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“These are fragments of our experiences of this cruel war… Starving and freezing, constantly fearing for our lives.”: A bottom-up history of the forced displacements of Polish civilians from lands annexed directly into the German Reich, 1939-1941

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ABSTRACT

This MRP fills a gap in the historiography on the forced displacements of Polish civilians by the Nazi German administration between 1939-1941 from lands annexed directly into the German Reich onto the *Generalgouvernement*. Drawing on a set of forty-four primary sources consisting of written memoirs and video interviews, this MRP constructs a bottom-up history of the evictions, temporary transit camps, and train journeys that the forcibly displaced Poles were forced to endure. Contrasting previous works, this MRP describes how different groups of people reacted – varying in age, urbanicity, location, and profession, in particular also looking at the perspective of children. It extends the description to the pre-war lives and to the beginnings of the German Occupation of Poland through the eyes of the forcibly displaced Poles, creating partial microhistories, as well as considering the new identities of the forcibly displaced as *exiles – wygnańce*. It gives a voice to the primary source, while continually examining them against Polish-language and English-language secondary sources on the topic.

DEDICATION

To my Grandfather, Teodor Stasiak – this is all thanks to you!

To all those who suffered through these forced displacements.

To all those around the world who have suffered similar fates.

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I would like to thank my family and friends, who were there for me when I needed a crutch to stand on, a person to talk to, or a hug. In particular, I would like to thank my girlfriend Stephanie, for the emotional support, and for helping me to remember life apart from my MRP. I am also grateful to my sister Nicole, for cheering me on, for knowing just what to say over countless late-night conversations, and for

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Finally, I would like to thank my Grandfather, Teodor Stasiak, who, having miraculously survived brutal Nazi German oppression, only to be forced to live decades under Soviet tyranny, did it all with a gentle soul and endless wisdom. Thank you for having the courage to write down your story – our family story.

I would also like to thank all those others, who had the bravery and strength to share their stories, despite all the difficulties of reliving the trauma they had survived. And I encourage all others to share and tell their own stories: they are valuable, they are needed, and they must not be lost.

To all those who I did not name, know that you are not forgotten. There have been countless people who have supported me in the past three years and throughout my life, and I can never thank them enough for the positive effect they have had!

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INTRODUCTION

When the German Reich invaded Poland in September 1939, Hitler had grand ambitions of germanization. While from one perspective, the invasion was a continuation of the thousand-year Germanic push to the Slavic East, the *Drang nach Osten*, the new thousand-year Reich diverged from previous German occupiers who largely merely sought to germanize the Polish people. Hitler believed that there could only be a germanization of soil, not people. The goal was to achieve German living space, *Lebensraum*, and there were grand plans for the creation of settler-colonial *empty space to the East*, and long-term plans to remove 80-85% of the native Polish population, 75% of Belarusians, and 65% of Ukrainians, among other populations.[1] While the full extent of these plans would only be possible to execute after a Fall of the Soviet Union, after the September 1939 invasion of Poland, the Nazi bureaucracy began to craft short-term plans to germanize the newly conquered land. They faced a major demographic challenge: the lands that they annexed were simply not German. Data gathered by Dariusz Matelski, a Polish historian, reveals that the population of the Polish lands directly annexed into the German Reich[2] was 10,139,000 people. Only a mere 599,000, or 5.9%, were ethnic

[1] Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty Do Generalnego Gubernatorstwa: 1939-1941*, (Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 2003), 19.

[2] The Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, signed on August 23, 1939, had split the Second Polish Republic, as well as the whole of East Central Europe, into two spheres of influence between the German Reich and the Soviet Union. The German Reich received close to half of the Polish land area, which they split approximately in half, choosing to directly annex lands, including: Gdańsk and Bydgoszcz and their surroundings, which were integrated into the province of Gdańsk-Western Prussia (Reichsgau Danzig – Westpreußen); Ciechanów and lands up to the Wisła and Narew rivers, which were integrated into the German province of Eastern Prussia (Reichsgau Ostpreußen); the city of Katowice and surroundings, which were integrated into the province of Upper Silesia (Oberschleisen); and finally the remainder of the lands between Poznań and Łódź would be created into the new province (or Reichsgau) of Wartheland, sometimes abbreviated to Warthegau. The remainder of the land, including Warszawa and Kraków were placed in the newly created colony named the *Generalgouvernement* (GG), aptly named to wipe out any trace of a Polish state. The GG was a German administered governate under Hans Frank (October 12, 1939 – January 18, 1945), created for the exploitation (for example the millions of Poles taken into forced labor)

Germans, 603,000, or 5.9%, were Jewish Poles, and an overwhelming 8,905,000, or 87.9% were (non-Jewish) Poles.[3]

The German occupation of Poland began with the organized and systematic mass murder of the Polish Intelligentsia. In the words of historian Piotr Wróbel, "the Polish nation was decapitated: the most promising youth, the most patriotic intelligentsia, and the most outstanding intellectuals were killed."[4] Historian Philipp Ther adds that 54,000 Polish civilians were executed either by German soldiers or the SS within the first three months.[5] The goal was to "clean the political ground" by eliminating the elites and leadership class, targeting independence activists from before the First World War, participants in uprisings, and also "anti-German" government workers, scholars, and cultural elites; further, the goal would be achieved by the destruction of Polish culture, national tradition, and religion, to transform the Poles into a *Knechte* (farmhand) class.[6] A rigid racial hierarchy was imposed upon the land, with pre-war citizens of Germany, the *Reichsdeutsch*, at the top, followed by ethnic Germans, the *Volksdeutsch*, much lower were Slavic minorities in Poland, such as the Belarusians and Ukrainians, who Wróbel adds, "enjoyed some kind of autonomy and several privileges," with Poles even lower than them, and finally at the lowest point of the Nazi-German racial system were the "non-human" Jews and Gypsies.[7] The Slavs, specifically the Poles, were sub-human in

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and eventual destruction of the non-Jewish Polish population as well as the immediate and complete destruction of the Jewish Polish population.

[3] Dariusz Matelski, "Polityka Eksterminacji Obywateli Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej Przez Trzecią Rzeszę i Związek Sowiecki w Latach 1939–1945 Część I: Polityka Trzeciej Rzeszy," *Nowa Polityka Wschodnia*, no. 3 (14) (2017): 145-165, https://doi.org/10.15804/npw2017412, 150.

[4] Piotr Wróbel, "The Devil's Playground: Poland in World War II," accessed March 16, 2020, http://www.warsawuprising.com/paper/Wróbel1.htm.

[5] Philipp Ther, *The Dark Side of Nation-States: Ethnic Cleansing in Modern Europe*. trans. Charlotte Kreutzmuller. (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2016), 96.

[6] Dariusz Matelski, "Polityka Eksterminacji Obywateli Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej," 148, 152.

[7] Piotr Wróbel, "The Devil's Playground: Poland in World War II."

the Nazi German model, *Untermenschen*, but could still be of use as slave laborers for the Reich, while the Jewish and the Gypsies were to be immediately eliminated.

It was in this context that, in 1939, a growing bureaucracy took shape to handle the planning and execution of the deportations, under the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt* (RHSA) the main security service of the Reich. Historians Rutherford and Rutowska, whose books are used as key secondary sources for this Major Research Paper (MRP), describe the organization of this bureaucracy, with Rutherford illustrating, in extensive detail, the lives and ambitions of individual German leaders within. Later, as part of the RHSA, the *Umwandererzentralstelle* (UWZ) (or Central Emigration Office) would become the driving planner behind the forced displacements. From a bird's eye view, the complete forced displacement process would go as follows: the German bureaucracy would create plans for how many Poles to target for forced displacement by region, the Gestapo or the new local German authorities would conduct the eviction, the displaced Poles would have all their properties seized without any compensation, be transported to a temporary transit camp, and finally they would be taken by train to the *Generalgouvernement* (GG), where they would be dumped and local foremen would have to find them housing/lodging and food with limited local resources.

This MRP aims to fill a gap in the historiography of these forced displacements, drawing from a set of forty-four primary sources consisting of written memoirs and video interviews and focusing almost exclusively on the *Wartheland*, predominantly in the Wielkopolska (Greater Poland) region of Poland. The only English-language book that focuses entirely on the forced displacements is Philip Rutherford's *Prelude to the Final Solution the Nazi Program for Deporting Ethnic Poles, 1939-1941*. It is an analysis of the

forced displacements, investigating each *Nahplan* through German government memoranda, and while perfectly valid in scope, it lacks a Polish bottom-up perspective. More effective at giving a voice to the Poles who experienced the forced displacements is Maria Rutowska's "Forced displacement of the Polish population from the Wartheland to the General Government 1939-1941,"[8] which describes the forced displacements, analyzing each segment, from the evictions – to the temporary transit camps – to the train rides, while focusing on the main temporary transit camp in Poznań. Her work is a successful and necessary contribution to the historiography, but this MRP will show that the experience is not sufficiently described in any of the secondary sources.

While Rutowska considers and describes the general experience of Poles through each segment of the forced displacement through long memoir quotes, there is more to be learned by following specific individuals through these experiences, rather than only describing places and processes. Although Rutowska's quotes are broadly representative of entire experiences, the set of sources used for this MRP can describe how different groups of people reacted, varying in age, urbanicity, location, and profession, and in particular also looking at the perspective of children. It will strive to describe the experience more precisely in terms of these groups and categories and extend the description to the pre-war lives and to the beginnings of the German Occupation of Poland through the eyes of the forcibly displaced Poles. By more closely following individuals of varied age, urbanicity, social class, and profession, one can better understand the depth of experience, emotion toll, and information available to forcibly displaced Poles as they endured the execution of the forced displacements. Furthermore,

[8] Original Polish language title: *Wysiedlenia Ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty do Generalnego Gubernatorstwa 1939-1941*, (Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 2003).

by following the primary sources this closely, this MRP will answer questions previous works do not ask when they simply describe the events in and of themselves.

BACKGROUND

A brief description of the realities of the German occupation are vital. The *Black Book of Poland*, published in 1942 by the Polish government-in-exile, describes the German occupation. It summarizes the unprecedented and bleak situation of Poles: "The Germans have murdered without trial over seventy thousand Poles. Tens of thousands are slowly dying in prisons and concentration camps. Millions are starving under the German scourge."[9] Death squads travelling behind the German army murdered tens of thousands from previously prepared lists of "anti-Reich and anti-German elements."[10] The *Black Book* describes the deliberate murder of civilians during military operations, the mass slaughters and executions, the mass arrests and torture, the concentration camps, the general brutal treatment of the entire population, while also specifically bringing attention to the massacres of Jewish Poles, their expulsions, ghettoization, confiscations of property, and humiliating regulations.[11] More broadly, the German occupation saw the elimination of the Polish language from streets, attempting to make the heartland of Polish culture appear German. Further, Polish cultural possessions and institutions were looted and destroyed: the Royal Castle in Warszawa among other national treasures, countless museums, art collections, libraries, archives, monuments, and much more.[12]

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[9] Polish Ministry of Information, *The Black Book of Poland* (New York: G P Putnam's Sons, 1942), 18.
[10] Phillip T. Rutherford, *Prelude to the Final Solution: the Nazi Program for Deporting Ethnic Poles, 1939-1941*, (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007), 43.
[11] Polish Ministry of Information, *The Black Book of Poland*, 17-116, 219-252.
[12] Maria Wardzyńska, *Wysiedlenia Ludności Polskiej z Okupowanych Ziem Polskich Włączonych Do III Rzeszy w Latach 1939-1945*, (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej. Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2017), 142-143, 473.

Professors of Polish Universities were arrested and placed into concentration camps, all universities and secondary schools and all "Scientific, Artistic, and Educational Institutions" were closed, the Polish Press was banned, and there was a complete banning of the Polish language. At the same time, the persecution of the Catholic Church, and the banning of religious services abounded.[13] The official and institutional separation of Poles from Germans was the norm, forbidding humane treatment, while an example of official memoranda read "A Lower Race Needs Less Food."[14] In the *Generalgouvernement*, the goal was the maximum exploitation of land and preparation for colonization.[15] In the Warthegau, the goal was to germanize the land by resettling new Germans, and directly or indirectly exterminating the Poles. The Gauleiter (a position similar to governor) of Warthegau, Arthur Greiser, sought to create a "model gau" and to him the Germanization of the Warthegau meant that no other nation except the German one had any right to live there.[16] How these measures worked in practice will be revealed by the primary sources used in this MRP.

Geography professor Eberhardt describes the practical plans which the Nazi bureaucracy had created, called *Nahplans*. There were meant to be three, the First Nahplan was meant to remove 80,000 undesirables to the GG in December of 1939; the Second Nahplan was meant to remove 600,000 in 1940; while the Third Nahplan was meant to remove 800,000 in 1941 (nearly 1,500,000 in total).[17] Of these plans, only the first was fully completed, while each succeeding plan was less successful than the last.

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[13] Polish Ministry of Information, *The Black Book of Poland*, 325-400, 448-514.
[14] Polish Ministry of Information, *The Black Book of Poland*, 417-428, 486-508.
[15] Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty*, 20.
[16] Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty*, 24.
[17] Piotr Eberhardt, *Przemieszczenia ludności na terytorium Polski spowodowane II wojną światową*, (Warszawa: IGiPZ PAN, 2000), 18-19; Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty*, 46.

The Second Nahplan was delayed and split up, with a temporary (Interim Plan) *Zwischenplan* targeting urban Poles preceding it. The Third Nahplan was discontinued due to economic concerns, the GG refusing to accept more transports, and the lack of train logistics due to preparation for the invasion of the Soviet Union. Below is a table noting the dates and number of victims of each organized Nahplan from the Wartheland:

Table 1

Total number of organized forced displacements to the GG by Nahplans

Table 1: Total number of organized forced displacements to the GG by Nahplans

	Dates of displacement	**Number of organized displacements to the GG**
Nahplan 1	1939/12/01 – 1939/12/17	87,833 (incl several hundred Jewish Poles)[18]
Zwischenplan	1940/02/10 – 1940/03/15	40,128 (no statistics, small % of Jewish Poles)[19]
Nahplan 2	1940/03/01 – 1941/01/20	122,984 (no statistics, small % of Jewish Poles)[20]
Nahplan 3	1941/01/21 – 1941/03/15	19,226 (incl 2,140 Jewish Poles)[21]
Total:	1939/12/01 – 1941/03/15	270,171

Sources: Data from Phillip T. Rutherford, "Race, Space and the 'Polish Question': Nazi deportation policy in Reichsgau Wartheland, 1939-1941." PhD diss., Pennsylvania State University, 2001. 204; Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty*, 142; Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty*, 51; Phillip T. Rutherford, "Race, Space and the 'Polish Question': Nazi deportation policy in Reichsgau Wartheland, 1939-1941," 204; Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty*, 266; Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty*, 53.

[18] Phillip T. Rutherford, "Race, Space and the 'Polish Question': Nazi deportation policy in Reichsgau Wartheland, 1939-1941." PhD diss., Pennsylvania State University, 2001. 204; Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty*, 142.
[19] Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty*, 51.
[20] Phillip T. Rutherford, "Race, Space and the 'Polish Question': Nazi deportation policy in Reichsgau Wartheland, 1939-1941," 204; Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty,* 266.
[21] Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty,* 53.

Of the forced displacements to the GG, the German bureaucracy only succeeded in removing 270,171 of the 1,480,000 that was their original goal.

There are also three distinct categories of forced displacements discussed in the secondary sources. The first is the most examined – where Poles had their properties seized and were taken to a transit camp from which they were sent by trains to the GG. The statistics above account only for this category, which lasted from 1939 until the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941. The second is described with the Polish word *rugowanie* by Rutowska or *wysiedlenia "dzikie"* by Wardzyńska, the latter translating roughly to "wild evictions." This process was present throughout the war, particularly at the beginning before the bureaucracy took hold. It involved local Germans (*Volksdeutsch*) or newly settled Germans working for the state (*Reichsdeutch*), seizing properties (such as the nicest apartments in cities, stores and businesses in towns, or farmland and inventory in rural areas) on their own initiative from local Poles, forcing the Poles to fend for themselves.[22] Wardzyńska cites Czesław Łuczak, who writes that just in the beginning of the war in the Wartheland, several thousand Poles were forcibly displaced in this way.[23] The final form of the forced displacements began after the 1941 invasion of the Soviet Union. As the Germans no longer had the logistical capacity to spare trains for the displacement of Poles, Germans continued to seize properties and forcibly displace Poles albeit internally, sometimes to live with family nearby and other times to "reservations" – this was called *Internal Displacement*.[24] In addition, a larger percentage of the displaced were sent to forced labour camps in Germany proper. This

[22] Maria Wardzyńska, *Wysiedlenia Ludności Polskiej z Okupowanych Ziem Polskich,* 142-147.
[23] Czesław Łuczak in Maria Wardzyńska, *Wysiedlenia Ludności Polskiej z Okupowanych Ziem Polskich*, 144.
[24] Phillip T. Rutherford, *Prelude to the Final Solution*, 221.

MRP will only focus on the first category – of Poles forcibly displaced to the GG. Below is a table from Maria Rutowska's book, with the number of Poles displaced by the Nazi Germans:

Table 2

Number of forced displacements by region separated by External and Internal

Table 2: Number of forced displacements by region separated by External and Internal

Name of region	Deportation to GG (between December 1939 and March 1941)	Internal Displacement	Total
Warthegau	280,609	345,022	625,631
Gdańsk-West Prussia	41,262	70,000	111,262
Upper Silesia	22,148	59,191	81,339
Ciechanów region	20,646		20,646
Total	364,665[25]	474,213	838,878

Note: Rutowska is later able to conclude that of the nearly 365,000 Poles forcibly displaced from lands annexed into the Reich, only 31,000 were Jewish Poles.
Source: Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty,* 40.

As for the ethnic Germans re-settled into Wartheland, Rutowska provides the total figure that between 1939 and 1941, 360,929 were settled in the homes and properties from which Poles were forcibly removed, before 1945 a total of 631,485 were brought, of which 85% were sent to the Wartheland.[26] In *The Dark Side of Nation-States: Ethnic Cleansing in Modern Europe*, historian Philipp Ther describes their experiences in more detail. The groups mostly originated from lands under Soviet control and, as a result of agreements between the Soviets and the Nazi Germans, such as one made on November 3, 1939, for a "population transfer" between descendants of "German colonists in eastern

[25] Rutowska is later able to conclude that of the nearly 365,000 Poles forcibly displaced from lands annexed into the Reich, only 31,000 were Jewish Poles: Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty,* 40.
[26] Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty,* 23.

Galicia and Volhynia" and Byelorussians and Ukrainians living on GG territory.[27] Several pressure and propaganda campaigns were created to convince these groups to relocate. An example of one of the propaganda campaigns is that anyone who considered staying had to declare that:

> 1) I, along with my children and children's children, disassociate myself from the German people.
> 2) I permanently relinquish my German status and hence all the protection that the German Reich has hitherto afforded me by its might.
> 3) I leave behind me all that is of my blood …
> 4) I prefer to remain isolated and alone.[28]

As a result, nearly 62,000 *Baltendeutschen* were brought from Estonia and Latvia by late 1939; later 137,000 ethnic Germans from eastern Galicia and Volhynia; after September 1940, 93,000 from Bessarabia and 43,000 from Northern Bukovina; and finally, 66,000 ethnic Germans were brought from Bukovina and Dobruja as a result of a German-Romanian treaty in October 1940.[29]

These re-settlers were processed and racially categorized by the Nazi Germans. According to Rutherford, as many as 256,257 were kept in resettlement camps for the entirety of the war.[30] It is crucial to note the difference between the transit camps meant for resettled Germans and those meant for Poles. Historian Maria Wardzyńska reveals that the camps created for the resettled Germans were built in sanatoriums, resorts, schools, or specially modified factories remodelled to accommodate living, and that the

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[27] Philipp Ther, *The Dark Side of Nation-States*, trans. Charlotte Kreutzmuller, 92.
[28] Philipp Ther, *The Dark Side of Nation-States*, trans. Charlotte Kreutzmuller, 91.
[29] Philipp Ther, *The Dark Side of Nation-States*, trans. Charlotte Kreutzmuller, 91-93.
[30] Phillip T. Rutherford, *Prelude to the Final Solution*, 190.

Germans were given abundant food and medical care.[31] It will be shown in this MRP how much this description contrasts those temporary transit camps meant for Poles.

Ther argues the resettled ethnic Germans were (secondary) victims instead of perpetrators – as people who largely lost their social and professional statuses, income, and lived in worse conditions than those they left. Ther quotes some of these German re-settlers describing the Warthegau as a disappointment while "some resettlers came to doubt their legitimacy and even feel some sympathy toward the Poles who had to leave." Rutherford quotes a doggerel from Łódź:

The Balts speak Russian
The Volksdeutschen Polish
The Poles German
The Reichsdeutschen are speechless[32]

It is clear that the Wartheland was a place where simplistic Nazi racial theories crashed into the wall of a much more complicated reality. As this MRP focuses on the experience of the forcibly displaced Poles, little else will be written on the topic of the re-settled ethnic Germans.

HISTORIOGRAPHY

The topic of forced displacements of Poles from lands annexed into the German Reich is often overshadowed by other war crimes committed by the Nazi Germans and Soviet Russians during the Second World War. Realizing that this part of the Second World War was absent from the collective consciousness of the people of Wielkopolska (and throughout Poland), activist and author Jacek Kubiak was driven to act. In his

[31] Maria Wardzyńska, *Wysiedlenia Ludności Polskiej z Okupowanych Ziem Polskich*, 37.
[32] Phillip T. Rutherford, *Prelude to the Final Solution,* 133.

displays-turned-book, he teamed up with two experienced Polish historians – Agnieszka Łuczak-Kadłubowska and Maria Rutowska to create a popular history of the forced displacements. The book's[33] main goal is to re-popularize the subject and spread awareness, specifically within the Wielkopolska region, where a documentary on the same subject was filmed by Kubiak. The main contribution of the book is an analysis of the forced displacements' curious absence from the collective consciousness of the region. The answer given was censorship in the Polish People's Republic – a Soviet satellite state after the Second World War. Kubiak affirms that Polish historians were unable to properly discuss German forced displacement campaigns fully as it would reveal Soviet complicity/cooperation and even further undermine the propagandistic image of a savior-Soviet Union. The Soviet Union was the main source of resettled Germans as part of Hitler's *Heim ins Reich* campaign. While it certainly never left the collective memory, especially of the generation of those who experienced the forced displacements, the topic left the collective consciousness due to it not being discussed at home. The same happened to many other aspects of the Second World War in Poland, which were not discussed out of fear of the new totalitarian government, and, as Maria Sobocka puts it, that traumatic memories were simply not shared in her family.[34] Kubiak's book is not written for a scholarly audience, but rather for the general public. The author has contributed to the topic's popularization, and, collaborating with many others he has helped open the *Museum of Oral History in Poznań*, which also holds over forty interviews with survivors of forced displacements, among hundreds of other

[33] Jacek Kubiak and Agnieszka Łuczak, *Wypędzeni 1939...: Deportacje obywateli polskich z ziem wcielonych do III rzeszy*, 2015.
[34] Maria Sobocka, "Nikt nie spodziewał się przesiedlenia," Poznańskie Archiwum Historii Mówionej, 2014, video, 56:32, https://historiamowiona.poznan.pl/relacje/maria-sobocka/.

interviews on other topics. These interviews are among the main sources used in this MRP.

While noticeably absent from the collective consciousness, the forced displacements were not absent from Polish historiography. A description of the deportations is given as early as in the *Black Book of Poland*, published by the Polish government-in-exile in 1942. After the war, throughout the Communist era (predominantly in the 1960s and 1970s), there are several Polish authors who synthesize and analyze the forced displacements. Smaller regional works are also plentiful. Some of the main authors include: Czesław Łuczak,[35] Czesław Madajczyk,[36] Włodzimierz Jastrzębski,[37] Szymon Datner, Jan Gumkowski, Kazimierz Leszczyński,[38] and Jerzy Marczewski.[39] The topic is also briefly covered in non-historical books, like Piotr Eberhardt's "Population Movements in Polish Territory caused by World War II" *Przemieszczenia Ludności na Terytorium Polski spowodowane II Wojną Światową*, published in 2000, which approaches the topic through the lens of Human Geography. Two recent Polish language history books which will predominantly be analyzed for this MRP are: Maria Rutowska's "Forced displacement of the Polish population from the Wartheland to the General Government 1939-1941" *Wysiedlenia Ludności Polskiej z*

[35] Numerous works on the forced displacements and the occupation at large, for a collection of primary sources: Czesław Łuczak, *Wysiedlenia Ludności Polskiej na tzw. Ziemiach wcielonych do Rzeszy 1939-1945 „Documenta Occupationis"* Poznań, Poland: University of Adam Mickiewicz printing house, 1969 see also Czesław Łuczak, *Polityka ludnościowa i ekonomiczna hitlerowskich Niemiec w okupowanej Polsce* Poznań, Poland, 1979.
[36] Multiple works, see for example: Czesław Madajczyk, *Polityka III Rzeszy w okupowanej Polsce: T. 1–2*, Warszawa, 1970.
[37] Multiple works, see for example: Włodzimierz Jastrzębski, *Hitlerowskie wysiedlenia z ziem polskich wcielonych do Rzeszy w latach 1939–1945*, Poznań, 1968.
[38] Szymon Datner, Gumkowski, Jan, Leszczyński Kazimierz, *Wysiedlanie ludności z ziem polskich wcielonych do Rzeszy, „Biuletyn Głównej Komisji Badania Zbrodni Hitlerowskich w Polsce"* 1960, nr 12.
[39] Jerzy Marczewski, *Hitlerowskie koncepcje polityki kolonizacyjno-wysiedleńczej i jej realizacja w „okręgu Warty",* Poznań, Poland, 1979.

Kraju Warty do Generalnego Gubernatorstwa 1939-1941, which was published in 2003 and Maria Wardzyńska's "Forced Displacement of the Polish Population from occupied Polish lands incorporated into the German Reich in the years 1939-1945" *Wysiedlenia Ludności Polskiej z Okupowanych Ziem Polskich włączonych do III Rzeszy w latach 1939-1945*, which was published in 2017.

In terms of non-Polish historiography, the topic is touched upon in many historians' works, including most notably Götz Aly's: *Final Solution: Nazi Population Policy and the Murder of the European Jews*. There are also other books which dedicate at least one chapter to the forced displacements, such as Philipp Ther's *The Dark Side of Nation-States: Ethnic Cleansing in Modern Europe,* translated by Charlotte Kreutzmüller, which was published in 2016. It calls the forced displacements an *ethnic cleansing* and argues that these actions were the modern and rational consequence of the European nation state. A comparative work, it stresses the connection between German actions and previous Italian, French, and British-influenced population transfers, specifically those transfers made after the First World War, such as those between the Greek and Turkish states. The most systematic work on the forced displacements, however, is by Philip Rutherford in his 2007 book based on his PhD dissertation, *Prelude to the Final Solution the Nazi Program for Deporting Ethnic Poles, 1939-1941*.

Due to their recency and their specific scope, the three books that will be considered most substantially for this MRP are: Rutowska's *Wysiedlenia Ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty do Generalnego Gubernatorstwa 1939-1941*; Rutherford's *Prelude to the Final Solution the Nazi Program for Deporting Ethnic Poles, 1939-1941*; and Wardzyńska's *Wysiedlenia Ludności Polskiej z Okupowanych Ziem Polskich*

Włączonych do III Rzeszy w latach 1939-1945. While it would be useful to consider all twentieth century Polish historical literature, most of the earlier authors are already cited by both Rutowska and Wardzyńska and it is necessary to limit the scope of this MRP. As such, this MRP will become a comparison of three varied, twenty-first century works on the one side, with Polish memoirs on the other.

Rutowska's book is the earliest of the three. While it does consider the entire scope of the forced displacements, including the origin of the policies, the book places most of its attention to the transit camps – specifically the main transit camp in Poznań. These transit camps are the book's main focus and self-described contribution to the historiography. The book also seeks to be the first full synthesis of all the forced displacements to the GG from 1939 to 1941. Rutowska's book first goes through German memoranda to outline the bureaucratic organization of the forced displacements, but also uses a considerable number of Polish memoirs. Numerous chapters include long quotes from memoirs lasting several pages, which she justifies as not just individual experiences, but as quotes which are representative of the general experiences of forcibly displaced Poles. To this effect, she writes that the memoirs that she cites are confirmed by the German primary sources, available Polish primary and secondary sources, and by dozens of other Polish memoirs.[40] As such, her book not only presents the "German" perspective, but properly conveys the way that Poles saw these events in a way that is both historically rigorous and emotionally real. Rutowska also invites further research on other temporary transit camps and defends the indispensability of primary sources.

[40] Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty,* 15.

Rutherford's book is the second most recent. The book's main contribution is a deep analysis of German government documents and memoranda, which it uses as its main sources. While this is a perfectly valid scope, it has been critiqued for being nearly completely devoid of Polish sources, neither considering Polish historiography nor primary source memoirs.[41] Contrasting Rutowska, Rutherford focuses on the German bureaucracy and their evolving plans, and the changing individuals in charge of them – giving biographies to the top Nazis. While Rutowska describes the organizations responsible before describing the experiences of forcibly displaced Poles, Rutherford instead focuses on the lives and decisions of German bureaucrats. Rutherford also makes the attempt to analyze the Polish Question[42] as a longer study in Polish-German history, although he is similarly critiqued for this because he did not incorporate Polish historiography. He tries to show, however, the interconnectedness, or perhaps unity of, the Polish Question and the Jewish Question in the beginning years of the Second World War. His core argument is that the German bureaucracy learned the complex train and transportation logistics and the skills of tracking down and rounding up individuals during the forced displacements of mostly non-Jewish Poles. It was these skills that were integral for the efficiency of the death camps during the Holocaust in the later years of the Second World War.[43]

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[41] Piotr Wróbel, review of *Prelude to the Final Solution: the Nazi Program for Deporting Ethnic Poles, 1939-1941*, by Phillip T. Rutherford, *The Journal of Modern History* 81, no. 2 (2009): 476–78.
[42] The Polish Question refers to the geopolitical issue and debates surrounding the existence of an independent Polish state after the partitions of the eighteenth century. Rutherford writes that during the Springtime of Nations, there was some (mostly-western) German support for the recreation of a Polish state, but after the unification of Germany in 1871, the existence of a Polish state would result in a loss of German-controlled territory and thus could no longer be supported politically.
[43] Phillip T. Rutherford, *Prelude to the Final Solution*.

Wardzyńska's book is the most recent. It can be more aptly described as a report, as there is relatively little analysis, if any. Instead, the book publishes her findings on the collection of surveys of the Main and Regional Commissions for the Investigation of Nazi Crimes in Poland, which had been distributed/administered between 1968 and 1972, about the forced displacements. In fact, she is critiqued for not incorporating the broader Polish and German historiography and over-relying on these surveys as sources.[44] Her sources can also be critiqued for their relative lateness as they were collected some two decades after the forced displacements, however, the sources are closer to the time period compared to the memoirs and video interviews used for this MRP, which were mostly from the 1990s to as late as the 2010s. The more credible source critique would be to challenge her findings compared to the memoirs. For example, on pages 183 and 303 Wardzyńska describes the only two forced displacements that took place in the gmina (administrative district akin to municipality) of Gruszczyce, in 1939 and in 1941 respectively. However, one memoir from the set of primary sources used for this MRP, confirmed by the oral history of several other families, states that the forced displacement from Włocin-Kolonia (in the gmina Gruszczyce) of several families took place on November 10, 1940.[45] Wardzyńska does not shy away from the incompleteness of her sources for these forced displacements, but instead her work can be understood as an analysis of the primary source surveys she employs, which make for a safe baseline or minimal number of undeniable forced displacements from each of the three categories

[44] Marcin Pregietka, review of *Wysiedlenia Ludności Polskiej z Okupowanych Ziem Polskich Włączonych Do III Rzeszy w Latach 1939-1945*, by Maria Wardzyńska, *Zapiski Historyczne* 65, no. 1 (2018): 219-225, http://dx.doi.org/10.15762/ZH.2018.14.
[45] Teodor Stasiak, *Wspomnienia lat 1940-1945,* (self-publ., Toronto, 2017), 7.

described above.[46] As a whole, her book is divided into sections geographically and chapters further divide each section into chronological portions following each German plan. She writes an incredibly comprehensive list of forced displacements from every town and village grouped into regions. The book lists the number of families forcibly displaced from each municipality or region of Poland. It spends more time answering the questions of where and when as opposed to answering the question of how.

Wróbel writes in his review, "Rutherford demonstrates convincingly how the Nazi policies towards Jews and Poles were linked and interdependent."[47] This MRP seeks to bolster the argument that Rutherford lays out by adding more Polish primary sources, which is something that Rutherford is critiqued for not using enough of. Rutkowska's arguments will also not be disparaged but instead will be supported by more Polish primary sources. While her work is extremely important and moves the field forward, it focuses predominantly on the experience in the temporary transit camps. In contrast, the set of Polish primary sources used for this MRP will extend the analysis to more of the experience, from before the forced displacement to the destination of the train journey, with a greater depth, and following individuals through these stages.

Rutherford and Rutowska's works go into great depth in describing the German individuals and agencies behind organizing the forced displacements. This MRP will not go into such great detail, but rather will attempt to fill the other perspective of the displacements – that of the forcibly displaced. The basic description and mechanics of the forced displacements is virtually identical between the three books.

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[46] Maria Wardzyńska, *Wysiedlenia Ludności Polskiej z Okupowanych Ziem Polskich*, 376.
[47] Piotr Wróbel, review of *Prelude to the Final Solution: the Nazi Program for Deporting Ethnic Poles, 1939-1941*, by Phillip T. Rutherford, *The Journal of Modern History* 81, no. 2 (2009): 476–78.

There are no discernable historiographical debates – Rutowska's use of both German and Polish primary and secondary sources, Rutherford's extensive use of German primary sources, and Wardzyńska's use of surveys, all line up. Each book, albeit with varied levels of detail, describes the organization of the German bureaucracy, and the various stages of the German plans – the long-term ambitions, but also the short-term actual actions – the 1939 First Nahplan, the short 1940 "interim" Zwischenplan, the 1940 Second Nahplan, and the 1941 unfinished Third Nahplan. The precise sequence of events surrounding the evictions are all similar, although Rutherford gives little attention to it, focusing instead on the German debates regarding the implementation of plans, and Wardzyńska also spends relatively little space on it. Rutherford focuses on an explanation of orders and guidelines that the German officials were expected to follow. Rutowska and Rutherford both discuss the shifting allowances for luggage and food required as German bureaucratic policy adapted to logistical challenges throughout various stages of the war. Rutowska and Wardzyńska portray the terror in the physical forced displacements – the yelling and physical beatings. All three authors discuss the short amount of time given to pack and the precise inventory of items and stock in the house that was taken by German officials.

Rutowska and Rutherford restrict their scope and essentially end their analysis in 1941, marking the end of organized cargo trains filled with approximately one thousand Poles each making the journey to the GG. And yet the expulsions do not end in 1941, they merely begin to take a different form amidst new political, economic, and military realities. "Informal" expulsions (Internal Displacements) continued to take place to make room for Germans until 1945. Rutowska and Rutherford do not ignore this fact but

dedicate very little space to post-1941 actions. This is one of the strengths of Wardzyńska's book – it describes the full development of the forced displacements.

None of the books follow the Poles after their forced displacement – this leaves open the possibility for such an analysis. Rutowska and Rutherford both discuss the later balance between war economy realities and ideology, which lead to the termination of forced displacement to the GG, while Wardzyńska describes the continuation of the internal forced displacements in more detail. Thanks to primary sources, such as those gathered by Kubiak, this MRP can make a significant contribution to the historiography, by providing a Polish, bottom-up perspective on the forced displacements. And for the first time, it would be possible for a subsequent project to describe the life of the Poles after they were left in the GG and upon their return home after the war.

SOURCES / METHODOLOGY

This MRP will analyze forty-four Polish primary sources, both in the form of video interviews and written memoirs. When translating from Polish to English, every attempt has been made to translate word-for-word with some words placed in brackets added to better impart the true meaning and context. The first source, where this project truly began, is a memoir written by my Grandfather, Teodor Stasiak – my original inspiration to pursue this topic. The memoir, written in the 1990s, begins with a description of the eviction, continues through the time spent in the temporary transit camp, including the separation of family members to forced labour, follows the rest of the family in the train to the GG, and finally describes life in the GG, before describing the family's return home. The greatest emphasis is given to life in the GG. My next set of

sources are written memoirs collected by the Pilecki Institute, which I was able to analyze in-person in Warsaw in the summer of 2022. Finally, the bulk of the primary sources used for this MRP are video interviews from the Poznań Oral History Archive (Poznańskie Archiwum Historii Mówionej).

The Poznań Oral History Archive has hundreds of interviews freely available to the public online covering many different topics from the Polish Interwar Period to recent events like the Women's Strike.[48] At the time of my analysis, there were forty-one videos in the "Forced Displacement from Wartheland" (Wysiedlenia z Kraju Warty) section under the "Second World War – accounts" (II Wojna Światowa – relacje) category, of which thirty-one will be used (as others did not describe forced displacements to the GG). Instead, some described local displacements or cases where people had properties seized but were taken directly into forced labour in the *Altreich*, or Germany Proper.[49] Most of the thirty-one video interviews used for this MRP were filmed between 2006 and 2009, but some were filmed as late as 2018. The videos range between seven minutes and fifty-six minutes, with an average being twenty-nine minutes long. The Pilecki Institute in Warsaw[50] also holds Polish primary sources on the forced displacements. In their digital archives, it was possible to track down fourteen written memoirs, which were submitted in the early 1990s as part of a contest created to gather sources on this topic. Two of these written memoirs were eliminated, one due to geographical considerations as it described a displacement within the GG, and the second due to brevity, leaving twelve written memoirs to be used for this MRP. These twelve spanned from six to fifty-nine pages,

[48] "Strajk Kobiet" were protests that took place between October and November 2020 across Poland.
[49] *Altreich* here refers to "Old Germany," the pre-1939 borders of the German Reich
[50] A Polish government organization tasked with researching and raising awareness about the Nazi German and Soviet Russian occupations of Poland.

however, most were relatively short with only three written memoirs being over twenty-five pages long, and eight written memoirs being under ten pages long.

Considering all forty-four primary sources at once, the subjects vary in age, urbanicity, and class. Only a slight majority are male. Their age at the time of forced displacement varies from unborn to twenty-two years of age, making all of the subjects of these sources children or young adults. A slim majority are ten years of age or under. The group does not appear to vary on religious background or ethnic background. Their parents range from small-hold farmers in similarly small villages, to doctors or lawyers in Poznań. Many had parents who were store owners, or had a trade, or were schoolteachers, some even had live-in servants. Due to the Nazi German bureaucracy seizing the best properties available, the subjects of the primary sources came from families which were in the upper percentiles of the given area, which meant a disproportionate many were veterans of the Great War or various uprisings, politically active as village leaders or political party members, engaged in multiple careers, or at least did relatively well for themselves – the best and brightest. This grouping of sources well represents population density, as sources vary from small villages to medium-sized towns, to large cities like Poznań.

The authors and interviewees will not be made anonymous, as the sources are a part of the public record, and because this MRP seeks to honour their memory. For the video interviews, the interviewers typically only asked a small number of follow-up questions to assist, however, the subjects of the interview were the main speakers, and told their stories at their own pace and in their own way. Some divulged very personal and tragic sides of their stories, others reflect back on near-death experiences. This MRP

hopes to make a nuanced analysis of how these different primary sources present different parts of the occupation, while focusing on specific events. What is said? How is something said? What is skipped over? These are some of the questions which will be asked against the sources.

Overall, insofar as how the video interviews were conducted, I am satisfied with how they were carried out, and how interviewees described their story. While the category of information presented will always be inherently subjective, there is a large enough number of sources, with a broad spread across region, class, urbanicity, and even waves of forced displacement, to be able to draw conclusions and contribute to the historiography of the topic. The diversity of this group is of paramount importance. As in similar works, no claim is made that this group of sources is fully representative of all the experiences of the forced displacements, let alone of German-occupied Poland as a whole, however, they form a good starting point for a bottom-up history of these events, before further investigations can be made.

The methodology used for analyzing each of the forty-four primary sources consisted of ten questions. The following sections of the MRP mirror the structure of these questions. The first two were meant to answer how pre-war life is described, and then how the beginning of the war is described. After this, the focus is on how the actual eviction from the house is described, the nature of the different transit camps and their conditions, and the train journey to the GG. This MRP will borrow from the British Marxist school of history, in writing from the bottom-up. It will also borrow ideas from the school of Black History with the ideas of double identities (as Poles, but also specifically as “exiles”) and countercultures (with the non-existent legal status of Poles

and brutal conditions levelled against them leading them to participate in resistance to German authority that considered Poles to be *Untermenschen*). The MRP may also take on elements of a microhistory, analyzing "the history of everyday life."[51] In contrast to a simple reading of German primary sources, this MRP will hope to create a partial reconstruction of the lives of the victims: the everyday struggle for survival, the ideas and plans made in an ever-changing and hostile environment, the successful and unsuccessful attempts to negotiate a new life.

Before delving deeper, a critical analysis of the sources is necessary. The first potential problem is the young age of the authors and narrators at the time of these historical events. Some scholars, like Laurie Cohen in her book *Smolensk under the Nazis* avoid younger age groups, because while younger children would have had memories of the events, they would be "quite difficult to recall and accurately articulate."[52] For this MRP, even those who would be too young to remember these experiences will be used, because there is precedence for oral family stories in this field of history. Simultaneously, all of what is narrated by the primary sources is compared against the available secondary source literature, which is mostly built upon German archival evidence, meaning that sources are rigorously cross-examined. Furthermore, the sources, all writing or narrating after the fall of Communism in Poland, no longer had reason to alter their stories due to fear of repercussions or censorship. Some may be suspected of altering the narrative to protect something a friend or family member did, such as giving information to the Germans, but no specific instance raised suspicion in the analysis.

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[51] Laurie R Cohen, *Smolensk under the Nazis* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2013), 29.
[52] Laurie R Cohen, *Smolensk under the Nazis*, 24.

It is important to note that in searching for sources for this MRP, I specifically sought sources which described a forcible displacement to the GG. I discarded a dozen sources due to them describing a local displacement, which inherently limits the scope of this MRP. At the same time, by strictly searching for those whom the Germans successfully forcibly displaced, I am also missing the voices of those who were targeted but managed to evade or escape the forcible displacements. While it is not impossible to find these sources, there is intrinsically less evidence of these successful attempts. As such, this aspect of the forced displacement will be outside of the scope of this MRP.

It is unclear whether each individual had told their stories many times before, or if it was their first time. Some are clearly more articulate than others, but all are coherent and remain on-topic unguided. However, the majority of the forty-four primary sources used for this MRP were created in the last thirty years, which is between fifty and seventy-five years after the historical events took place. This could raise questions about their reliability, however, there is also precedence for the use of this type of primary source in this field. Critically, cross-examination with secondary sources will help to ensure the reliability of the sources to the highest level possible. Some of the sources are also very open about this issue, Kazimierz Sakowski, for example, concludes his memoir writing: "This description may be incomplete, but after so many years I can only recall some of the circumstances, while trying to erase from my memory those grey days of the Hitlerite occupation"[53] These sources will not be assumed to be a complete picture but instead this MRP will be a chance for the survivors to speak of their experiences in their

[53] Kazimierz Sakowski, "Wspomnienia," (memoir, (AW II/2258/p – IP/Arch/8/1.1/929), Leszno, Poland, 1994). "Opis ten jest może niepełny, ale po tylu latach przypominam sobie niektóre okoliczności starając się wymazać z pamięci owe szare dni hitlerowskiej okupacji."

own words, giving invaluable insight into their day-to-day lives and the inhumane treatment that they had suffered. The primary sources will reveal an abundance of information that simply does not exist in the German archival evidence. It is also self-evident in quotes such as the above that this MRP is intrinsically linked to the memory of trauma, and the effects of trauma must be considered when analyzing these sources – how certain memories are "burned in," while others are repressed.

Additionally, the sources had decades to process and compartmentalize some of the trauma that they had experienced, which allowed some of them to rather casually and in a matter-of-fact way present traumatic information, such as several older people – neglected in the brutal conditions of train cattle cars – dying only to be noticed hours or days later by their co-passengers, or a young child dying of thirst in their wailing mother's helpless arms, or young children mistakenly playing on what turned out to be a mass grave. Being in situations and having absolutely no control over one's life, not knowing whether one would lose it that instant or whether one would live another day, the continual difficulties to survive each day – this was inconceivable trauma. The ability of the subjects to remember particular events from seventy years ago with vivid details serves as further evidence for the deep impact the events had on their health and more generally, on their lives.

There is a very clear consensus with the vast majority of the primary sources that this was a traumatic and horrific experience, but there still are those who are outliers to this consensus. Some do not describe the train ride with the same horror and death that others do. Others do not pay much attention to the temporary transit camps, and there is even one source who describes the farm that they were placed on as an improvement, or a

better farm, to where they had lived on before. These cases are few and far between, but this MRP must admit that they exist. These outliers are usually somewhat poorer rural people who perhaps grew up in rugged conditions and may have simply not been as fazed by the negative or worsening of conditions that all other sources had described. Alternatively, and more likely, the silence could be the effect of trauma repressing the memories.

DESCRIPTION OF PRE-WAR LIFE AND THE BEGINNING OF THE WAR

To better put the forced displacements into context, a brief analysis of how the different sources describe their lives before the war, as well as the beginnings of the German occupation is essential. Approximately half of the sources do not describe this time period at all, choosing either to start on the day of the forced displacement, or describe only bare facts such as their age, where they lived, where they went to school, and similar, brief general biographical information. Others describe the beginning of the occupation only when prompted, at later points of their interviews.

Of note, very few of the primary sources describe the pre-war period in an idyllic way. By any definition, the time before the war truly was idyllic – the subjects of the sources were young, their families were relatively well-off, and then everything was taken and for the most part never fully given back. Henryka Maciejewska describes it best:

> those were good times, I mean, before the forced displacement, those were the best times I ever had. […] one lived in prosperity […] when we were forcibly displaced, everything was over – our entire youth (our best years). After that the

> hard work started – the forced displacement and everything, and then work – constant work.[54]

The post-war Polish (Communist) authorities had seized the family's pre-war property before their return and would not let them regain what had been theirs. Her father would shortly die of a stroke (presumed to be caused by the stresses of what they had lived through), and the remainder of the family would have to work extremely hard to make ends meet. In contexts like these, it makes sense that other sources would say how they "had a beautiful childhood."[55] And yet, these are individual sources, and do not form a broad pattern. The closest example of an idyllic introduction would be Alfons Korzczoł's description of the river Warta flooding, however, his style of narrative is unique among all the sources.[56] This absence of an idyllic description of the pre-war period may be because before the war the lives of the subjects of the sources were normal, and did not merit an explanation, or perhaps because their pre-war life paled in importance to the events that would come after – the events that the subjects of the sources had wanted to explain in the most detail.

More descriptions are given of the weeks preceding the war. Jan Kozak, echoed by multiple other sources, discussed that the adults around him seemed to be talking about war for weeks before, and that schoolchildren had wondered who would win –

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[54] Henryka Maciejewska, "W Jędrzejowie pierwszy raz zobaczyłam Żydów," Poznańskie Archiwum Historii Mówionej, 2006-2009, video, 25:38, https://historiamowiona.poznan.pl/relacje/henryka-maciejewska/; "dobre czasy, to znaczy, przed wysiedleniem, to były najlepsze czasy jakie miałam. […] Człowiek żył w dobrobycie. […] jak nas wysiedlono, właściwie, to się wszystko skończyło – cała młodość. No bo potem zaczęła się ciężka praca. Wysiedlenie i w ogóle, a potem praca, ciągle praca."
[55] Ewa Czarkowska, "W Radomsku przyjęli nas serdecznie," Poznańskie Archiwum Historii Mówionej, 2006-2009, video, 25:03, https://historiamowiona.poznan.pl/relacje/ewa-czarkowska/
[56] Alfons Korzczoł, test"Wysiedleńcy z Poznańskiego," (memoir, (AW II/2138/p – IP/Arch/8/1.1/545), Zielona Góra, Poland, 1960).

despite differences in population sizes the children idealized the Poles as more valiant.[57] Kozak continues that there were some fears over the potential of a new kind of warfare, with new kinds of weapons which could destroy towns at once.[58] Some expected the same treatment of civilians as in the First World War, while others anticipated much worse repressions, claiming that "these were different Germans, *worse* Germans."[59] Overall, this tense atmosphere is repeated by many sources, describing a feverish atmosphere amidst army mobilization in the days before the war started.[60] Multiple sources describe an early return home from camps or from visiting family. Henryk Kwiatkowski, for example, describes a panicked early return from summer camp in Gdańsk on the last train. The train did not make it to Poznań as it was bombed and Kwiatkowski had to trek on foot about one hundred kilometers to return, abandoning baggage due to weight.[61]

When the war did start, there was definitely an informational deficit, as described by various sources. Some did not even know that the war had started until the afternoon, as they had been busy harvesting wheat in the field.[62] Kazimierz Sakowski, for example, had said that the people in his village were unsure of what was going on – whether it was a training exercise or otherwise. Only residents fleeing from nearby Wieluń confirmed that it was indeed war.[63] Many later described the first few days of the war as a traumatic

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[57] Jan Kozak, "Wysiedlenie – wspólne doświadczenie narodów," (memoir, (AW II/2219/p – IP/Arch/8/1.1/556), Tarnowskie Góry, Poland, 1994).
[58] Jan Kozak, "Wysiedlenie – wspólne doświadczenie narodów".
[59] Jan Kozak, "Wysiedlenie – wspólne doświadczenie narodów".
[60] Stanisław Chmielewski, "Wysiedlenie," (memoir, (AW II/2145/p – IP/Arch/8/1.1/145), Tarnowo Podgórne, Poland, 1995).
[61] Henryk Kwiatkowski, "Moje wojenne losy," (memoir, (AW II/2142/p – IP/Arch/8/1.1/623), Bydgoszcz, Poland, 1995).
[62] Jan Kozak, "Wysiedlenie – wspólne doświadczenie narodów".
[63] Kazimierz Sakowski, "Wspomnienia". It is worth mentioning that Wieluń was the first Polish town to be bombed at the start of the Second World War.

memory.[64] Some describe hearing loud alarms, explosions, and windows shattering.[65] Maciej Bąkowski, in Poznań, remembers scenes from the second or third day of the war where his youngest older sister had been gluing something to the windows so that they would not shatter in explosions; later he recalled seeing a column of German tanks driving through Poznań near their home.[66] Some described war crimes being committed, like Bronisław Murawski, who described witnessing planes blindly machine-gunning down civilians, something well-attested to in secondary source literature.[67] As he laid down in cover, he saw a farm building bombed, with several civilians killed, who were buried by locals that night.[68] It is clear that the sources experienced the war in various different ways, depending on their locations. Those in smaller remote villages might not have experienced the front passing at all, while those elsewhere witnessed war crimes against civilians firsthand.

Amidst the fears, uncertainty, and sadness, different primary sources describe tearful goodbyes, particularly with fathers joining the ranks of the army and fighting. Jan Korzybski describes his father, commandant of the police, returning to say goodbye with tears in his eyes, and leaving the eldest son as the man or protector of the house.[69] Some of the men who went actually had been turned back as there were too many volunteers

[64] Irena Sikorska, "wspomnienia," Poznańskie Archiwum Historii Mówionej, 2011, video, 39:06, https://historiamowiona.poznan.pl/relacje/irena-sikorska/.
[65] Stanisław Chmielewski, "Wysiedlenie".
[66] Maciej Bąkowski, "Gdy przyszli gestapowcy, ze strachu zwymiotowałem," Poznańskie Archiwum Historii Mówionej, 2018, video, 47:15, https://historiamowiona.poznan.pl/relacje/maciej-bakowski/
[67] Richard C. Lukas, The Forgotten Holocaust; The Poles Under German Occupation, 1939-1944 (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1990), 1.
[68] Bronisław Murawski, "Cywilny niewolnik," (memoir, (AW II/2151/p – IP/Arch/8/1.1/759), Koszalin, Poland, 1994).
[69] Jan Korzybski, "Wysiedlenia – wspólne doświadczenie narodów," (memoir, (AW II/2186/p – IP/Arch/8/1.1/535), Ciechanów, Poland, 1994).

relative to the available equipment.[70] Many families attempted to flee for a multitude of motivations. During the first few days, there was still an expectation for some that the Polish line would hold, which incentivized some to choose to flee to territory that would still be held by the Polish state.[71] Others simply chose to flee out of the sheer terror they had already experienced or heard about. Zbigniew Kowalski describes it so:

> A great fear gripped the people, when it turned out that Germans were rapidly flooding into our country. There were reports of how barbaric they were behaving wherever they entered, how they were bombing cities and villages. They even fired at people working in the fields from planes, and the local Germans, who had already been supplied weapons, were murdering Poles. […] We sat in great stress and fear until September 5, 1939. That day at dawn, together with my family and other neighbours, we ran away towards [the village of] Silna. There was a ferry there across the Vistula River to Ciechocinek, and from there [we went] towards Warszawa.[72]

Others still believed that the Germans might limit their territorial desires to Poznań or the Greater Poland region as a whole, regaining the land they controlled in the Partition Period, and fleeing east would allow families to remain in an independent Polish state.[73] Anna Muszyńska-Kobacka recalls that her parents, schoolteachers, as well as many in Poznań, had believed in this last way of thinking – something that she described in retrospect as "psychosis." With the belief that retreating east would allow them to stay in

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[70] Alfons Korzczoł, "Wysiedleńcy z Poznańskiego".
[71] Jan Kozak, "Wysiedlenie – wspólne doświadczenie narodów".
[72] Zbigniew Kowalski, "Wysiedlenie – wspólne doświadczenie," (memoir, (AW II/2291/p – IP/Arch/8/1.1/553), Toruń, Poland). "Wielki strach ogarnął ludzi, gdy się okazało że Niemcy w szybkim tempie zalewają nasz kraj. Dochodziły wieści w jak barbarzyński sposób zachowują się tam gdzie wkraczają, jak bombardują miasta i wioski. Z samolotów ostrzeliwali nawet ludzi pracujących na polach, a miejscowi Niemcy mający już broń mordowali Polaków. […] W naprężeniu i trwodze siedzieliśmy do 5 Września 1939 roku. Tegoż dnia o świcie uciekaliśmy wraz z rodziną i innymi sąsiadami w kierunku Silna. Tam była przeprawa przez Wisłę do Ciechocinka, a stamtąd w kierunku Warszawy."
[73] Anna Muszyńska-Kobacka, "Wsadzili nas do wagonu trzeciej klasy," Poznańskie Archiwum Historii Mówionej, 2006-2009, video, 34:10, https://historiamowiona.poznan.pl/relacje/anna-muszynska-kobacka/.

an independent Poland, her parents fled, but after a week or so they returned to Poznań, having realized there would be no way to escape the war.[74]

Many others would also flee but would be turned back by the German army. Marian Kretkowski describes such an experience. He and his father had fled by car east, hoping to cross into Romania, but due to a breakdown past Lublin near Chełm, they had to repair the car. He recalls him and his father tearfully witnessing Polish prisoners of war (POWs) being loaded onto a train. When another German column was passing, they and a third man had attempted to hide in hay out of fear of reprisals. Unfortunately, they were quickly found, and with rifles pointed at them, Marian's father showed the German soldiers the Iron Cross from his service in the First World War, which according to Marian, likely saved their lives. After receiving gasoline from the soldiers, they began the journey home, with Marian reflecting that this was the best case scenario, as by this time eastern Poland, including the Romanian border, had been under Soviet control and Marian and his father would likely be arrested and deported to Siberia had they attempted to cross so late.[75] Other fleeing groups did not make it as far, before being turned back by the German army.[76] Benigna Owczarczak remembers her father saying "if we are to die, may as well die at home."[77] This one quote seemingly perfectly sums up the mindset of Polish civilians at this time. With no agency left to them, and limited knowledge of what repressions the German occupation would bring, they returned to their homes, defeated.

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[74] Anna Muszyńska-Kobacka, "Wsadzili nas do wagonu trzeciej klasy"; "Jak wojna wybuchła, moi rodzice doszli do wniosku…podobno wtedy była taka psychoza, żeby uciekać z Poznania na wschód. Że może się Niemcy zadowolą zdobyciem Poznania, ewentualnie Wielkopolską, no bo to był dawny zabór pruski, więc jak się ucieknie na wschód to wojna nas ominie. I rodzice rzeczywiście wyjechali na wschód, no i w sumie tłukli się tylko pociągami, parę dni może tydzień i po tym tygodniu wrócili do Poznania."
[75] Marian Kretkowski, "We wkładki miałem wszyte złote marki," Poznańskie Archiwum Historii Mówionej, 2006-2009, video, 37:41, https://historiamowiona.poznan.pl/relacje/marian-kretkowski/
[76] Bronisław Murawski, "Cywilny niewolnik".
[77] Benigna Owczarczak, "Wy pójdziecie trzecim transportem," Poznańskie Archiwum Historii Mówionej, 2006-2009, video, 31:50, https://historiamowiona.poznan.pl/relacje/benigna-owczarczak/.

After a month of fighting, and after the Soviet army had entered eastern Poland, the Polish army surrendered, and a government-in-exile formed in France. For those left behind, the new occupation brought about new realities and repressions. Sakowski again describes this as a period of confusion for a dozen or so days before life stabilized.[78] There were physical changes, new street names, Nazi banners, a new administration, even crosses disappeared from the roads.[79] Alfons Korzczoł sets the scene, as he witnessed many of his neighbours, local Germans, congregating at the Sieraków town hall:

> There was a general commotion, shouting – *heil – heil – heil* and applause. [...] The military column stopped, and a shiny limousine entered the town square. It stopped, and then a general with white lapels on his uniform coat spoke to the gathered people.
>
> Aleksander heard as an elderly man standing next to him was translating the stranger's statements. He only remembered that the translator stated how the speaker was to say to the gathered people: "Now you will be lords, and the Poles will be your farmhands (servants/slaves)" - These words, as it was possible to later find out, were said by Greiser, the later leader of Greater Poland/Warthegau. Alexander again reported to his father everything he had seen and heard. Massive military columns passed through, and new local leaders arose. It was hard to believe that the fate of the city, its surroundings and the country could change so suddenly.
>
> Nobody believed (or wanted to believe) it would stay that way. It will change. This is only for now. There will be a war, they hoped. Meanwhile, Alexander did not see any war (battles) anymore (the front would not pass again for another six years).[80]

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[78] Kazimierz Sakowski, "Wspomnienia".
[79] Bronisław Murawski, "Cywilny niewolnik".
[80] Alfons Korzczoł, "Wysiedleńcy z Poznańskiego" "Nastąpiło ogólne poruszenie zerwały się okrzyki – heil – heil – heil i oklaski. […] Kolumna wojskowa zatrzymała się i na rynek wjechała lśniąca limuzyna. Zatrzymała się, po czym przemówił z niej do zebranych generał z białymi wyłogami na klapę płaszcza mundurowego.
Aleksander usłyszał jak obok niego stojący starszy pan tłumaczył wypowiedzi przybysza. Zapamiętał tylko, ów tłumacz orzekł, jakoby mówca miał powiedzieć do zebranych 'Teraz wy będziecie panami, a Polacy waszymi parobkami' – Te słowa jak się później dowiedzieć można było powiedział Greiser późniejszy wódz Wielkopolski/Warthegau.
Aleksander znów doniósł ojcu o wszystkim, co widział i co słyszał. Przeszły potężne kolumny wojskowe, powstali nowi miejscowi władcy. Aż się uwierzyć nie chciało, że tak nagle odmienić się mogą losy miasta, okolic, kraju

This quote, while long, encapsulates the words of many other primary sources. The rapid transition came as a shock to many, and the repeated quote from Greiser, puts into perspective the real changes the German occupation implemented, and the clear hierarchy that would be thrust upon the Poles. Alfons in particular denotes the many local Germans which joyfully welcomed the German army which would place many of them in charge. Alfons would later describe local Germans dancing around "like mad," donned in swastikas, and further acting rudely and elitist toward local Poles, showing how many small-town local ethnic Germans had bought into the Nazi vision.[81] Other primary sources, like nine-year-old Stanislaw Chmielewski in Poznań, described his surprise at the realization of how many Germans had been around, including many individuals he did not think had been German. Suddenly, he found his former friends and neighbours in *Hitlerjugend* uniforms, spying on the area.[82]

Iwona Ponikowska discusses the continued fear that was felt, and how Poles mostly only received rumors and partial information.[83] What was known was the new difference in legal status between Poles and Germans. There were limits on what Poles could buy; Benigna Owczarczak remembers one day when a "Polonized German" exclaimed that there was "no coal for Poles today" while the Germans had their own, better, inventory.[84] Aleksander Śmigielski laments at the lack of food due to rationing. He

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Nikt nie wierzył, że tak pozostanie. To się zmieni. To tylko na razie. Wojnę dopiero będzie – mówią. Tymczasem wojny Aleksander już nie widział."
It is important to note that "Aleksander" appears to be a code, or avatar, for the author, Alfons. This written memoir is the only one which appears to have been written in 1961, and, likely due to fears of Soviet censure, is written in third person as a narrative, but contains details only an eyewitness could have known.
[81] Alfons Korzczoł, "Wysiedleńcy z Poznańskiego".
[82] Stanisław Chmielewski, "Wysiedlenie".
[83] Iwona Ponikowska, "Poznaniacy wysiedleni do Generalnej Guberni – na Zamojszczyznę," (memoir, (AW II/2296/p – IP/Arch/8/1.1/869), Barwice, Poland).
[84] Benigna Owczarczak, "Wy pójdziecie trzecim transportem"; "Wy pójdziecie trzecim transportem".

describes how he would only receive five hundred grams of bread to eat for a week as a thirteen-year-old, and later a full kilogram after he turned fourteen. He describes how he could only receive up to one and a half kilograms *if* he "worked hard at his job," which is something he did also out of fear of being sent to Germany for forced labour. He explained how his family was lucky, as they had access to a farm, which provided them with potatoes and cow milk. Through this farm he attested that his family helped other Polish families and even a local German one.[85] The new realities can be summed up in a single line, which Jan Kozak's neighbour heard after she inquired why German soldiers were dismantling a fence on her property unannounced. The answer she received from the German official: "*according to the rules of national socialism, even the dress you're wearing is not your property.*"[86]

In terms of other repressions, Poles were not allowed to use modes of transportation, for example the train. Jan Kozak recalled how he first learned of this. He had been visiting family and friends but was caught by a German patrol. The Germans had rudely ordered him and all others to return home by the quickest route, as no travel was allowed, not even to see friends and family in nearby villages. As a result, he had to make a thirty-kilometer journey to Poznań on foot.[87] Many items were seized. Aleksander Śmigielski talks about how he was forced to give up even his kayaks to Germans, how he and other Poles were unable to walk in parks, and that there was a limited number of movies for Poles despite there being many available for Germans.[88] Murawski exclaims

[85] Aleksander Śmigielski, "Na Śrem zrzucili trzy bomby," Poznańskie Archiwum Historii Mówionej, video, 41:10, https://historiamowiona.poznan.pl/relacje/aleksander-smigielski/.
[86] Jan Kozak, "Wysiedlenie – wspólne doświadczenie narodów" "Według zasad narodowego socjalizmu, nawet suknia, którą ma na sobie nie jest jej własnością."
[87] Jan Kozak, "Wysiedlenie – wspólne doświadczenie narodów".
[88] Aleksander Śmigielski, "Na Śrem zrzucili trzy bomby".

that even before his family's forced displacement, a local German had taken over managing their orchard, and that another local German who's inn/restaurant had been destroyed by the German air force simply seized and moved into an equivalent business that was owned by a local Polish family, all immediately and without any compensation.[89] It is clear that the primary sources, despite informational deficits, knew or learned firsthand that they lacked any legal status or property rights. Furthermore, they easily suffered through physical abuse for trivial acts, such as for not taking their hat off as a sign of respect to Germans.[90] In most cases, taking sampling bias into account, most local Germans were verbally abusive to local Poles, often calling them *swine* or similar names. Any Poles who fought back were sentenced to forced labour or even the death penalty.[91] Śmigielski shares his hopelessness:

> We had to remove our hats for Germans in uniform […] take them off for policemen, for those in the SA […], and for the boys in the *Hitlerjugend*. If a Pole did not [take off their hat] then he was punched in the face, and if a Pole returned [the punch] to such a German, then he was sentenced to death and was beheaded in the prison on Młyńska street in Poznań.[92]

Śmigelski would then name the individual who suffered such a fate.

Apart from legal status or property rights, Poles were not afforded basic human dignity and were executed for comparatively minor infractions. The primary sources which do describe this time before the forced displacements reveal an understanding of the brutal repressions, and some show how remarkably well-informed they were. This

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[89] Bronisław Murawski, "Cywilny niewolnik".
[90] Jan Kozak, "Wysiedlenie – wspólne doświadczenie narodów".
[91] Alfons Korzczoł, "Wysiedleńcy z Poznańskiego".
[92] Aleksander Śmigielski, "Na Śrem zrzucili trzy bomby". "Niemcom w mundurach czapki trzeba było zdejmować, […] policjantom zdejmować, tym z SA […] i z chłopakami z Hitlerjugend. Jak Polak nie dał to dostał pięścią w twarz, jak Polak oddał takiemu Niemcowi to został skazany na śmierć i głowę mu obcięto w więzieniu przy ulicy Młyńskiej w Poznaniu."

begins to reveal the answer to what did individuals living through these difficult times actually know. The answer, based on the sources shown above is that information, while partial at first, and often only in the form of neighbourly rumors, passed sufficiently well that Poles knew of many of the dangers that they faced.

The repressions went far further than as described above. In the first months of the occupation, Germans had systematically rounded up members of the *Intelligentsia* caste for mass murder, and others they deemed enemies of the German nation. The authors of the primary sources both bear witness to and suffer these atrocities. Some make specific reference to, while none contradict, that Jewish Poles suffered the worst repressions. This, however, does not belittle the repressions that non-Jewish Poles suffered as well.[93] Jadwiga Cicha, eight years old at the time, recalls her father's arrest (he was a doctor). She recalls her mother visiting to feed him and bribing officials with laundry powder among other things to secure his release.[94] Her father's survival is unique among the primary sources, as so many other authors report losing family members, usually their fathers. Murawski talks about an older friend's arrest and execution, being kept secret by the Germans.[95] Kozak, discusses his neighbour, who was accused of killing more than the allowed number of pigs (a Pole needed to get special permission to kill even one) being taken and "*never seen again*."[96] This language is often used, for unless a subject of the primary source witnessed the execution, or learned from someone who did, they would legitimately not be sure of what the ultimate fate of these arrested individuals

[93] Kazimierz Roszak, "Wysiedlenie do Generalnej Guberni," (memoir, (AW II/2254/p – IP/Arch/8/1.1/911), Poznań, Poland, 1994).
[94] Jadwiga Cicha, "Przyjechaliśmy do Płochocina w wielki mróz," Poznańskie Archiwum Historii Mówionej, 2006-2008, video, 11:14, https://historiamowiona.poznan.pl/relacje/jadwiga-cicha/.
[95] Bronisław Murawski, "Cywilny niewolnik".
[96] Jan Kozak, "Wysiedlenie – wspólne doświadczenie narodów".

was. The subtext given is always the assumption of their execution, but this is a clear example of the sources not having full knowledge and openly admitting to it.

Apart from unwitnessed executions, many mass executions, or mass shootings were witnessed. Kozak laments seeing many mowed down by machine gun fire without trial.[97] Henryk Wachowski describes how his father was executed in 1939.[98] Śmigielski, again, describes witnessing the mass execution of participants of the Greater Polish Uprising.[99] He states that the German officials first asked if an individual fought for the German army in the First World War, whether they swore an oath to the Kaiser, and then whether they participated in the Uprising against the Kaiser – those who answered yes to the last question were sent to the left, while others were sent to the right – all those who participated were gunned down.[100] Maria Sobocka also describes how her father was lucky to only be taken for forced labour and released, as many others were executed in the town square. She describes them as mostly participants of the Greater Polish Uprising, but also the wealthiest (Polish) landowners.[101] Irena Sikorska was not so lucky – her father had been arrested and as she ran to the town square, she only heard a rifle salvo, and the last she saw was his, and many others', lifeless bodies being loaded onto a wagon. It was only by the person who delivered bread, who had seen her father before his death, that a letter written by Sikorska's father hours before execution was handed to the

[97] Jan Kozak, "Wysiedlenie – wspólne doświadczenie narodów".
[98] Henryk Wachowski, "Z wybuchem wojny zaczęła się makabra," Poznańskie Archiwum Historii Mówionej, 2010, video, 26:06, https://historiamowiona.poznan.pl/relacje/henryk-wachowski/.
[99] The Greater Polish Uprising, 1918-1919, or *Powstanie Wielkopolskie*, was the successful armed uprising of Poles against the Weimar Republic after the First World War that secured the cradle of the Polish nation to be re-integrated into the Polish Second Republic, following the regaining of Polish independence after 123 years.
[100] Aleksander Śmigielski, "Na Śrem zrzucili trzy bomby".
[101] Maria Sobocka, "Nikt nie spodziewał się przesiedlenia".

family. It was a short and heartfelt goodbye, with clear signs of a shaking hand from the script:

> Dearest and beloved wife, loving and beloved children,
> My final words, dear loving wife: take care of our dear, beloved children, for if I am to die, I die completely innocent. I have not done anything against any German. I do not know if we will receive a priest (for Last Rites). My dears, I conclude this letter of mine. I kiss and hug you very warmly.
> –Your Loving Daddy and Loving Husband, Tomasz Wachowski[102]

This quote alone, shows the value in allowing the primary sources to speak for themselves.

There are two primary sources, both Mieczysław Hejnowicz and Jan Bobkiewicz, who mutually confirm one another's accounts of the Gostyń town square mass execution.[103] The former is more descriptive, as he lost his father there. His father was a leader in the miller's union, a local politician, and a local leader in the "National Party." Hejnowicz describes him as hated by the local Germans, and that when he was arrested, German officials came specifically, calling him *der König Gostyngen* ("the King of Gostyń") referring to his local leadership. On the day of the execution, the Germans are said to have forced all residents aged sixteen or above to come to the town center, where they had built a wall of sandbags, with the German army surrounding the square. Hejnowicz claims that nobody was informed that executions would take place, that even the list of convicted crimes was likely read in private. There were forty prisoners in total,

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[102] Irena Sikorska, "Wspomnienia"; the full letter is shown in the video interview, the letter is dated to the day of the execution, and it was written an hour before his death, it reads:
"Ukochana droga żoneczko, kochające ukochane dzieci,
Ostateczne moje słowa kochająca droga żoneczko: staraj się o nasze drogie, kochane dzieci, bo jeśli ginę, to ginę zupełnie niewinnie. Żadnemu Niemcowi nic nie zrobiłem. Nie wiem, czy otrzymamy jeszcze księdza. Kończę kochani, ten mój list. Całuje Was bardzo serdecznie, ściskam.
-Kochający Wasz Tatuś i Kochający Twój Mąż, Tomasz Wachowski"

[103] Jan Bobkiewicz, "O szóstej rano zapukali do drzwi znajomi Niemcy," Poznańskie Archiwum Historii Mówionej, 2008, video, 20:30, https://historiamowiona.poznan.pl/relacje/jan-bobkiewicz/.

separated into groups of ten. Hejnowicz recalls the moment his father was executed in front of the crowd. The first ten were made to stand with their hands up and their backs to the German riflemen. The first volley sent shock and horror in the crowd, including the narrator's sister screaming in horror. Two more groups of ten were executed, while the last was spared for reasons unknown to Hejnowicz and Bobkiewicz. The execution and the loss of Hejnowicz's father caused tremendous pain, particularly to his mother. He discussed how there was great fear as to what would happen to the rest of their family next and a bitter need to prepare for whatever it may be. He described a faint hope that one tragedy – the execution of a father of eleven – to be "enough for the Germans," and so their family had not expected another tragedy – their later forced displacement to the GG – to occur.[104]

A brief discussion of how the local Germans are described is necessary, as they are presented in a mixed way by multiple primary sources. Tying to the quote from Greiser above, Jan Kozak makes a point of bringing up Greiser's order of forcible deportation of all Poles, noting that he grew up in what was Poland in the Interwar Period. The sense of betrayal for taking such actions against his neighbours, and those he grew up around is not hidden in Kozak's voice.[105] And while some individual local Germans are praised for helping, the overwhelming majority of those mentioned, are done so with a sense of betrayal.

Murawski, for example, talks about the numerous local farms owned by Germans. He makes a point to say that he has no memory of strains or conflict between Poles and

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[104] Mieczysław Hejnowicz, "Gostyń był zszokowany tym mordem," Poznańskie Archiwum Historii Mówionej, 2006-2009, video, 36:28, https://historiamowiona.poznan.pl/relacje/mieczyslaw-hejnowicz/
[105] Jan Kozak, "Wysiedlenie – wspólne doświadczenie narodów".

Germans, no boycotts of German farms, no nationalism from Poles, only fair competition; instead, that fear started only after Hitler's demands for Gdańsk.[106] Korzczoł talks about how, despite a hatred to the bondage his grandparents endured in the Partition period, the community still had a positive view of Germans, despite a fear of Hitler preparing for war.[107] Zbigniew Kowalski discusses the Polish community's feelings of betrayal by the majority of the German populace. He explains that they had their own schools, stores, large farms, that they were economically better off, they were welcome, they were friends. He talks about how this treatment was repaid with the brutality of the German occupation with massive arrests, beatings, and executions of Poles, as he discusses his witnessing of the beating to death of one Polish man by local Germans.[108] Czabański explicitly calls the local Germans, not just complicit, but active participants, benefactors, and instigators of Polish forced displacements.[109]

Before their swastika-ladened cheers and dances, Korzczoł describes Germans, especially the younger ones, beginning to act odd before the war, self-segregating to form their own group.[110] After, amidst the seizure of properties, individuals such as Kretkowski complains that local Germans had promised to "temporarily look after" items until the "end of the war." items which they never returned – for example a car which was meant to be stored for safe-keeping was instead used to flee to Germany at the end of the war.

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[106] Bronisław Murawski, "Cywilny niewolnik".
[107] Alfons Korzczoł, "Wysiedleńcy z Poznańskiego".
[108] Zbigniew Kowalski, "Wysiedlenie – wspólne doświadczenie".
[109] Stanisław Czabański, "Opowieść o Wysiedleniu," (memoir, (AW II/2123/p – IP/Arch/8/1.1/167), Żnin, Poland, 1993).
[110] Alfons Korzczoł, "Wysiedleńcy z Poznańskiego".

This raises questions of what different *Volksdeutsch* conceptions of an end of the war would be.[111]

Overall, there is a view of sheer betrayal on the part of Poles by the *Volksdeutsch* – Korzczoł had seen some of them as friends before the war but could no longer after its start. He does, however, make a point of mentioning that some of the individuals who signed up for the *Volkslista* (list of *Volksdeutsch*) did pass on information to the Poles in order to help them.[112] Kowalski, too, describes a local German helping his family and driving back home. This local German had claimed he was afraid of the other Germans as they had been armed with guns and murdered a Polish teacher.[113] This goes to show that there was a variety of relationships, even if the clear trend was overwhelmingly negative.

To conclude, the set of primary sources chart the transition from a peaceful life with their German neighbors, to a fear-filled life with the now untrustworthy and ruthless German perpetrators. A relationship dynamic that so quickly became radically different, from equals to a neo-feudal relationship between Lords and peasants or servants. The horror of the new order, the new slavery and institutionalised inequality, brutal punishments for small actions, and terror are all shown in the primary sources' own words. The destruction of the intelligentsia and punishment of so-called enemies of the German people is shown, fundamentally changing the lives of the survivors into a life of fear for survival. Amidst countless mass killings, arbitrary brutal punishments, property seizures, and a complete stripping of rights, the initial survivors knew what waited for them and their loved ones if they attempted to resist. This helps to explain why so many

[111] Marian Kretkowski, "We wkładki miałem wszyte złote marki".
[112] Alfons Korzczoł, "Wysiedleńcy z Poznańskiego".
[113] Zbigniew Kowalski, "Wysiedlenie – wspólne doświadczenie".

would follow the German eviction instructions, given at gunpoint. The terror of the occupation *is* the prelude to the forced displacements.

EVICTION

In analyzing how the evictions were described by the primary sources, a pattern emerges. An important fact about the primary sources is that they can be divided into two categories – those which describe the eviction and subsequent time in camps and in transportation in extreme detail – contrasted to those who give nearly no information on these topics at all. Crucial to this consideration is the trauma endured by the individuals, which allowed some to share more details, and made it impossible for others to share at all.

While the previous section was not described from the perspective of the forcibly displaced in the literature, this and the following two sections are well-documented in the secondary sources, mainly by Rutowska. She makes particular use of primary sources for her descriptions. This section will be compared to hers. Her description is virtually perfectly encapsulated in the following long quote from Dr Tadeusz Silnicki, a professor who at the time worked at the University of Poznań and was forcibly displaced himself. He describes the evictions from Poznań as so:

> The displacement method was as follows. 2-3 days in advance, a German agent would appear at the intended victim's apartment under any pretext. He confirmed the actual occupants in the candidate property for displacement, of course without letting the occupants know the purpose of his visit. The eviction unit, consisting of several fully armed soldiers and with an officer or non-commissioned officer, arrived late in the evening after curfew. The eviction frequently lasted no longer than fifteen minutes and often no considerations allowed for the extension of this short time. But even these fifteen minutes was not left for those facing eviction to get dressed and take the most necessary things, because a significant part of it was

taken up by confirming the identity of people, searching for money and valuables, and confiscating them.

The order to leave the apartment was given in writing, although this formality was not always followed. The order listed the people affected by the displacement and instructed them to take a blanket or quilt and dishes and eating utensils with them. Money was allowed to be taken at one hundred zlotys per person, and any excess was ordered to be surrendered under the threat of severe penalties in case of concealing or hiding money. As soon as the eviction patrol crossed the threshold of the house, the residents lost their personal freedom and ownership of all their property. The soldier walked step by step behind everyone. Every item that the displaced people wanted to take with them was vetted, they were allowed to take one thing and were told to leave another. Basically, they were allowed to take the most necessary personal items from the wardrobe, one suitcase per person. Sometimes it was possible to smuggle in more, but there were also cases where people were immediately driven out, just as they were standing, without being allowed to take anything. The constant urging to hurry, threats to use weapons, sometimes hitting with rifle butts, shouting *heraus* (out) and *los* (go) created an atmosphere of tension and terror, which made it difficult to maintain the presence of mind, so needed when it was necessary to prepare for a long exile and to provide supplies which would be impossible to obtain afterwards. The catastrophic atmosphere was further increased by the uncertainty of fate, especially at the beginning, among the first displaced persons, when the news about the (temporary transit) camp on Główna as a staging ground had not yet spread and when it was not known where the displaced victims were destined; and the eviction unit did not provide any information regarding this. Questions were answered with answers such as “you definitely won't come back here” or the ironic comment “take a look at your apartment, because you will never see it again.”[114]

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[114] Tadeusz Silnicki in Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty*, 74-75. “Technika wysiedlania była następująca. Na 2-3 dni naprzód pojawiał się w mieszkania upatrzonej ofiary agent niemiecki pod jakimkolwiek pozorem. Stwierdzał on faktyczny pobyt na miejscu kandydata na wysiedleńca, oczywiście nie dając mu wcale do poznania celu swej wizyty. Patrol wysiedlający, złożony z kilku żołnierzy w pełnym uzbrojeniu i z oficerem lub podoficerem przybywał późnym wieczorem po godzinie policyjnej. Wysiedlenie niejednokrotnie trwało nie dłużej niż 15 minut i często żadne względy nie wpływały na przedłużenie tego tak krótkiego czasu. Ale nawet i ten kwadrans nie był pozostawiony wysiedleńcom na ubranie się i zabranie najniezbędniejszych rzeczy, gdyż znaczną jego część zajmowało stwierdzenie tożsamości osób, poszukiwanie pieniędzy i walorów i ich konfiskata.
Rozkaz opiewający na opuszczenie mieszkania wręczano na piśmie, choć nie zawsze dopełniano tej formalności. W rozkazie wymienione były osoby dotknięte wysiedleniem i instrukcja, by zabrać ze sobą koc lub kołdrę i naczynie do jedzenia. Pieniędzy pozwalano zabrać po 100 złotych na głowę, resztę nakazano oddać pod zagrożeniem srogimi karami w razie zatajenia i ukrycia pieniędzy. Z chwilą gdy patrol wysiedlający przekroczył próg domu, mieszkańcy tracili wolność osobistą i własność całego swojego mienia. Żołnierz chodził krok w krok za każdym. Kontrolowano każdą rzecz, którą wysiedleńcy chcieli wziąć ze sobą, na jedno pozwalano, drugie kazano zostawić. Zasadniczo pozwalano wziąć najniezbędniejsze osobiste rzeczy z garderoby po jednej walizce na osobę. Niekiedy udawało się przemycić więcej, ale bywały też wypadki, że ludzi wypędzano momentalnie, tak jak stali, nie dając im możności zabrać cokolwiek. Ustawiczne przynaglanie do pośpiechu, groźby użycia broni, czasem uderzenie kolbami karabinów, krzyki “heraus” i “los” stwarzały atmosferę napięcia i terroru, której trudno było zachować

The primary sources fully line up with this account. The main contribution to the historiography of this section is an answer to the question – *did they know*? Did the forcibly displaced know ahead of time, were they prepared? The answer, of course, varies, but patterns can be drawn out of the available primary sources.

As alluded to in the quote from Rutowska, rumors had quickly begun to spread through cities like Poznań about forced displacements, specifically surrounding the establishment of the temporary transit camp. The general pattern from the primary sources appears to be that those from cities and towns, especially those taken in later rounds of forced displacements, were informed and prepared for their eviction – with baggage ready at the door each night, much to the annoyance of the evicting German soldiers.[115] On the contrary, many of those living in villages, for example Maria Sobocka, would say "nobody expected the forced displacement, nobody saw it coming."[116] Halina and Dorota Koszczyńskie simply say that the *Gestapowcy* came without warning on November 30.[117] Henryka Maciejewska also claims no prior knowledge, and that no rumors reached her family before her forced displacement on December 3rd 1939.[118] This is a stark contrast from Poznań native, Maciej Bąkowski, who said that his mother was

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przytomność umysłu, tak potrzebną, gdy należało się przygotować do dłuższego tułactwa i zaopatrzyć w rzeczy potem nie do zdobycia. Nastrój katastrofy powiększała jeszcze niepewność losu, zwłaszcza na początku, u pierwszych wysiedleńców, gdy nie rozeszła się jeszcze wiadomość o obozie na Głównej jako miejscu etapowym i gdy nie było wiadome, dokąd przeznaczone są ofiary wysiedleni; a patrol wysiedlający żadnych co do tego nie udzielał wiadomości. Na zapytania padały odpowiedzi w tym rodzaju 'tutaj już na pewno nie wrócicie lub ironiczna uwaga 'niech pan sobie oglądnie swe mieszkanie, bo go pan już nigdy nie zobaczy.'"

[115] Maria Pągowska, "Dwa razy nas brali z domu," Poznańskie Archiwum Historii Mówionej, 2006-2009, video, 39:45, https://historiamowiona.poznan.pl/relacje/maria-pagowska/.

[116] Maria Sobocka, "Nikt nie spodziewał się przesiedlenia".

[117] Halina i Dorota Koszczyńskie, "Gestapowcy pozwolili nam się pomodlić".

[118] Henryka Maciejewska, "W Jędrzejowie pierwszy raz zobaczyłam Żydów".

packed before the Germans came – "she knew they were coming, as did everyone"[119] Marta Gładyś is even more striking, showing unmistakably how most Poles in Poznań were packed and ready, having witnessed the German program: "Each evening, every Pole [in Poznań] shivered in terror, when the Germans would come, who the Germans would come for next, and where they would be taken."[120]

Those who were informed and prepared obtained their information in a variety of ways. For some, hints of deportation plans became apparent by the winter, with rumors spreading.[121] Others, especially those in later waves of forced displacement, were informed by friends and family. Władysław Szała discussed how his uncle, who had been forcibly displaced a year before, had written a letter to his family so that they would know what to expect.[122] Anna Muszyńska-Kobacka expressed how her parents, who were teachers, feared reprisals, and learned from many of their friends who were also teachers and were forcibly displaced before them that "teachers were to be eliminated by Germans," leading the family to be somewhat prepared.[123] Stanisław Janiec for a similar reason had parents who worriedly expected forced displacements due to his father taking part in the Greater Polish Uprising.[124] Jan Jankowski's father was the leader (*sołtys*) of their village, so he knew which families were going to be forcibly displaced ahead of time. Jankowski notes his father had told him that the Germans revealed their plans of

[119] Maciej Bąkowski, "Gdy przyszli gestapowcy, ze strachu zwymiotowałem".
[120] Marta Gładyś, "Kilka kawałków ziemniaka w litrze zupy," Poznańskie Archiwum Historii Mówionej, video, 37:28, https://historiamowiona.poznan.pl/relacje/marta-gladys/.
[121] Alfons Korzczoł, "Wysiedleńcy z Poznańskiego".
[122] Władysław Szała, "Niemcy dali nam odczuć, że są panami," Poznańskie Archiwum Historii Mówionej, 2006-2009, video, 32:10, https://historiamowiona.poznan.pl/relacje/wladyslaw-szala/.
[123] Anna Muszyńska-Kobacka, "Wsadzili nas do wagonu trzeciej klasy".
[124] Stanisław Janiec, "W nocy biegały po nas szczury," Poznańskie Archiwum Historii Mówionej, December 2018, video, 21:31, https://historiamowiona.poznan.pl/relacje/stanislaw-janiec/.

only displacing larger farmers "the good farmers, not those who did not have land," as smaller landholders were to be left for forced local labour.[125]

Other individuals received information from local Germans. A handful of primary sources reveal more about how this may have looked. Kazimierz Roszak describes that there were *przecieki* or "information leaks" from local German populations that good farmers and law-abiding citizens would be targeted and that they would be displaced "any day now."[126] Maria Pągowska claims that her family learned of their eviction from local Germans that her father was working for. These local Germans gave information to them that the Poles would be deported and even informed them on how to prepare and how and where to hide money in clothing.[127] Summing up the feeling of most Poles, Alfons Korzczoł writes about a general *disbelief in deportations* in the sense of not understanding how forced displacements could come to the "humble and unassuming inhabitants of this quiet provincial small town."[128]

Preparation took more forms than just being packed ahead of time. Multiple sources describe burying items in fields or gardens. Halina and Dorota Koszczyńskie report their family burying fine porcelain.[129] Henryk Kwiatkowski and Marian Fellman's fathers both had to hide diplomas and memorabilia, which were evidence of their participation in uprisings. For the Fellman family, local Germans participating in their

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[125] Jan Jankowski, "Żyliśmy z kartek z niemieckich koszar," Poznańskie Archiwum Historii Mówionej, 2006-2009, video, 14:16, https://historiamowiona.poznan.pl/relacje/jan-jankowski/.
[126] Kazimierz Roszak, "Wysiedlenie do Generalnej Guberni".
[127] Maria Pągowska, "Dwa razy nas brali z domu".
[128] Alfons Korzczoł; "skromnych i bezpretensjonalnych mieszkańców tego cichego miasteczka prowincjonalnego."
[129] Halina i Dorota Koszczyńskie, "Gestapowcy pozwolili nam się pomodlić," Poznańskie Archiwum Historii Mówionej, video, 10:05, https://historiamowiona.poznan.pl/relacje/halina-i-dorota-koszczynskie/.

eviction specifically noted their absence.[130] Jan Jankowski also describes his family burying many things, like firearms and coal, in various places on the farm, which were then recovered after the war.[131] It is clear that those individuals who had some knowledge and forewarning planned and prepared as best they could with what they had, making sure to avoid extra repercussions by hiding evidence of their participation in uprisings.

Different strategies were employed to keep valuables away from German hands. Zbigniew Kowalski describes being forewarned by a neighbour's family and being able to hide the best things – a bike, a watch – at the neighbours.[132] Władysław Szała describes the conundrum of keeping various items with neighbours for safekeeping – it was impossible, because based on what they saw at the time, anybody could be forcibly displaced.[133] Ewa Czarkowska writes that her family did not count on being displaced, but she assumes her family was among the first to be taken. She describes that even other families assumed hers would not be displaced, so neighbours who she described as refugees from the East left their most trusted family memorabilia for safekeeping, though luckily these were taken back just in time.[134] Maria Pągowska's describes a very similar situation.[135]

Polish civilians clearly had to adjust their tactics amidst informational deficits under the terror of the German occupation. One strategy was to sell off items quickly. Maria Pągowska, twenty-two at the time of displacement, describes the beginning of the

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[130] Marian Fellman, "Koc od sąsiadki był z nami całą wojnę," Poznańskie Archiwum Historii Mówionej, video, 43:16, https://historiamowiona.poznan.pl/relacje/marian-fellman/, Henryk Kwiatkowski, "Moje wojenne losy".
[131] Jan Jankowski, "Żyliśmy z kartek z niemieckich koszar".
[132] Zbigniew Kowalski, "Wysiedlenie – wspólne doświadczenie".
[133] Władysław Szała, "Niemcy dali nam odczuć, że są panami".
[134] Ewa Czarkowska, "W Radomsku przyjęli nas serdecznie".
[135] Maria Pągowska, "Dwa razy nas brali z domu".

war before their eviction as an opportunity to sell off things from the farm for money, using the logic that if they would not be displaced, then they would be fine with the rest of their property, but if they were displaced, then the money would be invaluable.[136] This is confirmed by Rutowska, who quotes a memoir where a Polish family rushed to sell or even donate items to neighbors, "*byle nie w ręce okupanta*," that is, "anywhere but into the occupier's hands."[137] This clearly shows the planning based off limited information that happened, and also implies that Polish civilians were not informed of the harsh rules to limit the amount of money that was allowed to be kept by the forcibly displaced.

Moving to the question of what was packed, Rutowska describes how few items could be taken, as per German orders, and a German would follow each family member in lockstep, ripping from Poles' hands anything not allowed, yelling and terrorizing at every step. Generally, a blanket, dishes, food for two weeks, and documents would be allowed, but these rules were not always followed.[138] Ewa Czarkowska describes her mother packing all sentimental things – albums with family pictures, book of stamps, Ewa's teddy bear and a book of religious devotions.[139] Ewa's mother had thought that all things like plates and cutlery would be possible to purchase but family memorabilia would be irreplaceable.[140] It is unfortunate that due to the horrific conditions of the transit camps, and the seizure of most valuables and money, that precisely plates, cutlery, and food became irreplaceable and invaluable. Marian Kretkowski adds that his mother had been prepared and so the fifteen minutes they received was sufficient and the food she

[136] Maria Pągowska, "Dwa razy nas brali z domu".
[137] Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty*, 86.
[138] Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty*, 73-91.
[139] This book and the teddy bear survived and were shown in the video.
[140] Ewa Czarkowska, "W Radomsku przyjęli nas serdecznie".

packed lasted several days.[141] Maciej Bąkowski also adds that his mother prepared dried bread ahead of time and clothing.[142] It should be highlighted that primary sources consistently praise their mothers for preparedness and packing.

In attempting to self-answer who was taken and why, some narrators, like Irena Sikorska bring up the word "*KongresPolen*" meaning those Poles who had lived in the "Congressional Kingdom of Poland"[143] and moved to the western provinces of Inter-war Poland after it regained independence.[144] Kazimierz Roszak, living in what is now a suburb of Poznań, more broadly speaks of German authorities (in this area starting in October 1940) targeting groups such as partakers in Uprisings, members of the intelligentsia, patriots, "or anyone the local German population did not like."[145] Andrzej Gładysz, whose father had received a higher university education, recalls being told that his family would then be "taken away" because they are "dangerous for the surrounding (area)"[146] Jan Kozak and Marta Gładyś conjecture that even connections to the German state or knowledge of the German language did not matter enough to save Poles (who did not sign the *Volkslista*). Jan Kozak's father had fought in the German army on the Western Front with distinction in the First World War, and yet was still displaced, as were others who worked in Germany and spoke the language too.[147] Gładyś also writes that she was born in and lived in Germany for many years due to her parents' work, even having to work with a tutor to improve her Polish, despite this, the German authorities

[141] Marian Kretkowski, "We wkładki miałem wszyte złote marki".
[142] Maciej Bąkowski, "Gdy przyszli gestapowcy, ze strachu zwymiotowałem".
[143] The Congressional Kingdom of Poland was a short-lived puppet state of the Russian Empire after the defeat of Napoleon, and later a general description of the land after the state lost its autonomy and was directly integrated.
[144] Irena Sikorska, "Wspomnienia".
[145] Kazimierz Roszak, "Wysiedlenie do Generalnej Guberni".
[146] Andrzej Gładysz, "Przeżywaliśmy każde przyjście 'Jędrusiów'," Poznańskie Archiwum Historii Mówionej, 2014, video, 19:31, https://historiamowiona.poznan.pl/relacje/andrzej-gladysz/
[147] Jan Kozak, "Wysiedlenie – wspólne doświadczenie narodów".

preferred to forcibly displace them.[148] This shows how racially motivated the forced displacements were.

Resistance to the evictions also took place, typically in the form of evading or escaping them. Benigna Owczarczak, for example claimed that she had heard from "around" that a *transport* was coming, and so, her brothers had not slept in the house for safety, as one was a veteran of the Polish army and had to report daily to the Gestapo.[149] Wanda Wojtkowiak was another example of this. Seventeen at the time, forewarned by local rumors, originating from local Germans, she stayed with extended family. An anomalous case, she was later allowed to rejoin her immediate family in the GG after communicating with them, was given a passport by German authorities, and even asked the German family living in her house for another duvet, a request which, surprisingly, was granted by them. Her video interview is one of few with a consistently relatively positive view of local Germans.[150] Rutherford notes from the German perspective, that Polish evasions were common enough to be a thorn in the German bureaucracies side, with a semi-organized resistance of Poles not being home, returning only for a few hours a day to tend to their livestock, something made possible according to Rutherford by the German bureaucracy being too obvious with their presence. The resistance precipitated a change in German tactics.[151] Rutowska describes the same issue from the Polish perspective. She describes the semi-organized resistance of Poles either making sure they are packed before the eviction teams arrived, or simply leaving their homes. She writes that the resistance was most successful in rural areas, where Poles could hide in

[148] Marta Gładyś, "Kilka kawałków ziemniaka w litrze zupy".
[149] Benigna Owczarczak, "Wy pójdziecie trzecim transportem".
[150] Wanda Wojtkowiak, "Na wsi zawsze wysiedlali w nocy," Poznańskie Archiwum Historii Mówionej, video, 29:57, https://historiamowiona.poznan.pl/relacje/wanda-wojtkowiak/
[151] Phillip T. Rutherford, *Prelude to the Final Solution,* 160.

neighbouring villages with friends or family, and that this resulted in the German bureaucracy being forced to dedicate more resources to find the Poles. This was possible either by being forewarned in time, or deciphering the markings placed on the properties by the German teams, although these markings are not mentioned by any of the memoirs, perhaps due to children not noticing them or due to the Germans learning to be less obvious in making them. Rutowska quotes the following memoir:

> My parents decided that we would not allow ourselves to be deported to the Generalgouvernement, especially since the war was to end soon – so we ought to be close to our home. In addition, we learned from nearby villages the brutal methods of forcible displacement, and the separation of older children from their parents to be transported to Germany for forced labor. So we decided to leave the farm ourselves before the eviction team arrived.[152]

The set of primary sources used for this MRP do not have more such answers due to sampling bias, that is, those who successfully evaded the evictions and wrote memoirs were not categorized to be in the same location.

Instead of hiding in other villages or neighborhoods beforehand, those who were not forewarned may have hidden themselves or ran as the eviction took place. This was the case for Teodor Stasiak's brother Czesław, twenty-one at the time, who was not home at the time of the eviction, saw from afar what was happening, and escaped to remain hidden for a portion of the war (not an easy task as the German bureaucracy had orders to surround the villages with as many as fifty uniformed police to prevent escapes);[153] similarly his youngest sister Eleonora was also not at the house and would be reunited

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[152] Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty*, 82-83; "Rodzice postanowili nie dać się wywieźć do Generalnej Guberni, tym bardziej że wojna miała się szybko skończyć – należało więc być blisko swego. Poza tym znane były z okolicznych wsi brutalne metody wysiedlenia oraz oddzielanie przy tej okazji starszych dzieci od rodziców i wywożenie ich do Niemiec na roboty przymusowe. Uradziliśmy więc, że przed przybyciem ekipy wysiedlającej opuścimy sami gospodarstwo."
[153] Phillip T. Rutherford, *Prelude to the Final Solution*, 145.

with the family only approximately a year later after a dangerous and illegal two hundred and fifty kilometer trek on foot across the border by her mother and her (her mother making the roundtrip to get her).[154] Bronisław Murawski describes a similar experience.[155]

Moving to a description of the evictions, secondary sources like Rutowska describe the lists the German authorities used for forcible displacements.[156] This is confirmed by Marian Fellman whose grandfather was in the house but not on this list, therefore he was not taken, but allowed to sleep at a neighbour's house.[157] Rutherford explains that older people were exempt from the deportation but not from the eviction, with constantly changing rules as to what constituted "incapable of travel."[158] On a similar note, Józef Szofer's family had been taking care of a disabled orphan they had taken in, who was allowed to stay, likely in a nearby house, by the German authorities. This was possible because he was not on the list, although could also be due to the inability of this individual to travel.[159] Finally, Teodor Stasiak and Kazimierz Roszak both describe a very similar situation, where their grandmothers were allowed to stay locally with other family.[160] Rutherford contrasts this, describing how the evictions were conducted clumsily at first, with even visiting guests being seized by mistake.[161]

In contrast, the primary sources also describe unlisted individuals allowed to be taken. Jan Bobkiewicz described how helpful his family's live-in housekeeper was,

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[154] Teodor Stasiak, *Wspomnienia lat 1940-1945*.
[155] Bronisław Murawski, "Cywilny niewolnik".
[156] Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty*, 72-3.
[157] Marian Fellman, "Koc od sąsiadki był z nami całą wojnę".
[158] Phillip T. Rutherford, *Prelude to the Final Solution*, 156-7.
[159] Józef Szofer, "Chcieli i mnie wywieźć z Żydami 'na mydło'," Poznańskie Archiwum Historii Mówionej, 2006-2009, video, 46:23, https://historiamowiona.poznan.pl/relacje/jozef-szofer/.
[160] Kazimierz Roszak, "Wysiedlenie do Generalnej Guberni", Teodor Stasiak, *Wspomnienia lat 1940-1945*.
[161] Phillip T. Rutherford, *Prelude to the Final Solution*, 77.

helping them pack amidst the intense stress and short amount of time. Despite the reluctance and initial refusal of the German authorities, upon the Bobkiewicz family's request, the housekeeper agreed and was allowed to go with the family.[162] Barbara Pazoła, similarly describes how her father, who must have been on the Germans' list, had been in the hospital, which prompted the grandfather to come in his stead, as well as a servant (*służąca*) who had been taken into forced labour to Germany in the Łódź camp.[163]

There appears to be a need for a "man of the family" in the evictions, as here a grandfather was taken (or perhaps simply allowed to go) with the family, while in the case of widowers, the eldest son would at times appear to be treated differently. This was the case for the Stasiak family, where the eldest son, Stefan, twenty-nine at the time, was of the age to be taken into forced labour, but was not taken, perhaps to ensure that there was an adult male. Without more information, it is impossible to know whether the German authorities implemented this as a system or passively allowed this mercy, or whether the couple of families do not constitute a pattern, but rather the exception to the rule. It is more likely that these two were the exceptions to the rule, as Andrzej Gładysz says how he noticed that many other families were also displaced at same time, according to him it was all the intelligentsia families, but also families without male head of the family (widows and families).[164]

As for typical evictions, they could be described in a number of ways. Some, like Zofia Janowska, only mention the date, and that it was amidst a terrible winter, perhaps not going into any further details to describe it from the pain the traumatic memory

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[162] Jan Bobkiewicz, "O szóstej rano zapukali do drzwi znajomi Niemcy".
[163] Barbara Pazoła, "Po zupę na końcu, żeby była gęsta," Poznańskie Archiwum Historii Mówionej, 2006-2009, video, 26:51, https://historiamowiona.poznan.pl/relacje/barbara-pazola/.
[164] Jan Korzybski, "Wysiedlenia – wspólne doświadczenie narodów".

would bring.[165] Henryk Wachowski, gives few details besides the date, likely due to not remembering as he was only four at the time of the eviction.[166] On the other hand, multiple primary sources, including Teodor Stasiak, describe the exact date and even time of the forced displacement, showing how "burned in" the traumatic memory was.[167]

Rural forced displacements were done as fast as possible, typically at night or the early morning, and unannounced, in order to frighten residents.[168] German gendarmes would come and take a precise inventory of all buildings, livestock, and tools.[169] The Polish family would then be given between fifteen to thirty minutes to pack.[170] Local transportation, usually a horsedrawn wagon would be waiting to take them to a local camp or gathering point.[171] The primary sources cited here also describe several families being taken at once. Rutowska adds how the *Volksdeutsche Kommission* (Commission of local *Volksdeutsch*) was employed to distinguish who was or was not German, and later surveys were handed out to them asking who else should be deported.[172] Urban forced displacements were similar, with buses or walking instead of horse-drawn wagons.

Not all evictions happened in the standard way. Some anomalies are attested to within the primary sources. Stanisław Czabański's case is unique because his family had owned multiple properties and had been "evicted" twice by local Germans. They initially

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[165] Zofia Janowska, "Na peron i na łaskę losu," Poznańskie Archiwum Historii Mówionej, 2006-2009, video, 23:19, https://historiamowiona.poznan.pl/relacje/zofia-janowska/.
[166] Henryk Wachowski, "Z wybuchem wojny zaczęła się makabra".
[167] Teodor Stasiak, *Wspomnienia lat 1940-1945*.
[168] Wanda Wojtkowiak, "Na wsi zawsze wysiedlali w nocy".
[169] Teodor Stasiak, *Wspomnienia lat 1940-1945*.
[170] Władysław Szała, "Niemcy dali nam odczuć, że są panami".
[171] Kazimierz Sakowski, "Wspomnienia".
[172] Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty*, 67-70.

moved with all their belongings down the street to a second smaller home, and the real *deportation* or forced displacement, came only a month later.[173]

Dobkiewicz remembers the eviction happening on an early December morning, the family was then taken by horse-drawn wagons to the train station in Międzychód (the gmina town) and then by train to Niepokalanów, near Warszawa. Her story is unique for two reasons. Firstly, she makes no mention of the temporary transit camps or searches but seems to have been sent directly to the GG, something which can be explained away by the fact that she spends very little time on this part of the war and simply does not describe this event as she overwhelmingly describes life in the GG instead. Alternatively, it is possible that the German authorities developed sufficient efficiency to not need to store exiles in temporary transit camps at times. The second unique aspect of her story is that her family was sent to Niepokalanów, to the monastery, where they were cared for by the monks for a time,[174] which is particularly important as it was the monastery home of Maksymilian Kolbe, a Catholic priest, and now canonized saint, who would be martyred in Auschwitz, after offering his life for a fellow prisoner.[175]

The brutality and tension are not missing from the sources' descriptions of the eviction. Irena Sikorska illustrates the look of fear in her mother's eyes as there was another bang on their door – "the last knock took her husband's life." The Germans were yelling *schnell, schnell* (quick, quick) at what appeared to her as the top of their lungs.[176] Barbara Pazoła, less than seven years old, describes as her first memory the

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[173] Stanisław Czabański, "Opowieść o Wysiedleniu".
[174] Sabina Dobkiewicz, "Niemcy potrafili wieszać ludzi nad torami," Poznańskie Archiwum Historii Mówionej, video, 21:22, https://historiamowiona.poznan.pl/relacje/sabina-dobkiewicz/
[175] Desmond Forristal, "Maximilian Kolbe," The Furrow 28, no. 10 (1977): 627–41, http://www.jstor.org/stable/27660445, 627.
[176] Irena Sikorska, "Wspomnienia".

uncontrollable shaking of her teeth as the Germans banged on the door, yelling "*raus, raus*!" (out, out!)[177] The four-year-old Maciej Bąkowski recalls stepping outside to be greeted by a Gestapo agent, causing the boy to throw up as a result of his fear and stress.[178] The Germans are described as walking after each family member closely.[179]

Most of the evictions were terrifying and difficult, but some were more chaotic than others. Henryk Kwiatkowski describes SS-men adding confusion as, at first, they claimed that only the father of the family was to be taken and only later did they clarify that the whole family was to be forcibly displaced, causing fifteen minutes of rapid re-packing.[180] Stanisław Janiec is another example, having been one of the earlier evictions in Poznań. His father had thought the Germans were going to forcibly displace other families in the apartment building, and since he spoke excellent German, he went to try to translate and help these families. He was quickly corrected, as he was given the papers ordering his family's displacement. The family had been mostly packed before, however, due to a two-week lull in forcible displacements. the family was not prepared. Due to the stress of the moment, the family "lost control of themselves" and only frantically packed what they could, not all that they needed. This is a perfect example of families who were prepared and forewarned, but simultaneously not ready. The family was thrown out very quickly, but there was so much pressure that the parents almost forgot their three-year-old daughter in a stroller. It was only the German authorities which reminded them.[181] This well demonstrates the sheer terror and stress families were deliberately placed under.

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[177] Barbara Pazoła, "Po zupę na końcu, żeby była gęsta".
[178] Maciej Bąkowski, "Gdy przyszli gestapowcy, ze strachu zwymiotowałem".
[179] Benigna Owczarczak, "Wy pójdziecie trzecim transportem".
[180] Henryk Kwiatkowski, "Moje wojenne losy".
[181] Stanisław Janiec, "W nocy biegały po nas szczury".

Mieczysław Hejnowicz has a different story through which chaos showed opportunity to save someone from the forcible displacements. Hejnowicz says that his cousin from next door came in and "kidnapped" his youngest brother (who was one years old) to live next door. Mieczysław's uncle likely saw what was happening and did not know if the family was to be executed so, in the chaos, he had his daughter sneak in through the back to take the infant boy.[182]

Andrzej Gładysz describes his mother as very nervous, frenziedly packing two suitcases, not knowing what to pack for the cool October temperature. When she finished, the Gestapo officer Fischer threw everything out – seeing that money fell out as well, he pocketed it himself. In Andrzej's father's memoir, he writes that the German was not serving his nation but being a common robber.[183] This type of corruption was confirmed by multiple primary sources. Maria Pągowska also claims that a German had even forced each person to pay for the bus that came to pick them, justifying himself by saying that he could have come for them in a "manure wagon" so the Poles should be happy to pay extra for the bus.[184] Maria Sobocka provides an example instead of a member of the SS exploiting Poles more than even the German bureaucracy allowed. The SS-man without explanation claimed the family would return from the transit camp in three days, and that they should give all their valuables, like jewelry and money, to him for "safe-keeping," as the camp would strip them from everything. Needless to say, they were not allowed to return home, and did not get these valuables back.[185]

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[182] Mieczysław Hejnowicz, "Gostyń był zszokowany tym mordem".
[183] Andrzej Gładysz, "Przeżywaliśmy każde przyjście 'Jędrusiów'".
[184] Maria Pągowska, "Dwa razy nas brali z domu".
[185] Maria Sobocka, "Nikt nie spodziewał się przesiedlenia".

Multiple sources describe the complicity of local Germans in the eviction process. Iwona Ponikowska describes the eviction being conducted by a local German who had been friendly to Poles before the war, but whose demeanor radically changed after the war began. He had knocked on the door with four others. The family was told it had thirty minutes to pack, with slightly more time given "due to great aunt's behavior." With tears in everyone's eyes, everyone calmly packed necessities.[186] Jan Bobkiewicz, too, remembers that his mother recognized the two "civilian dressed" Germans who came with the uniformed gendarme. She had gone to (German) school with them, but they acted like they did not know her. At the end of the interview, Bobkiewicz would say that for him, this was the worst memory of the entire war – how so many families were taken, and how local Germans treated them so poorly. The experience of having everything taken from them, being given "ten minutes to pack," and "not knowing what to do" was traumatic enough, but the betrayal of locals – classmates – friends – particularly stung and stayed in their memory for so many decades.[187] On this subject, Alfons Korzczoł is once again vocal about how local Germans, who had been "allowed to live in peace and good conditions for so many years," now were so brutally throwing Poles, their neighbours, out of their homes aggressively. He describes how three local Germans, armed with rifles, broke into his home – swastikas on their shoulders – aggressively yelling at a mother with two young children.[188] To complicate the subject of complicity, Jan Nowowiejski reports the opposite. As opposed to sadistic local Germans having their way with Polish civilians, six-year-old Jan remembers one German (of three) in civilian

[186] Iwona Ponikowska, "Poznaniacy wysiedleni do Generalnej Guberni – na Zamojszczyznę".
[187] Jan Bobkiewicz, "O szóstej rano zapukali do drzwi znajomi Niemcy".
[188] Alfons Korzczoł, "Wysiedleńcy z Poznańskiego".

clothing speaking in Polish and being very apologetic – claiming that if he did not evict the Polish family, then he would be forcibly displaced himself.[189]

Once removed from their homes, the Poles were transported either by bus, horse-drawn wagon, or on foot to either a train station or a temporary transit camp. Halina and Dorota Koszczyńskie describe the journey to the temporary transit camp as difficult, as at various stops, people were "fulfilling their physiological functions all beside one another" because there was no other option. Some local people would give them food or allow them to wash their hands – something that the Gestapo was said to not be happy about. Poles were placed in difficult situations.[190] Alfons Korzczoł also describes patriotic songs being sung while Poles were moved altogether in a group. He describes his growing hatred of the lawless violence inflicted on his innocent mother. Alfons paints the scene of his family as well as evicted neighbours escorted by Germans through town. A dozen or so horse-drawn wagons to take crying mothers and children, while angry fathers walk alongside. Alfons notes that the conscience of local Germans remained unmoved, but that patriotic Poles sang anthems throughout.[191]

An important narrative thread strung through multiple primary sources is the importance of religion and patriotism in maintaining the spirits of the forcibly displaced Poles. Amidst the terror they experienced, it appeared impossible not to fall into despair. Religion and patriotism were prime reasons that the Poles could stay strong. Halina and Dorota Koszczyńskie, for example, make specific note that the last thing they did before being forced out of their home, despite the very little time that they were given, was

[189] Jan Nowowiejski, "Po mojego ojca przyjechało gestapo"; "Po mojego ojca przyjechało gestapo".
[190] Halina i Dorota Koszczyńskie, "Gestapowcy pozwolili nam się pomodlić".
[191] Alfons Korzczoł, "Wysiedleńcy z Poznańskiego".

praying in front of a picture of Mary (the Mother of God). They make specific note that the Gestapo allowed the prayer, likely as an exception.[192] Amidst the terror inflicted, and the loss of all of their possessions, prayer gave them peace and strength. One particular narrative thread begins with the father of one of the primary source subjects. Jan Nowowiejski's father was Feliks Nowowiejski – a famous composer, organist, and musician. Forced into hiding by the Gestapo for writing the patriotic song *Rota*, Feliks would eventually escape Poznań to Kraków and live under an assumed name.[193] Thirty-eight kilometers south of Poznań, this very same patriotic song would be sung by Wojciech Borowiak and all those around him as the forcibly displaced were led to train wagons. The lyrics would inspire them to resist, would remind them of previous loss of independence, and would finally remind them to rely on God. Wojciech Borowiak describes that the song was sung "so loudly that the whole train was shaking." Apart from this song, the prayer/song "Serdeczna Matko" (Dear Mother) would also be sung.[194] Iwona Ponikowska also describes this song being sung.[195] The Polish lyrics of the hymn evoke imagery of crying orphans asking Mother Mary for mercy, the key line is "have mercy, have mercy, let us not be in exile" ("Zlituj się, zlituj, niech się nie tułamy"), which takes on new meaning in the context of those forced from their homes. Iwona Ponikowska specifically points out the new identity the displaced took on through this song, that of self-described exiles, *wygnańce,* an identity which will be explored more deeply later. "Slowly sinking in that there was no return to patrimony, only wandering

[192] Halina i Dorota Koszczyńskie, "Gestapowcy pozwolili nam się pomodlić".
[193] Jan Nowowiejski, "Po mojego ojca przyjechało gestapo"; it is in Krakow that the Nowowiejski family would cross paths with Karol Wojtyła, now known as Saint Pope John Paul II, the second explicit connection to a Catholic Saint of this set of primary sources.
[194] Wojciech Borowiak, "Wspomnienia".
[195] Iwona Ponikowska, "Poznaniacy wysiedleni do Generalnej Guberni – na Zamojszczyznę".

into exile, into the unknown, with an unknown fate."[196] Nowhere is this new identity more clearly and explicitly self-described.

Within the sources, there is the repeating theme of the *nieznane* or the *unknown*. This theme will be significantly more apparent in the next two sections, but already begins to be mentioned here. Bronisław Murawski ends his description of the eviction by describing the gathering of many local forcibly displaced families outside, "nobody knew where or when they would go."[197] Jan Korzybski adds to the scene, depicting a tearful goodbye to the warm home as well as to everything his parents had worked for their whole lives. A goodbye filled with Germans yelling *schnell, schneller,* (quick, quicker) the barking of dogs, bright light from lanterns, and fear. Fear. Poles being made to go into the cold, dark, muddy night, not knowing the destination.[198]

As attested to by Rutherford, the German bureaucracy took care to not allow re-settled Germans to see the evicted Poles.[199] The reasoning must have been to not cause unease or even guilt in the new homes and possessions of these ethnic German settlers. An example of this was Jan Jankowski, who was loaded onto a horse-drawn wagon with his family and taken to the next village two kilometers over, into a temporary camp created in a school. This was only temporary "storage" so that the resettled Germans (from the East, likely from the Black Sea) could come in by bus and then by the same horse-drawn wagon to their new homes. The homes that the hidden Poles had just had taken from them. After this, the displaced Poles were taken by the same buses and driven

[196] Iwona Ponikowska, "Poznaniacy wysiedleni do Generalnej Guberni – na Zamojszczyznę".
[197] Bronisław Murawski, "Cywilny niewolnik".
[198] Jan Korzybski, "Wysiedlenia – wspólne doświadczenie narodów".
[199] Phillip T. Rutherford, *Prelude to the Final Solution*, 136.

to Łódź to the resettlement camp.[200] Nevertheless, mistakes did occur, where resettled Germans from across East Central Europe saw and were seen by the evicted Polish civilians. Wanda Wojtkowiak for example, notes how she learned of the "difference" between local Polish-speaking Germans as opposed to those settled from afar. She calls the ethnic Germans settled from around the Black Sea a "different kind of people," something she learned from neighbours who had been forced to work for the Germans.[201] Barbara Pazoła notes with clear bitterness and sadness how two German families were moved into her duplex, receiving all the provisions they could need, while the Polish family was forced into "exile with nothing."[202] Later on, Stanisław Czabański would, just before he would be loaded onto it, similarly describe seeing an oncoming train with Germans set to take over Polish properties and farms. He would first use the phrase "German families from Baltic countries" ("niemieckie rodziny z krajów nadbałtyckich") in a descriptive paragraph, followed by a more poetic and emotional paragraph, where he would use the phrase "hated Balts (derogatory)" ("znienawidzonych 'Baltusów'").[203] Jan Kozak would use the word *Baldoki* in the same spirit.[204] With emotionally charged language, it's expected that the individuals who were to take everything from the authors would be referred to in this way. What is interesting is how rare these descriptions are, as they are few and far between.

In conclusion, as Silnicki wrote, at the moment of the start of the eviction the forcibly displaced Poles "lost their personal freedom and ownership of all their

[200] Jan Jankowski, "Żyliśmy z kartek z niemieckich koszar".
[201] Wanda Wojtkowiak, "Na wsi zawsze wysiedlali w nocy".
[202] Barbara Pazoła, "Po zupę na końcu, żeby była gęsta".
[203] Stanisław Czabański, "Opowieść o Wysiedleniu".
[204] Jan Kozak, "Wysiedlenie – wspólne doświadczenie narodów".

property".[205] It can be seen that Poles in urban areas were generally better informed than their rural counterparts. I have also shown how a closer look at the primary sources reveals that the Poles typically learned of the forced displacements from witnessing them, rumors, friends and family, or even from local Germans. Further, it is possible to learn what was packed as well as what different strategies were employed to prepare for or evade the forced displacements. Above all, the primary sources reveal the rationale for some of their actions taken in preparation, and show the reactions, feelings, and general understanding of the forcible displacements. Many other minor questions are answered to better witness the events from their perspective. It is possible to see how the evictions took place in more remote villages and in different towns, in more variety than previous works. The sources do not hold back on the sheer terror and fear that was inflicted, in addition to revealing basic information such as the timing of the evictions. It is worth noting that none of the primary sources discuss German officials marking and choosing the properties ahead of time, as the secondary sources describe, however, this could be explained either by the stealthiness of the Germans or by the younger age of the primary sources, as children simply did not know this information. Finally, the primary sources reveal a complex understanding of the complicity of local Germans, and describe the theme of going into the unknown, armed with a diminishing number of personal possessions and the hope of their religion and faith.

TEMPORARY TRANSIT CAMPS

Of the secondary sources, Rutowska dedicates the most attention to the system of transit camps, which the forcibly displaced Poles were sent to. She thoroughly and with

[205] Tadeusz Silnicki in Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty*, 74-75.

long quotations from memoirs describes the brutal and humiliating searches/inspections Poles had to go through, including the confiscation of nearly all belongings, especially anything of value, but also racial screenings.[206] Great detail is given to the lack of basic living conditions, including adequate food (there were two to three meals a day: soup, coffee, and bread – precise amounts were not given but they were clearly starvation rations),[207] adequate heating in winter (the damaged, uninsulated buildings which the camps were in were only given small heaters but there was never enough fuel given to warm the large rooms, many people became sick and there were high death rates in camps),[208] sanitation (there typically were no showers and only a common toilet for dozens of people),[209] sleeping conditions (every camp was only given piles of straw for Poles to sleep on, which were rarely changed and constantly infested with insects, which further lead to disease),[210] inadequate medical care (hospital care was rare, the few doctors were typically those forcibly displaced and they did not have any medication or equipment to use),[211] and brutal treatment (there are many descriptions of beatings and strict discipline on even young children or older individuals).[212] Rutherford's descriptions of the camps focus on documentation from the German bureaucracy, which fails to portray the true horror of the living conditions.

Much like the preceding section dealing with the eviction, the set of primary sources describe the camps in varying detail. A quarter of primary sources make no

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[206] Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty,* 73-79, 117-9, 125, 142, 156, 165, 206-8, 213.
[207] Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty,* 128-9, 153, 175.
[208] Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty,* 123, 132-5.
[209] Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty,* 96, 206.
[210] Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty,* 132-5, 174-5, 206.
[211] Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty,* 174.
[212] Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty,* 125.

mention of the camps, perhaps because some may have been transported directly to the GG in some rare cases, but more than likely the silence is because the narrators wished to focus on different aspects of their experiences or because they repressed the sheer trauma they faced. This could also explain the second quarter of primary sources who spend only a few seconds or lines describing them, not getting into any real detail. The other half of sources describe the camps in much greater detail. Many recount the most traumatic scenes, while others describe humiliating strip searches, the inadequate food that was given, the unsanitary and unsafe conditions, and daily life in general, as well as the physical attributes of the camp such as its buildings and guards. The accounts largely confirm Rutowska's findings, whereas the marked difference is that the set of sources used for this MRP shows the experience through the eyes of children who were not spared any terror. Rutowska's sources, being adults at the time, describe the camps in a more logistical way, with particular attention to how Poles organized themselves into committees to negotiate conditions and advocate for the weakest and most ill among themselves.[213] This MRP instead will give a voice to the children and share their perspective – sometimes limited in understanding, but always valuable, and in many ways offering unique insights not discussed elsewhere.

There were multiple different camps that one would be sent to, depending on where they were displaced from and the date. For example, the main transit camp in Poznań (called *Lager Glowna*) was operational from November 1939 to May 1940, and virtually all Poznań residents as well as many from surrounding towns and villages would be sent there during that time period. This camp is the main focus of Rutowska's book.

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[213] Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty*, 107-112.

After May 1940, the majority of the forcibly displaced would be sent to the main (network of) transit camp in Łódź (*Centrala Przesiedleńcza w Łodzi – Umwandererzentralstelle, Dienstestelle – Litzmannstadt*). Before this, there were also many temporary transit camps set up in or near various towns across the areas annexed directly into the German Reich. Rutowska describes a number of these, including: *Cerekwica* near *Jarocin*, *Dobrzyca* near *Krotoszyn*, *Gniezno*, *Kowanówko and Bąblin* near *Oborniki*, *Młyniewo* near *Grodzisk Wielkopolski*, and *Nowe Skalmerzyce* near *Ostrów Wielkopolski*.[214]

The collection of primary sources used in this MRP describes several but not all of these camps, while also describing temporary transit camps not described in Rutowska's book, usually the smallest temporary holding points, which Rutowska urges more research to be conducted to explore. At times source authors are specific with where they were sent, or it is otherwise obvious by their stating that they were in "the camp in Poznań" or were sent to Łódź. Other times, only the town name is given, and the temporary transit camp they were sent to can only be extrapolated. There were some subtle differences in how each individual described their experiences in the camps, but most of the accounts fully line up with one another and against the secondary sources. While regardless of camp, much of the experience was the same, this MRP will attempt to describe each camp individually, while also describing the general temporary transit camp. The main contribution to the historiography of this section is in giving individuals a voice to speak in their own words.

[214] Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty,* 163-194.

Stanisław Janiec summarizes by entitling his video interview “W nocy biegały po nas szczury” – meaning “At night, rats ran all over us.” The spirit of the transit camps is encapsulated by Teodor Stasiak:

> It was very difficult. Hunger, freezing, filthiness, and insect infestations. At night, we were often called to musters. We had to compose ourselves quickly from sleep and go into the courtyard. There, outside, we were made to stand [at attention], often in the pouring rain. We had to follow every order quickly, and if anyone did not make it in time, they were beaten and abused. It was most difficult for mothers with small children.[215]

The camps were a question of survival.

Typically, the first thing that greeted the new arrivals at camps was a harsh and humiliating strip searches for any valuables not taken during the eviction stage. Money and jewellery were to be handed over and people were often beaten for not complying or simply for no reason at all.[216] Curiously, the memoirs and video interviews of those sent to the Poznań camp alone do not describe this part of their experience, yet it is attested to in Rutowska’s book as the first action that greeted newcomers, paired with sporadic beatings, where one memoir reveals that a man was beaten and died of his wounds eight days later.[217]

Stanisław Czabański starts with how all new forcibly displaced Poles had to strip for a “humiliating” and “freezing” shower. Their clothes, supposedly disinfected, were difficult to locate from the pile after the shower. Made to walk several kilometers to another camp, the forcibly displaced were inspected by local Łódź German men and

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[215] Teodor Stasiak, *Wspomnienia lat 1940-1945*: “Było bardzo ciężko. Głód, zimno, brud i robactwo. W nocy często wzywano nas na apele. Trzeba się było szybko zebrać ze spania i na podwórko. Tam na dworze trzeba było stać często w deszczu. Należało wszystko wykonywać bardzo szybko, a jeśliby ktoś nie zdążył to go bito i poniewierano. Najtrudniej było matkom z małymi dziećmi.”
[216] Teodor Stasiak, *Wspomnienia lat 1940-1945*.
[217] Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty,* 118, 125.

women. He writes that this interview was conducted in Polish, by German interviewers with whips in hand. What followed was a brutal inspection with clothes being ripped up, loaves of bread cut open – all to locate any hidden cash or valuables.[218] Despite the fear of beatings and harsher consequences, Czabański and Iwona Ponikowska witness,[219] while Kazimierz Roszak and Marian Kretkowski successfully get money passed the German guards.[220] Others were not willing to risk hiding money, opting to burning it instead before the searches, embodying the "anywhere but into the occupier's hands" motto.[221] Kazimierz Roszak describes the speed and brutality of the strip-searching Germans, throwing out the insides of luggage, bags, and unexpectedly, food, showing how clearly experienced and thorough the German bureaucrats were in their searches. Everyone witnessed multiple beatings with "bamboo rods," where not even children were spared. He describes the permanent mark this event left on him in his life, after he was "dying of fear while a German woman was searching his belt" – where he had money hidden.[222] Kazimierz Sakowski focuses on how families were separated for the initial strip searches to be reunited after, and how these separations and humiliations repeated. In his own words, it was "difficult to describe the sheer sadness and screams and cries in the confusion."[223]

[218] Stanisław Czabański, "Opowieść o Wysiedleniu".
[219] Stanisław Czabański, "Opowieść o Wysiedleniu", Iwona Ponikowska, "Poznaniacy wysiedleni do Generalnej Guberni – na Zamojszczyznę".
[220] Kazimierz Roszak, "Wysiedlenie do Generalnej Guberni", Marian Kretkowski, "We wkładki miałem wszyte złote marki".
[221] Benigna Owczarczak, "Wy pójdziecie trzecim transportem", Maria Rutowska, Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty, 86.
[222] Kazimierz Roszak, "Wysiedlenie do Generalnej Guberni".
[223] Kazimierz Sakowski, "Wspomnienia".

In Gniezno, Maria Pągowska writes only that the Germans allowed no more than twenty marks each.[224] Marian Kretkowski speaks about how during the search, his backpack was ripped of by a German yelling (in German) that "the boy would not need books where he was going." His mother tried to defend the nine-year-old, but was "hit so hard she fell over," causing the nine-year-old to cry. The backpack also had hidden money, sewn into his shoe because the family had assumed that children would not be inspected so thoroughly.[225] In Cerekwica, Maria Sobocka describes how SS-men took everything of value, apart from one knife being left per family. She then adds that men and women were separated to different floors, with two SS-women searching the Polish women and their luggage.[226] In the *non-Wartheland* camp Durchlager Soldau in Działdowie, Jan Korzybski writes how the German authorities demanded the Poles give up all valuables, under the death penalty. His mother gave over her gold ring, but his sister's watch was hidden and saved.[227]

Just after the searches, there would be a separation of those who would be taken for forced labour. As far as primary and secondary sources relay, this only happened in the Łódź camps, not in the various smaller temporary transit camps or in Poznań. For those taken for forced labour, this was their whole experience, while for those taken to the GG, who suffered many more experiences later in the war, this separation was only one moment among many. This may explain why this is mostly glossed over. Kazimierz Sakowski, for example, only mentions that the Germans were looking for healthy young

[224] Maria Pągowska, "Dwa razy nas brali z domu".
[225] Marian Kretkowski, "We wkładki miałem wszyte złote marki".
[226] Maria Sobocka, "Nikt nie spodziewał się przesiedlenia".
[227] Jan Korzybski, "Wysiedlenia – wspólne doświadczenie narodów".

people for forced labour,[228] Maria Binkowska-Skoczek mentions that her older sister taken to forced labour in Germany after they had arrived in the Łódź camp.[229] The same is true for Teodor Stasiak who writes how his sister Bronisława was taken to Germany for forced labour.[230] Stanisław Czabański also writes that after the searches, all boys and girls above the age of fourteen were taken, including his brother who worked for the whole war in Germany.[231] Wanda Wojtkowiak, although not taken to the camp, relates what she heard from the family story: that her brother was taken to forced labour in Germany despite having asthma.[232] Bronisław Murawski describes this part more, as he was taken to forced labour, and is the only primary source with this characteristic. He describes it as the separation of families, where the author was taken one way and the rest of the family in the other. He emotionally relates how he never saw his siblings again, as they did not survive the war. He laments on how he was not allowed to say goodbye, not knowing it would be the last time he would ever see them.[233] There is a clear and inseparable connection between the forced displacements and forced labor in the Reich in the secondary sources.[234]

During the separation of those taken for forced labour in Germany there was also a search for the racially valuable, or in other words, children suitable for germanization. Children would be separated from their parents and pseudoscientific tests such as

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[228] Kazimierz Sakowski, “Wspomnienia”.
[229] Maria Binkowska-Skoczek, “W mieszkaniu został duży majątek,” Poznańskie Archiwum Historii Mówionej, 2006-2008, video, 35:36, https://historiamowiona.poznan.pl/relacje/maria-binkowska-skoczek/
[230] Teodor Stasiak, *Wspomnienia lat 1940-1945*.
[231] Stanisław Czabański, “Opowieść o Wysiedleniu”.
[232] Wanda Wojtkowiak, “Na wsi zawsze wysiedlali w nocy”.
[233] Bronisław Murawski, “Cywilny niewolnik”.
[234] Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty*, 9-10.

measuring their skulls would take place.[235] Around forty-five thousand Polish children were taken for germanization or rejected and sent to concentration camps.[236] The primary sources do not describe this much, as they did not fall victim to this. In the Łódź camp, Kazimierz Sakowski describes only that there was a separation of families again and that "allegedly, not everyone could find their kids, and I do not know what happened to them."[237] This is another good example of the honesty of the sources, who do not try to fill in the blanks on their experiences with knowledge they would learn after the war, and instead choosing to relay only what they saw and heard. Marian Kretkowski, in the camp near Gniezno also honestly relates that he has no memory of children being taken for germanization, although admits that him not eye-witnessing it does not mean that it did not happen.[238] None of the other sources have anything to say on the subject.

More broadly, in analyzing the imperfections of sources, and their self-correction, it is noted that Władysław Szała first notes that he was forcibly displaced on September 1, 1942, "exactly two years after the start of the war," soon after he realizes that he misspoke and corrects himself by saying that other family was forcibly displaced a year before, in 1940. This relatively minor error and correction does not cast doubt on the truthfulness of the rest of the account.[239] An apparent mistake that does warrant suspicion is that of Jan Kozak who describes that he was taken to a transit camp in Poznań in 1943, after having spent time in a local labour camp and being "forcibly displaced in stages"

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[235] Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty*, 144.
[236] Dariusz Matelski, "Polityka Eksterminacji Obywateli Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej," 158-159.
[237] Kazimierz Sakowski, "Wspomnienia"; "Podobno nie wszystkim udało się odnaleźć swoje dzieci i nie wiem jaki je los spotkał."
[238] Marian Kretkowski, "We wkładki miałem wszyte złote marki".
[239] Władysław Szała, "Niemcy dali nam odczuć, że są panami".

due to owning multiple properties.[240] As the Poznań camp closed in 1940, three years before he was allegedly sent there, further aspects of his account cannot be trusted. It is possible that he is telling the truth and that there was a smaller temporary transit camp, but the large-scale forced displacements and movement by trains to the GG had ended by 1941 and so the rest of Jan Kozak's account will not be used.

The answer to how long the primary source authors spent in the camps naturally varies. Bronisław Murawski is lucky, spending only about four or five days inside the Łódź camp.[241] Bernard Bachorski reports that he spent about two weeks inside, adding that the Łódź camp was among the worst of all the camps. It is unclear if he means of all the transit camps or of all concentration camps in general.[242] Finally, Kazimierz Sakowski writes that his time in the Łódź transit camp was about a month.[243] In at least one case, a group might be taken once but released. This is what happened to Maria Pągowska who says that her family, as well as a several other families were taken to a school in a nearby town, released after one night, then taken again three months later.[244] This may be due to the earliness of the forcible displacement, as it was in December 1939, but it may also be due to the remoteness of the village; it is possible the Germans did not have the logistics to transport the group from the local town to the larger temporary transit camp in Gniezno. In Cerekwica, the length of time spent in the camp also varies. Zbigniew Grześkowiak only says that he spent some number of days there, but does not remember how long, only adding that "it felt long."[245] Maria Sobocka, on the other hand, and

[240] Jan Kozak, "Wysiedlenie – wspólne doświadczenie narodów".
[241] Bronisław Murawski, "Cywilny niewolnik".
[242] Bernard Bachorski, "Zupki były gorące, nie wiadomo z czego".
[243] Kazimierz Sakowski, "Wspomnienia".
[244] Maria Pągowska, "Dwa razy nas brali z domu".
[245] Zbigniew Grześkowiak, "Hitlerowiec uderzył w twarz, normalna sprawa".

despite admitting that she finds it difficult to distinguish memories from family stories, due to her being so young, remembers that she spent exactly six weeks in the transit camp, and that around two hundred and fifty-one people were in its very tight and cramped building.[246]

Special attention can be given to how narrators describe their first day in the camps. In Poznań, near their home, Ewa Czarkowska writes how the first day was a mix of joy and sadness due to meeting those they knew in the camp. It must have been bittersweet to feel a sense of togetherness with their family friends in a place that was so cruel. She specifically mentions an older couple, a master portrait painter who was their friend and later painted her portrait. Czarkowska talks about the cruelty of the seemingly indiscriminate forced displacement of older people and large families.[247] Stanisław Chmielewski says something similar, explicitly saying that he does not remember much having been nine years old. He remembers being made to sleep on straw, but also remembers meeting the family friends who his family had just visited the same day.[248] Finally, Maciej Bąkowski talks about the same experience, about how his neighbours in Poznań became his neighbours in the Poznań camp. This was a man who was an engineer and chief of the airport, who had married a Russian woman.[249]

For the Łódź camp, different primary sources pay attention to different aspects regarding the first day. Some describe a complete lack of preparation to receive people.[250]

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[246] Maria Sobocka, “Nikt nie spodziewał się przesiedlenia”; adding that traumatic memories were not shared in her family and also adding that she returned to the place of the camp decades later (around the year 2000) to inspect it.
[247] Ewa Czarkowska, “W Radomsku przyjęli nas serdecznie”.
[248] Stanisław Chmielewski, “Wysiedlenie”.
[249] Maciej Bąkowski, “Gdy przyszli gestapowcy, ze strachu zwymiotowałem”.
[250] Bernard Bachorski, “Zupki były gorące, nie wiadomo z czego”.

Others simply state that they were taken to Łódź by bus.[251] Others still, describe being taken there by train before having to walk several kilometers to the actual camp, writing about how the journey was a sad goodbye to their hometown.[252] Wojciech Borowiak sums up the whole experience in a way similar to previous sources adding that there was a shuffling between different buildings of camp, before being sent East, but in particular he describes his time as he was taken to the transit camp for the strip searches as "purgatory" for torture and brutality.[253] Teodor Stasiak also referred similarly as it was like a "purgatory."[254] In Gniezno, Maria Pągowska describes it similarly, saying that while she was lead by the Gestapo (*Gestpaowcy*) she felt like she was in hell.[255]

The physical description of the camps was an aspect of the experience that the primary sources reveal more of – perhaps it was easier to describe the tangible aspects or perhaps the buildings and rooms had been burned into their memories. The Poznań camp on Główna was described the most. Marta Gładyś describes that the camp was surrounded by the Germans who had surrounded it with barbed wire and erected watchtowers, likening it to Auschwitz.[256] Ewa Czarkowska, describes a building that looked like a factory and had two levels, with food served below, and people sleeping on the upper level. Her parents would look from above to see if they recognized any of the new people to be forcibly displaced.[257] In contrast, Benigna Owczarczak says very little: that the camp was on main street, and that two large heaters were seen inside,[258] which

[251] Bronisław Murawski, "Cywilny niewolnik".
[252] Stanisław Czabański, "Opowieść o Wysiedleniu".
[253] Wojciech Borowiak, "Wspomnienia".
[254] Teodor Stasiak, *Wspomnienia lat 1940-1945*.
[255] Maria Pągowska, "Dwa razy nas brali z domu".
[256] Marta Gładyś, "Kilka kawałków ziemniaka w litrze zupy".
[257] Ewa Czarkowska, "W Radomsku przyjęli nas serdecznie".
[258] Benigna Owczarczak, "Wy pójdziecie trzecim transportem".

Maciej Bąkowski adds were not nearly powerful enough to heat up the massive building.[259]

There were actually several barracks as Gładyś's family moved, first sleeping in "a smaller barracks" on straw and later moving to a several-floor barrack that housed one thousand people. In this building concrete floored was covered with straw to sleep on, and there were boards built to separate the different "laying areas" from which little hallways formed. Her description is very much reminiscent of a barn.[260] It must be emphasized that the straw was a breeding ground for a variety of insects causing rampant lice and other bug bites. Marian Fellman's laments the conditions, particularly the straw on concrete, showing how profound of a change in the standards of living these camps were in comparison to the pre-war lives of those forcibly displaced. He also says that families divided their sleeping spaces from other families by luggage "walls."[261]

Stanisław Janiec says that when he arrived, women and small children were sent to one side of a pavilion and him and the men to the other. Others do not describe this detail due to age: he was twelve at the time and sent with the grown men, which was especially difficult for him as he was only able to see his family during the day, and he missed his mom.[262] Finally, Marta Gładyś adds that there was a danger in the barrack that had a bathroom. Her parents warned her to watch out as there was a risk of falling.[263] This paints quite the picture of a camp designed to dehumanize its inhabitants – with barn-like qualities and straw for sleeping there is a clear zoomorphism of Poles on the

[259] Maciej Bąkowski, "Gdy przyszli gestapowcy, ze strachu zwymiotowałem".
[260] Marta Gładyś, "Kilka kawałków ziemniaka w litrze zupy".
[261] Marian Fellman, "Koc od sąsiadki był z nami całą wojnę".
[262] Stanisław Janiec, "W nocy biegały po nas szczury".
[263] Marta Gładyś, "Kilka kawałków ziemniaka w litrze zupy".

part of the German authorities, in addition to dangerous conditions and a blatant, deliberate disregard for safety.

Shifting to the Łódź camp, Wardzyńska informs us that the buildings had been textile factories before the war.[264] Kazimierz Roszak describes an abandoned factory with no heating in the hall during the particularly cool autumn. As in Poznań, it was impossible to maintain hygiene, there was a lack of any necessary things and, and sleeping conditions were straw on concrete.[265] Jan Jankowski provides a street address for the camp he was sent to: Żeligowskiego 41. He complained that they had nothing to cover themselves up with at night, that not even the children had blankets, as he spent a month there on the concrete.[266] Barbara Pazoła confirms the same but adds that there were separations between "rooms" with improvised substitute-walls.[267]

Only Marian Kretkowski describes the temporary transit camp in Gniezno, improvised from some abandoned buildings. The camp, just like all the rest, had concrete on the first level with straw to sleep on, while some kind of haulm fell through the holes of the upper-level's wooden floor. He estimates a six hundred square meter area, which at its peak one thousand five hundred people were forced to share. Finally, he mentions large metal frames for windows, but no glass, despite the harsh winter, implying harsh cold and sickness becoming rampant.[268] Rutowska confirms that the camp was previously a production hall and tannery warehouses.[269]

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[264] Maria Wardzyńska, *Wysiedlenia Ludności Polskiej z Okupowanych Ziem Polskich*, 188.
[265] Kazimierz Roszak, "Wysiedlenie do Generalnej Guberni".
[266] Jan Jankowski, "Żyliśmy z kartek z niemieckich koszar".
[267] Barbara Pazoła, "Po zupę na końcu, żeby była gęsta".
[268] Marian Kretkowski, "We wkładki miałem wszyte złote marki".
[269] Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty*, 173.

Maria Sobocka says that the camp in Cerekwica was in the building of a *poprawczak* (reformatory/juvenile detention center) with a big wall around it. The men and boys twelve years old or older were placed in the lower level with a chapel, while women and younger children were placed separately on upper level.[270] Kazimierz Sakowski, describes a temporary transit camp in Wieluń, a building surrounded by barbed wire, it had primitive conditions and a barely standing "provisional" roof. It was likely only used for a moment, as the Poles were quickly taken by train to the camp in Łódź soon after.[271] Finally, Jadwiga Cicha describes Młyniewo. It appears to be a three-building camp surrounded by barbed wire and two watchtowers, seized from a local family. Women with young children were made to live in the granary (*spichlerz*), while men and older boys were placed in the barn, and finally, the third barrack was where cooking took place.[272]

The lack of food was among the worst in the descriptions of the primary sources. In Poznań, Henryk Kwiatkowski describes receiving three meals a day – a cup of grain coffee and slice of bread for two meals in the morning and evening, while there was a soup for dinner.[273] Benigna Owczarczak talks about how they "got only really soup" likely commenting on how the morsel of bread could hardly count as a meal, or implying that even this bread was not always given.[274] Marian Fellman also confirms this, saying that there was a kitchen but that it only made a very thin soup. He added that a person only got one portion of bread that had to be saved for supper and breakfast, which was only a grain coffee in the morning and evening. Sugar of course, was only had by those

[270] Maria Sobocka, "Nikt nie spodziewał się przesiedlenia".
[271] Kazimierz Sakowski, "Wspomnienia".
[272] Jadwiga Cicha, "Przyjechaliśmy do Płochocina w wielki mróz".
[273] Henryk Kwiatkowski, "Moje wojenne losy".
[274] Benigna Owczarczak, "Wy pójdziecie trzecim transportem".

who brought it from outside, and there was no milk.[275] Any food that families were able to bring in, quickly ran out. Alina Wiciak has little to add, she writes that they were given hot coffee and milk (other sources say milk was only for toddlers) only on the second day. She finishes her description by estimating that her family spent about a month in the camp before being sent East.[276] Stanisław Janiec describes his short stay of four days as an experience he would never forget. He focuses on the severe stomach problems he had as a result of the food.[277]

Marta Gładyś was able to go into further detail. She describes how each morning the camp dwellers received a cup of coffee. For dinner, they had to come with a bowl or cup to get soup. Soup changed, as one day it would be beans, while on another day it would be groats for example. Gładyś says that the *fasola* bean soup would be so thin that in a liter of soup you had to look for pieces of potato or pea; luckily the groats were thicker. For other meals she describes receiving bread and marmalade or margarine alternatingly with it. At the end of her sentence, she remarks that that was the whole food they received in a day, hinting at how little it was. She remarked that they were lucky to receive help from the local *Poznaniacy* (Poznań residents) who would leave food for the camp dwellers. Głądyś says she did not witness how this happened, but that her father gathered and brought some and that only thanks to this outside Polish help did they survive the month in the camp.[278] Jan Nowowiejski describes the food in the camp similarly. He referred to it as "bardzo skromne" – very small/modest meals. Like Gładyś, he relied on outside help, in this case receiving from his neighbour packages of food,

[275] Marian Fellman, "Koc od sąsiadki był z nami całą wojnę".
[276] Alina Wiciak, "Pozwolili mi zabrać tylko misia".
[277] Stanisław Janiec, "W nocy biegały po nas szczury".
[278] Marta Gładyś, "Kilka kawałków ziemniaka w litrze zupy".

"helping considerably."[279] In terms of younger primary source authors, Maciej Bąkowski describes his sheer reliance on his parents. He remembers a scene looking at his father eating the soup and drinking the grain coffee, Bąkowski considered himself to be so lucky that his father did not lose his mind. He later adds that he did not feel the hopelessness others had felt and that for children like himself – four years old at the time – to some extent it was an adventure despite all the trouble.[280] Rutowska provides the original German sources describing how much food was supposed to be given per person, but quickly contrasts this with memoirs who describe how many went without food for days. When food was given, the description of the primary sources used for this MRP matches Rutowska.[281]

This can be contrasted to the Łódź camp, which, based on the descriptions of primary sources, was significantly worse. Here Iwona Ponikowska remarks that the camp lead to many people having nervous breakdowns due to the lack of any sanitary conditions, the ability to wash and clean oneself or children, and that several dead dogs were found in the kitchen, to be prepared to serve as food.[282] The rest of the food itself was largely similar but of poorer quality, as Bernard Bachorski remarks that the soups were warm, but made out of "God knows what."[283] Kazimierz Sakowski adds to this, first describing breakfast as black coffee and a piece of bread, and that dinner was soup, usually very watery and made from beets and groats. On one instance, a head of a cat was noticed in the soup but "nobody was brave enough to say anything to the guards. Hunger

[279] Jan Nowowiejski, "Po mojego ojca przyjechało gestapo".
[280] Maciej Bąkowski, "Gdy przyszli gestapowcy, ze strachu zwymiotowałem".
[281] Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty*, 129-130.
[282] Iwona Ponikowska, "Poznaniacy wysiedleni do Generalnej Guberni – na Zamojszczyznę".
[283] Bernard Bachorski, "Zupki były gorące, nie wiadomo z czego".

took its toll, and so it was necessary to drink up the soup."[284] A clear insight into the brutality of the German guards, as even starving Poles feared interacting with them. Bronisław Murawski adds that soup was served only once a day, and there was never enough for everyone. If one did not have a bowl, like Murawski himself, then nothing was given. The only saving grace was that his family still had some food from home.[285] Certain camp occupants had the opposite strategy, as Barbara Pazoła remembers as her eldest brother (seven years old) had been telling his grandpa that they should go in the back of the line for soup because then they will get the thickest soup. She later describes this soup as a single potato for one liter of water.[286] This would imply that there was enough soup to serve everyone, but that it was obviously watered down so much that it was essentially water. Kazimierz Roszak claims that life in camp was not dissimilar to a description of Auschwitz or other concentration camps. He added that dinner was always thin soup, that other meals were small amounts of bread and weak coffee, and that marmalade would rarely be given.[287]

Comparable situations existed in other camps. In Gniezno, for example, Marian Kretkowski reports that in the first days, there was no food given, families only had what they brought. After that, they were given one meal a day – soup with a small piece of bread. This had to be eaten standing up. Kretkowski remarks that he does not remember if the bowls were given or if the bowls were brought by each individual family.[288] Maria

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[284] Kazimierz Sakowski, "Wspomnienia": "Przy rozdzielaniu zupy z kotła zauważono w zupie łeb kota. Trochę było szemrania między ludźmi ale nikt nie odważył się tego kwestionować u dozorcy. Głód robił swoje i trzeba było zupkę wpijać bo nie można mówić o jedzeniu ze względu na jej konsystencje – za bardzo rozwodniona."
[285] Bronisław Murawski, "Cywilny niewolnik".
[286] Barbara Pazoła, "Po zupę na końcu, żeby była gęsta".
[287] Kazimierz Roszak, "Wysiedlenie do Generalnej Guberni".
[288] Marian Kretkowski, "We wkładki miałem wszyte złote marki".

Pągowska confirms that Poles were not given any food or drinks.[289] Rutowska describes how for many months only one small meal was given a day, with portions of donated food even being seized; only in late February of 1940 was a provisional kitchen allowed to be built.[290] In Cerekwica, Maria Sobocka says that very poor food was given, that it was "potatoes with water or water with potatoes," occasionally beets, limited vegetables, but never anything else.[291] She adds that milk given to infants in small amounts and with lowered fat and that there were attempts to get more milk for infants, showing the constant resistance and fight for better conditions from forcibly displaced Poles.[292] Finally, Kazimierz Sakowski describes that in the camp near Wieluń, food was thrown over the fence of the camp by locals. The German garrison seemed to tolerate this, but the garrison guards were stern that anyone approaching fence from inside would be shot![293]

As alluded to above, particular attention is paid to the toilets, or lack thereof, in the different camps. A daily struggle, which made the difficult situation that much worse, Henryk Kwiatkowski describes that there were only latrines two hundred meters away from the buildings where they slept. He called it "murder for the sick and the old" during the cold winter under the snow.[294] Adding to this, Marta Gładyś says that if a person wanted to wash their clothes, it could only be done in the bathroom, and in the January cold there was no place to dry them except by the two large heaters, and a person had to stand by them for a very long time to dry.[295] The Łódź camp was much worse. Bernard Bachorski reports that there were no bathrooms, and that one "had to go near where you

[289] Maria Pągowska, "Dwa razy nas brali z domu".
[290] Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty*, 175.
[291] Maria Sobocka, "Nikt nie spodziewał się przesiedlenia".
[292] Maria Sobocka, "Nikt nie spodziewał się przesiedlenia".
[293] Kazimierz Sakowski, "Wspomnienia".
[294] Henryk Kwiatkowski, "Moje wojenne losy".
[295] Marta Gładyś, "Kilka kawałków ziemniaka w litrze zupy".

slept."[296] Jan Jankowski talks instead about a large hole dug in the middle (presumably outside in a courtyard), this was the bathroom everyone was expected to use.[297] In Gniezno, Marian Kretkowski does say that there were small toilets inside, but that they were of very poor conditions, especially for older people who constantly got diarrhea from food.[298] Other camps are not described by this collection of sources.

Sleeping conditions were also terrible, as described by the primary sources. In Poznań, Stanisław Janiec recalls his first night as brutal, wet and cold, only sleeping on a small amount of straw, and away from the rest of family.[299] Marta Gładyś adds how in the bitter cold, all her family had was what they brought. They had to sleep huddled together, covered in their own jackets. Gładyś remarks how inhumanely they were treated, making it evident that the two heaters in the other part of the barrack did not sufficiently warm the building since they were shivering at night.[300] Jan Nowowiejski adds that during his stay from December 1939 to February 10, 1940, his family stayed in barrack number four, but later moved to another which seemed warmer. They slept on a little bit of straw covering the concrete.[301] This reveals that there was the possibility to move within the camp, looking to at least slightly improve conditions. The Łódź camp has the same description, with Bernard Bachorski and Bronisław Murawski relating that there was nothing to sleep on, apart from straw.[302] In Gniezno, Maria Pągowska reveals more details, saying that her family was given the choice between being quartered downstairs

[296] Bernard Bachorski, "Zupki były gorące, nie wiadomo z czego".
[297] Jan Jankowski, "Żyliśmy z kartek z niemieckich koszar".
[298] Marian Kretkowski, "We wkładki miałem wszyte złote marki".
[299] Stanisław Janiec, "W nocy biegały po nas szczury".
[300] Marta Gładyś, "Kilka kawałków ziemniaka w litrze zupy".
[301] Jan Nowowiejski, "Po mojego ojca przyjechało gestapo".
[302] Bernard Bachorski, "Zupki były gorące, nie wiadomo z czego"; Bronisław Murawski, "Cywilny niewolnik".

with other forcibly displaced people with poor air quality and used up straw for sleeping versus the upstairs which had broken windows and snow covering the straw. Her family chose the upstairs.[303] Rutowska adds some details about the Gniezno camp's poor sanitation, sheer dirtiness, and bugs, with the cold being the worst of it all.[304] This is a key insight into how terrible and cramped the conditions in the camps were, that a better choice for a family was to risk hypothermia. The Cerekwica camp was slightly different, as Maria Sobocka relates that on the lower level the men only slept on straw, but that the upper level had some beds (for women and young children).[305] The camp in Młyniewo was not so lucky. Jadwiga Cicha talks about how people slept on straw, and that only some people had been able to sleep on the bedsheets that they brought.[306]

In conjunction to this, was the fierce cold that the forcibly displaced faced. In Poznań, Maciej Bąkowski remembers one instance of his sister dropping and spilling the grain coffee, when they came back the boiling coffee had frozen over because it was minus forty degrees Celsius.[307] Inside was not better, as Jan Nowowiejski describes that after snow had fallen, it covered the floor, due to holes in the ceiling.[308] Benigna Owczarczak adds that there was only cold water.[309] In Łódź, Bronisław Murawski writes that the concrete buildings were unheated.[310] In Gniezno, Marian Kretkowski says that the two small heaters were completely insufficient. And that of the two water pumps, the

[303] Maria Pągowska, "Dwa razy nas brali z domu".
[304] Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty*, 175.
[305] Maria Sobocka, "Nikt nie spodziewał się przesiedlenia".
[306] Jadwiga Cicha, "Przyjechaliśmy do Płochocina w wielki mróz".
[307] Maciej Bąkowski, "Gdy przyszli gestapowcy, ze strachu zwymiotowałem".
[308] Jan Nowowiejski, "Po mojego ojca przyjechało gestapo".
[309] Benigna Owczarczak, "Wy pójdziecie trzecim transportem".
[310] Bronisław Murawski, "Cywilny niewolnik".

one outside would usually be frozen.[311] It is abundantly clear that the conditions, particularly in the harsh winters, were dire, with hypothermia in the uninsulated and unheated buildings during winters, and heat stroke in the hot summers.

Relatively few details on the daily life inside the camps are given, apart from the brutal discipline and terror through continuous musters, beatings, and forced labor. In Poznań, Henryk Kwiatkowski writes about the loud nights, loud from the commotion of the newly brought forcibly displaced.[312] Maciej Bąkowski, four years old at the time, remarks that his main memory of the camp was that each day was the same. He describes it as more of a sense of hopeless boredom than anything else, with emphasis on "hopeless." He remembers drawing a bun with ham in it – that was his greatest dream, compared to the rutabaga soups and grain coffee and bread that they were given.[313] Marta Gładyś adds more, saying that the daily schedule was that in the morning and night men would get food for everyone. There would be some cleaning, for example of the bowls and general area, but most of the time was spent sitting and talking – reminiscing of memories. Gładyś, in particular, had to watch over her little brother, so that he would be occupied and also to not fall from the floor as the stairs were poorly secured.[314] Henryk Kwiatkowski, older than the others, adds that the two ineffectual heaters became a meeting spot for the displaced to talk about observations and about next days. He then adds that there was forced labour, naming them *prace gospodarcze*.[315]

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[311] Marian Kretkowski, "We wkładki miałem wszyte złote marki".
[312] Henryk Kwiatkowski, "Moje wojenne losy".
[313] Maciej Bąkowski, "Gdy przyszli gestapowcy, ze strachu zwymiotowałem".
[314] Marta Gładyś, "Kilka kawałków ziemniaka w litrze zupy".
[315] Henryk Kwiatkowski, "Moje wojenne losy".

In the descriptions above, the perspective and daily activities of children – spared from forced labor – shine through, however, they differ significantly from those of adult memoirs used by Rutowska. She instead describes it as fundamentally a work camp, meaning that teenagers and adults were made to work, at times, with even forced physical activity for men aged fourteen to thirty "for show" in an attempt to hide the real cruelty inflicted on them.[316] Rutowska also highlights the work of the committee in the camp, which helped organize the people, attempting to help them to avoid more punishments, but also even running a postal service which helped ship food and clothes to detainees, helping them considerably, and overall ameliorating the unbearable conditions as much as possible within the German rules.[317] As the committee was formed from the first wave of intelligentsia deportees, it was able to be more active than any other camps described, with unbearable conditions made more bearable thanks to cooperation and proactiveness within the increasingly strict German rules, such as the constant changes to the limited allotted time outside of thew segregated barracks. The committee stopped conflicts, asking Poles to not revert to German authorities in cases of conflict, but to treat one another brotherly, and at times, even organized in secret, cultural events, professors lecturing on their materials, and other discussions, attempting to create some semblance of a social life and unity amidst the brutality.[318]

The daily life in the Łódź camp is less described. Kazimierz Sakowski, eleven, writes simply that daily life in the camps, was as follows: sleeping on straw on the sides of the large rooms, and that in the center of the room there were tables to sit at, he then

[316] Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty*, 124.
[317] Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty,* 111-117.
[318] Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty*, 107, 117, 119, 138.

continues only to describe what they ate.[319] Barbara Pazoła remembers all of her family being huddled down, laying down on straw laid over the "pallet."[320] Bernard Bachorski remembers that they moved between halls every two to three days.[321]

In Cerekwica, more can be learned from Maria Sobocka. She describes how older kids (aged sixteen or above) were tasked with babysitting the younger kids, that is, watching them "making sure to not approach fence as anyone within ten meters would be shot" and teaching them "songs or whatnot," something the Germans did not seem to really care or do much about.[322] A transport could not be organized by the Germans, so the camp dwellers attempted to fill the time with discussions for example by people discussing travels and the world (after the forced labor and the humiliating musters).[323] Finally, from Jadwiga Cicha in Młyniewo, it is possible to learn that the days were somewhat okay for the children, in her opinion, as they "could always find something to do." She does bring up, however, that the nights were particularly scary and dark for them. She remembers crying alongside her sister, saying to their mother that they wanted to go home to their toys and dolls.[324] Józef Szofer's experience in Młyniewo was different, not due to age, since he was only two years older, but due to the fact that he was a boy. He describes the entire camp experience in brief, how many people from local villages were taken by train to Młyniewo for about two weeks where all the men (unclear,

[319] Kazimierz Sakowski, "Wspomnienia".
[320] Barbara Pazoła, "Po zupę na końcu, żeby była gęsta".
[321] Bernard Bachorski, "Zupki były gorące, nie wiadomo z czego".
[322] Maria Sobocka, "Nikt nie spodziewał się przesiedlenia".
[323] Maria Sobocka, "Nikt nie spodziewał się przesiedlenia".
[324] Jadwiga Cicha, "Przyjechaliśmy do Płochocina w wielki mróz".

but implicitly the ten-year-old narrator is included in this work) were made to work in the farm fields.[325]

It is important to consider what information the forcibly displaced had at this point. The answer varies across camps and according to the age of the authors. Marta Gładyś is quite helpful in enlightening this aspect of the exile-experience. She writes, that in the Poznań camp, around January 1940, there were no transports and the camp inmates simply did not know when there time in the camp would end.[326] Each night after the forced musters, which will be explained in more detail later in this section, people would gather together and important information would be shared.[327] She adds that none of the family knew what would happen next or when. They had learned that the camp deported people into the "Kieleckie" region but did not know where within it.[328] She adds that this complete lack of knowledge of what was to come next was "absolutely nerve-wracking:" for her parents. After a week had passed in the camp, a rumor began spreading that the inhabitants would be forcibly displaced somewhere else. Her father inquired of a "Gestapowiec" who confirmed this but said that they (Gładyś's family) would not be taken soon. Her father, who she describes as a usually calm man, was furious, and managed to negotiate to be on one of the first transports out of camp.[329] This is a key insight into the experience as it reveals the sheer helplessness in the limited information available to the camp inmates, but reveals how they would still do everything in their power to try to better their situation.

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[325] Józef Szofer, "Chcieli i mnie wywieźć z Żydami 'na mydło'".
[326] Marta Gładyś, "Kilka kawałków ziemniaka w litrze zupy".
[327] Marta Gładyś, "Kilka kawałków ziemniaka w litrze zupy".
[328] Marta Gładyś, "Kilka kawałków ziemniaka w litrze zupy".
[329] Anna Muszyńska-Kobacka, "Wsadzili nas do wagonu trzeciej klasy".

The inmates of the Łódź and Gniezno camps do not reveal the information they had, but there are strong implications that similarly to other camps they did not have any information and were at the complete mercy of the German authorities. In Cerekwica, in a single line, Maria Sobocka summarizes the very difficult conditions as: cramped quarters, little food, and a lack of knowledge as to what will happen next after the transit camp.[330] She reveals the frame of mind of her family, as well as what they were aware of in the moment, saying:

> Nobody knew what would happen to us. It was known that in Gostyń, in Leśno, in Poniec, here in Śrem, in Kurnik, here nearly fifteen kilometers from us in Książ, all of them (those that were taken by the Germans) were shot. It looked a number of different ways, and [it was all] for nothing (the mass executed were innocent)! And they were shot as a way to terrorize everyone.[331]

She then added a story of how a group of men who had been Polish prison guards from Jarocin were later brought to the camp. They had told their wives in the camp that they were taken by the Germans into the forest and made to dig a grave. The only reason the mass execution without trial was stopped was because a high-ranking German had come with orders from Berlin to stop them. The Germans, not knowing what to do brought the Polish men back to the town to inquire if they had orders and permission to execute them, but according to Sobocka there was a ban on executions by November by someone local called "Pastor King" who had gone to Berlin to stop the killings. The Germans were confused and not knowing what to do with the men sent them to the transit camp.[332] Therefore it was in this frame of reference – of countless mass executions in forests – that the camp inmates could not imagine what their fates would be. They knew that at any

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[330] Maria Sobocka, "Nikt nie spodziewał się przesiedlenia".
[331] Maria Sobocka, "Nikt nie spodziewał się przesiedlenia"; "Nikt nie wiedział co z nami będzie. Wiadomo było, że w Gostyniu, w Leśnie, w Poniecu, tu w Śremie, w Kurniku, tu blisko piętnaście kilometrów od nas w Książu wszystkich tych rozstrzelano. Różnie to wyglądało, i to za nic! I to postrzelano na postrach."
[332] Maria Sobocka, "Nikt nie spodziewał się przesiedlenia".

moment they could lose their life, and in the words of Sobocka – "*for nothing*." They only learned of when they would leave a day early.[333]

Despite the difficult conditions, the primary sources still report helping others with what little their families had. In the Poznań camp on Główna, Ewa Czarkowska reports that her father was approached by another family that was unknown to them. The people in the camp had asked him for help to have him as an *opiekun* or caregiver, Czarkowska says that he felt responsible for helping them despite not having much.[334] In the Łódź camp, Iwona Ponikowska writes about how the ground was muddy, and at one point all the Poles were forced to stand in place where the water level was up to their ankles. To combat this, some of the men gave planks or bricks for pregnant women to stand on. Ponikowska shows how much this helped by adding that her mother would claim to have suffered chronic illness post-war after the sheer cold of the Łódź camp.[335]

In Gniezno**,** Marian Kretkowski reports that the help came from outside of the camp, as local people from the town would throw bread over the fence, which the camp people could gather and eat. Although the German guards had forced townspeople away, the food saved the lives of the camp inmates.[336] Henryka Maciejewska gives a different story, having been sent to the camp in Wronki. She describes this camp as a literal prison, which Rutowska confirms was the buildings' previous purpose.[337] Her description starts similarly to others, with men separated from women and all forced to sleep on straw on concrete. It diverges as she adds that in her case her family's neighbour, taken to the

[333] Maria Sobocka, "Nikt nie spodziewał się przesiedlenia".
[334] Ewa Czarkowska, "W Radomsku przyjęli nas serdecznie".
[335] Iwona Ponikowska, "Poznaniacy wysiedleni do Generalnej Guberni – na Zamojszczyznę".
[336] Marian Kretkowski, "We wkładki miałem wszyte złote marki".
[337] Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty,* 96.

Polish Army, asked for Maciejewska's family to take care of his pregnant wife. When they were forcibly displaced, there was a fear that they would no longer be able to, but since the pregnant wife was forcibly displaced at the same time, they were able to continue fulfilling their promise and took care of her even after they had been placed into the GG. Overall, the Maciejewska highlights the feeling of great fear, not knowing what would happen next, in the camp experience.[338]

In Cerekwica, Maria Sobocka adds that according to her, there were never any conflicts between Poles. This was admittedly not easy, and she makes the point of saying that sometimes people had to bite their tongues, but otherwise great care was made to never miscommunicate.[339] This is a key point as it is also an aspect of the camp experience which Rutowska highlights, specifically in her discussion of the Poznań camp on Główna.[340] As such, this is a major point of confirmation between primary and secondary sources.

It is worthwhile to explore how interactions with the German guards of the camps were described in the primary sources. Curiously, the sources from Łódź do not have any documented interactions with guards, and only three sources do at all. In Poznań, Marta Gładyś remarks that like other children, she did not leave the barracks except to go to the bathroom. She notes that she does not really remember interactions with guards as she was mostly with just Poles. She specifically does not confirm whether one had to bow to the German guards as they passed.[341] This does not enlighten the situation. Marian Fellman is not more helpful in this regard. As he was thirteen years old, he says he does

[338] Henryka Maciejewska, "W Jędrzejowie pierwszy raz zobaczyłam Żydów".
[339] Maria Sobocka, "Nikt nie spodziewał się przesiedlenia".
[340] Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty,* 130, 135.
[341] Marta Gładyś, "Kilka kawałków ziemniaka w litrze zupy".

not remember the exact daily schedule of the camp or the rules. Instead, he remembers that outsiders were not allowed to get close to the camp, although people were warned and not shot if they approached. He compares the guards as similar to the ones in concentration camps.[342] Maria Sobocka in Cerekwica is more revealing of how interactions occurred. Once again, confirmed by Rutowska's description of interactions of guards with inmates in the Poznań camp, Sobocka describes that the Poles in the camp were organized by a Polish man (named Zygmunt Czarnecki z Ruska) who had been educated and knew German and Polish very well. Despite the fact that others knew German as well, only he was allowed to speak to the Germans. Sobocka remarks that her parents had gone to German school, so they knew the language well.[343] But this system, of having one leader or "elder" chosen from among the German-speaking Poles, was already attested to in Poznań, and so was likely also employed by the Germans in other camps such as this one.[344] It is clear that there were advantages to both the Germans and the Poles by only having one line of communication open. The Germans had less work, only having to reprimand Poles when necessary and maintaining easy communication with them as a group, while the Poles would have had an easier job in maintaining cohesion and resistance to the hardships – it was less likely for Poles to sabotage one another, and a certain unity could grow among them.

And this unity would be very necessary to survive the hardships that they were forced to endure. In Poznań, both Marta Gładyś and Henryk Kwiatkowski complain

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[342] Marian Fellman, "Koc od sąsiadki był z nami całą wojnę".
[343] Maria Sobocka, "Nikt nie spodziewał się przesiedlenia". She also does describe another episode, where an outsider had tried to help the camp inmates and was in turn arrested and locked in the cellar by the German authorities, only to be freed after a local German passer-by had recognized the woman and asked for her release. This example, in turn, shows the less organized, and almost improvisational nature of the German authorities attempts to maintain strict order.
[344] Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty*, 119.

about the daily *apele* that is, musters. Gładyś mentions that these happened each night.[345] Kwiatkowski, on the other hand, goes into more detail, explaining that in the "apele" all were forced to stand at attention and follow orders. He adds that shortly after, some individuals would be taken from the camp and would never return.[346] Rutowska confirms and also describes the musters in more detail.[347] Łódź was no different in this regard. Kazimierz Roszak writing about how the Poles were constantly made to stand at attention for hours at the musters. He adds that there were beatings for those who could not stand long enough.[348] In an oral history, Teodor Stasiak adds how much his heart broke for the young children, who along with all the adults were forced to stand at attention for hours, rain or shine, often at night.[349] Bernard Bachorski summarizes the conditions as impossible to live amidst the repressions, the inability to speak, the inability to walk alone, and the complete shortage of food causing starvation.[350] The repressions were much worse, however, as Iwona Ponikowska would describe two physical beatings in close proximity to one another. The first involved the Germans enticing Poles to sign onto the *Volksliste*,[351] with Ponikowska's father refusing. The German authority, disliking this answer, attempted to whip him in return, but Ponikowska's grandfather ended up blocking the blow. The second example was on the author's mother during the strip search by a "ruthless German woman" who attacked her for missing a button after all the

[345] Marta Gładyś, "Kilka kawałków ziemniaka w litrze zupy".
[346] Henryk Kwiatkowski, "Moje wojenne losy".
[347] Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty*, 165.
[348] Kazimierz Roszak, "Wysiedlenie do Generalnej Guberni".
[349] Teodor Stasiak, *Wspomnienia lat 1940-1945*.
[350] Bernard Bachorski, "Zupki były gorące, nie wiadomo z czego".
[351] The German bureaucracy continually attempted to entice those Poles which they deemed racially valuable, typically for having considerable German ancestry, or for speaking German at home and cultivating German culture. While hundreds of thousands joined, there were documented cases of ethnically ethnically-German Poles who chose never to sign despite enormous pressure, some even losing their lives for their fierce Polish patriotism.

chaos and then insulted the woman's fifth pregnancy.[352] It is unclear if the German woman had then hit the author's mother, however, in the context it is likely.

Another example of a persistent problem is the constant and worsening sickness caused by both the cold and from the food. Bernard Bachorski confirms this explicitly, adding that his family was not allowed to take enough warm clothing from home, and only had one bedsheet: *prześcieradło*. Sick from the cold, but also sick to their stomachs, he confirms the chronic diarrhea noted by most of the primary sources.[353] Kazimierz Roszak confirms this as well, as in his case, his family spent two months in the camp as he, as the eight-year-old boy had bloody diarrhea and later pneumonia. He was taken to the hospital with a strong fever for the whole time and he writes that parents feared his fate, both in the illness and in how (or even if) he would be treated in the hospital, but allowed him to be taken to the camp hospital.[354] Rutherford reveals the position of the German bureaucracy, whose policy in the camps in Łódź originally was to send the remainder of the family separately from a recovering sick inmate, but amended it to keep families together in May of 1940. The result was that "some families had remained in the camps for up to five months" only further exacerbating health problems and leading to new "outbreaks of illnesses and epidemics" leading for a policy where one parent or older family member could stay with a sick child aged fourteen or under.[355] It is clear that the German bureaucracy was keenly aware "prolonged detention" came with "health risks," but the descriptions of Rutherford's book do not give justice to the reality of the camps.[356]

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[352] Iwona Ponikowska, "Poznaniacy wysiedleni do Generalnej Guberni – na Zamojszczyznę".
[353] Bernard Bachorski, "Zupki były gorące, nie wiadomo z czego".
[354] Kazimierz Roszak, "Wysiedlenie do Generalnej Guberni".
[355] Phillip T. Rutherford, *Prelude to the Final Solution,* 158.
[356] Phillip T. Rutherford, *Prelude to the Final Solution,* 158.

Kazimierz Sakowski adds to the Roszak and Bachorski's scene, blaming on a lack of sanitary conditions, being forced to sleep in the same clothes, not being able to wash up, sleeping in straw, the lack of ability to keep things clean, as the cause of the rapid spread of bugs/vermin. In a single line, he says "people started getting sick, dying."[357] He contrasts Kazimierz Roszak's experience writing about how his infant brother (under a year old) got sick with diarrhea and how all his family thought he would die. Roszak laments that the camp authorities did not care at all about the sick. Instead, some kind of treatment was improvised by the inmates and the brother got better eventually, only miraculously.[358] Rutowska writes how the official camp death rate in Poznań was deflated due to extreme illnesses being sent to the general hospital, and their deaths were not recorded in the camp statistics. Further, she reveals the high number of deaths in the camp, explicitly caused by the poor conditions of the camp, the lack of cleanliness in part leading to fleas and rats, which resulted in illnesses typhus, pneumonia, and many others.[359]

It seems that the Łódź camp was the most brutal, however, the other camps were not short of hardships. In Gniezno, Marian Kretkowski remembers that Gestapo officers were recruiting for forced labour from among the camp dwellers.[360] He would later add that his father attempted to be retained for work (outside the temporary transit camp), Kretkowski elaborated that he even promised he could bring his family back but "he knew what fate was waiting for him as a member of the Uprisings, so he negotiated to join his family in the camp." Therefore, the rest of family along with Marian spent about

[357] Kazimierz Sakowski, "Wspomnienia".
[358] Kazimierz Sakowski, "Wspomnienia".
[359] Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty*, 132-134.
[360] Marian Kretkowski, "We wkładki miałem wszyte złote marki".

a month in the camp, but the father only spent a few days (presumably at the end, close to their departure to the GG).[361] Meanwhile, Maria Pągowska remembers that the Germans would make searches at night, and if hidden money was found, they would beat the guilty person until they were unconscious.[362] Further, she recalls a scene of Germans putting all the lights on at night when Allied bombers were overhead.[363] These examples clearly show of how little the value of Polish lives was regarded. The German authorities took active measures to whittle down the number of living Poles. In Cerekwica, Maria Sobocka confirms that there were also two daily mandatory musters with one in morning. She mentions a daily rotation of *zakładnicy*, which from the context may simply mean forced labour.[364] She adds that in her opinion there were few sick people compared to other camps due to (relatively) good condition. For the two people who got sick, a local German doctor came to help, albeit without any medicine. It is unclear whether he was prohibited from bringing medicine by the camp guards or whether he did not bring any on his own accord. Sobocka joyfully notes that nobody in the camp died or was killed but admits that this was due to "everyone" knowing that there were others gunned down locally, causing everyone in the camp to behave as best as possible.[365] Starvation rations, forced labour, beatings, and the unknown fate amidst local mass executions being considered *relatively good* is very telling of the overall conditions of the camps.

Amidst such hopeless conditions, religion and the Catholic faith were two of the primary sources of hope for many of the primary sources. In the Poznań camp, Marta Gładyś, for example, talks about how, presumably after the musters, Poles would pray

[361] Marian Kretkowski, "We wkładki miałem wszyte złote marki".
[362] Maria Pągowska, "Dwa razy nas brali z domu".
[363] Maria Pągowska, "Dwa razy nas brali z domu".
[364] Maria Sobocka, "Nikt nie spodziewał się przesiedlenia".
[365] Maria Sobocka, "Nikt nie spodziewał się przesiedlenia".

and sing together. She describes this as one of the few things in particular which kept spirits high. Marian Fellman remembers that a priest from a nearby parish would approach the camp fence to give blessings and moral support to those inside "as best as he could." As best as Fellman can recall, the priest was not treated harshly by the guards, but Fellman cannot remember if Mass was celebrated in the camp.[366] Marta Gładyś adds to this that she knew that priests were there to hear Confession but she does not think any Mass being celebrated by them, possibly because her forcible displacement was in late January 1940, after the others in this paragraph had already been sent to the GG.[367] Henryk Kwiatkowski, also fourteen years old at this time, remembers correctly and reflects on the secret religious liturgies nearly every Sunday.[368] Rutowska clarifies, quoting a memoir, from the Poznań camp, that describes how at least at one point, there were eight consecutive secret weekly masses which the German commandant seemed to "try not to see":

> The touching moments included Holy Masses. There were probably eight of them in total. They took place in the famous Barracks IV. We took advantage of the large amount of space, [enough] for four thousand people more or less. Holy Masses were celebrated by Father Helak. He risked his life in performing his pastoral duties. He heard Confessions, organized group prayers, and finally even administered Communion. The parish in Główna provided the missal, wine, chalice and unconsecrated communion hosts. How they got inside the camp will probably forever remain a mystery. We built the altar and cross and made the candlesticks and other religious items ourselves in the camp workshop. We used an old, large alarm bell as a bell for mass. (...) I must point out that in the Holy Mass the entire camp population took part, without exception. At the end of the Holy Mass after hiding the missal, candles, etc., we sang the song: 'Go to Jesus.' It became our camp anthem. This song, sung by a crowd of several thousand people, proclaimed far and wide that we do not give up or lose hope here and that we trust in God's mercy.[369]

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[366] Marian Fellman, "Koc od sąsiadki był z nami całą wojnę".
[367] Marta Gładyś, "Kilka kawałków ziemniaka w litrze zupy".
[368] Henryk Kwiatkowski, "Moje wojenne losy".
[369] Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty,* 136; "Do wzruszających momentów należały msze św. Było ich razem pewnie osiem. Odbywały się one w owym słynnym baraku IV.

The lyrics of the song that was sung need to be added to fully understand the depth of this memoir quote, and the power of their faith as unifying and hope-giving:

Pójdź do Jezusa, do niebios bram,	Go to Jesus, to Heaven's gates,
W Nim tylko szukać pociechy nam.	In Him alone may we find solace.
On nas napoi krwią swoich ran,	He will satisfy us with the blood of his wounds
On Ojciec, Lekarz, Pan.	He is the Father, Physician, Lord.
Słuchaj Jezu jak Cię błaga lud,	Listen, Jesus, as your people plead,
Słuchaj, słuchaj, uczyń z nami cud.	Listen, listen, perform a miracle with us.
Przemień o Jezu smutny ten czas.	Transform, O Jesus, this sad time.
O Jezu pociesz nas.	O Jesus, comfort us!
Że z nami jesteś, pozwól to czuć,	That You are with us, let us feel that,
Nadzieję w sercu omdlałym wzbudź.	Arouse hope in our fainting hearts.
Daj wytrwać mężnie prób ziemskich czas,	Let us endure the earthly trials bravely,
O Jezu pociesz nas.	O Jesus, comfort us!

This collection of primary sources does not contain any mention of religious activities in the Łódź camps, but there is some information available about other camps. In Gniezno for example, Marian Kretkowski mentions, at the least, that he does not recall of religious ceremonies being allowed, but knows that no priests had been allowed to come.[370] Similarly, in Cerekwica, Maria Sobocka notes that priests were never allowed to enter the camp. She goes into further detail, however, remembering the story of a little altar server boy who wanted to go to Mass nearby outside the camp, but was forbidden by his parents who knew that they would be executed if he had made any attempt to leave.

Wykorzystaliśmy dużą ilość miejsca, bo na 4 tys. osób mniej więcej. Msze św. odprawiał ks. Helak. Z narażeniem swego życia wykonywał on swoje obowiązki duszpasterskie. Słuchał spowiedzi, przeprowadzał wspólne modlitwy, w końcu nawet komunikował. Mszału, wina, kielicha i komunikantów dostarczała parafia w Głównej. Jaką one drogą się dostawały do wnętrza obozu, to zostanie pewnie tajemnicą. Ołtarz, krzyż, świeczniki i inne drobiazgi wykonywaliśmy sami w warsztacie obozowym. Jako dzwonka przy mszy używaliśmy dawnego dzwonka alarmowego o dość pokaźnej wielkości. (...) Muszę zaznaczyć, że w mszy św. brała udział cała ludność obozu bez wyjątku. Na zakończenie mszy św. po usunięciu mszału, świec itd. śpiewaliśmy pieśń: 'Pójdź do Jezusa'. Stała się ona naszym hymnem obozowym. Pieśń ta śpiewana przez parutysięczny tłum głosiła daleko, że my tu nie wątpimy i ufamy miłosierdziu Bożemu."

[370] Marian Kretkowski, "We wkładki miałem wszyte złote marki".

Instead, a little booklet was prepared for the boy so that he could have a "dry Mass" (a Catholic religious liturgy without the priest or the Eucharist).[371] This is a clear example of how important religion was, as well as how difficult it could be to be denied the ability to participate in religious activities.

Moving to a non-Wartheland camp, called the Durchlager Soldau, in Działdowie, Jan Korzybski recalls a teary scene of the forcibly displaced being taken through the town towards the camp, similar to the previous section of this MRP. As they were being packed into cars for further travel, Korzybski remarks that someone in the crowd started to sing a church hymn "Serdeczna Matko" (nicknamed the "Hymn of the Exiles") and that all the Poles began to sing. The Germans, not knowing how to react, did not put a stop to it and local onlooking (non-forcibly-displaced) Poles had to "wipe their faces," as there were many tears in all Polish eyes.[372] Finally, in Młyniewo, Jadwiga Cicha remembers that in the room in which the women slept, there was a Rosary prayed each night, organized by the women there.[373] It is clear that this and the other religious activities which Poles took part in helped them to remain in higher spirits, giving them hope and unity in the impossible conditions that they were subjected to. It often added meaning to their suffering, which further increased their trust in God. It was a key lens in how they understood their experience and saw the world, something shown even in their use of words like "hell" or "purgatory" to describe the camps and the entire forcible displacements.

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[371] Maria Sobocka, "Nikt nie spodziewał się przesiedlenia".
[372] Jan Korzybski, "Wysiedlenia – wspólne doświadczenie narodów".
[373] Jadwiga Cicha, "Przyjechaliśmy do Płochocina w wielki mróz".

It may have also inspired them, in part, to certain forms of passive resistance. There are a several scenes of this in both the Poznań and Łódź camps. In the Poznań camp, Jan Nowowiejski remembers that letters were exchanged in secret between his parents (his hospitalized father and his mother in the camp), these letters were sent via an intermediary.[374] Unusually, he was given a pass (*przepustka*) and allowed to leave the camp for a short while and visit his father in the hospital a single time.[375] Another example is Marta Gładyś remembering that she found a poem written in the bathroom: "Dzisiaj groch, jutro kasza, a pojutrze Polska nasza!" – "today beans, tomorrow groats, aftermorrow Poland's ours!"[376] Even this little poem gives a glimpse at the fighting spirit of the otherwise helpless Poles.

The Łódź camp had similar episodes. Barbara Pazoła remembers that she and her family had had two dolls, and while one was seized, the other was spared due to the intense crying of the children. Unknowingly to the Germans in the moment, both dolls had been stuffed with money by the father in case of forced displacement.[377] This example shows the risk-taking that some of the forcibly displaced resorted to, and the success some of the surviving ones report in the primary sources. On a different note, Stanisław Czabański writes about a heroic episode of a Polish man (which he names) stepping onto a ledge and giving an inspirational speech about how they were all going into the unknown, perhaps to certain death, but that with God's help they may all return home someday. The German reaction to this was violent, as machine guns were calked and angry screams were heard, but the German reaction was stifled by the quick-thinking

[374] Jan Nowowiejski, "Po mojego ojca przyjechało gestapo".
[375] Jan Nowowiejski, "Po mojego ojca przyjechało gestapo".
[376] Marta Gładyś, "Kilka kawałków ziemniaka w litrze zupy".
[377] Barbara Pazoła, "Po zupę na końcu, żeby była gęsta".

Polish crowd who hid the speech giver amongst itself.[378] This episode has many of the themes seen throughout the experience of the forcibly displaced – the theme of going into the unknown as exiles, the attempt at maintaining high spirits and a hope for return, the importance of faith and religion in the maintenance of this hope, the fearless active resistance at different moments and the unity and cleverness of the crowd in protecting the resistor, and finally the fierce but ultimately unsuccessful German reaction with violence and terror.

As for terror, there were far worse depictions described by this collection of primary sources. While none of the hardships described in the Poznań camp amount to terror, multiple scenes from the other camps do. In the Łódź camps, Jan Jankowski describes the following scene. Five years old at the time, he and two younger boys went to the fence of the compound. The German army was passing by singing a military song ("Deutschland, Deutschland uber alles"). The Polish boys made a joke about it, specifically by adding a verse about Hitler putting a finger up his butt. The German soldiers, with their dogs, chased down the three boys, the smallest one they grabbed by an arm and a leg and threw into the cesspool pit. The second boy suffered the same fate. Only after the incident were the Polish adults able to react, but they were too late and only retrieved corpses from this pit. The narrator ran away the farthest, but the dog caught him, he was assaulted and has marks to this day, but luckily his father was close enough and by saying something in German to the soldiers, he saved his son's life.[379] Kazimierz Sakowski writes about a different scene of children playing on a "bouncy" ground, which allowed the kids to hop on it. There happened to be a destroyed tank beside this, as well

[378] Stanisław Czabański, "Opowieść o Wysiedleniu".
[379] Jan Jankowski, "Żyliśmy z kartek z niemieckich koszar".

as a strange white substance coming out of the ground, as Sakowski writes. The children were later told to not play there as the adults said it was a mass grave. Sakowski adds that there were two such sites.[380]

Both these scenes show the utter brutality of the German authorities, who sought little provocation for their attacks, and did not spare even children. There are more examples of terror in the camps. In Gniezno, Marian Kretkowski sets the scene, explaining that in the room in which the forcibly displaced were made to sleep, uniformed guards and even the Gestapo with dogs would ruthlessly deal with the inmates. Kretkowski explains that nobody was allowed to sit up, only to lay down, with guards explicitly telling people when to roll over, in order to fit the greatest number of people. Kretkowski recounts that one mother with an infant was sitting up, because the infant's hands were all covered in bug bites, an all-too-common symptom of being forced to sleep on old, bug-infested straw. The German's solution to the problem of the two sitting up, was that a German guard shot the mother, still holding her baby, in front of everyone.[381]

In Durchlager Soldau, in Działdowie, Jan Korzybski recalls the moment before the group of forcibly displaced Poles were taken to the camp, while they were being gathered in a seized farming estate by the Germans. He writes that several people were shot for attempting to escape, including a young woman.[382] The way these episodes are described, that is from the perspective of a child experiencing the event, reveals how the children experienced them firsthand, layered with decades to process the trauma and to grieve. The experiences are written or spoken more so in a matter-of-fact way, although,

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[380] Kazimierz Sakowski, "Wspomnienia".
[381] Marian Kretkowski, "We wkładki miałem wszyte złote marki".
[382] Jan Korzybski, "Wysiedlenia – wspólne doświadczenie narodów".

in referencing the physical scars that quite literally remain to this day, it is possible to see the sheer pain in the authors' words.

A few of the primary sources describe the last days in the transit camp. In the Poznań camp, Marta Gładyś wonders, and struggles to remember if they were told the destination in the GG on the day they were told they would be on the train. She explained that her family was told around noon that they would be on a train that day.[383] Henryk Kwiatkowski was told instead in the evening of February 14, 1940, a full month after the eviction, with the Germans reading out names to prepare for the train.[384] In Cerekwica, the last day would be more difficult. Maria Sobocka remarks that other families were beaten by the Germans if they took too long to get onto the buses (which would take them to the train station). She recalled how the Germans took the coat of another Pole, leaving only a suit jacket in the freezing December weather. Then, at the train station, a "higher ranking" German had seized the larger baggage that one family had been able to take. He promised that it would go on the next train, "but of course it never did." Sobocka laments that that family was left with nothing but the clothes on their back. In sum, the "Germans had taken everything they could every chance they got."[385]

There are also several local, smaller camps that are described in this group of sources. For example, in Leśno, which Irena Sikorska describes being taken through. She describes being taken to a school in the center of the town. In it, two other mothers were already present with small children, all of which were crying. The mothers and grandmothers were made to give a lot of information to the German authorities, for

[383] Marta Gładyś, "Kilka kawałków ziemniaka w litrze zupy".
[384] Henryk Kwiatkowski, "Moje wojenne losy".
[385] Maria Sobocka, "Nikt nie spodziewał się przesiedlenia".

example names or valuables in their possession. Sikorska goes on to say that no food was given apart from what they hurriedly packed at home, and furthermore, that they were not allowed to leave the school, being left locked inside.[386] Andrzej Gładysz describes Dobrożyc, where all were taken to a larger estate. There Gładysz finds that there were already thirty landowning families present, listing some last names such as Prince Czartoryski and more. He further describes that being quartered there was something he saw as interesting and new as a seven-year-old boy. Although, as families were not given beds, with only straw to sleep on and a board of wood to separate from other families, the six weeks were for him "the worst of the war." He adds that kids did not have to do anything, while mothers were made to cook, and fathers were made to do physical labour such as cutting down trees. He recalls from his father's memoir, that one day a German aristocrat arrived at the camp as a visitor. This aristocrat negatively commented about his German nation upon seeing the Prince Czartoryski being made to cut down a tree.[387] This primary source not only adds nuance, showing that some of the richest of Polish aristocrats had different treatments from the average forcibly displaced Pole, but also provides a window into the opinions of certain groups of Germans.

Two sources reveal the same experience in the town of Gostyń. Jan Bobkiewicz describes how all the forcibly displaced were gathered together, first in the parish hall, then later in the monastery on Święta Góra. They were taken by horse–drawn wagons procured from a local miller, named Klempel. In this monastery they underwent a strip search by "young Germans wearing yellow" who were "looking for money" trying to convince the group of Poles by saying that they would find it one way or another, so the

[386] Irena Sikorska, "Wspomnienia".
[387] Andrzej Gładysz, "Przeżywaliśmy każde przyjście 'Jędrusiów'".

Poles "ought to just give it to them."[388] He would then be taken directly to the GG. Mieczysław Hejnowicz, taken around the same day describes how over the three days, more and more people were taken to the monastery. Everyone had to sleep on *sienniki*, that is straw mattresses. He adds that there was a fear and complete lack of information on what would happen next (in the context of the public mass execution of thirty locals less than one month before). Eventually all were taken as a huge group (Hejnowicz estimates up to two thousand, although the typical train sizes would imply a number closer to one thousand) through Gostyń and onto a long train to Łódź where they would not be processed in the camp, but instead given food by locals before being taken further to the GG.[389]

In conclusion, following the accounts of this set of primary sources answers many questions not answered in the available secondary sources. In particular, it is possible, in greater detail, to see the on-the-ground Polish understanding of the humiliating strip searches and the separation to forced labor and for germanization. It is possible to follow different individuals through their first days in the camp, as well as through how a typical day would look. The primary sources reveal the complex and difficult decisions they had to make, in battling the cold, the lack of food, hygiene, and medicine in greater variety than the secondary sources describe. Their responses and resistance are seen through interactions with guards, beatings, and terror, but also their resilience, faith, and unity through these repressions. Finally, in their own words, the specific information the camp-dwellers had is revealed, and how they used this information to navigate through the impossible situation they were forced into.

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[388] Jan Bobkiewicz, "O szóstej rano zapukali do drzwi znajomi Niemcy".
[389] Mieczysław Hejnowicz, "Gostyń był zszokowany tym mordem".

TRAIN JOURNEY

The final section of this MRP will describe the train journey of the forcibly displaced to the GG. For some, it was a deathly forced march, which they spend considerable time describing, while for others, this was an undescribed aspect of their experience. Andrzej Gładysz summarizes the spirit of the experience as so:

> After six weeks, we found out that we have to pack up because wagons will be prepared. We were picked up and taken to the Koźmin station. There we were loaded into [train] wagons that were parked there, cattle wagons, and from there we went to Małopolska. We arrived, I remember, [in] a small town – Ryki – it is near Warszawa. There, all the families were unloaded and they [the Germans] told us, 'Do what you want now, make for yourselves a [new] life among your fellow Poles [among your own kind]'.[390]

After this each family found help and lodgings with locals, and after a number of weeks started to look for jobs and a new life. While this is the general experience of the forcibly displaced: taken by train, dumped in the GG at the mercy of locals' help, and slowly building a new life, there are so many unique stories and nuances that complicated the new reality. For some it was marginally better, whereas for most it was far worse.

The secondary sources also describe the train rides to the GG; Wardzyńska gives some details, however, Rutowska is the most descriptive. Rutherford only approaches the subject through the perspective of logistical lessons learned by the German bureaucracy. The trains used were overwhelmingly cargo trains – and around one thousand Poles or more would be pushed into them at about forty per wagon, so that there was barely any

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[390] Andrzej Gładysz, "Przeżywaliśmy każde przyjście 'Jędrusiów'"; "po sześciu tygodniach dowiadujemy się że mamy się pakować bo będą podstawione takie lory wiejskie. Podstawiono i wszystkich nas odstawiono na dworzec do Koźmina. Tam nas załadowane w wagony które tam stały, takie bydlęce wagony i stamtąd pojechaliśmy do Małopolski. Wylądowaliśmy pamiętam mała miejscowość – Ryki – to jest niedaleko Warszawy. Tam wszystkie rodziny zostały rozładowane i powiedzieli nam [Niemcy] róbcie sobie teraz co chcecie, szukajcie sobie bytu wśród Waszych Polaków."

space to sit.[391] Rutherford describes that the German bureaucracy had to enforce that no more than one thousand be fit, as large death rate statistics reached their desks.[392] Rutowska counters that these and other new German rules did not improve the conditions of the forcibly displaced according to the memoirs, and is more descriptive using memoirs to describe the experiences of Poles in these trains.[393] Due to delays and track issues, the train rides sometimes lasted more than two weeks, all with inadequate food and little to no water, no sanitation – dirty conditions in trains, but more importantly a lack of bathroom facilities – in the rare (non-daily) stops Poles would be forced to relieve themselves in plain view of others and German guards, as those who tried to escape would have been executed. The combination of a lack of food and water, no sanitation, freezing cold in winter or extreme heat in summer, and long trip times without opening wagons led to the deaths of a significant percentage of Poles.[394] Wardzyńska provides an approximate death rate for the train rides, at 30 for 1000, showing that this was clearly a death march.[395] This only represents an average, as an individual from the German bureaucracy reported an individual over-packed train rides causing one hundred fatalities,[396] while a Polish railway worker reported a train transport, in the winter frost was sent in open coal cars, with half the occupants freezing to death.[397]

It is important to note that the particular brutality of German guards, the freezing cold winters or exceedingly hot summers, the lack of bathrooms, food, or water, all

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[391] Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty*, 153, 199.
[392] Phillip T. Rutherford, *Prelude to the Final Solution*, 101; Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty*, 204.
[393] Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty*, 206.
[394] Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty*, 157, 197, 206-208, 214; Phillip T. Rutherford, *Prelude to the Final Solution*, 100, 152, 188.
[395] Maria Wardzyńska, *Wysiedlenia Ludności Polskiej z Okupowanych Ziem Polskich*, 38.
[396] Phillip T. Rutherford, *Prelude to the Final Solution*, 101.
[397] Polish Ministry of Information, *The Black Book of Poland*, 195.

contributed to the sheer difficulty of the situation. Another important observation to make is that, as in previous sections of this MRP, not every primary source in this set describes this part at all. From the other perspective, it is also notable to note how Rutherford highlights, when he describes the train rides: "to outsiders and victims, looked horrible efficiency, but to perpetrators every stage had complications and was rife with inefficiency."[398] While the conditions were designed to be dehumanizing and brutal to the Poles, it is also important to note that a degree of German incompetence and inefficiency also worked to make the experience more difficult for the Poles to endure.

While many of the sources only describe the trains in a few details, it is worth looking at some of the longer descriptions in their fullness. Bernard Bachorski, for example, talks about how he had to wait for six to eight hours for the train to go after all the Poles were loaded up onto it. The unheated train car took hours to finally heat up by their own breaths. He was lucky as the trip that he describes as "very long," was also "uneventful." The young narrator remembers stops where the train was unhooked from the cars; he remembers crying and hiding in his mother's dress. Seventy-five at the time of the interview, he admits that his eight-year-old memory was not great, but that he remembers hunger most of all, as during the trip there was no food given and no way to get any.[399] Marian Kretkowski describes a similar journey. He particularly draws attention to the cold, that is, the minus forty degree Celsius conditions of February/March 1940. His journey was more difficult, being put into cattle cars, into the extreme cold, with no food or water given to them at all for the six-day journey. The only available water was at the infrequent train stops, when every Pole would run to the water pumps (of

[398] Phillip T. Rutherford, *Prelude to the Final Solution,* 88.
[399] Bernard Bachorski, "Zupki były gorące, nie wiadomo z czego".

questionable sanitariness) at the various stations, although even then, Germans did not permit this sometimes, according to Kretkowski. He emphasizes that this small amount of water was *all* they could get.[400]

Stanisław Janiec has more to say on the matter. He sets the scene, with a train being brought to the camp on December 4, 1939. It consisted of mostly cattle cars and one passenger train only. The narrator remarks that this passenger train car was likely for older people, and while some Polish passengers would be able to use it, the secondary sources remark that its purpose was for the German guards. Regardless, Janiec's family was placed altogether in one cattle car, where he says about thirty people in total were made to fit in the car. As the people were loaded, two buckets were placed inside as a bathroom, as well as three water cans for hot coffee. The train car was then locked from the outside with barbed wiring (*drut*). The narrator, then twelve years old, remembers hugging the hot water can of coffee and falling asleep – upon waking up he was hugging a cold water can. He adds that the train journey was not direct, instead having many stops and going the long way around. Finally, on the fourth day at 2 am, on the night of December 4-5, they all arrived at Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski.[401] It is noticeable that the narrator, ninety years old at the time of the interview, likely misremembered the dates, but the rest of the details line up with the secondary sources and so, are trustworthy and accurate.

Finally, Marian Fellman describes a very large (long) train. What he describes appears to be a modified cargo train with a dozen or so wagons, instead of the typical cattle cars, which most other primary sources in the set used for this MRP describe.

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[400] Marian Kretkowski, "We wkładki miałem wszyte złote marki".
[401] Stanisław Janiec, "W nocy biegały po nas szczury".

Inside these cargo trains, there were benches made from boards, so that more people would fit. Fellman was lucky, as he could sit on the bench the entire trip. He says that his trip was from the December 11 to 12 (1939). The largest problem was the temperature as it was minus eighteen degrees Celsius the first day, and the next day in the GG it was already minus twenty-two Celsius. The train trip path was not direct as the first stop is said to be in the city of Piotrków Trybunalski, where Fellman says that they made to wait for hours in the train on a sidetrack for an entire afternoon, because they learned that the city "was not prepared to accept such a large group of forcibly displaced people." He remembers that during this long stop in extreme cold, the mothers of young children and infants wanted to get hot water for the children. Around noon he learned that all on the train would be moved to another town. Fellman speculates that there were phone calls to other cities to see who would be able to take them. Częstochowa ended up being the city to take the group. Back in the train, two kids, including Fellman's five-year-old brother were frozen. He describes the wall of the train as that of a refrigerator, with a five-centimeter wall of ice. There were fifty-three people cramped in the train car, so many were forced against the ice wall which was created from the breathing. In his words, his brother was literally frozen to the wall in the blanket. He also had heard that two infants had died as a result of the fierce cold.[402] It is worth noting that the two longest accounts were from narrators who were twelve and thirteen respectively, while the two shorter accounts were from narrators who were seven and eight respectively. The primary sources that have far less information are on average much younger.

[402] Marian Fellman, "Koc od sąsiadki był z nami całą wojnę".

Upon looking at the train journey as a whole, it is now worth examining more deeply into how the set of primary sources describe the entire experience step by step. For example, the escort from the camp to the train station is fairly well detailed. Stanisław Czabański writes about how after about three weeks in the temporary transit camp in Łódź, a group, including him, was forced to walk several kilometers to trains. They were escorted by guards with dogs and then loaded into freight trains with forty to a train wagon.[403] Kazimierz Roszak, also leaving the same camp, adds that when he was taken to the station, on December 5, his group was forced to wait for the train in the cold for hours. In addition, all the men received beatings "as a going away gift."[404] Jan Bobkiewicz conveys a similar experience, despite not being taken to through the Łódź camp, but instead gathered in Gostyń and later in a monastery on Święta Góra. He describes a cold December day – the eighth. Similarly to how he was evicted from his home, once again he was taken by horse-drawn wagons (*furmanki*), but this time to the train station. The train was already ready, with passenger trains which the people were placed inside. He describes the Germans as very brutal, yelling at people to get on the train faster. He adds that he and many others were forced to leave all their belongings (luggage) if they were unable to easily carry them onto the train. He later says that much of it was lost and never recovered.[405] Bernard Bachorski remembers the walk through Łódź to the train station at night, under escort of the *Wehrmacht*, to the sidetracks. He says that the train was completely frozen over and that the Germans had to use some

[403] Stanisław Czabański, "Opowieść o Wysiedleniu".
[404] Kazimierz Roszak, "Wysiedlenie do Generalnej Guberni".
[405] Jan Bobkiewicz, "O szóstej rano zapukali do drzwi znajomi Niemcy".

machines to defrost it enough to open the door. It had passenger trains, but they were so overfilled that they could not fit all the people.[406]

The description of the train, its cars, and the train ride differ based on the type of train, age of the narrator, length of the ride, and season or weather. Most were taken in cattle cars, others in cargo trains which at times were equally bad but could sometimes have benches to sit on which was an immense improvement to the cattle cars, finally some were lucky enough to be taken in passenger cars of the train. It appears that most trains had passenger cars at the front for German personnel, which some Poles could sit in the back of. The sources disproportionately have this experience with very young narrators, implying that in some cases, mothers with small children would be given this mercy of being allowed into the passenger car. While disproportionate, it is still rare. This is the case for Stanisław Chmielewski, who describes that the train he was taken to was a cargo train but that he and his family were allowed into front passenger car.[407] This is likely due to luck and surely due to the young age of Chmielewski at the time – nine. Marta Gładyś also was in the heated cars and adds that sometimes, people from the unheated train cars would come to warm up.[408] Finally, Anna Muszyńska-Kobacka summarizes the experience as a "third class ticket" where children were not counted and not given a seat.[409] It appeared common that small children were expected to be on their parents', their mothers' specifically, laps the whole ride, even for days. And although she did not remember it herself, based off family stories, Iwona Ponikowska provides a typical description of a very tight train ride, with only a small space on the floor for each

[406] Bernard Bachorski, "Zupki były gorące, nie wiadomo z czego".
[407] Stanisław Chmielewski, "Wysiedlenie".
[408] Marta Gładyś, "Kilka kawałków ziemniaka w litrze zupy".
[409] Anna Muszyńska-Kobacka, "Wsadzili nas do wagonu trzeciej klasy".

person. An exhausting trip, with mothers heating up bottles by holding them up to their bodies to feed infants, only improvising pillows for kids. In her words, the Germans paid no care to infants, pregnant women, or the elderly.[410]

And even these experiences could be considered lucky as those not in passenger cars had it significantly more difficult. Maciej Bąkowski and his family, after a month in the Poznań camp, were transported in trains in late February in the bitter cold. The way he describes the train cars appears similar to Marian Fellman – they appear to be cargo trains with benches built in to maximize space for people with luggage.[411] Henryka Maciejewska says only that it was a cargo train, with straw on the ground for them, once again.[412] The cattle cars appear to be the worst by far.

Aleksander Śmigielski, in attempting to remember his grandfather's story of forcible displacement, states that the cattle cars were for men and passenger cars for women. While this is not corroborated in any other primary source, Rutherford mentions that there was a general separation of men from women and children, and later during the Second Nahplan, in an attempt to lower the deathrate, only when possible, women and children would be placed in passenger cars.[413] Since Śmigielski's grandfather was likely forcibly displaced before the Second Nahplan, it is also possible instead that he was offered a seat in a passenger car due to his age but gave it up for someone else.[414] Those who do describe the cattle cars do so in varying detail, as if the experience is self-explanatory and too difficult to return to the trauma of it. Kazimierz Sakowski writes

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[410] Iwona Ponikowska, "Poznaniacy wysiedleni do Generalnej Guberni – na Zamojszczyznę".
[411] Maciej Bąkowski, "Gdy przyszli gestapowcy, ze strachu zwymiotowałem".
[412] Henryka Maciejewska, "W Jędrzejowie pierwszy raz zobaczyłam Żydów".
[413] Phillip T. Rutherford, *Prelude to the Final Solution*, 85, 115.
[414] Aleksander Śmigielski, "Na Śrem zrzucili trzy bomby".

about the train ride to Łódź, in cattle cars with no food, water, or toilets. He would describe it as a torment and go into some detail as to the brutality of the German guards, which will be elaborated on later.[415] Jan Korzybski does not reveal much more than that they were packed into cattle trains with barbed wire around small windows.[416] Zbigniew Grześkowiak does not remember much but adds that he too was taken on cattle cars.[417]

It is worth comparing the estimates as to the capacity of the train cars of the primary sources with the secondary sources. To start, Jan Bobkiewicz, ten at the time of forced displacement, remembers that the train was like a toy for him – standing his head touched the ceiling.[418] Józef Szofer adds that everyone had to stand, as there were fifty men to a car. [419] Barbara Pazoła adds that it was so tight in the train, and so impossible to breathe in it, that she has claustrophobia to this day in trains and elevators.[420] Rutowska confirms this, citing a memoir where a train was packed so tight that apart from two stops those locked inside had to stand for three days and two nights in the cold and with no food.[421] Henryk Kwiatkowski and Maria Sobocka both estimate the group of forcibly displaced to be about twelve hundred. Sobocka even adding that there were twenty-two wagons, with as many people placed inside as physically possible, and even mail being transported in some wagons.[422] Rutherford confirms these estimates, writing that while the Germans would later have orders to put no more than one thousand Poles into a transport, at the start of the forced displacements there were more forced inside, at

[415] Kazimierz Sakowski, "Wspomnienia".
[416] Jan Korzybski, "Wysiedlenia – wspólne doświadczenie narodów".
[417] Zbigniew Grześkowiak, "Hitlerowiec uderzył w twarz, normalna sprawa".
[418] Jan Bobkiewicz, "O szóstej rano zapukali do drzwi znajomi Niemcy".
[419] Józef Szofer, "Chcieli i mnie wywieźć z Żydami 'na mydło'".
[420] Barbara Pazoła, "Po zupę na końcu, żeby była gęsta".
[421] Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty*, 203.
[422] Henryk Kwiatkowski, "Moje wojenne losy"; Maria Sobocka, "Nikt nie spodziewał się przesiedlenia".

numbers near eleven or twelve hundred.[423] Rutowska confirms that there were approximately forty people per train wagon, with twenty to thirty wagons per train.[424]

The length and path of the train journey of course varied by each account. It is necessary to note that in the secondary source literature, Rutherford discusses the challenges the transport leaders faced, with Polish railway workers feigning incompetence and sabotaging railway schedules and how attempts to streamline the process led to conflicts between Warthegau and GG authorities.[425] The hope of the Polish railway workers had been to save at least some of their countrymen from the forced displacements by delaying the trains as much as possible.[426] Rutowska adds that the first trip took eighty hours, while subsequent trips only twenty.[427] In this context, Mieczysław Hejnowicz has the shortest trip, estimating about an eight-hour train ride to Łódź.[428] Kazimierz Sakowski describes an all-day ride starting at night and ending the next night.[429] Jan Korzybski too had a trip which was all night and until noon.[430] Kazimierz Sakowski's trip was longer, at about two to three days.[431] Józef Szofer, similarly rode for three days and three nights in a cargo train, as did Maria Sobocka, Maciej Bąkowski, Marta Gładyś.[432] Marta Gładyś describes how her sick little brother was laying behind her and her family, and that the train took the long way around as they only rode on the railways that were clear. The train went first to Gniezno and only then to the south of

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[423] Phillip T. Rutherford, *Prelude to the Final Solution*, 91.
[424] Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty*, 153.
[425] Phillip T. Rutherford, *Prelude to the Final Solution*, 92-94.
[426] Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty*, 201.
[427] Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty*, 154.
[428] Mieczysław Hejnowicz, "Gostyń był zszokowany tym mordem".
[429] Kazimierz Sakowski, "Wspomnienia".
[430] Jan Korzybski, "Wysiedlenia – wspólne doświadczenie narodów".
[431] Kazimierz Sakowski, "Wspomnienia".
[432] Józef Szofer, "Chcieli i mnie wywieźć z Żydami 'na mydło'"; Maria Sobocka, "Nikt nie spodziewał się przesiedlenia"; Maciej Bąkowski, "Gdy przyszli gestapowcy, ze strachu zwymiotowałem"; Marta Gładyś, "Kilka kawałków ziemniaka w litrze zupy".

Poland as its destination. To her, it felt like that train would seemingly go for five minutes and stop for two hours.[433] Halina and Dorota Koszczyńskie provide more detail about their convoluted train journey. They were first sent to Częstochowa and later to Radom, where they got off and were greeted and helped by locals who organized from the Marian (*Mariacki*) Church. There was quite a bit of confusion, as they were told to get off by the locals allegedly, as the train would go on to Warszawa.[434] Jan Bobkiewicz similarly discussed how the people did not know where they were going. The train had left around noon, passed through Leszno, stopped in Łódź where people were allowed disembark to get water, and then the train would go on through other smaller towns.[435]

This leads to the question of what information did the Poles have? As before, Stanisław Czabański and Teodor Stasiak both bring up the theme, or notion, of "going into the unknown."[436] Stanisław Chmielewski similarly adds that "nobody knew the destination of the train; the Germans onboard the passenger car refused to give any information." It was only during a longer stop a few dozen kilometers from the destination that it was revealed.[437] Jan Korzybski writes that he and others had no knowledge of the destination while riding, and that they were "sealed off with no information."[438] Henryk Kwiatkowski also had an unknown destination in the moment, but writes that the only way that the train riders could know where they were was by reading train station names as they passed by. This must not have been easy on his nightly

[433] Marta Gładyś, "Kilka kawałków ziemniaka w litrze zupy".
[434] Halina i Dorota Koszczyńskie, "Gestapowcy pozwolili nam się pomodlić".
[435] Jan Bobkiewicz, "O szóstej rano zapukali do drzwi znajomi Niemcy".
[436] Stanisław Czabański, "Opowieść o Wysiedleniu", Teodor Stasiak, *Wspomnienia lat 1940-1945*.
[437] Stanisław Chmielewski, "Wysiedlenie".
[438] Jan Korzybski, "Wysiedlenia – wspólne doświadczenie narodów".

journey.[439] Alina Wiciak and Henryka Maciejewska both simply add that they did not know where they were going.[440] Jadwiga Cicha was taken by cattle cars for either two or three days. She comments that it was as if the Germans did not know what to do with the people. She seems to have overheard conversations between Germans who considered just "dumping" the people in an open field somewhere despite the intense cold. The train arrived at numerous different places, including Warszawa.[441] The only primary source which diverges from this trend is Benigna Owczarczak. All others are silent or explicitly admitting to not knowing the destination of the train trip. She, instead, implies that she knew the original destination when she says that they arrived at Tarnobrzeg on Palm Sunday, but that they were originally meant to ride to Rzeszów if not for the fact that plans had changed. This foreknowledge of the destination is not in other memoirs.[442]

Apart from the physical description of the train and the information they had, the primary sources also discuss the sheer heat or cold, the lack of food and water, as well as the lack of a bathroom for the entire train ride. Stanisław Chmielewski was lucky that the passenger car he rode in was overheated during the *winter of the century*.[443]Marta Gładyś remarks that not all trains were heated, but that they got lucky with a heated one as her youngest brother was sick and the camp doctor could not give them more than an aspirin.[444] Maria Sobocka also says this, and secondary sources confirm, that very few were heated.[445] Rutowska confirms this, by describing the freezing conditions, and how

[439] Henryk Kwiatkowski, "Moje wojenne losy".
[440] Alina Wiciak, "Pozwolili mi zabrać tylko misia"; Henryka Maciejewska, "W Jędrzejowie pierwszy raz zobaczyłam Żydów".
[441] Jadwiga Cicha, "Przyjechaliśmy do Płochocina w wielki mróz".
[442] Benigna Owczarczak, "Wy pójdziecie trzecim transportem".
[443] Stanisław Chmielewski, "Wysiedlenie".
[444] Marta Gładyś, "Kilka kawałków ziemniaka w litrze zupy".
[445] Maria Sobocka, "Nikt nie spodziewał się przesiedlenia".

many were made to wait outside in the cold for hours in minus thirty degrees Celsius weather.[446] Maria Sobocka says that no food was given,[447] with Anna Muszyńska-Kobacka adding that there was no food apart from what they already had.[448] Stanisław Czabański was given food, which was left in the train cars, but all they found were forty moldy loaves of bread and no water.[449] Marta Gładyś appears to be the luckiest, having received "a bit of bread" and "maybe margarine too."[450] Rutowska confirms the amount of food, by writing that the official rule was changed from having two days' worth of food to ten days', but that this was never implemented in practice.[451]

Virtually all the sources complained of a lack of water, with Maria Sobocka stating that it was the biggest problem that they faced.[452] Józef Szofer also describes having very limited water and only an improvised bathroom in the corner of the train car.[453] Barbara Pazoła elaborates on the problem that the lack of bathrooms caused. She first only glosses over the train rides, but prompted by the interviewer, returns to add more detail. In her first description, she discussed how she and all her siblings suffered from severe diarrhea from the food given in the camps, to the point that shortly after arriving in the GG, her eldest brother passed away due to dysentery. Given how frequent the reports of diarrhea are, many more likely would have died and this would not reach or be included in the German statistics of camp deaths. To add, Pazoła herself had her own medical complications as a direct result of the camp, suffering from anemia for ten years

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[446] Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty*, 157.
[447] Maria Sobocka, "Nikt nie spodziewał się przesiedlenia".
[448] Anna Muszyńska-Kobacka, "Wsadzili nas do wagonu trzeciej klasy".
[449] Stanisław Czabański, "Opowieść o Wysiedleniu".
[450] Marta Gładyś, "Kilka kawałków ziemniaka w litrze zupy".
[451] Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty*, 153.
[452] Maria Sobocka, "Nikt nie spodziewał się przesiedlenia".
[453] Józef Szofer, "Chcieli i mnie wywieźć z Żydami 'na mydło'".

after, ending only around her sixteenth birthday. When prompted, she adds more details about the train ride itself:

> ‘So, what did this transport look like? Two more sentences.’
> So in the cattle [wagons], I only remember that I kept raising my head (looks upward showing in what way she did it) because it was so stuffy. I couldn't breathe, and so to this day I'm afraid to even enter the elevator, and when I do, I feel claustrophobic because we were so packed together (when we were on the train), right? People were relieving themselves there, it smelled so bad. Mommy had a potty with her, and if any child wanted to [use it], then later they threw it [the excrement] out the window, but she [the mother] could not serve everyone [in the train car] with that potty, right? And everyone had diarrhea.[454]

This quote alone, once again shows the value in allowing the primary sources to speak for themselves. Rutowska confirms this information, writing that there were frequent stops but the doors were rarely unlocked. When they were allowed out, they were forced to defecate thirty meters from the train, steps from one another, in plain view of the guards who pointed rifles at everyone to ensure that nobody would escape.[455]

There are a number of other key elements of the train ride that are worth a more detailed look. Stops, for example, are described in different ways. Anna Muszyńska-Kobacka, for example, appears to be in a cargo or passenger car, and she describes how during stops, everyone was kicked out to use a bathroom, because in the train it was impossible to.[456] This is contrasted by Alina Wiciak, who says that at some stations, only women and children were let out and given hot food (during the cold winter), while men

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[454] Barbara Pazoła, “Po zupę na końcu, żeby była gęsta”; ‘To jak ten transport wyglądał? Jeszcze dwa zdania.’
“To tymi bydlęcymi [wagonami] ja to pamiętam tylko tyle że stale unosiłam głowę, bo mi było tak duszno. Nie mogłam oddychać, to do dzisiaj boje się wejść nawet do windy, a jak wchodzę to mam takie uczucie klaustrofobii, bo ściśnięci (byliśmy w pociągu), nie? Ludzie się tam załatwiali, tak śmierdziało. Mamusia miała nocniczek ze sobą, jak któreś dziecko chciało to potem przez okienko to wyrzucali, no ale wszystkich nie mogła tym nocniczkiem obsłużyć, nie? A wszyscy to biegunkę…”
[455] Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności Polskiej z Kraju Warty*, 214.
[456] Anna Muszyńska-Kobacka, “Wsadzili nas do wagonu trzeciej klasy”.

were forced to stay in the train, surrounded by many guards.[457] Finally, Marta Gładyś has the opposite experience, where there would be some stops where they were able to leave the train, but that only her father would go and he would be the one to bring water from the outside which the family would then put on the radiator to heat it up. It is unclear if there was some kind of pump at the station or if the father simply brought snow, but this is what they drank to survive.[458] And so, it is likely that rules changed and evolved over time and were selectively enforced by the guards present, with some being relatively lenient and others even more strict.

As in the camp section, it is worth analyzing whether locals provided any help to the train riders. The only source which directly answers this is Stanisław Czabański, who describes that as the train passed Warszawa, at one station "people," likely locals, passed water and fruits through the tight, barbed-wire-covered window of the train.[459] It was likely much more difficult to help the forcibly displaced in this part of the experience, as, in addition to the usual difficulties of helping, there were no ways of knowing where and when the trains would arrive. This is a stark difference to the camps which were stationary and stood for weeks or months, giving locals more time and resources to try to organize help.

Some attention also needs to be given to the more gruesome aspects of the experience. As the secondary sources show, death was a common occurrence on the train rides, even in German underrepresented statistics.[460] Barbara Pazoła, directly continuing from the quotation above, says that "when we were traveling, if there was a station/stop,

[457] Alina Wiciak, "Pozwolili mi zabrać tylko misia".
[458] Marta Gładyś, "Kilka kawałków ziemniaka w litrze zupy".
[459] Stanisław Czabański, "Opowieść o Wysiedleniu".
[460] Phillip T. Rutherford, *Prelude to the Final Solution*, 101-2.

then those who had died/fallen were thrown out (presumably by Germans) onto the platform and the train continued on."[461] It is clear that the most basic dignity was not given to the forcibly displaced Poles. This is seen even more so in the brutality of the following two scenes. Józef Szofer remembers that at one point, the Germans had come in and asked if there were any teachers aboard. They promised that they would be returned or left in the village, but instead they were gunned down, although this is not directly witnessed by Szofer.[462] The strongest example from this set of primary sources comes from Kazimierz Sakowski who describes the train conditions as torment. In his group specifically, there were several attempted escapes, which all ended in failure. The gendarmerie was on high alert and shot all those attempting to escape. The bodies of "young boys" who tried to escape were dragged along by the train as a warning to anyone who dared try again.[463]

This brutality needs to be countered with the few positive stories of solidarity among the forcibly displaced that exist from this low moment. Teodor Stasiak is a good example of a resilience to this brutality. While being transported, they were told that each family would be getting a farm, but as they did not know whether this promise would be fulfilled, or in what state the farms would be in, his neighbour suggested a pact in the train, between three local families, to help one another. This help proved life-saving, as only one of the three families was given a farm that was remotely livable, and it took the

[461] Barbara Pazoła, "Po zupę na końcu, żeby była gęsta"; "to to, a jak jechaliśmy to jak był gdzieś tam stacja/przystanek, to Ci co pomarli/upadli wyrzucali (Niemcy?) na peron i jechał pociąg dalej."
[462] Józef Szofer, "Chcieli i mnie wywieźć z Żydami 'na mydło'".
[463] Kazimierz Sakowski, "Wspomnienia".

work of all the families to survive.[464] Another example, this time of daring resistance, comes from Anna Muszyńska-Kobacka.

> At some point we arrived in Włocławek. They threw everyone out onto the platform again and I don't know which of my parents thought of it, anyway, aha, my mother begged for coffee from some SS man, but for it to be fortified with something. So, the SS man fortified it with rum, and this coffee was given to me. Of course, if you give a five-year-old starving child coffee with rum, the effect is, so to speak, predictable. I lost consciousness, my father took me in his arms and then my parents went to the Germans and asked if they could go to the field and bury the child because it had died. Well, the German graciously agreed to it, so my father took me in his arms, my mother took the cart with my younger sister and all our stuff, they went to the field, [and] they were there until the train started moving. Because people were only released from the trains for a short while. When the train left, my parents returned to the station, and what next, they decided that they would board the first train that came, but the train had to be either to Warsaw, where my father's older brother lived, or to Lublin, where my father's younger brother lived. Well, the train to Warsaw arrived first, so we got on there, we arrived in Warsaw, and it was actually Christmas Eve.[465]

She then added an anecdote about how her father's sister-in-law was not too pleased of the unexpected Christmas guests, and they only spent three days before renting different rooms for themselves. This story stands alone as a unique escape from the forced displacement, in stark contrast to the many who were gunned down for trying to escape.

A different attempt at resistance is described by Marian Fellman. Initially, his family had counted on being "reclaimed" as his father was an employee in the legal

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[464] Teodor Stasiak, *Wspomnienia lat 1940-1945*.

[465] Anna Muszyńska-Kobacka, "Wsadzili nas do wagonu trzeciej klasy"; "w pewnym momencie przyjechaliśmy do Włocławka. Znowu wyrzucili wszystkich na peron i nie wiem komu z rodziców to przyszło do głowy, w każdym bądź razie, aha, od jakiegoś SS-Mana, matka wyżebrała kawę, ale żeby była czymś wzmocniona. Więc SS-man wzmocnił rumem, i tą kawę dano mnie. Oczywiście jak pięcioletniemu dziecku wygłodzonemu da się kawę z rumem, to efekt jest, że tak powiem, godny do przewidzenia. Ja straciłam przytomność, ojciec wziął mnie na ręce i wtedy rodzice poszli do Niemców z zapytaniem czy mogli mnie pójść na pole i pochować dziecko, bo umarło. No Niemiec się łaskawie na to zgodził, no więc ojciec mnie wziął na ręce, matka wzięła wózek z młodszą siostra z całym naszym kramem, poszli na to pole, byli na tym polu tak długo, aż pociąg nie ruszył. Bo to długo nie trwało to wypuszczanie ludzi. Jak pociąg ruszył, rodzice wrócili na stacje, no i co dalej, postanowili, że wsiądą do pierwszego pociągu, który się zjawi, z tym że pociąg ten musi być albo do Warszawy gdzie mieszka starszy brat ojca, albo pociąg do Lublina gdzie mieszka młodszy brat ojca. No pierwszy przyjechał pociąg do Warszawy, no więc tam wsiedliśmy, przyjechaliśmy do Warszawy to była akurat Wigilia."

administration of Poland, and according to Fellman, there was a list given to reclaim employees. But Fellman's father was informed the Gestapo was still looking for him and not yet on his trail. Evidently, the bureaucracies were unable to communicate at such an organized level. As many of his father's friends who took part in the Uprising had already been taken to a camp on Żabików[466] and were killed there according to Fellman. As a result, in order to escape the Gestapo, his father asked the "Polish commandant of the camp" when the next transport was, hoping to be on the next one out. They succeeded and left two days later at night.[467]

The last major question to answer, which is not well attested to in the secondary sources in any detail, is the destination of the train rides. Secondary sources answer roughly where the forcibly displaced were taken, and what they may be met with, but allowing these primary sources to speak reveals an important extension to the story. In terms of where they ended up, it of course varies, as most towns and villages were quickly overwhelmed by the large transports and began refusing to accept more, and so the Germans had to disperse the forcibly displaced further and further. Marta Gładyś attests that the destination was Miechowa in the Małopolska region,[468] Benigna Owczarczak was sent to Tarnobrzeg arriving on Palm Sunday,[469] Jan Jankowski says only that they were taken into the Lubelski region to a specific town named Frampol,[470] Zbigniew Grześkowiak eventually arrived in Opoczno (east of Piotrków Tryb),[471] and finally Irena Sikorska was sent to Tomaszów Mazowiecki in a trip that lasted under

[466] This was a concentration camp for participants in uprising, according to the narrator.
[467] Marian Fellman, "Koc od sąsiadki był z nami całą wojnę".
[468] Marta Gładyś, "Kilka kawałków ziemniaka w litrze zupy".
[469] Benigna Owczarczak, "Wy pójdziecie trzecim transportem".
[470] Jan Jankowski, "Żyliśmy z kartek z niemieckich koszar".
[471] Zbigniew Grześkowiak, "Hitlerowiec uderzył w twarz, normalna sprawa".

twenty-four hours. Teodor Stasiak and his family trip ended up in Garwolin, south of Warszawa.[472] When they arrived there, they were greeted and helped by locals who took many people into their homes.[473]

This was the typical scene of arriving at the final destination – either locals would accept families into their homes giving one or two of the rooms depending on how much space they had. Alternatively, if there were empty homes in a town or village, displaced families would be given them by allotment, although given limited supply they were often made to share them with other displaced families. There were also complications in the organization of the quarterings. This was the case for Ewa Czarkowska's family, as her father had promised to help another family earlier in the Poznań camp and so, he made sure all the people were taken to their new hosts first, causing Czarkowska's family to not get a host as their original host was accidentally double-booked.[474] The arrival could look differently in larger towns and cities. Marian Fellman recalls how in Częstochowa, they were greeted by, according to the Fellman: oddly enough, Polish police. The group of forcibly displaced were taken to the Cathedral[475] where the displaced were given a warm meal: a "very tasty" soup and could see the list of where they would be quartered.[476] Compared to the food given in the camps, even a regular soup in Częstochowa must have tasted heavenly. Mieczysław Hejnowicz was also given a

[472] Teodor Stasiak, *Wspomnienia lat 1940-1945*.
[473] Irena Sikorska, "Wspomnienia".
[474] Ewa Czarkowska, "W Radomsku przyjęli nas serdecznie".
[475] He clarifies that they were not sent to the famous monastery on Jasna Góra, but instead to the Częstochowa Cathedral.
[476] Marian Fellman, "Koc od sąsiadki był z nami całą wojnę".

soup by local Łódź residents, although this was only a short stop on the trip, before he was ultimately taken to Wilkowice near Rawa Mazowiecka.[477]

Longer, more painful journeys were common as the towns closest to the train stations filled up with the forcibly displaced and so further journeys after the agonizing train rides were common. Henryk Kwiatkowski is one such example, as his transport, estimated by him as about twelve hundred forcibly displaced, were later taken by sled to a smaller town the next afternoon. There they received a warm meal and were distributed into local households. Kwiatkowski's family was lucky, and due to his family's size, they were given to a farming family in a forty-two-hectare farm owned by a father and son.[478] Zbigniew Kowalski also has a unique story. After two days of train travel followed by travelling on a horse-drawn wagon, the forcibly displaced were given food by what Kowalski called the "Polish army under supervision of Germans." After two weeks they were sent across local villages to make a life for themselves.[479] Marta Gładyś describes that condition of those who survived, saying that many people went straight to the hospital with frostbite.[480]

Barbara Pazoła had a more difficult journey, relating that the cattle trains only took them so far. While sometimes the group was moved by horse-drawn wagons, she remembers so much walking, sometimes walking twelve kilometers in a day with all their things. Her mother was carrying the smallest child the whole time and would be unable to

[477] Mieczysław Hejnowicz, "Gostyń był zszokowany tym mordem".
[478] Henryk Kwiatkowski, "Moje wojenne losy".
[479] Zbigniew Kowalski, "Wysiedlenie – wspólne doświadczenie".
[480] Marta Gładyś, "Kilka kawałków ziemniaka w litrze zupy".

move her hands at the end of day.[481] These forced marches would be the most difficult part of the war for Pazoła:

> But later there were no railway tracks around, so they rushed us. They drove us (a forced march), and if any of us got weak, they were [finished off by the butt of a German rifle] and thrown into a ditch. And [the corpse would be left to] lay there. The Germans had already arrived, and we always walked like this, me and my sister holding the back of Mommy's dresses, and Grandpa held our brothers by the hand and [had] a backpack on their backs, or some sort of bundle, and that's how we walked. Those were the worst nights because the children's legs were so weak, I remember that I couldn't go on and Mommy said, 'You still have to go a little, you have to go some more.'[482]

This was October, and shortly after they made it, her older brother passed away. The constant life-saving encouragement of the exhausted mother cannot be overstated. And after being starved for weeks in the temporary transit camps, nearly killed by the conditions and length of the train rides, and now sent on a brutal forced march, the survival rate of Poles could not have been high.

Only two of the forcibly displaced report being met by "the Polish Red Cross." This was the case for Jan Korzybski who met them at the destination. There, the Polish Red Cross organized where each family would go, and the displaced were given an exclamation of relief and smiles from the Red Cross.[483] For others, it was a less enthusiastic greeting. Iwona Ponikowska's family was met by the Polish Red Cross as their transport arrived in Zamość. The Red Cross representatives explained what the forcibly displaced Poles could face: more transit camps, work camps, forced labour, and

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[481] Barbara Pazoła, "Po zupę na końcu, żeby była gęsta".
[482] Barbara Pazoła, "Po zupę na końcu, żeby była gęsta"; "Ale potem już tam nie było torów kolejowych wszędzie, to nas pędzili. Pędzili a jak któryś tam zesłabł to kolbą i do rowu. I leżał. To już Niemcy przyszli a myśmy tak szli zawsze my z siostrą za sukienki Mamusie, a Dziadek z tymi braćmi za rękę i plecak na plecach, czy tam jakiś tobołek, i tak szliśmy. To były najgorsze te nocy bo te nóżki dziecięce takie słabe, pamiętam że nie mogłam ujść a Mamusia 'jeszcze musisz trochę iść musisz jeszcze iść.'"
[483] Jan Korzybski, "Wysiedlenia – wspólne doświadczenie narodów".

what Ponikowska called "Majdanek."[484] It is unclear how much was known about the death camps at this moment in time by ordinary Poles, and how much was added into the retelling of the story after decades. The Red Cross added that no help could be given except for in extreme circumstances, for example international conventions or German family law could be called upon.[485] With people being gunned down without trials, it is unclear whether these international conventions or German family law ever helped the Poles.

For some, they would not be immediately sent to be quartered among local Poles, but instead would be kept in another temporary internment camp. This was the case for Teodor Stasiak, who relates that his journey was by train to Chełm where they were taken to another internment camp and given very little food, where the family would be kept for a week before being sent on another train trip that ended in Garwolin, south of Warszawa.[486] Iwona Ponikowska's family was also taken to one such camp where they suffered starvation. While there was no explicit threat against approaching the fence, vague repressions were hinted by the German guards, but out of necessity, Ponikowska's mother went to the fence to try to buy bread with smuggled money. There was an unwillingness of some Polish forcibly displaced prisoners to eat what the food given by the Germans due to seeing the horrific conditions of the kitchen, and yet, due to the sheer starvation, many still ate. Luckily Ponikowska's mother managed to buy loaves of bread at the fence, which considerably helped, while locals also donated food at the less

[484] Majdanek was a Nazi concentration and extermination camp built and operated by the SS on the outskirts of the city of Lublin during the German occupation.
[485] Iwona Ponikowska, "Poznaniacy wysiedleni do Generalnej Guberni – na Zamojszczyznę".
[486] Teodor Stasiak, *Wspomnienia lat 1940-1945*.

guarded points.[487] Maciej Bąkowski was not taken to a regular camp, but instead to a mental institution just outside of Kraków (although now within the city limits) that the Germans had previously "liquidated" with gas or starvation, or bullets, having all the personnel and patients killed, according to the post-war research done by Maciej Bąkowski on the Internet.[488]

Others were far luckier in where they ended up. Sabina Dobkiewicz describes that she as taken by train to Niepokalanów, near Warsaw. She does not make any mention of transit camps or strip searches, instead she spent a month in the monastery of Niepokalanów. The monks took care of them and gave them food. While there were little ways the monks could help, and everyone had to sleep on the floor, covered in their jackets, by January local people were organized and came and "brought people to work," giving the forcibly displaced employment and more permanent housing.[489] But others experienced it differently.

Alfons Korzczoł seems to have also been taken to Niepokalanów, as he explains that he was taken to Szymanów, close to Warszawa. He describes large rooms for hundreds of people where they were taken in. It was unheated, and again people were given straw to sleep on concrete. First, children and the sick were laid to rest for the night, only then would the rest go. He sets the scene: some prayed all night, while many people had given up hope. Each day, people were dying, mostly the elderly, and young children, and later pregnant women. Water was being carried in as well as whatever people could find, but many people needed help. Sickness was multiplying as fast as

[487] Iwona Ponikowska, "Poznaniacy wysiedleni do Generalnej Guberni – na Zamojszczyznę".
[488] Maciej Bąkowski, "Gdy przyszli gestapowcy, ze strachu zwymiotowałem".
[489] Sabina Dobkiewicz, "Niemcy potrafili wieszać ludzi nad torami".

burials – hunger and death was approaching. Only a handful of religious brothers helped however they could by bringing food to the camp-dwellers. Soon after, much like in the Poznań camp, a committee was formed to help those in the camp. On their twelfth day, it was Christmas Eve, a harsh winter cold terrible for all. There were attempts to take out families one at a time. And soon Korzczoł's family, too, taken to settle Brwinów, specifically in a palace that had been used as a Polish military hospital. Conditions here were similar to Szymanów, with the inside being as cold as outside, just without the wind. Sleeping again, was on straw in cold and many got sick. The Committee was trying to organize food and to take care of children, but still many of them died. The funeral service was attended by all the forcibly displaced.[490]

In conclusion, this set of primary sources reveals in greater variety the experiences of the forcibly displaced on the train rides and of individuals through the long marches or rides to the train stations, where many had to wait for hours in the cold for the train to arrive. It is seen firsthand that frame of mind of the Poles forced and locked into the tiny and dirty train cars, where it is impossible to miss the Nazi German perception of Poles locked in cattle cars. The experience of forcibly displaced Poles, particularly children, is revealed as they endured the brutal cold, the lack of food and water, the lack of toilet facilities, through the long winding journey. They are allowed to describe in their own words, their emotions, frame of mind, and the information they had, as well as the strategies they employed in attempting to survive their ordeal. The brutality of the large death rate and the desecration of corpses is on full display. Finally,

[490] Alfons Korzczoł, "Wysiedleńcy z Poznańskiego".

descriptions of the arrival at different destinations are provided in greater variety than the available secondary sources.

After arriving at their destinations, the surviving forcibly displaced Poles would have to begin anew, to start from virtually nothing. Many would be at the mercy and charity of local Poles for months, especially if they arrived in the harsh winter. Their experiences diverge from one another, but many would survive the remainder of the war only with great difficulty, the only improvement would be that they were no longer in the temporary transit camps, under the harshest and most direct terror of the German guards.

CONCLUSION

The primary sources used in this MRP showed how the Germanization of soil worked in practice, ripping Poles out root and stem from their homes. They revealed how the Warthegau became a province where no other nation except the German one had any right to live. Following the individuals through each segment allowed for a qualitative analysis of the forced displacements, considered double identities, that of "*exiles*" – "*wygnańce*," and created several microhistories. It reconstructed the lives of Poles before the war started at the beginning of the occupation, through the evictions, through the various temporary transit camps, and via the trains to their final destinations. It showed in detail: the everyday struggle for survival, the ideas and plans made in an ever-changing and hostile environment, the successful and unsuccessful attempts to negotiate a new life. Taken together, this has created a bottom-up history of the forced displacements.

One of the themes that continues to be revealed through each section is the notion of being forced to go into the unknown – the *nieznane*. An often-repeated word, together

with exile – *tułaczka* – wandering in exile, reveal how the forcibly displaced Poles understood their experience. Combined with repeating notes of religious imagery and prayer songs, it is possible to understand one of the major sources of continued hope for the otherwise helpless and hopeless Poles. Through an analysis of the daily activities, it is possible to tangibly see how the Poles attempted to maintain unity and solidarity through their experiences, inspiring bravery.

In this MRP, I was able to continue in Rutowska's work, extending her descriptions to more temporary transit camps, as she urged future works to do, not only physically describing their structure, but also the lived experiences of its prisoners. I did not discredit her conclusions, but rather expanded them through the use of this new set of primary sources in a novel way, and in particular by looking at the perspective of children. The children – the youngest of whom were spared from forced labor, could at times be lucky enough to be bored in the camps, but as a whole, they were not spared from the beatings, humiliating strip searches, and brutality of the German guards. The stress and trauma that they endured stayed with them their whole lives, as in the camps and the trains, they were not spared from starvation, freezing, or death.

A closer look at the set of forty-four primary sources reveals how varied the experiences could be, while simultaneously, how they all share key similarities. Having followed these individuals, and allowing them to speak in their own words, it is possible to learn how the sources, of varied age, urbanicity, social class, and profession, navigated the impossible situations they faced, how they understood their experiences, how they felt in key moments, and what information they managed to learn as they endured the execution of the forced displacements. By giving a voice even to younger children, an

entirely new perspective emerges, not previously considered in past secondary sources. Finally, answers to questions not asked by previous sources abound.

Rutherford's central argument, how the German bureaucracy had learned and developed skills in the capture and detaining of Poles that would allow them to commit the Holocaust with greater efficacy, is self-evidently seen in the descriptions by the primary sources, which can be compared against Jewish sources describing their capture and detaining and transporting to death camps. This leads to the question of why Jewish Poles were not described in the primary sources? The answer is that they are described, although mostly in the primary sources' description of their new lives in the GG. Jewish Poles were, for the most part, not present in these various temporary transit camps, as for the Germans, the Jewish Question had an answer distinct to that of the Polish Question. Suffering a different fate, they are not described in the primary sources' description of the evictions, temporary transit camps, or the train rides, while only being briefly described in the pre-war lives.

The primary sources used in this MRP confirm Rutherford's findings, taken from German memoranda, while simultaneously adding much needed depth to the human experience, as the primary sources lived through the processes he describes. By following the set of primary sources through their description of pre-war life and analyzing their description of the beginnings of the German occupation reveals their personal understanding of the new order and the mindset with which they entered the forced displacements. The complex and drastically altered relationship with local Germans is revealed, leading to a better understanding of how the Poles internalized the later evictions which the *Volksdeutsch* had played a role in. The new fearful reality, filled with

mass executions without trial and physical repercussions for the smallest perceived offense against the Germans, or even for no reason at all, helps to explain why the Poles had no other option than to obey the Germans' orders.

Following the Poles through the evictions reveals far more about their course, compared to merely looking at German memoranda and official plans. The eviction, camp, and train experiences also benefit from an analysis centered on answering specific questions, organizing the sources to maximize their ability to speak for themselves, all while comparing their answers against the available secondary sources. Looking at how different groups of Poles described the evictions, shows the differences between the information available to Poles living in urban versus rural locations. In this MRP I was also able to answer specifically in what ways the Poles were informed, how they prepared and packed, and how some resisted before and during the evictions. It revealed how Poles understood their experiences despite the informational deficits they had, and what their frame of mind was during these chaotic and stressful experiences. Better understanding the beatings, terror, and humiliating de-humanization inflicted by the Germans keenly shows the difference between the temporary transit camps meant for Poles versus those prepared for the incoming ethnic Germans. Analyzing the different types of trains, lengths of train rides, and how experiences varied between them was key to understanding the variance in experiences in the train rides. Putting into perspective the de-humanization and zoomorphism allows a better understanding of the meaning of *untermenschen*, and the Nazi German racial hierarchy in practice. Poles were brought to incredibly low points in the desperation of their starvation. Murder, both inflicted actively through beatings, and passively through freezing to death or illnesses resulting from the

insect and rodent infestations clearly was central to the Nazi German vision of remaking the territories into empty space for their settler colonial lebensraum.

Through all this, we learn about how twentieth century settler colonialism looks like in practice, in the perspective of the colonized. A stark change from the previous Hohenzollern colonialism, which attempted to settle the region but not at the cost of property rights. Instead, the Nazi German system completely dispossessed the Poles of all rights, from a right to private property, to a right to basic national, cultural, and political freedoms, to even the most basic human rights – *the right to life*. Poles could have all their properties and possessions seized as compensation to the ethnic Germans coming from the East. Worse still, as has been shown, Poles were treated as subhuman, and in the context of the experience of the forcibly displaced, this placed them below even animals, who are sufficiently fed and not purposely terrorized.

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