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GERMAN-POLISH NEIGHBOURHOOD RELATIONS ON THE
SHARED BORDER: AN AMBIGUOUS STORY

It was the nineteenth century Polish national movement that first developed the idea of the Oder-Neisse line as a suitable border with Germany; the territory east of this line, as they argued, had a long history as an area of Slavic settlement. Nevertheless, the possibility of realizing this "Western conception" of Poland first presented itself with the constitution of a Polish state in the wake of German defeat in the First World War. Despite establishing the fact of Polish statehood, the precise form which it was to assume was initially unclear and first assumed its inter-war form at the Peace conference of 1919. Opening to the fanfare of Wilson's 14 points, including the right of national and ethnic self-determination — it soon became clear that the international delegates had arrived with a number of very different diplomatic conceptions. Ignoring the purported right to self-determination, the Polish plenipotentiaries based their argumentation on an old legal title which ignored the demographic realities of the areas to which they laid claim.

The *Rzeczpospolita* conception held by the majority of the Polish elite (a return to the borders of 1772) around which they hoped to establish the newly-constituted Polish nation was even more unrealistic, ignoring as it did, the claims and existence of a whole host of Eastern peoples, including the Lithuanians, Ukrainians and Byelorussians. Polish and Soviet interests also led to their rejection of a further notable proposal contained in the Curzon line (named after the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon), which based on majority vernacular self-determination, sought to establish Poland on something approaching its current Eastern border. Indeed, disappointed by the fruits of diplomacy, the new Polish government made recourse to force to achieve its territorial aims — the ensuing peace treaty of Riga (March 1921) established Poland's Northern and Eastern borders in accordance with her maximalist aims. As a result, Lithuania had to submit to permanent Polish occupation of what had been proclaimed as its Capital, Vilnius. Polish territorial expansion also brought further challenges; the possession of new lands launched a long-term conflict with the Soviet Union and brought a number of ethnic minorities into what had originally been intended as an ethnically homogenous state. Furthermore, in view of the thin cultural heritage of the newly annexed territories, the Polandization of these new territories met with only limited success. The Ukrainians of
Eastern Galicia for example mounted considerable resistance to this unfolding cultural imperialism.

Encouraged by their success in the East, Polish nationalists now sought to apply the same logic to their Western borders.¹⁴ Eyeing what actually represented the heartland of Prussia, they argued that the inhabitants of this area were in fact, Germanized Poles ruled by a very small upper class of German immigrants. One particular representative of this line of argument was the Polish General Staff officer Henryk Bagiński. In a wide range of pamphlets and books published between 1914 and the 1940s, he re-emphasized the “necessity” of regaining what he saw as “lost Polish territory in the West”.¹⁵ A member of a working group chaired by the Polish foreign minister Józef Beck, he and his associates developed a theory of a “Third Europe” or “Intermarium” to serve as the geostrategic foundation of Polish foreign policy. This policy foresaw the division of Europe into three separate spheres of influence. Just as French power stretched from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic, Germany should rule the area between the North Sea and the Adriatic, whilst the third European Great Power, Poland, was to hold sway between the Baltic and the Black Sea. Working within this tripartite conception, Poland then developed her claim to what at the time, represented German territory. The most restrained of these conceptions foresaw Poland extending to what Bagiński referred to as the “Great Slavic river”, the Oder. One of his books setting out these claims even contained a foreword by Marian Kukiel, the Polish foreign minister in London exile.

Viewed in terms of such conceptions, it soon becomes apparent that Poland could not be content with the extent of her Western border in the interwar period. Indeed, this was given clear expression in the number of plans to employ military means to extend her border westwards.¹⁶ This position was mirrored in Berlin, where the Reich government never accepted the Versailles settlement, involving as it did the loss of formerly German lands to Poland. Such revanchist sentiments led to official support for and encouragement of German minority resistance to the new Polish state, and hindered the integration of German-speaking minorities in the republic.¹⁷ Moreover, feeling their rights (guaranteed by international treaty) to have been violated, and having lost much land in the course of land reform,¹⁸ hundreds of thousands of Germans left Poland in the interwar period to resettle in the Reich.

The latent conflict between the two states came to a head with the ban on exporting to Poland (1920–1922) and the nine-year “customs war” beginning in 1925, which acted as an effective boycott of Polish exports.¹⁹ This policy met with considerable protest from German economy and industry of the border areas, as it brought extensive damage to these regions without achieving the desired political result. Seeking to defuse this situation,
German merchants and industrialists – especially those from lower Silesia – pressed for the normalization of German-Polish economic relations and to this end, founded the German Industrial Federation for Poland (Deutsche Wirtschaftsbund für Polen) which was renamed in 1930 as the German-Polish Chamber of Commerce (Deutsch-Polnischen Handelskammer). Joint meetings of the Silesian merchants circle and Greater Poland planned improvements to the German-Polish infrastructure as part of a greater attempt to “transform the Silesian-greater Polish connection into a bridge for global East-West traffic”. Both sides used a variety of means, including publications to push for a German-Polish trade treaty which would have necessitated an improvement in bilateral economic relations. This was eventually concluded in mid-March 1930, although it was never ratified by the Reichstag.

The German success at Locarno (October 1925) for which the German Foreign Minister Gustav Stresemann was feted, consisted in dividing the question regarding Germany’s borders into two. Having guaranteed the status quo in the West, he managed to obtain an agreement with the French which did not stipulate the nature of Germany’s Eastern border, a question which remained open for further revision. Indeed, Germany vehemently rejected any form of “Eastern Locarno” involving recognition of the Versailles border settlement in the East. Viewed from a Polish perspective, the situation appeared bleak, as Germany also began developing closer ties with the Soviet Union, which represented an alliance between Poland’s principal enemies.

The National Socialist rise to power in 1933 and the subsequent German-Polish non-aggression pact (January 1934) brought an improvement in German-Polish relations. The economic conflict was brought to an end, but the trade agreement signed on 11 October fell very much short of the draft of 1930, especially in terms of its much shorter duration. Nevertheless, the normalization of economic relations resulted in greater economic prosperity in the border area, and the Breslau Trade Fair and the International Poznan Trade Fair developed into two hubs of German-Polish trade relations. Germany even made an appearance at the June 1939 Poznan Trade fair, only two months before the German invasion of Poland on 1 September 1939. This event, followed by the Soviet invasion on 17 September effectively put an end to the twenty-year existence of the Second Polish Republic. Both occupiers began immediate implementation of their aims: the destruction of the Polish state and the destruction of the Polish nation. The West Polish Voivodship was annexed by the Reich and renamed as the Warthegau, an area which was to function as a central part of the German war economy and a testing ground for National Socialist ideology. The Polish population was expelled, to be “resettled” in the General Government of Warsaw.
THE POST-WAR SETTLEMENT AND THE EXPULSION OF THE GERMANS AND POLES

The establishment of the Oder-Neiße line as the German Eastern border in 1945 was a political decision taken at the conferences of Yalta and Potsdam lacking all historical foundation.27 Indeed, the circumstances and genesis of this decision was to burden German-Polish relations for many years to come. The conference of Tehran (28 November–1 December 1943) established the Curzon line as the Polish-Soviet border28 and added the provision that the Polish population East of this line (and indeed in other areas) was to be resettled in other formerly German territories in the West and East, the population of which was also to be forcibly moved. From this point on, the fate of Poles and Germans were inextricably tied.29

The conference of Yalta (4–11 February 1945) finally established the Polish Eastern border in accordance with Stalin’s wishes. Losing an area of around 179,000 square kilometres (almost half of its former area), Poland was to be re-established in the West, but the exact nature of the reconstituted Polish state was to be decided upon at a future peace conference. Territory which was to be transferred from German to Polish sovereignty (established in negotiations between the USSR and the provisional Polish government) was however treated almost as war booty by the Red Army. Machines, industrial plant and kilometres of railway track were dismantled and shipped to Russia, followed by supplies and livestock. Ten thousands of Germans and Poles — such as the 15,000 miners from Silesia — were imprisoned in holding camps and later deported to the USSR. The policy of organized plunder of (formerly) German property continued until into the autumn of 1945.30

Concerned as they were to establish ethnically homogenous nation states and thereby minimize the potential for post-war conflict, when considering the problem at the beginning of 1945, the allies soon realized that the number of Poles and Germans which would be subject to a “population transfer” would be much larger than originally planned. The Yalta accords left an important aspect of the coming territorial re-ordering open: whether the German-Polish border was to proceed along a line through Glatz-Neiße or Görlitz-Neiße. Seeking to present the Western allies with a fait accompli, the Soviet Union and Poland simply expelled the German populations from all areas which they claimed without the faintest of legal foundation. The Poles in the Polish-Ukrainian border area did not fare any better: expulsions had been organized in this area since 1944 in order to lay the foundations for a later Greater Ukraine within the Soviet Union.31 The expulsion of both the Germans from the formerly Eastern territories and the Poles from their Eastern areas was soon underway and assumed a rapid pace even before the Potsdam conference. Far from being conducted in a “humane and orderly” fashion,
the early programme of expulsion was badly prepared, violent and ruthless. The Polish government hoped to alter the ethnic composition of the formerly German Eastern territories so as to present an ethnically-homogenous Poland at the Potsdam conference and in this way stake a claim to retaining their new “Western” territories. During the Potsdam negotiations, Stalin was now able to claim that the population East of the Oder and Neiße was now entirely Polish in composition – the Germans expelled from these areas had been replaced by Poles expelled from their Eastern homelands and transported many miles Westwards in an equally inhumane fashion. The Germans and Poles affected by these actions bore no responsibility for their fate; decided by Stalin and executed by the Red Army, other Eastern army units and local militias it was tolerated (however grudgingly) by the Western Allies.

The decision taken at Yalta to postpone the final demarcation of Poland’s Western border until a future peace conference was reaffirmed at Potsdam (17 July–2 August 1945). At the same time, it was decided that the area between the pre-war Polish border and the Oder-Lausitz-Neiße line, Southern East-Prussia and the territory of the former free city of Danzig was to remain under Polish administration and should not fall under the Soviet Zone of Occupation. In essence, this decision represented the de facto establishment of the new Polish-German border; the resolution to reach a definitive decision at a future peace conference came to nothing, as the peace conference never took place.

The big three seemed to be in agreement at Potsdam: German responsibility for the outbreak and conduct of the Second World War justified a sacrifice through which it could hope to atone for its crimes. Poland’s new Western border on the Oder and Neiße was not only to serve as compensation for the loss of its Eastern territories, but in constituting a strategic barrier against Germany was to satisfy the security needs of the Soviet Union. This interpretation is confirmed by the predominantly military character of the border until the end of the 1940s.

The mass exodus of Germans and Poles underway at the very time at which Churchill, Stalin and Roosevelt opened preceding in Potsdam shows that the expulsions were not decided upon or initiated at Potsdam; the big three merely reacted to their development and attempted to bring them under some vestiges of control and order. The declared allied aim – the creation of ethnically homogenous national states – which they pursued consistently, involved great upheaval for both Poland and Germany, both in terms of loss of territory and mass population movement.

In fashioning its Eastern border in this way, Poland confronted the big three with a fait accompli. In the period between Yalta and Potsdam, the allies had already decided that Poland should forfeit Polish territory to the East, but had reached no decision on the level of compensation to be of-
ferred to her in the West. Moreover, the demographic planning of the new Polish state went further than this: not only were Poles deported from their former Eastern homelands, but non-Poles were expelled from former Central-Poland and resettled in the Soviet Union. This decision predominantly affected ethnic Ukrainians, who were given until the end of 1946 to leave Poland. In this way, Poland was to be transformed into an "ideal" homogeneous nation state free of any ethnic minorities. The "orderly and humane" organization of the expulsion also remained a fiction in Central Poland.38

Both the situations faced by expelled Poles and Germans and the societies which were forced to accommodate them displayed striking similarities.39 The expulsion of the Germans was experienced in three phases: flight, wild expulsion and their "resettlement" in accordance with the Potsdam accords. The flight from the advancing Red Army began in the Reich's Eastern provinces and the particularly exposed Eastern German settlements as early as 1944. As party officials forbade any civilian evacuation in the face of the Russian advance, indeed, expected that the inhabitants mount resistance, the evacuations usually began far too late and the civilian populations often left at the very last possible moment. The disorganized, last-minute rush to escape resulted in terrible congestion on the roads and railways. The hard winter 1944–1945 also increased the number of victims of the refugee chaos.40

The arrival of the Red Army was followed in early 1945 by the phase of "wild expulsions", lasting around a month. Anti-German sentiment latent in the Czech and Polish populations was vented on the refugees. Between June – mid-July 1945, the entire German population was expelled from the border strip between Oder and Neisse.41 The deportations followed in a number of stages. May 1945 saw the deportation of Germans from a strip of land 100–200 kilometres in extent East of the Oder and Neisse. The eviction of Germans from Danzig followed in June; Eastern Pomerania, West Prussia, the Southern area of East Prussia and Upper Silesia followed in the autumn of 1945. After a short pause for winter, the action was resumed in early 1946.42

The Potsdam agreement should have put an end to the chaos, averted atrocities and ensured the "orderly implementation" of the population transfer. Yet the implementation of this intention failed in the face of extensive anti-German sentiment and serious transport problems. A Polish administration was established only in the course of 1945 and only then barely functioned. Only a year after the Potsdam agreement did the situation become more bearable and the deportations better organized. Despite this improvement, many of those expelled in the winter of 1947 froze to death in the unheated trains in which they were transported.43 Almost three million Germans had been expelled from the territory of the new Polish state. The subsequent years saw the flight of hundreds of thousands of more German Poles.44
In a manner similar to the expulsions of Germans, the deportation of ethnic Poles was conducted in several stages. The “evacuation” of Polish land owners, former military settlers, foresters and their families began in February 1940. In this way, the German occupiers removed the leading social classes and political elite. The second wave of deportation beginning in April 1940 affected the urban elites: teachers, soldiers, local government officials and businessmen. The third wave of deportation from May and June 1940 included many Poles and Jews who had fled from the General Government. The NKVD launched the last round of deportation in June 1941 to remove all those who had escaped the previous waves of expulsion. 63% of all those deported were ethnic Poles.

The second wave of Polish deportation began – this time under German organization – in the Polish Eastern territories at the end of 1942. As the Germans succeeded in playing off the ethnic Ukrainian inhabitants against their Polish neighbours, this wave of deportation culminated in bitter fighting between Polish and Ukrainian volunteer groups. In 1942, the Ukrainian insurgent Army UPA (Ukrainska Povstanka Armija) began a murderous campaign directed against Polish settlements in Wolynien. In response, the Poles organized units within the Polish Underground army AK (Armia Krajowa) to carry out acts of retaliation in areas of predominantly Ukrainian settlement.

The internationally agreed expulsion of Poles began following an agreement between the Committee of National Liberation (PKWN) and the Soviet republics in September 1944. This measure primarily affected Poles and Ukrainians, and to a lesser extent, Byelorussians and Lithuanians. In the years 1945–1946, the Poles expelled 480,000 Ukrainians, 36,000 Byelorussians and 2000 Lithuanians into the Soviet Union. Many of these people settled directly on the Eastern border; others were deported into the heart of the Soviet Union.

The Polish deportations present a similar picture of violent chaos. With the collapse of all vestiges of government, those determining events sought to use the situation of upheaval to create new, unalterable circumstances. The material destruction, poorly functioning distribution network and damaged transport infrastructure made the task of deporting 1.5 million people almost impossible. The expulsion by the Red Army of ethnic Poles from Western Ukraine to South East Poland had begun in October 1944. The mass of Poles moved in this action initially had nowhere to go until early 1945, when the Red Army advanced deeper into Germany. Despite experiencing a slight improvement in their situation, the modalities of the deportation (a lack of supplies and poor transport links) brought suffering upon the refugees who were forced to travel for more than two weeks. The single largest wave of expulsion occurred 1945–1946; by the time it was completed in 1948, around 810,500 people had been forced to leave Western Ukraine.
GERMAN-POLISH RELATIONS IN THE DIVIDED CITIES ON THE COMMON BORDER

At Potsdam, it was decided that German towns straddling the new border should be divided. The result was a series of “divided towns” including Görlitz-Zgorzelec, Guben-Gubin, Frankfurt an der Oder-Słubice, Bad Muskau-Łęknica where an atmosphere of hate and fear pervaded in the post-war years. After the Second World War, the word “German” and its derivates became unwords. Germans were “criminals” or “executioners”. Now was the hour of ideology, not understanding. The accusation of collective German guilt made by the anti-German government in Warsaw soon attained widespread popular acceptance, fuelling an almost universal and blind hatred of all things German. This hatred simmering in the Polish inhabitants of the new border towns was accompanied by fear that the Germans would one day return to reclaim their old homes. On the other side of the border, the Germans long nursed hopes that one day they would be allowed to return. This aspiration was especially strong in Guben, as Wilhelm Pieck, himself a son of East Guben made frequent visits to his home town and spoke openly of the prospects of a return. Playing with the emotions of the inhabitants, he referred to the newly Polish part of the Guben, known for its attractive blossom trees as the “prettiest part of the town”. The Chairman of the SED and “son of Guben” promised the return of the Polish district.

German hopes of revising the Oder Neisse border and returning to their old homes were kept alive until July 1950, when the Treaty of Zgorzelec established the irrevocable nature of the new border. This development put an end to discussions within the SED of a possible border revision and established a taboo around the now defunct question. Despite its dictated nature, this treaty acted to bring calm into the German-Polish border area, which in turn acted as a catalyst for the distrust against Germany.

For the Polish inhabitants of the Northern and Western areas, the treaty had much more than a merely symbolic significance, as it put an end, albeit slowly to more than a decade of fear that they would once again be uprooted and forced to leave their new homes. Instead, with a new feeling of security, the Polish settlers began to feel increasingly at home. These developments also helped to ease relations between the GDR and Poland. Despite the new atmosphere, the border remained closed, as the nature of the Communist system forbade any change. The sparse level of cross-border contacts was restricted to exchanges between firms, organizations, schools and the two Communist parties. The hermetically sealed border remained closed for ordinary people and the German expellees were not able to visit their old homes and meet their new inhabitants. This dream had to wait 21 years to become reality, with the first border crossings taking place on New Year's
Eve 1971 following the establishment of passport and visa-free travel. The people of both Poland and the GDR greeted this development and many in the divided towns took advantage of the opportunity to cross the border. The majority of German expellees also took advantage of this new opportunity to visit their old homes. Reports to the GDR security apparatus give a largely positive impression of the visits of GDR citizens to their former houses and the largely warm welcome with which their unexpected visit was received. The Poles in the Western and Northern Polish areas were initially surprised by these unexpected visitors, but after the initial shock often invited their German guests to a small meal. There is also information pertaining to the disappointment of the German visitors at the neglect to which their former houses were subject. Nevertheless, they often showed understanding for the difficult financial situation in Poland and some even offered help, for instance in bringing paint from the GDR with which to paint a weather-beaten fence.

In general, the visits by GDR citizens to their former possessions assumed a positive course, as long as the Poles involved understood that the visit was merely a temporary affair and that Germans did not seek to regain their lost property. Allusions to the need to maintain the houses in a better state of repair were on the other hand, not taken with any gratitude. If the German visitors started to look around to see if the household installations were still in the same location, the new owners were often nonplussed. In contrast to the older GDR citizens, members of the younger generation were not concerned about the condition of their parents' former houses. They were much more interested in the plans and interests of the younger Poles, or the possibility of spending leisure time on the Polish side of the border. Parents often reminded their children that it was "also their home from which the Poles had driven them." Visits by GDR families to their former properties often occurred within the first months of the border being opened. On the whole, the short initial visits were either not repeated, or they developed into friendships, with each side inviting the other to attend birthdays, weddings, baptisms and other similar events.

Following the spread of the Solidarność movement in Poland and the economic difficulties in both countries, the GDR authorities arranged for the border to be closed and travel once again required a passport and a visa. In the early period of the Solidarność campaign, GDR citizens followed the political developments with some sympathy. After a while however, deterioration of the economic situation in Poland led to mounting criticism and the majority of GDR citizens were of the opinion that Solidarność served to destabilize the Polish economy. Contact between Germans and Poles in the 1980s became increasingly difficult, as the closed border was impassable for ordinary citizens who required special permission or a visa. The personal con-
tacts and cross-border co-operation initiatives in the divided towns forged in the 1970s came under threat from the new visa requirement. Nevertheless, despite the stagnation of the 1980s, the curiosity and openness characterizing the majority of ordinary people in the 1970s remained undiminished. Countless acquaintances and friendships survived the difficult period of the closed border (1980–1991) and thrived again after 1991.

The 1990s brought fundamental changes for the East Central European border regions. Whilst many borders disappeared or became increasingly permeable, other regions witnessed an intensification of the conditions of division. The German-Polish border numbers amongst the benefactors of the collapse of Communism and the transformation process of the immediate post-Communist era, seeing the re-introduction of a visa-free border crossing. Following the conclusion of the treaty confirming the existing German-Polish border (signed on 14 November 1990) and the German-Polish friendship agreement (17 June 1991) a number of agreements between individual border towns and regions cemented this process on the local level. The first agreement in this process of local diplomacy was that between the towns of Gubin, Guben and Laatzen, signed on 19 January 1991 and thus before the opening of the border. This process either reactivated existing agreements or brought them up to date. Formed at the beginning of the 1990s, the German Polish border region constituted the first of several Euroregions.

In 1991, five boroughs of the Polish Voivodship Zielona Góra and the forest authorities of the German side of the border seized the initiative and began with the construction of a Euroregion. Despite the early nature of this move, the resulting agreement was not signed until 21 September 1993. The current area of the Euroregion Spree-Neiße-Bober extends over an area of 10,000 km²; its headquarters is located in the divided city Guben/Gubin. This Euroregion was founded with the aim of improving the economic potential of the region, harmonizing the regional infrastructure, improving cooperation in hazard prevention and intensifying contacts in culture, education, tourism and health. Four working groups were formed to implement these plans, divided according to their activity: 1) the economy, communications and tourism, 2) agriculture, forestry and environmental protection, 3) youth, sport, education and culture and 4) information. Their activities all aim at reducing existing barriers and restrictions.

A further Euroregion on the Polish-German border area is the Euroregion pro-Europe Viadrina, founded on 21 December 1993 as a joint undertaking between The Residents' Association of the Lubser Land "Border Region" (Poland) and the German borough "Mittlere Oder". As with the Euroregion Spree-Neiße-Bober, this Euroregion also comprises over 10,000 km²; its administrative head quarters is located in Dąbroszyn on the Polish side of the
border. One of the most important tasks of the Euroregion includes promotion of good neighbourhood relations, the improvement of the quality of life of the residents and cross-border co-operation in the areas of education, culture and the economy.77

Since their foundation, the Euroregions have completed a great number of projects, mostly funded by the programmes Interreg and Phare. A very important area of cross-border co-operation is education. Sixth-form pupils in the Spree-Neiße-Bober can attend the Guben Comprehensive, whose "A" levels are valid in both countries and all children in the Euroregion have the opportunity of visiting the great number of language camps in the region which teach both Polish and German. Moreover, a number of bilingual further training programmes are offered to nurses, fire fighters and the members of other professions.78 The Euroregion Pomerania has also established a number of German-Polish schools and the Euroregion form of the European school clubs, comprising 100 clubs, organizes training programmes, seminars, conferences, educational travel schemes and discussion meetings, all with the aim of spreading knowledge about the EU. The German-Polish youth organization is also very active in the Euroregion Pomerania, providing support and financing for numerous German-Polish youth meetings.79 The Viadrina University at Frankfurt (Oder) and the Collegium Polonicum in Ślubice also play a significant role in the Euroregion pro-Europa Viadrina, providing a forum for education and cultural exchange for students from across the world (including Germany, Poland, the Czech Republic, Russia, Byelorussia, Ukraine, the USA and South America). A former cloister in Neuzelle was converted into a German-Polish grammar and boarding school. Frankfurt (Oder) also boasts a German-Polish Kindergarten.80 The Euroregion Neiße was selected as the location for the International Institute of Universities, located in Zittau, an institution similar to a University, responsible for the specialist teaching of German, Polish and Czech economics. German applicants to the institute must have passed their mid-diploma exams; Polish and Czech aspirants must have completed at least four semesters in a university in their homelands.81

All the Euroregions in the German-Polish border area are very active in the area of culture and sport, a sector in which the German-Polish Jugendwerk also plays an active part by promoting joint German-Polish exhibitions, concerts, seminars and sporting events in the Euroregions.82 Cultural co-operation in the Euroregion is of especial significance for the development of good relations as it is highly effective in bringing together members of different cultures and mentalities, making a decisive contribution to reducing prejudice and stereotypes.83

A long-term aim of the Euroregions is the strengthening of the regional identity of the inhabitants of this border region.84 One characteristic of the
regional identities is a cross-border identity drawn from a sense of solidarity with those on the other side of a border. Such feelings are often especially pronounced in border regions due to the close proximity of cross-border neighbours. With the exception of a small minority, the German-Polish border area has yet to develop such an identity, and the populations continue to exhibit a singularly national affiliation apart from the usual assortment of prejudices, stereotypes and insecurities, the violent history of expulsion and the redrawing of borders can provide the explanation for the relatively weak formation of a border identity. Recent events prevent many from sharing a common history with their fellow inhabitants of the German-Polish border region. These hurdles constitute a particular challenge for the work of the Euroregions and the further development of the German-Polish border region as a whole. Research into migration and practices of commemoration in Germany in Poland can make an important contribution to the establishment and propagation of good neighbourhood relations in Germany and Poland.

CONCLUSION

The attempts to establish a permanent territorial settlement after the two world wars largely ignored both the Polish and the European perspective. Both exercises in post-war European cartography sought to establish Poland as part of a Cordon sanitaire. The Versailles settlement arranged a number of small East European states between the newly-emerged Soviet Union and Germany, designed to protect Western Europe from the former and contain the latter. The Potsdam settlement re-established Poland to serve Soviet security interests against any future threat from the West. Having gone to war to save Poland from German aggression, France and Great Britain (and now the USA) abandoned their former ally to Soviet domination. Poland was never included in important revisions of either post-war settlements, either in Locarno (1925) or the two plus four negotiations in 1990. This litany of affronts, broken promises and attempts to undermine the existence of an independent Poland has made Poland react with exceptional sensitivity to questions of its territorial and national integrity.
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Ibid.

Ibid., 157.

Trzop, Transgraniczna współpraca regionalna, Loc. Cit. (Note 78), 528–529.

Jajeński-Quast/Stoklosa, Geteilte Städte, Loc. Cit. (Note 54), 199–220.

