Chapter 5

VIOLENCE

It's quite clear—it's got to look democratic, but we must have everything in our control.

—Walter Ulbricht, 1945[1]

FROM THE VERY beginning, the Soviet Union and the Eastern European communist parties pursued their goals using violence. They controlled the "power ministries" of the Interior and Defense in every country, and they deployed both police troops and nascent armies to their advantage. After the war's end, this was not the mass, indiscriminate violence of the sort carried out by the Red Army during its march toward Berlin but rather more selective, carefully targeted forms of political violence: arrests, beatings, executions, and concentration camps. All of this they directed at a relatively small number of real, alleged, and imagined and future enemies of the Soviet Union and the communist parties. They intended both to physically destroy them and to create the sense that any armed resistance was useless.[2]

That was not what they said, of course. At least in the beginning, the NKVD and the new secret police forces loudly declared war on the remnants of fascism, while Soviet officials and local communist parties directed their fiercest propaganda at Nazi collaborators and quislings. In this they were no different from the restored national governments of France, the Netherlands, and the rest of formerly occupied Europe.[3] But in every country occupied by the Red Army, the definition of "fascist" eventually grew broader, expanding to include not only Nazi collaborators but anybody whom the Soviet occupiers and their local allies disliked. In time, the word "fascist," in true Orwellian fashion, was eventually used to describe antifascists who also happened to be anticommunists. And every time the definition was expanded, arrests followed.

Some of these "fascists" had been identified in advance. The historian Amir Weiner points out that the NKVD had been collecting lists of potential "enemies" in Eastern Europe—in Poland and the Baltic States in particular—for many years (though Weiner makes a distinction between the NKVD's excellent "knowledge" of Poland and its very poor cultural and historical "understanding").[4] They collected names from newspapers, spies, and diplomats. When they had no names, the NKVD prepared lists of the *types* of people who ought to be arrested. In May 1941, Stalin himself provided just such a list for the newly occupied territories of eastern Poland. He demanded the arrest and exile not only of "members of Polish counterrevolutionary organizations" but also of their families, as well as the families of former officers of the Polish army, former policemen, and former civil servants.[5]

Not all of the arrests took place right away. On a number of occasions, Stalin ordered Eastern European communists to proceed cautiously while establishing the new social order. The then-tiny Polish communist party received a message from Moscow in the spring of 1944, ordering its leaders to work with *all* democratic forces ("all" was underlined) and to direct its propaganda at "ordinary members" of other, more "reactionary" parties.[6] Stalin's initial policy was to tread softly, not to upset the Allies, and to win people over by persuasion or stealth. This is why free elections were held in Hungary, why some independent political parties were tolerated elsewhere, and why, as late as 1948, Stalin told the East German communists to follow an "opportunistic policy" that would entail "moving toward socialism not directly but in zigzags and a roundabout way." To their horror, he even suggested they might consider admitting former Nazis to their ranks.[7] The "national front" model had been drilled into all of the local communists who had arrived by plane from Moscow or on foot with the Red Army: don't use communist slogans; don't talk about the dictatorship of the proletariat; do talk about coalitions, alliances, and democracy.

Despite these moderate intentions, violence quickly accelerated, not always intentionally. Often, orders to move slowly could not be fulfilled because Soviet soldiers and officials were intellectually and psychologically

unprepared for the consequences of such a policy. To a Soviet officer, educated in Bolshevik schools and trained in the Red Army or the NKVD, an active participant in *any* political group other than the communist party was a suspicious figure by definition, and probably a saboteur or spy. Politburo members in Moscow could speak in theory about the creation of "socialist democracies," but Soviet administrators on the ground were often unable to tolerate anything other than a totalitarian state. They reacted with instinctive horror when newly liberated citizens began to exercise the freedom of speech, press, and association that the new regimes' rhetoric appeared to promise.

The violence also accelerated because the expectations both of the new Soviet military administrators and of the local communists were so quickly dashed. In the wake of what the Red Army regarded as its triumphant march through Europe, local communists expected the working class to join the revolution. When that failed to happen, they would often explode in fury at their countrymen's "incomprehensible spirit of resistance and complete ignorance," as one Warsaw party functionary put it.[8] Their frustration, coupled with the profound clash of Soviet and Eastern European cultures, fed directly into the political violence too.

In some countries there was no initial "liberal" moment of occupation. In Poland, the Soviet Union treated the Polish Home Army and especially its partisan divisions in the eastern half of the country with intense hostility long before the end of the war. The first Soviet invasion and occupation of eastern Poland in 1939 had been accompanied by mass arrests and deportations of Polish merchants, politicians, civil servants, and priests. The violence culminated in the infamous mass murder of at least 21,000 Polish officers in the forests of western Russia, a tragedy known as the Katyn massacre, after the village where the first mass grave was discovered. Among the Katyn victims were many reserve officers who had worked in civilian life as doctors, lawyers, and university lecturers—once again, the Polish patriotic and intellectual elite. The Polish Home Army, exiles, and underground leadership knew this story well: the discovery of one of the mass graves at Katyn by the Nazis in 1941 had led to a total break in diplomatic relations between the Polish exile government and the USSR.

At the time of the second Soviet invasion in 1944, the Home Army was nevertheless not primarily an anticommunist organization. By definition it

was anti-Nazi and antifascist, having been formed in 1942 as the armed wing of the mainstream Polish resistance movement, the Polish Underground State. Antifascism was almost the only political sentiment that united its soldiers, in fact, among whom were members of socialist, social democratic, nationalist, and peasant parties. At its height, the Home Army had some 300,000 armed partisans, which made it the second-largest resistance movement in Europe after the Yugoslav partisans, at least until the French resistance expanded in the wake of D-Day. The Home Army was legally subordinate to the Polish constitutional government in exile in London, which gave it both legitimacy and continuity with prewar Poland, something none of the smaller resistance movements in the country could claim.[9]

The Home Army itself operated on the premise that its leaders would play a large role in the formation of the postwar provisional government, just like Charles de Gaulle's followers in France. Its soldiers saw themselves, correctly, as Allies, along with Britain, France, and the USSR. Faced with the imminent arrival of the Red Army, the Home Army was therefore determined to mobilize against the retreating Germans and engage in tactical cooperation with the Red Army. Home Army units had been under direct orders not to fight against Soviet troops since October 1943, when the Home Army commander had requested that the London government in exile make a "historically transparent" decision on the matter.[10] Home Army partisan leaders were instructed to make themselves known to Red Army troops, and to assist Soviet soldiers as much as possible in fighting the Germans.[11] They were also to concentrate their efforts on liberating cities, the better to wield some political advantage later on.[12]

Some of the initial encounters went off smoothly. In March 1944, officers from a forward Scouting unit of the Red Army met with their counterparts in the Twenty-seventh Volhynia Home Army Infantry Division and agreed to cooperate in the liberation of Kovel, part of prewar Poland, today in western Ukraine. The Poles agreed to subordinate themselves to Soviet operational command during the battle, and the Soviets agreed to lend them ammunition and to acknowledge their political independence. Over three weeks, Polish and Soviet soldiers fought side by side, taking several villages and suffering many losses.[13]

If Soviet political goals had been different, that could have been a model for future cooperation. But it ended badly. In July, the Polish divisional commander reiterated his desire to continue to work with the Red Army,

but declared that he would not cooperate with the new, communist-led, Polish national liberation committee in Lublin. Cooperation ended. The division was immediately surrounded by Soviet troops and disarmed. Some of its members were sent to labor camps, others were arrested.[14] Cooperation, betrayal, disarmament, arrest: most of the subsequent encounters between the Red Army and the Home Army followed exactly the same pattern.[15]

As the Red Army's second invasion of Poland got under way in the spring and summer of 1944, its interactions with the Home Army were of intense interest to the Soviet leadership. Lavrentii Beria, the brutal and duplicitous boss of the NKVD, filed detailed daily reports on the situation in Poland to Stalin, using language that could well have been designed to alarm the Soviet leader. On June 29, 1944, for example, Beria gave Stalin a list of "Polish bands" (the word "band" implying something vaguely criminal) that were then preparing for action in "western Belarus" (formerly eastern Poland, the territory occupied by the USSR since 1939). These bands, he wrote, are "organized according to the same principles as prewar Poland" (prewar Poland having been capitalist, "aristocratic," and hostile to the USSR). He noted darkly that they maintain a "direct connection to the military circles of the Polish government in England" and in a later note pointed out that they sometimes even met with envoys from London (which meant that they must be tools of Western influence). He reckoned there were between 10,000 and 20,000 armed men in the area, and he was deeply suspicious of all of them.[16]

Beria also noted that the "bands" appeared to be preparing a major offensive against the Germans, which was true. At the end of June, Home Army soldiers in former Polish territories were indeed preparing for "Operation Tempest," a series of uprisings aimed at liberating Polish cities from Nazi occupation in advance of the Red Army's arrival. The most famous of these was the Warsaw Uprising, but smaller uprisings were also planned for Vilnius and L'viv (or Wilno and Lwów, as the Poles still called them). Beria was also correct in surmising that the leaders of the Home Army kept in touch with London. Although their communication with the outside world was primitive and irregular, the partisan units in these eastern forests did consider themselves to be part of a regular army, operating under the command of the Polish government in exile in London. They also assumed that with the end of the war the Polish territories occupied by the USSR in 1939 would revert to Polish sovereignty, and that the country's prewar borders would be restored.

Eventually Beria's communiqués went further. Not only did he imply darkly that the Home Army was a force of aristocratic capitalism but he also implied that its leaders were collaborating with the Germans. Borrowing a term from espionage, he wrote to Stalin that the Warsaw and Vilnius Home Army "centers" all "work in service of the Germans, arm themselves at [German] cost, and conduct agitation against the Bolsheviks, the [communist] partisans, and the kolkhozes, murdering communists who are left on the territory of western Belarus."[17] Beria was profoundly suspicious of the motives of the local commander in eastern Poland, General Alexander Krzyzanowski—better known then and since by his pseudonym, Wilk ("wolf"). General Wilk, Beria wrote in July, was a shady figure who had arrived in the region "illegally" from Warsaw during the period of German occupation. Worse, one of Wilk's underlings had already identified himself to the Red Army, and had asked the Soviet commanders for their cooperation in the liberation of Vilnius. Beria considered this request outrageous—"the Poles think they have a right to take Vilnius!"—and complained that "this Polish army disorients the population": the people of this region, he explained, ought to be under the impression that they owed their liberation to the Soviet Union, not to Poland.[18]

Some elements of Beria's rant against General Wilk ring true. Many Polish partisan groups in the regions around Vilnius, as well as in western Belarus and western Ukraine, were distinctly suspicious of communists, and with good reason. These were the territories that had already been occupied and terrorized by the USSR between 1939 and 1941, the territories from which half a million Poles had been deported into Soviet exile and concentration camps. The survivors were resentful, they knew about the Katyn massacre and they certainly did think they had the right to take back Vilnius, which had been a Polish city for many centuries and was at that time dominated by a Polish ethnic majority. They saw no shame in using the weapons stores that departing Germans had left behind either, if that would help them liberate their country in advance of the Red Army's arrival.

Yet to describe the Home Army battalions as working "in the service of Germans" was ludicrous. There was nothing remotely fascist about General Wilk, who had been fighting the Germans since 1939. Neither he nor anyone else in a senior position gave orders to resist the Red Army, then or later. Beria's dislike of men like Wilk was ideological, and perhaps egotistical as well. He hated the idea that some upstart noncommunist Poles might challenge Soviet officers.

This attitude was reflected all the way down the chain of command. In a report to headquarters in July, a Soviet commander of the First Belorussian Front reported meeting a Polish "partisan"—like Beria, he put this description in quotations—who had, to the Soviet commander's astonishment, acted like his equal. He noted that the Pole had claimed to be a "captain-commander of a division" and had requested arms and assistance. A few days later, another report from the field described an encounter with another group of Polish partisans who had come upon some downed American pilots. The Poles refused to turn these pilots over to the Red Army when commanded to do so. "These aren't partisans," complained the colonel in the field, "they are Polish divisions loyal to the Polish government in London!"[19] Actually, they were both. But the colonel's mental horizon could not stretch to include a partisan who was not a Soviet partisan.

By the middle of the summer, all pretense of cooperation had been abandoned, and the USSR began to treat the Home Army overtly as a hostile force. Beria informed Stalin in mid-July 1944 that he had sent 12,000 NKVD troops to "take the necessary Chekist measures"—that is, to use secret police methods—to root out the remaining Home Army partisans from the forest and to "pacify" the population that had been feeding and housing them.[20] As noted, he also sent General Ivan Serov to command them. Serov had already supervised the deportation of "dangerous elements" from eastern Poland and the Baltic States in 1939–41, and had organized the brutal deportation of the entire Tatar population from Crimea in 1944. The "pacification" of small nations was his speciality.[21]

Serov acted quickly. On July 17, Red Army commanders, acting on his orders, invited General Wilk to a meeting. Wilk arrived and was promptly disarmed and arrested. Over the next two days, large numbers of his men were also summoned, disarmed, and arrested. By July 20, the Red Army had arrested and disarmed, 6,000 Home Army partisans, among them 650 officers.[22] Enticed by the promise of better weapons and support, almost all of them were caught by surprise. On July 14, for example, Henryk Sawala, a young partisan fighter, was told that his unit would be joining a new Polish-Soviet division. His commander explained that they would receive six weeks of training. After that, they would continue to advance alongside the Red Army, with the support of Soviet artillery and tanks. Pleased by this prospect, Sawala presented himself on July 18 to the Soviet officers whom he believed would be leading this new division. He was immediately placed under arrest.

"We were met by a group of 50 [NKVD] soldiers and disarmed," he recalled later. Some of his fellow partisans resisted arrest, preferring to "die with honor." But seeing that they were vastly outnumbered, most decided to avoid an unnecessary massacre and put down their weapons immediately. All of them, including Sawala, were then marched, under armed guard and without food, to a temporary camp some forty kilometers from Vilnius. While the battle raged on in the west, these trained partisans—men who would have happily fought the retreating Germans—were forced to sit for days in cramped conditions, doing nothing: "We slept beside one another like canned sardines," he remembered, "eating nothing but bread and herring."[23]

Finally they were called to a meeting and offered a deal. A soldier in a Polish army uniform—Sawala remembered that he was "hard to understand, because he used more Russian words than Polish"—exhorted them to join the Polish division of the Red Army and to reject the "traitorous" London government. Jerzy Putrament, a Polish communist writer, then got up and repeated the same message. The response was not positive. The partisans threw mud in Putrament's face and demanded the return of their commander. The agitator who spoke bad Polish then dropped his polite demeanor and snarled that they'd all end up "breaking rocks" somewhere if they didn't join the Red Army right away. Now furious, most of them refused. They were duly deported farther east, to POW work camps. Some were sent farther still into the Gulag system. Sawala himself landed in a camp in Kaluga, southwest of Moscow.[24] The attack on the Home Army was supplemented with violence directed at anyone who might be sympathetic to the Home Army's plight, including family members. In total, the NKVD arrested some 35,000 to 45,000 people in the former eastern territories of Poland between 1944 and 1947.[25]

As they moved into territory that even the USSR recognized as Polish, Soviet commanders did not become any less wary of the Home Army or any less suspicious of its leaders. On the contrary, as they moved deeper into Poland, the Russians became crueler, more decisive, and more efficient. By the time they reached Poznań in western Poland, they needed only a week to arrest dozens of Home Army members, incarcerate them, and subject them to brutal interrogation and torture. Following that, the NKVD conducted group executions of thousands of people in the forests outside the city.[26] At the same time, the Home Army stopped treating the advancing Red Army as a potential ally, and Home Army partisans stopped identifying themselves

to the new invaders. Some dropped their arms and melted into the civilian population. Others stayed in the forest and hunkered down to see what would happen next.

Tales of what had happened in eastern Poland quickly reached Warsaw. Although the Home Army's leaders in the Polish capital had only sporadic contact with London, and although they knew little about the progress of the rest of the war, they did know that the Red Army was arresting and disarming their comrades. In an atmosphere of confusion and panic, on August 1 they launched the brave but disastrous Warsaw Uprising in an attempt to overthrow the Nazis and liberate Warsaw before the Red Army entered the central part of the city. The Germans fought back, brutally. British and American planes, mainly flown by Polish and South African airmen, bravely dropped food and ammunition for the rebels, though not enough to make a difference. The Red Army, by then just across the river, stationed itself in the eastern suburbs and did nothing. Stalin refused permission for Allied planes carrying aid for the rebels to land on Soviet territory.[27]

Though Stalin would later affect to know nothing of the uprising, the Red Army's spies watched the fighting in Warsaw very carefully, and they kept close track of the public mood. In early October, as the rebellion drew to a tragic and terrible end, a Red Army colonel described the situation in one of many detailed reports to Moscow. Though hundreds of thousands of people had died and the city had, in practice, ceased to exist—after the uprising ended, the Germans systematically dynamited buildings that were still standing and forced all survivors into labor camps—his primary concern was the relationship between the remnants of the Home Army and the much smaller People's Guard, the Gwardia Ludowa, the armed wing of the communist party. The former, he complained, was not sharing weapons with the latter. Worse, Home Army leaders were spreading negative propaganda about the USSR:

> In bulletins, they emphasize the insignificant assistance that the rebels had received from Soviet air drops, and at the same time praise the Anglo-American effort. Thus is it clear that this organization is preparing action against the Red Army . . . Rumours are also spreading to the effect that the Polish Army [the Polish troops under Soviet command] are Soviet spies who have nothing in common with Polish national interests.[28]

After the uprising was over—after Warsaw was burned to the ground, the leaders of the Polish Underground State were dead or in German prison camps, and some 200,000 people had been killed—the tone of the field officers' reports to headquarters and of Beria's reports to Stalin grew harsher. On November 1, Beria filed a report to Stalin describing the "anti-Soviet activity of the White-Polish-Nationalist Bandit Revolutionary organizations," by which he meant the Home Army leadership.[29] Later that month, Soviet field commanders recommended an "increase of repressive measures" against all armed Home Army members. Red Army troops were pulled from the front, more NKVD troops were procured, and at last the forces of the new Polish secret police were sent to do battle, literally, with the Polish resistance.[30] Thanks in particular to the NKVD reinforcement, 3,692 Home Army members were under arrest by the third week of November 1944. By December 1, the number was 5,069.[31]

The bitter fighting in the capital radicalized the Polish public. Many of those who had hoped for a romantic, triumphant ending of the war now lapsed into nihilism. In later years, the Warsaw Uprising would often be remembered as a heroic last stand for Polish independence, and its leaders would become heroes, first of the anticommunist underground, later of the postcommunist state. Contemporary Warsaw is filled with monuments to the uprising, and Warsaw streets and squares are rightly named after its leaders and its fighters. But in the winter of 1944–45, as the reality of Warsaw's destruction sank in and as the Red Army's brutality increased, the uprising was widely considered a terrible, disastrous mistake. Andrzej Panufnik, a deeply patriotic musician and composer, had been outside the city caring for his sick mother while the events unfolded. When his father finally returned from the city and began to describe the "brave self-sacrifice of men, women and children," Panufnik "became convinced that the Uprising had been an appalling mistake based on the false hope that the Russians would come to the rescue."[32] Szymon Bojko, a Pole serving in the Kościuszko Division, the Polish division of the Red Army, arrived in the last days of the uprising and watched Warsaw burn from the other side of the river. "I had a feeling of disaster inside me," he remembered later. "Nothing political. Just foreboding."[33] In the words of the historian Andrzej Friszke, the failure created "a deep gloom, a crisis of faith in the West, and a sharp realization of the country's dependence on Russia."[34]

The gloom would deepen even further a few months later when news

of the Yalta agreement filtered back to Poland. Poles pored over the treaty's vague language, especially its call for "free and unfettered elections" that could not be monitored or enforced. Yalta was understood, then and later, as a Western betrayal. Finally the reality sank in: The Western Allies were not going to help Poland. The Red Army would remain in power in the East.[35]

After Yalta, the leaders of the Home Army never again had the same authority. Following the uprising, the organization had rebuilt its structures under the leadership of General Leopold Okulicki. But without Western allies, and without the tens of thousands of young combatants who had died in Warsaw, many Poles lost faith in their ability to fight the USSR. Aware of his lost legitimacy, Okulicki officially dissolved the Home Army in January. In his last, profoundly emotional message, he told his soldiers to keep the faith:

> Try to be the nation's guides and creators of an independent Polish state. In this activity each of us must be his own commander. In the conviction that you will obey this order, that you will remain loyal only to Poland, as well as to make your future work easier, on the authorization of the President of the Polish Republic, I release you from your oath and dissolve the ranks of the [Home Army].[36]

Having called upon his countrymen to renounce their membership in the resistance, Okulicki himself withdrew into deeper conspiracy. The remaining Home Army leaders kept themselves concealed too, waiting for a better future. But the future never came. At the end of February, the NKVD made contact with Okulicki and his commanders, and invited them to a meeting with General Serov in a Warsaw suburb. Aware that their identities had become known to the Soviet secret police, operating in the belief that the Yalta treaty still obliged the Soviet Union to include some noncommunists in the new Polish government, hopeful of a better outcome, they went.

None returned. Like General Wilk before them, sixteen men were arrested, flown to Moscow, imprisoned in the Lubyanka (the Soviet Union's most notorious prison), and indicted under Soviet law for "preparing an armed uprising against the USSR in league with the Germans." They were accused, in other words, of "fascist" sympathies. Most received long camp sentences. Three of them, including Okulicki, would eventually die in prison.

The arrests were intended both to serve as a lesson to the Polish underground and to notify the outside world of Soviet intentions. They also sent a message to the Polish communists, at least some of whom had hoped to win over the Home Army's supporters legitimately. In notes he made later, Jakub Berman wrote that the arrests had "shocked and worried" his comrades, who had planned to undermine the Home Army leaders through a policy of "divide and rule," forcing them to squabble with one another so that, eventually, Okulicki and the rest would have become unpopular. Instead, the arrest of the sixteen men unified a large part of society against the communists.[37]

The abrupt abduction of the Polish underground leadership also caused the first major rupture in the alliance between the USSR and the Anglo-Saxon powers. In a letter to Roosevelt, Churchill described these arrests as a turning point: "This is the test case between us and the Russians of the meaning which is to be attached to such terms as democracy, sovereignty, independence, representative government, and free and unfettered elections."[38] As subsequent events would show, Churchill was right to question the Russians' interpretations of the words penned into the Yalta agreement, which very quickly came to appear not so much vague as meaningless.

After the arrest of the Home Army leadership, part of the Polish population decided there was nothing left to do except learn to live under a Soviet-style regime. But others drew the opposite conclusion and decided that there was nothing left to do except fight. By the spring of 1945, one large group of anti-Nazi and anticommunist partisans, the National Armed Forces (Narodowe Siły Zbrojne, or NSZ), a nationalist grouping to the political right of the mainstream underground, had decided to take this path. Instead of following the Home Army's orders to end the struggle, their leaders decided to continue fighting. As the bulk of the Red Army moved west toward Germany, they regrouped in the forests of eastern Poland, especially around Lublin and Rzeszów, where they dedicated themselves to the new struggle.[39] Their goal, as a Polish secret police document not inaccurately put it, was "the liquidation of the workers of the Department of Public Security" using either "quiet disappearances (drowning, kidnapping, torture) or open shooting."[40]

In the vacuum opened up by the dissolution of the Home Army, new groups began to form. The most famous was Wolność i Niezawisłość—Freedom and Independence—usually known as WiN. Jan Rzepecki, its leader, was a Home Army officer. Unlike the mainstream Home Army, he

and his colleagues decided to remain underground after the failure of the Warsaw Uprising. They kept their identities secret, continued to observe the rules of conspiracy, and communicated using codes and passwords. Their intention was to remain a civilian organization, though they stayed in touch with armed partisans of all kinds. Until October 1946, they subsidized a newspaper, *Polska Niezawisła* (*Independent Poland*), whose editor argued that Poles should not be tempted to accept a status quo he characterized as "Soviet terror."[41] The NKVD identified and arrested Rzepecki not long afterward, in November 1945. He was interrogated and forced, or convinced, to reveal the names of his colleagues. He was freed on the condition that he call on the rest of the underground to reveal their identities, which some of them did.

Starting from scratch, WiN reconstituted itself once again. Its "Second Executive" launched itself in December 1945, and lasted for almost a year, maintaining some communications with the outside world via long chains of couriers and messengers who passed inscrutable notes to one another over many weeks. Finally, after a woman working for WiN was captured on the border and found to be carrying an encrypted message, the chain unraveled, and the ringleaders were again captured and tortured into naming names. Eventually a Third Executive and a Fourth Executive were formed, both of which were penetrated by the Polish secret police from the start, probably according to a Soviet plan (the Bolsheviks had created a phony Russian "opposition" at one point in the 1920s to attract foreign spies as well). After the Fourth Executive was disbanded the secret police created their own pseudo-WiN, which kept in contact with naïve foreigners as well as those Poles too clueless to know that the "clandestine organization" was a police operation. WiN existed in this sorry state until 1952, though a few of its former members did manage to live for long periods in hiding.

The story of WiN is often held up as an example of the pointlessness of anticommunist resistance in the immediate postwar period, and it was certainly perceived that way at the time. But it is also possible to view the sad history of WiN as a testimony to the Polish desire for resistance. Some 10,000 members of the organization were arrested, tortured, and jailed. Hundreds were executed. Despite the amount of pressure on the group, and despite the obsession with which its members were pursued, at its zenith WiN had about 20,000 to 30,000 members.[42]

Among postwar Polish resistance groups, WiN was unusual in its size and in retaining some theoretical links to the old Home Army chain

of command. Most other such groups were very small, often consisting entirely of young people who modeled themselves on an idea of the Home Army, which they themselves had not quite been old enough to join, or who called themselves "NSZ" without really knowing what that organization was or what it stood for. A thirteen-member partisan group calling itself "Home Army Youth" began to collect weapons in the forests south of Kraków after 1945, for example, and secretly practiced using them until all were arrested in 1950.[43]

As Soviet troops moved west for the final assault on Berlin, the situation grew even more complicated. As the Red Army left a region, it often happened that partisan groups of all political stripes moved back in: NSZ groups, ex–Home Army soldiers, Ukrainian partisans who were fighting for Ukrainian independence. All of them were intent on fighting the Red Army and its Polish allies, but sometimes they fought with one another as well. Despite the chaos, some remained true to the ideals of the old underground. Others came to rely on theft to stay alive and degenerated into semi-criminal gangs. Vicious battles often broke out between them, especially between Poles and Ukrainians.

Although the USSR had "pacified" eastern Poland in the summer of 1944, by the following spring the east was thus convulsed by what should correctly be described as a civil war. For communists and their allies, the villages and forests around the city of Lublin became unsafe, and for a time even the city itself was a danger zone. According to one report filed in May 1945, the work of "all party and government organs" had ground to a halt in the area. In four local districts, the police no longer existed, having been either disarmed by partisans or murdered outright.[44] Soon afterward, Stalin, still celebrating the German surrender, was informed, in the most alarming terms, that "in Poland the anti-state underground continues to be active, everywhere."[45] Another five NKVD regiments, plus a motorized battalion, were duly called in to assist the hapless Polish secret police once again.[46]

In August 1945, the minister of public security, Stanisław Radkiewicz, attended a regional meeting of the Security Department in Lublin and heard some hard truths. One local officer reckoned that no more than 20 percent of the people in his county supported the new regime. Another explained that they had not managed to place any agents inside the armed anticommunist partisan movement because "they don't want to cooperate." Others thought the situation would improve because the peasants were tired of supporting

the partisans, some of whom regularly stole food. But all present agreed that "bands" were still a major problem. Some were hiding in the forests, others worked on their farms by day, but "at an agreed signal they come together and carry out a criminal attack."[47] They regularly assaulted security policemen, communist party officials, and others who collaborated with them.

Yet even as it fought, the armed resistance already seemed aware of its tragic position. Its members were exhausted by the long struggle with the Germans. Many had already spent five or six years living in the forests. Often very young, they had missed months or years of schooling. They knew that surrender meant the end of their dream of national independence, but at the same time they were now fighting against a new and more amorphous enemy. In the course of their duties, they were required to murder not German occupiers but Polish communists and Polish policemen. Some of them considered these tasks fratricidal and wanted out. Others resented those who left. In 1946, one armed gang beat up a pair of schoolteachers, both former Home Army men, accusing them of "collaboration" because they had returned to ordinary life.[48] Eventually, tens of thousands accepted one of a series of "amnesties," turned in their weapons, and joined civilian life.

Many were embittered by the experience. Lucjan Grabowski, the young man from the Białystok region, had stayed with his Home Army unit until he was asked to kill one of its members for treason. Suspecting the man was innocent, he refused to carry out the order. "They were terrible times, brother was killing brother for any kind of reason." Finally, "I began to become conscious of a few facts that until then I hadn't paid attention to and hadn't thought much about. A lot of my friends, former partisans, had gone to the West. Others had started university courses, or were finishing high school diplomas and working. And I was still fighting, for the fifth year in a row." Grabowski turned in his weapons along with forty other men, mostly from WiN. All had tears in their eyes: "We left the secret police building without weapons and no longer the same people we had been a few hours earlier."[49]

Others kept fighting. Tiny numbers of men—one or two dozen—remained in the forests for many years. One small group of NSZ partisans gave itself up in 1956, after Bołeslaw Bierut's death. One lone operator, Michał Krupa, remained in hiding until he was finally tracked down and arrested in 1959.[50] But most of those who kept fighting did so knowing there was no hope.

Among them was an underground leader known by the pseudonym

"Mewa." According to the Polish security police who tracked his movements, Mewa, who fought with the Home Army during the war, had returned to the armed struggle in 1945 out of desperation and disillusion: he was suicidal, a psychological profile of him explained, "he wants to die." Many of the 300 members of his gang—some former Home Army, some deserters from the Polish division of the Red Army—felt the same way. Most were from southeastern Poland, and their morale was low. In May 1945, they held an outdoor mass and pledged allegiance to the Polish government in exile in London—a government that was no longer recognized as legitimate by its allies or by anyone else, as all of those present knew perfectly well.

From then on, Mewa's group slowly shrank. In the months that followed, many of Mewa's men drifted back to their family farms or decided to leave the area and head to the former German territories, now part of western Poland, in order to begin new lives. Some of those who stayed began to steal from the local Ukrainian population, at that time still a large percentage of the inhabitants of southeastern Poland. More than once they burned Ukrainian villages to the ground. The archival record of their exploits says a lot about their desperation. In January 1945 they attacked a factory director, a Polish communist, and stole 100 zlotys of Polish currency. In April they stole two horses. In July they killed a Ukrainian peasant and threw his body into the river. By the end of 1945, the local police were working hard, but not very competently, to break up Mewa's group. They infiltrated two agents into the gang, only to learn that one turned back against them and the other had been uncovered and murdered. His body was thrown into a river too. Over the year and a half of its existence, the group carried out 205 attacks and murdered many local communist officials—until finally, in July 1947, Mewa was captured. As he must have expected, he was sentenced to death.[51]

A decade later, the ambiguity of this moment was perfectly captured in *Ashes and Diamonds*, Andrzej Wajda's classic film about this period. The movie tells the story of a partisan with a dilemma: he must choose between a girl he has just met and a political assassination he has been ordered to carry out. He chooses the assassination, but is shot himself while carrying it out. In the final scene he runs, stumbles, and finally dies on a field full of garbage. The metaphor was clear enough to Polish audiences: the lives of the young men who joined the resistance had been thrown away on the trash heap of history.

Though precise figures are hard to calculate, the NKVD itself reckoned

that in 1945 between January and April alone it had arrested some 215,540 people in Poland. Of this number, 138,000 were Germans or Volksdeutsche—local people who had claimed to be of German descent. Some 38,000 Poles were also arrested in this four-month period, and all were sent to camps in the USSR. Some 5,000 died "in the course of the operation and investigation."[52] Among them must have been thousands of Mewa's men who fought until the end, knowing they would lose.

Once the war had ended there was no sustained or armed resistance to the Soviet occupation of eastern Germany. Hitler had hoped there would be: before his suicide he exhorted the Germans to fight to the death, to burn cities to the ground, to sacrifice everything in one last violent struggle. He also ordered the Wehrmacht to create youth battalions that would conduct a partisan struggle against the Red Army after his death.

These youth battalions were the "Werewolves" who featured so largely in both Nazi and Allied propaganda, but who in reality were every bit as mythological as their name implied. With Hitler's death and Germany's defeat, they simply melted away: the spell was broken. Erich Loest, later a prominent East German novelist, was a twenty-five-year-old Hitler Youth leader and a junior Wehrmacht officer when he was first recruited to the Werewolf movement. He was told of his new role in the final weeks of the war, and even given some partisan training in preparation for the Russian occupation. Yet when the Russians actually marched into Mittweida, his hometown in Saxony, the underground struggle was the furthest thing from his mind. Instead of fighting the Red Army, his family helped him escape to an aunt's farm farther west, where he could safely surrender to the Americans.

Loest never spoke of his Werewolf training in the years immediately after the war—"I am not stupid," he told me—and he was never arrested. Others were less lucky. During the last days of the war, the SS ordered all of the teenagers in Mittweida to attend a lecture on the Werewolves. No training was given and no oaths were sworn, but an attendance list was passed around. Soviet authorities found the list after the war's end. "Nothing had happened except for this lecture, but all of them were arrested. Arrested for one year," explained Loest.[53]

The legal basis for such arrests was order 00315 of the Soviet Military Administration, issued on April 18, 1945. This edict called for the immediate internment, without prior investigation, of "spies, saboteurs, terrorists, activists of the Nazi party" as well as people maintaining "illegal" print and broadcasting devices, people with weapons, and former members of the German civil administration. The order resembled the regulations put in place in the other Allied occupation zones, where "active" Nazis were also interrogated on a massive scale.[54] The difference between the Soviet zone and other zones was one of degree: in practice, the Soviet order made it possible to arrest almost anyone who had held any position of authority, whether or not he or she had been a Nazi. Policemen, town mayors, businesspeople, and prosperous farmers all qualified on the grounds that they could not have been so successful unless they had collaborated.

By the time of the Potsdam Conference at the beginning of August, the definition of who could be interned had grown even broader. In an ugly Hohenzollern palace surrounded by green parkland, the Allies—Stalin and now Harry Truman and Clement Attlee (following Roosevelt's death and Churchill's electoral defeat)—issued a new declaration stating that "Nazi leaders, influential Nazi supporters and high officials of Nazi organizations and institutions and *any other persons dangerous to the occupation or its objectives* shall be arrested and interned" (my italics).[55] For the USSR this was an ideal formulation: "Any other persons dangerous to the occupation or its objectives" is a very broad category indeed, and it could be stretched to include anyone whom the NKVD disliked for any reason.

The Red Army duly set up military tribunals, courts without lawyers or witnesses, which continued for several years. These were completely separate from the Nuremberg trials, which were created jointly by all of the Allies to try the most high-ranking Nazi leaders, and they had nothing to do with international law. Convictions were sometimes made on the basis of Article 58 of the Soviet criminal code, the statute that was used to arrest political prisoners in the Soviet Union and that had no relation of any kind to German law either. Sentences were sometimes translated into German but written out in Cyrillic, making them impossible for the accused to read. Prisoners were sometimes forced, after severe beatings and other kinds of torture, to sign documents they couldn't understand. Wolfgang Lehmann, aged fifteen, signed a document stating that he had blown up two trucks, though he didn't know it at the time. Other trials were held in Moscow, where prisoners were convicted in absentia by Soviet judges. Weeks later, they would learn what had happened.[56]

Some of those arrested really had been Nazis, though not necessarily important Nazis. Little attempt was made to separate real criminals from small-time bureaucrats or opportunists. But in addition to the Nazis, the arrests soon swept up thousands of people too young to have been Nazis—Manfred Papsdorf was arrested at thirteen—or many who, like the teenagers of Mittweida, were guilty of nothing more than being in the wrong place at the wrong time.[57] A few were arrested because their enthusiasm for liberation was too great. Gisela Gneist was fifteen years old in 1945 and transfixed by the idea of democracy, a word she heard frequently on American Armed Forces Radio. Gneist lived in Wittenberg and was resentful of the Soviet soldiers there, some of whom had created a brothel on the top floor of her apartment block. She wanted something better, and along with some other teenagers she created a "political party," complete with its own amateurish secret codes. They had no idea of the potential danger, and they didn't have much of an ideology. "My idea of freedom," she remembered, "was that people should be able to speak freely. I didn't know what communism was, had never really heard of it."[58]

Gneist was arrested in December 1945, along with two dozen of her fellow "party members," all teenagers. She was put in a "cell without windows" along with twenty other women, some of whom were her schoolmates. The toilet was a milk bottle. There were bugs everywhere, and lice. A Soviet officer interrogated her in Russian for many days running, in the presence of a barely competent translator. He also beat her on the back and on the legs until the blood ran. Gneist, not yet sixteen, eventually confessed: she admitted she had been part of a "counterrevolutionary organization." A military tribunal found her guilty in January 1946 and sentenced her, just like a real war criminal, to incarceration in Sachsenhausen.[59]

Surprising though it will seem to those unfamiliar with this odd twist of history, Sachsenhausen, a notorious Nazi concentration camp, underwent a metamorphosis after the war and lived a second life, as did the equally notorious concentration camp at Buchenwald. The American troops who liberated Buchenwald in April 1945 had forced the leading citizens of Weimar to walk around the camp's barracks and to witness the starving survivors, the mass graves, and the corpses stacked like firewood beside them. Four months later, the Soviet troops who subsequently took control of the Weimar region had once again installed prisoners in those same barracks, and eventually buried

them in similar mass graves. They followed the same practice in many places. Auschwitz was another one of many labor camps in Poland also to be reused in some manner after the war.[60]

The Russians renamed Buchenwald Special Camp Number Two, and Sachsenhausen became Special Camp Number Seven.[61] In total there would be ten such camps built or rebuilt in Soviet-occupied Germany, along with several prisons and other less formal places of incarceration. These were not German communist camps but rather Soviet camps. The NKVD's central Gulag administration controlled all of them directly from Moscow, in some instances down to the last detail. The NKVD sent instructions from Moscow on how to celebrate the May 1 holiday in its German camps, for example, and carefully monitored the "political-moral" condition of the guards.[62] All of the senior camp commanders were Soviet military personnel, although some had German staff too, and the camps were laid out according to Soviet designs. An inhabitant of Kolyma or Vorkuta would have felt immediately at home.

At the same time, the German special camps were not labor camps of the kind that the NKVD ran in the Soviet Union itself. They were not attached to factories or building projects, as Soviet camps usually were, and prisoners did not go out to work. On the contrary, survivors often describe the excruciating boredom of being forbidden to work, forbidden to leave their barracks, forbidden to walk or move. In the Ketschendorf camp, inmates begged to work in the kitchens so as to have some kind of activity (and of course to have access to more food).[63] In Sachsenhausen there were two zones, in only one of which people were allowed to work. Prisoners much preferred that one.[64]

The special camps were not death camps of the kind that the Nazis had constructed either. There were no gas chambers, and prisoners were not sent to Sachsenhausen to be immediately killed. But they were extraordinarily lethal nonetheless. Of some 150,000 people who were incarcerated in NKVD camps in eastern Germany between 1945 and 1953—of which 120,000 were Germans and 30,000 were Soviet citizens—about a third died from starvation and illness.[65] Prisoners were fed wet, black bread and cabbage soup so bad that Lehmann, who was later sent to the Gulag, remembered that "in Siberia the food was better and more regular."[66] There were no medicines and no doctors. Lice and vermin meant that disease spread quickly. In the winter of 1945–46, it was so cold that the prisoners in the women's zone in

Sachsenhausen burned bed slats to keep warm.[67] As was the case in so many Soviet penal institutions, prisoners did not die because they were murdered but because they were neglected, ignored, and sometimes literally forgotten.

The explicit goal of the Soviet special camps in eastern Germany was not labor or murder but isolation: the special camps were meant to cut dubious people off from the rest of society, at least until the new Soviet occupiers had got their bearings. They were preventative rather than punitive, designed primarily to quarantine people who might oppose the system, not to incarcerate people who had already done so. In the Soviet Gulag some contact with the outside world was possible, and inmates could even sometimes receive visitors. By contrast, during the first three years of the existence of the postwar German camps, prisoners could not send or receive letters, and they had no news from the outside world whatsoever. In many cases, their families did not know what had happened to them or where they were. They had simply disappeared.

Over time, conditions did improve, in part thanks to pressure from outside. The sudden disappearance of so many young people made family members frantic, and they bombarded officials with requests for information. German authorities were usually of no help. In 1947, a local official advised family members in Thuringia that they "might be able to learn more from the Russian prosecutor in Weimar."[68] Soviet officials in turn passed such requests up the chain of command and, in the general chaos, people got lost. One German student disappeared in 1945 and was finally "found" by his parents only in 1952.[69] That was four years after the Soviet military administration in Germany had agreed to allow prisoners to notify their family members of their locations.[70] In that same year, the NKVD had also increased the food allowances for the camps, in order to reduce the high death rate and to mollify the East German leaders who were petitioning the Soviet authorities for change.[71]

The arrests, along with the prolonged detention of Wehrmacht soldiers in the Soviet Union (some would remain there until the 1950s), became a major source of friction between the public and the new authorities. But they also helped create a new set of standards for public behavior. Most of the newly liberated Germans were not communists and did not know what to expect from the Soviet occupation forces. The arrest and incarceration of thousands of young people on the slightest suspicion of any form of "anti-Soviet" politics immediately set the tone for others. It was a first lesson, for many, on

the need to censor oneself in public. If a teenager like Gisela Gneist could be arrested for talking about democracy, then the penalty for more serious political involvement would obviously be much higher.

Former prisoners and their families were even more afraid. After their release, they rarely spoke about what had happened to them. Lehmann, who had been in the Ketschendorf camp in Germany as well as the Soviet Gulag, didn't tell his wife about either until after 1989.[72] The use of selective violence and the creation of camps for potential enemies of the regime were also part of a broader Soviet policy. The Red Army and the NKVD knew that in societies as uncertain and unstable as those of postwar Eastern Europe, mass arrests could backfire. But arrests carefully targeted at outspoken people could have a wider echo: if you arrest one such person, ten more will be frightened.

The Russians who arrived in Budapest in January 1945 knew little about the nation whose capital they had just conquered. Most assumed they had arrived in a country peopled entirely by Nazi collaborators—Hungary had been a German ally during the invasion of the USSR—and they were sometimes incredulous to find themselves treated as liberators. As in Germany, they were under orders to arrest all of the fascists they could identify. But whereas in Germany they had looked for Werewolves and in Poland they tracked down the Home Army, in Hungary they seemed unsure of how, exactly, a fascist might be identified.

As a result, the first arrests in Hungary were often arbitrary. Men were stopped on the street, told they would be taken away to do "a little work"—*malenkaya rabota* in Russian, a phrase that became Hungarianized as *málenkij robot*—and marched off in convoys. They would then disappear deep into the Soviet Union and not return for many years. At the very beginning, it seemed almost anyone would suffice. An eyewitness from a town in eastern Hungary remembered that within days of entering his town, soldiers began collecting people: "Not only men but also children, sixteen- to seventeen-year-old kids and even a thirteen-year-old. No matter how we cried and begged, they did not react, just held their guns and told everyone to get out of the houses with sometimes nothing on, no clothes, no food, just the way they were there . . . We did not know where they were taken, they were just saying *málenkij robot, málenkij robot.*"[73]

Some were considered suspicious because they appeared to be wealthy or because they owned books. George Bien, then aged sixteen, was arrested along with his father because he owned a shortwave radio. He was interrogated as a spy, forced to confess, and made to sign a thirty-page Russian document, of which he did not understand a single word. Bien eventually wound up in the camps of Kolyma, returning home only in 1955.[74]

Soviet troops also seemed to be under orders to look for Germans, who they had been informed would be quite numerous. In practice, this meant that people with German-sounding names (very common in the former Hapsburg realms) were immediately treated as war criminals. József Révai, who was to become one of the most important Hungarian communists, complained to Rákosi in early January that Russian soldiers seemed to have "fixed quotas" they had to fulfill, and that they took as Germans "people who did not speak a word of German—people who were proven antifascists, had been interned."[75] The result of these policies was that somewhere between 140,000 and 200,000 Hungarians were arrested and deported to the USSR after 1945. Most of them wound up in the camps of the Gulag.[76]

Many remained in Hungary as well. Internment—imprisonment without trial—had become common in Hungary in the late 1930s, but now it was expanded. "People's courts" were created to try, sentence, and in some cases execute Nazi collaborators. A few of these trials were made into major public events, in the hope that they would educate Hungarians about the crimes of the past. Even at the time many observed that ordinary Hungarians mostly dismissed them as "victors' justice." A few years later, some of the verdicts would be overturned, on the grounds that it was time to drop the "retaliatory character of the punishments."[77]

Nor were they perceived as fair. Although decisions about internment and trials were nominally under Hungarian control, it was widely assumed that the NKVD influenced the courts. A. M. Belyanov, the Soviet official delegated to oversee security matters in Hungary, at one point berated a Hungarian politician about the slow pace of trials: "He urged that the people's tribunals work faster, he criticized them for negotiating and talking too much. He wanted them to announce the verdict right after the prosecution speech. I told him that we had studied the Soviet justice system and there, in political cases, witnesses are heard publicly at the court. He smiled unwillingly and showed me his big yellow teeth, which were like those of a tiger . . ."[78] The Red Army also held its own trials near Vienna, in an elegant villa in

the resort town of Baden. There was no pretense about Hungarian sovereignty there: Soviet military tribunals simply convicted Hungarians of political crimes under Article 58 of the Soviet criminal code, just as in Germany.[79]

The number of the accused was very high, and the nature of the charges very broad. A series of secret decrees had instructed the new Hungarian police forces to arrest, among others, former members of extreme right movements, including the fascist Arrow Cross movement, which had ruled Hungary during the final days of the war, from October 1944 until March 1945; military officers who had served under Admiral Horthy, Hungary's interwar authoritarian leader, from 1920 until the Arrow Cross takeover; and also pub owners, tobacconists, barbers, and all of those who—in another hopelessly broad formulation—"*due to their regular contacts with the public were the primary disseminators of fascist propaganda*" (my italics). In practice, anyone who had ever worked for or praised any of the prewar governments, party leaders, or politicians was at risk. The NKVD, along with the new security police, also acquired lists of young people who had been members of the *levente*, Admiral Horthy's paramilitary youth organization, and began tracking them down, just as they had tracked down Hitler Youth and alleged Werewolves in Germany. In total, Hungarian and Soviet security police interned some 40,000 Hungarians between 1945 and 1949. Around Budapest alone, the new regime built sixteen internment camps with a capacity to contain up to 23,000 prisoners.[80]

Not all of those arrested had collaborated with the Nazis. On the contrary, from the moment of the Red Army's entry into Hungary, the new Hungarian secret police—backed, of course, by the Hungarian communist party and its Soviet mentors—began to seek out and identify a different sort of "fascist" as well. Although the Hungarian wartime underground was never as large or as well organized as its Polish equivalent, there had been cells of anti-German opposition even at the highest levels of society. Immediately after the war's end (much earlier than Hungarian chronology usually has it) the NKVD and the Hungarian secret police made these antifascists into a target. They were too independent, they believed in national sovereignty, and they knew how to create clandestine organizations. Many supported the Smallholders' Party, which played a large role in the provisional government and did actually win elections in 1945.

In a truly democratic postwar Eastern Europe, they would, like the Polish Home Army, have become the political elite. But even before the Hun-

garian government was fully under communist control, former members of the anti-German resistance knew they were under surveillance. István Szent-Miklósy, a member of one such secret grouping, later wrote that he and his friends "felt somehow hunted but could not give any tangible reason" immediately after the war's end. Unlike their Polish counterparts, these were not armed partisans: Szent-Miklósy's group was, he wrote, "without formal structure, without lists of names, without pledges, emblems or identity cards, without clearly delineated rules, without even an encompassing philosophy."[81] Many had been part of earlier groups such as the Hungarian Community, an antifascist (and also anti-Semitic) secret society, or the wartime Hungarian Independence Movement, which was also more of an anti-German discussion circle than a full-fledged resistance organization. Some of the group were among the founding members of the postwar Smallholders' Party, and as such were trying to cooperate with a regime they thought might become a democracy. Eventually they were hardly more than a group of friends who were vaguely anti-Soviet and who met in one another's apartments to exchange concerns.

In the end, they became objects of special interest not because of anything they'd done but because the secret police got hold of a written summary of their wartime resistance activities. Then they were watched even more carefully, as Szent-Miklósy described:

> In the early fall [of 1946] my neighbor sublet the room adjacent to my living room to the Military Political section. From there they bored a hole through the wall and placed a microphone. As the hole lay behind my heavy Dutch colonial couch, the receiver did not pick up the voices in the room very clearly. Then my telephone was adapted to transmit the voices, and another microphone was placed in the front hall where, on a Biedermeier sofa, sat our neighbor's teenage daughter with her suitor, an MPS [military police] agent disguised as a university student.[82]

Szent-Miklósy was arrested in December 1946. He was taken to the secret police headquarters on Andrássy Street, where he was tortured. He was made to stand with his forehead angled against the wall and his arms outstretched for hours, and forced to shout, "I am the murderer of my wife and my mother," both of whom, he had been told, were also under arrest.

He was put on trial, along with a large group of coconspirators. All were accused of agitating to overthrow "the democratic state" and jailed for ten years. During the trial Szent-Miklósy "confessed," at great length, to crimes he had never committed. His arrest was a kind of preemptive strike, typical of that time: he and his circle hadn't actually done anything of any significance—but the authorities feared they might.

A similarly preemptive strike against the independent-minded clergy followed soon after. The chief victim of that round was a charismatic and energetic Franciscan monk, Father Szaléz Kiss. Father Kiss ran a large and successful Christian youth group called Kedim, in and around the town of Gyöngyös, just fifty miles east of Budapest. Over the course of 1945, the new Hungarian secret police began to take a special interest in Gyöngyös because the communists had done particularly badly there in the elections of that year, and because the peasant-based Smallholders' Party had done particularly well.

Their Soviet mentors became even more interested when, beginning in September 1945, unknown gunmen murdered several Red Army soldiers stationed in the region. Under pressure to do something, the new Hungarian secret police launched one of their first big investigations. They arrested and detained some sixty people, including high-school-aged members of Kedim, and interrogated them all at great length. Their goal was to establish an elaborate spiderweb of connections: between Kedim and the Smallholders' Party, between the Smallholders' Party and the "Anglo-Saxon powers," between the U.S. embassy and Father Kiss, and between Father Kiss and the young men who allegedly murdered the Russian soldiers. Put together, these links were said to expose a "fascist terror conspiracy group" that was, at least in the imagination of the secret policemen, attempting to bring back the old regime.

The record of those interrogations, neatly preserved in a Budapest archive, does not make easy reading. One of the central suspects, a young law student named Józef Antal, first denied everything. Later, he made a long and garbled confession, probably after having been tortured. Antal, who was described by a friend as having "participated in the resistance against the German occupation," was a crucial link in the spiderweb, since he worked in the local Smallholders' Party headquarters and was at the same time an acquaintance of Father Kiss. In his rambling statement, he recalled a conversation with a Smallholder politician about the "coming war" between Russia

and the Anglo-Saxon powers, and gave the impression that he had already started organizing for this "armed conflict" in collaboration with Father Kiss. There are allusions to some guns and grenades being held at the Smallholders' Party offices, as well as to a weapons store "in a castle" known to Father Kiss.[83]

Immediately afterward, Antal retracted this confession. But an equally garbled statement was also obtained from Otto Kizmann, a seventeen-year-old Kedim member who confessed to having assassinated a Russian soldier. Kizmann, who was also probably tortured, went much further. He said that Father Kiss had "showed us the business cards of influential persons who would bring us weapons," that the priest had "told us to get weapons for ourselves until the foreign shipments arrive," and that he had declared that "killing a Russian was not a sin." Similarly wild tales were also extracted from a friend of Kizmann's, László Bodnár, also aged seventeen, who claimed Father Kiss had promised he would help them escape Hungary by airplane.[84]

Father Kiss himself did not confess to any of these unlikely crimes. On the contrary, he told his interrogators: "I did everything I could to convince the young people to hide their weapons, and not to commit murder, because this was the most hideous crime." He had, he said, once met a representative of the U.S. embassy, a man who had given him some American newspapers. He had never received, and never sought to receive, any American weapons. He was condemned to death anyway, as were Kizmann, Bodnár, and a sixteen-year-old boy. The sentences were carried out in December 1946. Other members of the "conspiracy" went to jail or, in a few cases, to prison camps in the Soviet Union.

The "Father Kiss conspiracy," like the arrest of Gisela Gneist in Germany or the sixteen Home Army leaders in Poland, was a harbinger of what was to come. The investigation into it was clearly inspired by the Soviet military authorities, as many later investigations would be. As was common in Soviet investigations, links were drawn between different organizations—Kedim, the Smallholders' Party, the church, the U.S. embassy—based on chance encounters, distant acquaintanceship, or the imagination of investigators. The shadow of "fascism" was cast over everyone caught in the net. The victims were mostly people in their teens and twenties, an age group that would remain of enormous interest to secret policemen across the bloc in years to come.

In the spring of 1946, at the time of the sentencing, the case also received massive publicity. On May 4, the Hungarian communist party's newspaper, *Szabad Nép*, published a photograph of Father Kiss in handcuffs, under the headline "Fascist Conspirators Confessed and Pleaded Guilty of Murders." An editorial alongside was entitled, simply, "Hang Them."[85] The case was also reported in the noncommunist press, but with greater care. At first, *Kis Újság* (*Little Gazette*), the newspaper of the Smallholders' Party, at that time the largest party in the Hungarian parliament, simply published the official police press release. The following day, it reported the words of the Smallholder leader and Hungarian prime minister, Ferenc Nagy, who declared that "if the information published in the official police communiqués proves even partly true then we demand the strictest investigation and the harshest punishment for the guilty."[86] A few days later, he referred to the incident less ambivalently, as a "fascist conspiracy." Not for many years did anyone publicly suggest that the story might not have any truth to it at all.

Other cases followed, each accompanied by equally lurid propaganda, and each supported by equally ambiguous evidence. Internments came in consecutive waves, from 1945 onward, without a break. First came the "war criminals," fascists, and anyone presumed to be a fascist; then military and civilian personnel from the Horthy regime; then members of legal political parties, especially the Smallholders; then social democrats; then communist party members themselves. Although the definition of an "enemy of the state" changed over time, the mechanisms to deal with these enemies were put in place right at the very beginning.[87]

Theoretically, in 1946 Hungary was—like Czechoslovakia or eastern Germany at the same time—a democracy. The government was run by the majority Smallholders' Party, who were not communists. They ruled in coalition with communists, social democrats, and others. But the Hungarian communist party, not the Hungarian state, controlled the security organs, just as the Czechoslovak communist party controlled the Czech security organs, the German communist party would control the East German security organs, and the Polish communist party controlled the Polish security organs. Everywhere in Eastern Europe, their control over the secret police gave minority communist parties an outsized influence over political events. Through the selective use of terror, they could send clear messages to their opponents, and to the general public, about what kinds of behavior and what kinds of people were no longer acceptable in the new regime.

Chapter 6

ETHNIC CLEANSING

> The Bolshevik party is a model of the genuine international working-class party. From the day it was created it has fought nationalism in every form.
>
> —Educational pamphlet, published in Moscow, 1950

> I came back to my native village for the first time in 1965. Once I had known every path there, every crooked tree. For the first few minutes, I didn't know what I was looking at. Tears filled my eyes, for a long time I couldn't say a word. They had plowed up our beautiful Nietreba and planted a forest . . .
>
> —Ivan Bishko, a Ukrainian deported from his village in 1946[1]

One of the myths that the international communist movement propagated about itself was the myth of its own indifference to national and ethnic distinctions. Communists were internationalists by definition, "soldiers in a single international army" with no national divisions between them. Raphael Samuel, son of a militant British communist and later a party member himself, once described the communism of his childhood as "universalist":

> Though allowing for the existence of national peculiarities (we only half believed in them), we thought of the transition from capitalism to socialism as being "identical" in content everywhere. Communism, like medieval Christendom, was one and indivisible, an international fellowship of faith . . .[2]

In reality, there was no wartime leader so keen to manipulate and encourage national conflict as Stalin—with the exception, of course, of Hitler himself. Lenin appointed Stalin "Commissar of Nationalities" in 1917, and the future Generalissimo acquired an expertise and interest in the issue that he never lost. From the 1930s onward he directed waves of terror against minority ethnic groups living in the USSR, among them Poles, Chechens, Crimean Tatars, Volga Germans, and, in the final years before his death, Jews. Following the Nazi invasion in 1941, he also drew heavily on Russian national and nationalist symbols—traditional army uniforms, the Orthodox church—to inspire "internationalist" Soviet citizens to fight the Germans. He understood the political uses of nationalism very well: emotional calls for the defense of the motherland inspired the soldiers of the Red Army far more than any Marxist, internationalist language could ever have done.

Ethnic conflict was also written into the agreement signed by the three Allied leaders at Potsdam in July 1945. A later generation of European leaders would react with horror at the notion of "ethnic cleansing." But Stalin, Truman, and Attlee positively encouraged the mass transfer of populations. Their Potsdam agreement blandly called for the "transfer to Germany of German populations . . . remaining in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary," a sentence that affected millions of people.[3] By agreeing to move Poland's border with the USSR to the west, they also tacitly accepted that there would be transfers of millions of Poles to Poland from Ukraine, and millions of Ukrainians to Ukraine from Poland. Although transfers of Hungarians from Czechoslovakia and Slovaks from Hungary did not appear in the Potsdam agreements, nobody in the international community objected very much when they took place. For its part, the Soviet Union had already presided over the mass deportation of some 70,000 ethnic Germans from Romania to the USSR in January 1945, six months before the Potsdam treaty was signed.[4]

The only additional provision made at Potsdam was that "any transfers that take place should be effected in an orderly and humane manner." But

by the time the treaty was signed, these "orderly and humane" population transfers had already degenerated into chaotic and cruel mass movements of people. Ethnic conflict—deep, bitter, violent ethnic conflict, between many different kinds of groups in many countries—was Hitler's true legacy in Eastern Europe, so much so that any discussion of the expulsions of Germans from western Poland, the Sudetenland, Hungary, and Romania after 1945 has to begin by recalling what had happened in the previous five years. To repeat: the object of the German occupation of Poland had been to destroy Polish civilization, to turn the Poles into an illiterate workforce, to eliminate the Polish educated class. Poles had been deported from historically Polish cities such as Poznań and Łódź, as well as from Gdynia, the new port city that the Polish state had constructed in the 1920s. They had been replaced by German colonists, had become second-class citizens, had in some places lost the right to speak Polish in the street or to send their children to Polish schools. Thousands wound up working either as slave laborers in Germany or as prisoners in one of the dozens of slave labor camps the Germans constructed for that purpose on Polish territory.

The occupation of the Czech lands was milder, though also deeply degrading. Throughout the country, historical monuments and statues had been removed, local leaders murdered, the very notion of nationhood mocked. The German occupation of Hungary at the end of the war was shorter, though also very cruel. Even the earlier periods of uneasy Hungarian-German and Romanian-German collaboration were humiliating for those populations, since collaboration with the Germans had so quickly evolved into domination by the Germans. Everywhere, the Holocaust left a terrible legacy of guilt and hatred, among Jews and non-Jews alike.

Postwar tensions were worse in regions where local German ethnic populations had helped the Nazis maintain power. The Nazi party had secretly funded the fascist Sudeten German Party, which won 85 percent of the German ethnic vote in the Czech elections of 1938. The grateful Sudeten Germans had greeted their new Nazi rulers enthusiastically after the division of the country under the Munich agreement later that year, a fact much resented by the local Czechs.[5] Some of the German inhabitants of the Polish city of Bydgoszcz—about a fifth of the prewar population—actively assisted the Nazis in their 1939 slaughter of the town's leading citizens, including priests, teachers, and even Boy Scouts. That didn't make them popular after the war either.[6]

As a result of this recent history, the Eastern European desire for revenge against the German populations in their midst was understandable, perhaps even justifiable. But it was not always just. Not all Germans had been Nazis, and not all of them had turned on their neighbors. Many of them had lived peacefully beside Czechs or Hungarians, and had been good citizens of Czechoslovakia and Hungary for centuries. Others, such as the inhabitants of Lower Silesia and East Prussia—territories that were an undisputed part of prewar Germany and now belonged to Poland—lived in towns and villages that had been part of German states for centuries.

For many individuals, the loss of their homes, furniture, livestock, and family heirlooms was a tragedy from which they would never recover. Yet the ethnic Germans were not treated as individuals. They were treated as Germans. Gerhard Gruschka, a young Silesian who had refused to join the Hitler Youth because it interfered with his duties as an altar boy, was kept in a labor camp near Katowice where he was forced, by Polish commanders, to sing the Horst Wessel song while they jeered.[7] Ethnic Germans in Hungary who had been made to join the Wehrmacht against their will at the end of the war received the same arbitrary expulsion orders as those who had voluntarily joined the SS in 1943.[8] Herta Kuhrig, the daughter of a German communist in the Sudetenland, was expelled from her home along with the daughters of German fascists.[9] No distinctions were made between outright collaborators and committed antifascists, some of whom had suffered discrimination alongside the local population.

Knowing how much they were hated, the first Germans left Eastern Europe in a hurry, long before expulsions began. There was nothing organized about this mass movement of millions of people, many of whom ran from their homes in a panic, only to find themselves immediately engulfed by battle or overwhelmed by cold and hunger. Tens of thousands tried to escape across the Baltic Sea, only to drown when their ships were sunk by Allied planes. The 100,000 Germans living in the city of Łódź—most of them recent colonists—began to scramble out of the city on foot and on horseback on the morning of January 16, 1945, across roads and fields covered in snow. Many were caught in the Soviet bombardment of the city that began the same day.[10] A few days later, Countess Marion Dönhoff began preparing to leave her family's ancient estate in East Prussia. Most of her neighbors had not yet left: they had been waiting for a Nazi order for evacuation, which never came. As the Red Army approached with unexpected speed, the

East Prussians began throwing possessions onto carts and pouring into the streets of Preußisch Holland (now Pasłęk), as Dönhoff remembered: "The town looked like a jammed turntable. The wagons had driven in from two sides and clogged up the whole thing and now there was no way to go either forward or backward." She herself packed only "a saddlebag with toiletries, bandage material, and my old Spanish crucifix." She ate a last meal, got up, left the food and dishes on the table, and went out of the house. She did not bother to lock the door behind her. She never went back.[11]

The actual expulsions of the Germans, when they began a few months later, weren't much better organized. The Czechs speak of the spring of 1945 as the time of "wild" expulsions, a word that doesn't quite capture the depth of emotion surrounding these mass evictions. The prewar Czechoslovak president, Edvard Beneš, had advocated the deportation of ethnic Germans from his country ever since fleeing into exile in London in 1938. For seven years he had traveled to Moscow, London, and Washington trying to sell the idea. He had encouraged the deportation of Germans from Hungary too (in part so as to make way for the Hungarians he also hoped to expel from his own country). But despite these high-level discussions and advance preparations—and notwithstanding the "orderly and humane" instruction about to be issued from the Potsdam palace—the first wave of expulsions from the Sudetenland took place in a maelstrom of fury, vengeance, nationalism, and popular rage.

In a radio address in Brno on May 12, 1945, just after the Nazi surrender, Beneš declared that the Germans had ceased to behave like humans during the war, and as a nation "must pay for all this with a great and severe punishment . . . We must liquidate the German problem definitively." Following that statement, Czechs rioted in the center of Brno, demanding German collaborators be turned over to the police. A few days later, the newly formed Brno National Committee forcibly evicted more than 20,000 men, women, and children from their homes and forced them to start marching toward the Austrian border on foot, with whatever possessions they could carry.[12] Hundreds died before their arrival. According to Czech statistics, 5,558 Germans committed suicide in 1946 alone.[13]

At about the same time, spontaneous expulsions also began in western Poland, near Poznań, sparked by a housing shortage as well as by a desire for revenge. There were many Germans still living in the region, Poles were returning home in increasing numbers, buildings were in ruins. In Wielkopolskie, the region around Poznań, the first local administrators to appear

on the scene were communist secret police officers. They selected German deportees, put them on trucks, and sent them to hastily organized transit camps, where they stayed until transport could be arranged to Germany. This wasn't the moment for finer feelings. Polish soldiers and security police were instructed to celebrate "the expulsion of German filth from Polish lands . . . Every officer, every soldier should be aware of the fact that today he fulfills a historic mission, for which generations have been waiting."[14]

In this early period, when feelings were still raw, local populations often took their revenge by implementing the same kinds of laws and restrictions that Germans had imposed on them. In the summer of 1945, the Czechs forced Germans to wear white armbands marked with the letter "N"—for *Nemec*, which means "German" in Czech—painted swastikas on their backs, and forbade them to sit on park benches, walk on pavements, or enter cinemas and restaurants.[15] In Budapest, it happened that crowds of Jewish survivors attacked and beat former fascist officials on their way to or from war crimes trials, in a couple of cases nearly lynching them.[16]

Poles made the Germans do forced labor—as they had themselves done forced labor during the Nazi occupation—sometimes in former Nazi concentration camps. In some cases, former prisoners now ruled over former guards, and they beat and tortured them just as they had been beaten and tortured themselves. As one Polish historian writes, the postwar use of these wartime camps, though shocking to us now, made sense at the time: they were intact in a period when little else was. Indeed, they often served multiple uses in quick succession.[17] More than 11,000 prisoners—mostly Poles, and some Soviet prisoners, including hundreds of children—were living in a small Nazi labor camp in the village of Potulice, near Bydgoszcz, for example, until January 1945. Immediately after liberation, the camp was occupied by Russian soldiers, who made use of the barracks as well as what was left of the leather in the tannery where prisoners had worked during the war to repair boots. A few weeks after that, the camp's first postwar Polish commander, Eugeniusz Wasilewski, found several Soviet soldiers still in residence when he took possession of the property in February. He asked them to make way for the Germans and the Nazi collaborators—among them the former German guards and commanders of the Potulice camp—whom he had just arrested.

Wasilewski, a prewar member of the merchant marine—and, apparently, an unenthusiastic member of the communist party—then ran the camp

until July. Most of his employees were former prisoners, and many of them were seeking revenge. By all accounts Wasilewski tried to prevent the most egregious forms of mistreatment at Potulice, and one former prisoner turned guard complained that he was too lenient: "In my time things were worse." But the camp grew from 181 prisoners to 3,387 during the seven months he was in command and conditions inevitably deteriorated.[18] A typhus epidemic broke out after Wasilewski left in November, and in the following years the camp employees were accused of fraud, neglect, and alcoholism.[19] Over the five years of the camp's existence, nearly 3,000 Germans died there of hunger and disease.

Though there are no archival records of such abuse at Potulice, former guards and prisoners have also described, in interviews and memoirs, scenes of torture and abuse there and in other camps for German deportees. Germans were starved and beaten, they had excrement poured on their heads, their gold teeth removed by force, their hair set on fire. They were forced to repeat "I am a German swine," and made to exhume the bodies of recently murdered Polish and Soviet prisoners. The commandant of the prison at Gliwice, Lola Potok—a Jewish woman who had survived Auschwitz but lost most of her family, including her mother, her siblings, and an infant son—interrogated Germans about their Nazi affiliations, whipping them both when they confessed and when they didn't, on the grounds that if they didn't admit to collaboration they were lying. By her own account, she "recovered" after several months, regained her composure, and began to treat the Germans like human beings. This was not because she forgave them but because, she said, she didn't want to become like them.[20]

Over time, the expulsions of Germans from Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia—and eventually Hungarians from Czechoslovakia as well—did become more orderly. The Czechoslovak president issued the Beneš Decrees, which gave a legal veneer to what had been spontaneous expulsions. These decrees authorized the seizure of German and Hungarian property in Czechoslovakia; the eviction of German and Hungarian residents; the resettlement of Czechs and Slovaks on German and Hungarian land; and the removal of Czechoslovak citizenship from Germans and Hungarians. As these decrees attained the status of law, transports became more regular, food was provided, expellees were allowed to take furniture and clothing. Commissions were created to deal with knotty questions of property or identity. The latter problem was especially acute in the ethnically mixed regions of Poland,

where "Polonized" Germans with Polish wives often wanted to stay in the country, as did a number of small ethnic groups such as the Kaszubians and Mazurians, whose members had been considered "German" by the Nazis.

Most confusing were the cases of people who had declared themselves during the war to be Volksdeutsche, of German origin, a category specially invented for the Germanic but not necessarily German inhabitants of Nazi-occupied Europe. The Volksdeutsche were Romanians, Hungarians, Czechs, Poles, or others with German-sounding surnames and perhaps German family roots. They weren't necessarily able to speak German and most had never been to Germany. When the Nazis asked them to sign Volksdeutsche lists they might have done so out of ethnic pride, but were just as likely to have done so out of fear, or simply a desire for better treatment. Some had been intimidated. In Poland one commission decided in November 1946 to "rehabilitate" the Volksdeutsche and allow them to become "Polish" again, but only if they could prove that they had signed the Volksdeutsche list under duress, and only if they had behaved "in a manner befitting their Polish origin" during the war. Even so the security police sometimes authorized roundups of Volksdeutsche and forced them to work in labor camps alongside actual Germans.[21]

In Hungary, where many people had German-sounding surnames, the only institution which actually knew who had signed the Volksdeutsche list was the Census Bureau, and at first its director refused to give it up. Even after a visit from the Hungarian secret police in April 1945, the Census Bureau's employees resisted: never before had the bureau given data away, not for criminal investigations, not during the war, not even when the German occupation government in 1944 had tried to find out the identity of Jews. The bureau finally relented after ten of its employees were arrested by the secret police—and when it was made to understand that the local Soviet authorities were involved in these arrests and would happily carry out more.[22]

By the time it was finished, the resettling of the German populations of Eastern Europe was an extraordinary mass movement, probably unequaled in European history. By the end of 1947, some 7.6 million "Germans"—including ethnic Germans, Volksdeutsche, and recent settlers—had left Poland, through transfer or escape. About 400,000 of them died on the way back to Germany, from hunger, or disease, or because they were caught in the crossfire of the advancing front.[23] Another 2.5 million had left Czechoslovakia and a further 200,000 were expelled from Hungary.[24] German populations were

also deported, or left voluntarily, from Ukraine, the Baltic States, Romania, and Yugoslavia. In all, some 12 million Germans left Eastern Europe in the postwar period and resettled in both East and West Germany.

Once they'd made the trek across the border, German refugees received scant welcome. Almost everywhere they went in either the eastern or western occupation zones of Germany, they immediately formed an underclass. They spoke eastern dialects, had different manners and habits, and of course had no possessions or capital of any kind. In 1945, there had been no time to prepare any facilities for them, and many wound up wandering aimlessly in search of food. Epidemics of typhus and dysentery swept through the expellee population and spread to others. So bad was this problem in the Soviet zone that the authorities appealed to local leaders directly to at least keep the expellees in one place, and to "prevent people from wandering farther." Representatives of the British and American zones also appealed for the expulsions to stop or at least slow down.[25]

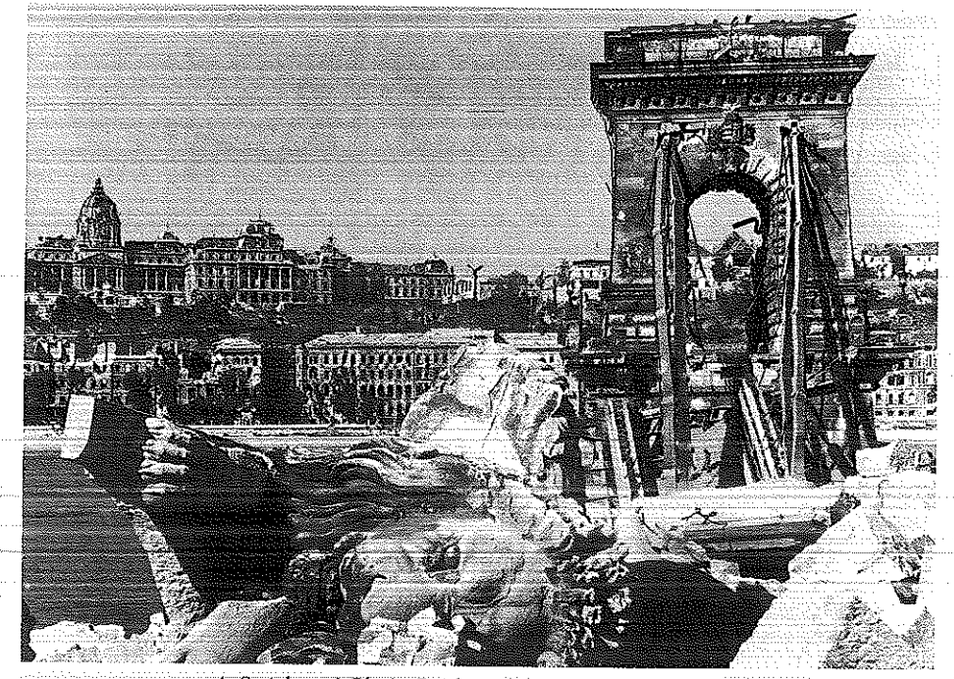
In retrospect, blame for the initial chaos and the thousands of deaths has often been laid on the governments that expelled the Germans. But responsibility ought to be shared more widely. Of course, the expulsions would never have happened without the war, without the German invasion of the region, and without Germany's brutal mistreatment of the Eastern European population. The numbers were also high because so many German "colonists" had moved to the region during the war, and, indeed, many Germans targeted for expulsion in 1945 did not have families and roots in the region at all. Among those expelled from Poland were ethnic Germans—sometimes from Germany, sometimes from other parts of Europe—who had been moved into Polish or Jewish homes and farms, following the murder or eviction of the owners. German officers or German businessmen and their families, many of whom had taken advantage of the privileges available to them in Nazi-occupied Europe, were also forced to leave. They had no moral claim to Polish land or property at all, though some later considered themselves "expellees" and therefore "victims" anyway. Erika Steinbach, a German politician who later became leader of the Bund der Vertriebenen, the powerful and vocal expellees' organization, was the daughter of a low-ranking German corporal, originally from Hesse, who happened to have been stationed in the Polish town of Rumia during the war. Her family had been "expelled"—or rather they fled—because they were occupiers, and indeed they headed back home to Hesse, which is where Steinbach grew up.[26]

ZERO HOUR

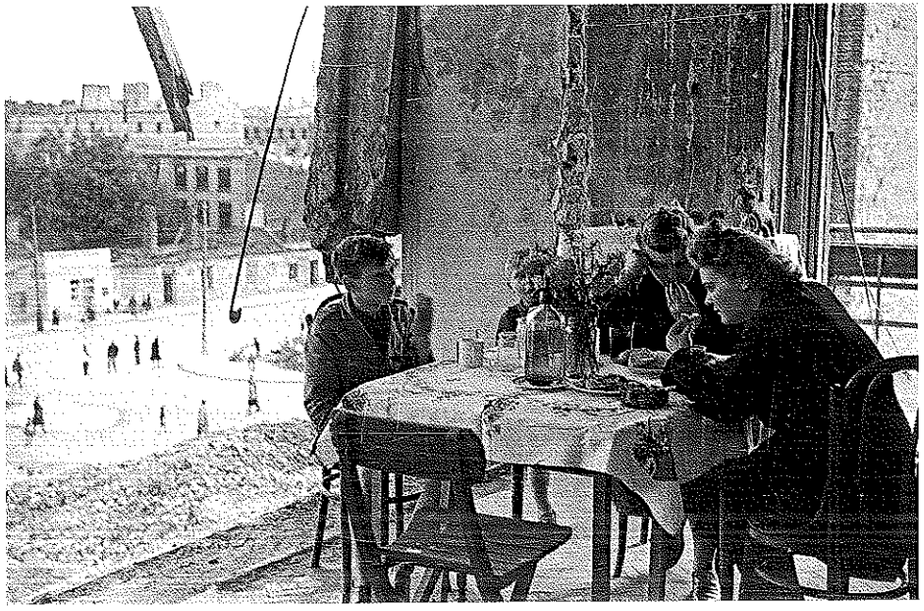
1. The Red Army in western Poland, 142 kilometers from Berlin, March 1945

2. The Reichstag, April 1945

3. Soviet soldiers distributing food to German civilians, May 1945



4. Széchenyi Chain Bridge, Budapest, summer 1945



5. In the ruins of Warsaw, a Polish family's midday meal …

6. … and a woman selling bread on a street corner, summer 1945

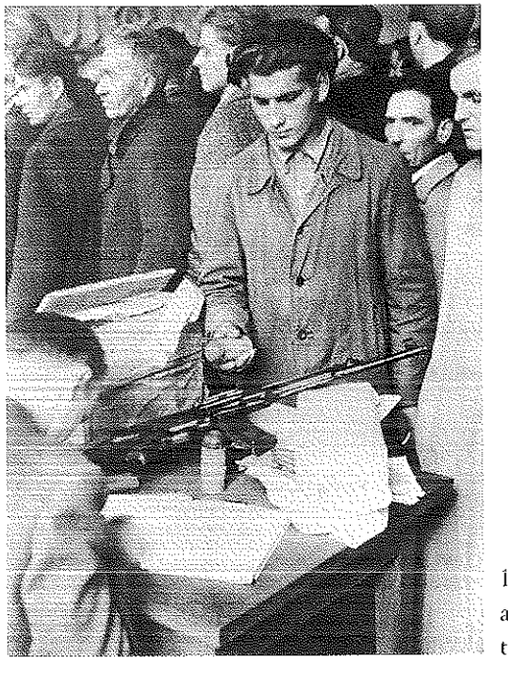
ETHNIC CLEANSING

7. Germans expelled from the Sudetenland, awaiting deportation

8. German peasants ("Swabians") on their way out of Hungary

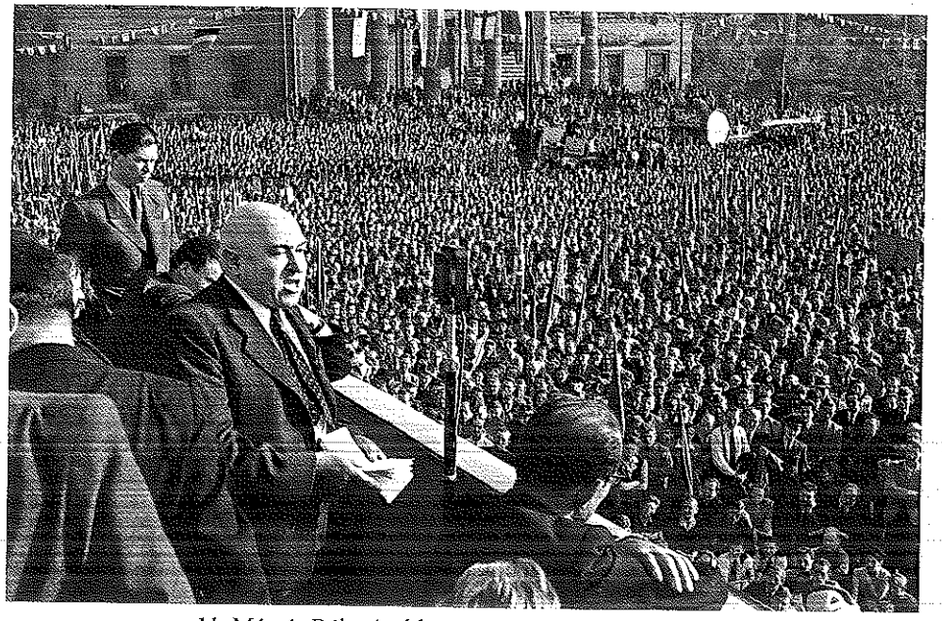
ARMED RESISTANCE

9. Polish partisans from the underground National Armed Forces (NSZ), who had fought the Germans and were preparing to fight the Red Army. All of these men were dead a few weeks after this photograph was taken in south-central Poland, spring 1944.



10. A Polish partisan accepts amnesty and turns in his weapons.

ELECTIONS



11. Mátyás Rákosi addresses Budapest crowds, 1946.

12. The communist party in Łodz, Poland, demonstrates against Western imperialism and Winston Churchill, 1946.

13. Election graffiti in Budapest, 1945: "Black Marketeers to Prison! Victory for the Communist Party Means More Bread and More Food!"

14. Voting in the Polish countryside, 1947

15. The communist party triumphant: the Hungarian elite gathers beneath portraits of Lenin, Stalin, and Rákosi, 1949.

The expulsion policy also had the hearty approval of all of the Western Allies, who had thought about it a great deal even before the Potsdam Conference. In 1944, Churchill had told the House of Commons that the "expulsion [of the Germans] is the method which, so far as we have been able to see, will be the most satisfactory and lasting" to achieve future peace. Roosevelt also approved of the ethnic cleansing policy, and cited the 1921–22 population exchanges between Turkey and Greece as a precedent.[27]

But the expulsions also had the full support of the Soviet Union. In a private, wartime conversation, Stalin had advised the Czechoslovak leadership to "throw them [the Sudeten Germans] out. Now they will learn themselves what it means to rule over someone else." He also advised the Poles to "create such conditions for the Germans that they want to escape themselves."[28] More importantly, Polish, Czechoslovak, Romanian, and Hungarian policemen who organized the deportation of Germans were all working with Soviet encouragement, in territories technically under the control of the Red Army. Stalin knew that both the Poles and the Czechoslovaks had talked of expelling Germans before the war's end, and had already assisted the Romanians. But the decision to redraw Poland's borders, replacing the eastern territories occupied by the Soviet Union with formerly German lands in the west, meant that the Poles had no choice but to go through with the expulsions, and on a much vaster scale than anyone could have imagined: in the end, the expulsion of the Germans was only possible with Soviet help.

The Red Army was also directly responsible for the expulsion and deportation of Germans from Romania and Hungary. The persecution of Germans in Hungary was launched by a Soviet order on December 22, 1944, which commanded all Germans in Hungary to report to the front line as forced laborers. Preparation for full-scale deportation began in February 1945, when the Soviet mission of the Allied Control Commission ordered the Hungarian Interior Ministry to "prepare a list of all Germans living in Hungary" (the order that led to the dispute with the Census Bureau and the arrest of its administrators).[29] By that time, the NKVD had already presided over the deportations of Germans from Romania as well.[30]

At the same time, the expulsion of the Germans was undeniably popular in every country where it took place, so much so that local communist parties rapidly took control of it—and eventually took credit for it—wherever they could. The Polish communist party gained much-needed credibility from its leading role in the deportations, even winning some guarded approval from

those on the political right, who had long advocated the creation of a "homogeneous" Polish state—homogeneity being very much an acceptable political goal everywhere in Europe at that time.[31] The historian Stefan Bottoni also reckons that the Romanian communist party's dual policy toward Romanian minorities—harsh treatment of the Germans combined with efforts to integrate the Hungarian, Slavic, and Jewish communities—helped it win legitimacy too.[32]

The Czechoslovak communist involvement in the expulsions was even more popular and possibly more important, since it made the party seem mainstream. After all, their policemen were simply upholding a popular government policy with exceptional vigor. Klement Gottwald, the Czechoslovak communist party general secretary, even called on the nation to take revenge not just for the recent war but for the Battle of the White Mountain in 1620, when Bohemia had been defeated by the Holy Roman Empire and its mostly German allies: "You must prepare for the final retribution of White Mountain, for the return of the Czech lands to the Czech people. We will expel for good all descendants of the alien German nobility . . ."[33] The Slovak communist party's regional newspaper used similarly nationalist rhetoric against its Hungarian minority, sometimes endeavoring to give it a Marxist accent: "The rich productive areas of Southern Slovakia whence the Hungarian feudal lords forced the Slovak farmers into the mountains, should be returned to the Slovak people."[34]

All the ad hoc institutions set up to facilitate German deportation quickly proved to have other uses as well. In Poland, many of the deportation camps built or adapted to hold German expellees were eventually transformed into camps or prisons for opponents of the regime. In Czechoslovakia, the communist party created a paramilitary organization to assist with the expulsions—the same paramilitary organization that would help the communist party carry out its coup d'état in 1948.[35] In a very literal sense, the expulsions thus laid the institutional ground for the imposition of terror that would follow a year or two later.

Because their policemen had organized the expulsions, local communist parties often found themselves in charge fortunately of the redistribution of German property. Apartments, furniture, and other goods suddenly fell into their hands, all of which could be usefully handed out to party supporters. The Germans also left behind farms and factories that could be nationalized immediately, to public applause, and put under the control of Polish or

Czech officials. This mass property seizure helped prepare the psychological ground for popular acceptance of more widespread nationalization, which followed soon afterward. Many had watched the Germans lose their houses and businesses with satisfaction, and felt that it was "fair" to take property from the enemies of the nation. So why should it not be "fair" to take property from the enemies of the working class?

Thanks to the efforts of vocal and powerful organizations of former German expellees, the expulsion of the Germans has become, in recent years, the best-known and most frequently discussed example of ethnic cleansing in postwar Europe. Yet it was only one of many mass ethnic-cleansing projects to be carried out after the war.

At almost exactly the same time as the Germans were being chased out of Silesia and Sudetenland, another population exchange was under way on the Polish-Ukrainian border. Curiously, the agreements governing this exchange—the second-largest set of postwar deportations—were signed not between Poland and the Soviet Union but between Poland and the Soviet Republic of Ukraine, an entity that at the time had no sovereignty, especially in matters of international relations. One Ukrainian historian reckons this was intentional. If the other Allies objected to the population transfer—or if the accompanying violence got out of hand—Stalin could always deny legal responsibility: "It wasn't us, it was the Ukrainians."[36]

As Stalin well knew, a full-blown ethnic war was raging in southeastern Poland and western Ukraine at that time. This is not the place for a full discussion of the rights and the wrongs of that particular conflict: suffice it to say that it had its roots in the long-standing economic, religious, and political competition that had been inflamed and distorted by the Nazi occupation and two Soviet invasions, in 1939 and again in 1943–44. Nor was the cause of peace and ethnic harmony in eastern Poland and western Ukraine helped by the partisans of many nationalities—Polish, Jewish, Ukrainian, Soviet—and of many political persuasions who were vying for power at that time either. The violence reached a peak of horror and tragedy in the formerly Polish and now Ukrainian county of Volhynia in 1943, when Ukrainian partisans aligned to the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (Ukrayins'ka Povstans'ka Armiya, or UPA) became aware that the Germans were losing and that the Red Army was coming. They thought that the time to establish their own state

might be approaching. The local leader, Mykola Lebed, called upon his followers to "cleanse the entire revolutionary territory of the Polish population." In the summer of 1943 his men—many of whom had been witnesses to or participants in the Soviet deportations of Poles in 1939 and the murders of Jews during the Holocaust—slaughtered some 50,000 Poles, almost all civilians, and chased tens of thousands of others out of Volhynia.[37]

Those who carried out the massacres that summer had absorbed both Nazi and Soviet lessons, as one Polish teenager's description of a mass execution in her village well illustrates. She, her sister, her two brothers, and her neighbors had been herded into a forest outside their Volhynian village and told not to move. What followed was tragically similar to many other mass executions that had taken place in the same region only a few months earlier:

> I lay down as if to sleep. I had a large scarf, and I covered my head with it, in order to see nothing. The firing came closer, I waited for death. But then I heard that the firing is growing more distant again, and I haven't been touched . . . [my sister and I] stood up, and looked at our brothers, aged 9 and 13, they had bullet wounds to the head. To this day I feel a weight on my conscience because I told them to take off their hats, maybe if they'd had their hats on they would have survived . . . [But then] where to go? We walked through the underbrush in the direction of Lubomal. We met an old Ukrainian lady with a girl. My sister started to ask if she would take us home with her, but she didn't want to . . . Luckily the nearest house was locked and empty, we drank water from the trough and kept going. My life as a wanderer had begun.[38]

The Poles took revenge. A Polish partisan, Waldemar Lotnik, recalled one of the return attacks that took place that same summer: "They had killed seven men two nights previously; that night we killed sixteen of theirs, including an eight-year-old schoolboy . . . there were 300 of us in all and we met with no resistance and suffered no casualties. Most of us knew many of the people in Modryn, so we knew who was a Nazi supporter and who was a Ukrainian nationalist. We picked them out." A week later, the Ukrainians retaliated, burned a village, raped all the women, and killed anyone unable to escape. The Poles retaliated again, this time in the company of men "so filled with hatred after losing whole generations of their family in the Ukrainian attacks that they swore that they would take an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, and they were as good as their word."[39]

Given this recent history, and given that it took time for the reality of the border changes to sink in, it isn't surprising that both Poles and Ukrainians resisted deportation. Initially the Soviet and Polish sides both agreed that the population exchange would be strictly voluntary, and some on both sides willingly boarded trains to cross the border in the autumn of 1944. But winter came, the bulk of the Red Army moved west for the final battle for Berlin, and volunteers began to dry up. Polish Home Army partisans, believing that the USSR would soon be forced to hand back former Polish territories to Poland—surely another world war was about to break out—continued to conspire in western Ukraine through 1945. "The territory of Western Ukraine will not be kept by the Soviet Union, it was and will be Polish territory," one Polish inhabitant told an NKVD informer. "America will never let the Soviet Union do that, because at the beginning of the war she declared that Poland would be the same as it was until 1939. And therefore it's not worth moving [to Poland]."[40]

Faced with this refusal and aware of the continuing ethnic conflict, Stalin made his policy toward ethnic Poles in the formerly Polish districts of what was now the Soviet Republic of Ukraine harsher. Nikita Khrushchev, then the Ukrainian communist party secretary, wrote to Stalin in September 1944, proposing to close down all Polish schools and universities in western Ukraine, to ban all Polish textbooks, and to start rounding up Poles to work on industrial projects elsewhere in the USSR.[41] As a result of these policies (as well as of America's failure to come to the rescue, and the failure of the Third World War to break out) Poles finally did begin to board the transports heading west. Although the NKVD was still finding and arresting members of "White Polish" organizations on Soviet territory as late as February 1946, those seem to have been the last cells of open resistance.[42] By October 1946, according to Soviet documents, 812,668 Poles had left Soviet Ukraine for Poland.[43] In total, 1,496,000 Poles would leave the USSR for Poland, moving from Lithuania and Belarus as well as Ukraine.[44]

This was a major cultural shift: the Poles leaving Lithuania, western Belarus, and western Ukraine were abandoning towns and cities that had been Polish-speaking for centuries. Many were moving to towns and cities

that had been German-speaking for centuries. The ancient Jan Kazimierz University in Lwów, now called L'viv, left behind its buildings and moved what remained of its books and professors to Breslau, now Wrocław, where it took up residence in what remained of that city's equally ancient university. Peasants who had farmed the famously fertile "black earth" of Ukraine found themselves relocated to the much sandier soil of Silesia, which required complex machinery and different farming methods. Sometimes resettled Poles walked into German houses where the tea kettles were still sitting on the stoves or where the previous owners, like Countess Dönhoff, had not bothered to do the dishes after eating a final meal.

In due course the Polish government would develop an elaborate mythology about this "recovered land" (*ziemie odzyskane*, a phrase that sounds, in Polish, very much like "promised land," *ziemia obiecana*) and about the Slavic kings who had ruled there in the Middle Ages. But in truth many of those who arrived in the "recovered land" felt like trespassers. Their first harvests failed, as they were unused to the new conditions. They resisted making investments, as they feared the Germans would return. The fact that Poles from all over Poland journeyed to the former German cities in 1945 and 1946 to steal whatever the Germans had left is indicative: it isn't the way people treat a place that feels like home.

Ukrainians who found themselves on the western, Polish side of the new border were if anything even angrier and more resistant to moving. Having heard stories of the 1932–33 Ukrainian famine, engineered by Stalin in part to quell Ukrainian nationalism, most had no illusions about the Soviet regime. They didn't want to go to Soviet Ukraine and some who did go there soon tried to return. Throughout 1945 and 1946, partisans from the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, as well as the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (Orhanizatsiya Ukrayins'kykh Natsionalistiv, or OUN), attacked the repatriation offices, damaged the roads and train tracks meant to carry deportees, and even burned down villages where repatriated Poles had come from Poland to live.[45]

Polish communists fought back. In April 1945, the Rzeszów special operational group, including members from the militia, the police, the secret police, and the Polish army, embarked upon a plan of forced deportation, intending to "clean out" the Ukrainians from five Polish counties. Their efforts were embarrassingly unsuccessful. Local support for the Ukrainian Insurgent Army and the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists was so strong that at

one point Rzeszów's leaders asked their secret police bosses for "extra reconnaissance planes." Since they couldn't catch Ukrainians on the ground, they thought they might do better spotting them from the air.[46]

By 1947, the Polish government was no longer interested in simple ethnic cleansing of the region. They faced a much more fundamental crisis: they had to preserve their own power in southeast Poland. Local administration was impossible, and in a few places the Ukrainian partisans had actually joined forces with the remnants of WiN, the Polish independence movement.[47] In March, Ukrainian partisans provoked a crisis by murdering the Polish deputy defense minister, General Karol Świerczewski, following a battle with some 150 partisans who had been armed with artillery and machine guns. After that, the Polish communist newspapers practically boiled over with distinctly non-internationalist ethnic outrage, speaking of Ukrainian "hangmen," "bandits," "butchers," and "foreign mercenaries," accusing them of having murdered a gallant son of the Polish nation with "fascist bullets"[48] (though Świerczewski was a long-standing Red Army officer, and one of the internal communiques about his death speaks of "informing his family in Moscow").[49]

In the wake of that murder, the Polish regime finally mobilized itself to deport the Ukrainians, not to the Soviet Union—they might cause trouble there too—but to the formerly German lands in northern and western Poland. Trumpeting their intention to bring "security" to the eastern part of the country—a goal the majority of Poles surely approved of—at the end of April they launched Akcja Wisła, Operation Vistula, a major military operation involving five infantry divisions, 17,000 soldiers, 500 militia, sappers, pilots, and Interior Ministry troops. Militarized Soviet NKVD divisions and the Czechoslovak army provided support along the borders.[50] By the end of July, this enormous force had finally succeeded in evicting some 140,000 Ukrainians from their homes, placing them in filthy boxcars, and resettling them in the north and the west of Poland. It was a bloody, angry process, every bit as bloody and angry as the killings in Volhynia three years earlier. One Ukrainian, a child at the time, remembers Polish soldiers breaking up his cousin's wedding:

> Suddenly the soldiers surrounded the house where the celebration was taking place, and set it alight with burning bombs. They killed the groom and several guests who couldn't escape; they threw the

bloodied corpses onto a cart which already held those they'd got in Zagrod. When they were about to leave, the bride suddenly appeared, in a white dress, with a veil. She begged for them to leave the body of her husband, Ivan. The soldiers laughed, tied her hands together with rope, tied her to the wagon and set off. The girl first ran, then fell, and was dragged through the dirt. The soldiers shot at her, and finally cut the rope and left her dead in the road.[51]

Without their support network among the Ukrainian peasantry, the Ukrainian partisans could no longer maintain their resistance. Those who weren't killed were captured, interrogated, and often tortured at Jaworzno, another former Nazi camp that had until then been used to hold Germans (like many Nazi camps, it had a long life, and served many functions). The Ukrainians were dispersed all over Poland. In the 1990s, I once encountered a group of their descendants living near Ełk, in the Mazurian lake district. They no longer spoke much Ukrainian. Because the Polish authorities ruled that no town in the country could consist of more than 10 percent Ukrainians, they had slowly lost their language, their culture, and their distinctiveness.

A few weeks after the end of Operation Vistula, the Soviet Union launched a similarly brutal action on the adjoining territories in Soviet Ukraine. Within the span of a few days in October 1947, the Soviet secret police arrested 76,192 Ukrainians in western Ukraine and deported them to the Gulag.[52] Several historians have speculated that the two operations were related. Both were intended to destroy forever the fiercely proud and tightly knit west Ukrainian community that had generated so much resistance to Poles and Russians alike. Operation Vistula ensured that any Soviet Ukrainians who escaped arrest could no longer use Poland as a safe haven.[53] Both operations were popular. Polish peasants who had been tormented by Ukrainian partisans were delighted to see them gone—and grateful to the Soviet and Polish troops who had dispersed them.

Operation Vistula was a particularly brutal example of a population exchange within a single country but it wasn't the only one. When the Czechoslovak government failed to get approval from the Allies, either at Potsdam or at the subsequent Paris Peace Conference, to deport Hungarians from Slovakia, they hit upon a similar solution. On paper, there would be no deportation of Hungarians from Slovakia, just a "voluntary" population exchange. To encourage these "voluntary" departures, Hungarians in Slovakia were deprived of citizenship, of the right to use their language in official places, and of the right to attend church services in Hungarian. Between 1945 and 1948, some 89,000 Hungarians were thus "persuaded" to leave Slovakia for the Sudetenland, where they replaced the missing Germans, or else to cross the border into Hungary itself. Some 70,000 Slovaks arrived from Hungary in their place.[54]

Not a word of protest was heard from outside the region. One Hungarian historian has declared that this was because "the fate of the Hungarian minority did not interest anyone."[55] But, in truth, the fate of none of the minorities interested anyone. The world hardly noticed the ethnic war between Poland and Ukraine, let alone Operation Vistula. Nor did it notice the 100,000 Hungarians who fled or were expelled from Romania, the 50,000 Ukrainians who left Czechoslovakia for Ukraine, or the 42,000 Czechs and Slovaks who returned from Ukraine to Czechoslovakia after the war.[56]

By 1950, not much remained of multiethnic Eastern Europe. Only nostalgia—Ukrainian nostalgia, Polish nostalgia, Hungarian nostalgia, German nostalgia—endured. In 1991, I went to visit a tiny hamlet near the town of Zablocko, in western Ukraine. It was occupied by a Ukrainian couple who in 1945 had been frightened by nightly visits from all kinds of partisans, frightened by the fighting and tired of war. Anxious for peace, they agreed to leave behind their beloved village on the river San, in eastern Poland. They piled all of their possessions onto a cart and trudged east. They eventually moved into a wooden house on top of a hill, until recently the property of a Polish family, and there they stayed. Half a century later, their granddaughter, who had never seen Poland, still pined to go there. Was it, she wanted to know, "as rich and beautiful as they say?"

In the end, most deported Germans went to Germany, Poles went to Poland, and Ukrainians could go to Soviet Ukraine. But the Jews of Eastern Europe, already displaced into hiding places, concentration camps, and exile, did not have an obvious homeland to which they could return in 1945. If they did return to their former homes, they found physical destruction, psychological devastation, and worse. Indeed, their postwar fate is impossible to comprehend without understanding that they returned to towns and villages that had been—and often still were—enveloped in ethnic, political, and criminal violence.

Accustomed to the idea that peace followed liberation, few Western Europeans find this easy to grasp. Nor is it easy to pick apart the myths and emotions that have wound themselves around the subject of the Jewish experience in postwar Eastern Europe in the years since. All of the postwar ethnic disputes are inflamed, from time to time, it is true, by contemporary politicians who want to use the past to influence the present. The associations of former expellees played a large and often awkward role in West German politics in the 1970s and 1980s, at times—including the critical moment of 1989—agitating for a change in the Polish-German border and for the return of their homes. The Poles and the Ukrainians occasionally squabble over the memory of the Ukrainian Revolutionary Army, whom the former remember as murderers and the latter now revere as freedom fighters. In 2008, Slovak-Hungarian tensions rose to the point that Hungarians, angered by the arrest of Hungarian activists in Slovakia, actually blocked several border crossings in protest.

Still, there is almost no greater emotional minefield than the history of the Jews in postwar Eastern Europe, and especially of the Jews in postwar Poland. The tangled relationship of the Eastern European Jews to Eastern European communism is a large part of it: some Jews played prominent roles in several of the postwar Eastern European communist parties and were thus perceived as beneficiaries of the new regimes, even though other Jews suffered at the hands of those same regimes. At times, Eastern Europeans and Jews have also engaged in a kind of competitive martyrology. The former resent the fact that the world knows about the Holocaust but not about their own suffering at the hands of both the Nazis and the Soviet Union. At times, the latter have interpreted any discussion of anyone's wartime suffering other than their own as a denigration of their uniquely tragic experience. There have been arguments about money, property, guilt, and responsibility.

An example of how these emotions play out arose in the 1990s, when a prosecutor at what became the Polish Institute for National Remembrance set out to investigate the unusual case of Salomon Morel, who—all agree—was a Polish Jew and a communist partisan. From February until September of 1945, Morel was also the commandant of Zgoda, a labor camp for Germans in the Upper Silesian town of Świętochłowice, on the site of what had once been an auxiliary camp to Auschwitz. After that, he remained an employee of the Polish secret police, eventually becoming a colonel and the commander of a prison in Katowice. Morel emigrated to Israel in the early 1990s.

Almost everything else about Morel remains in dispute. According to Polish investigators and prosecutors, Morel joined the Polish security police immediately after the war. He worked first in the prison of Lublin castle, where he assisted in the interrogation of Polish Home Army leaders. He was then transferred to Zgoda. During his tenure there, he became known for his cruelty to the mostly German prisoners, including women and children. He deprived them of food, allowed hygiene to deteriorate, tortured them for pleasure, and sometimes beat them to death. As a result of the poor conditions, a typhus epidemic swept the camp in the summer and some 1,800 prisoners died. According to archival documents, Morel was held responsible for the epidemic by the Interior Ministry, put under house arrest for three days, and deprived of a part of his salary.

In 2005, a Polish prosecutor, having decided Morel was guilty of war crimes, sent an extradition request—one of several—to the State of Israel, where Morel then lived. The prosecutor received, in response, a furious letter from the Israeli Ministry of Justice. Morel, the Israeli letter declared, was not a war criminal but one of the war's victims. He had witnessed the murder of his parents, brother, and sister-in-law at the hands of a Polish police officer during the war. His older brother was murdered by what the letter calls "a Polish fascist." According to the Israeli ministry official, the camp at Świętochłowice, when he ran it, contained no more than 600 prisoners, all of whom were former Nazis. Sanitary conditions were satisfactory. The Israeli official's judgment was not motivated by facts but by emotions: Morel, he declared, had suffered from "crimes of genocide committed by the Nazis and their Polish collaborators," the case against him was motivated by Polish anti-Semitism, and he would not be extradited.[57]

The exchange of letters caused a good deal of ill will on both sides. The Poles felt that the Israelis were hiding a typical communist criminal. The Israelis felt that the Poles were attacking a typical Jewish victim. And yet Morel's story was not typical at all. Far from being a "symbol" of unfairness to either Poles or Jews, his life story should have been treated as an exception.

To start with, Morel's story is unusual because, unlike most Eastern European Jews, he survived the Holocaust. It's not easy to say exactly how rare this was because precise numbers of survivors are not available. Not everybody who was Jewish registered as such in postwar Eastern Europe, and not every-

body wanted to be in touch with Jewish organizations. Many had changed their names in order to pass as "Aryan," and then simply kept those names after the war. But according to the best estimates, it seems that less than 10 percent of the 3.5 million Jews who had lived within the prewar Polish borders were still alive after the war. Perhaps 80,000 survived in Nazi-occupied Poland. The rest had spent the war in the Soviet Union, and when the war ended most came home. By June 1946, there were about 220,000 Jews within the postwar Polish borders. This was, at the time, less than 1 percent of the total population of Poland, which numbered about 24 million.[58]

Estimates are even more difficult to make in Hungary, where there was a long tradition of Jewish assimilation, intermarriage, and conversion. As a result, the numbers given for Jews in Hungary in 1945 vary widely, from 143,000 up to 260,000. This was, again, a small percentage of the total Hungarian population of 9 million. But because the Nazi deportations in the latter part of the war, including the famous mass transport to Auschwitz, had affected mainly Jews in the provinces, almost all of the remaining Hungarian Jews lived in Budapest.[59] Within the city, which then had about 900,000 inhabitants, Jews were a very visible and vocal minority. With their families and professional networks intact, the Hungarian Jews quickly began to play an important role in public life. This was not the case in Poland, and certainly not the case in Germany. Only about 4,500 Jewish survivors remained in the Soviet occupation zone of Germany after the war, a tiny fraction of the population of 18 million. They were, and remained, nearly invisible.[60]

Salomon Morel was also atypical in that he remained in Eastern Europe after the war. The vast majority of Jews who returned to their homes after the war stayed just long enough to find out if their relatives were alive and to see what property remained. Most were devastated by how little they found. In a 1946 memo, Polish Jewish authorities explained that many Jews were leaving the country mainly because it was impossible, simply, to live in towns or villages that had become "the cemeteries of their families, relatives, and friends."[61] Some left because they had relatives abroad—sometimes their only living relatives. Others, especially those with wartime experiences in the USSR, left because they hated communism and feared, correctly, that Jewish businessmen and traders would have no future in a communist state.

But others left because they were afraid. Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and eastern Germany, like all of Eastern Europe, were violent places

after the war. It was dangerous to be a communist official, dangerous to be an anticommunist, dangerous to be German, dangerous to be Polish in a Ukrainian village, dangerous to be Ukrainian in a Polish village. It could also be dangerous to be Jewish. Some Jews were welcomed home after the war, and treated with fairness and friendship. One Polish Jew who had joined the Red Army returned home to be welcomed by neighbors who fed him and protected him from local Home Army units who were hunting down communists. Other Polish Jews with communist party connections helped rescue Gentile Home Army partisans from the NKVD. Emil Sommerstein—a Zionist activist who was released from the Soviet Gulag in 1944 on the condition that he join the Polish provisional government as minister for Jewish affairs—conspired secretly to send Home Army couriers to London disguised as Orthodox Jews.[62]

At the same time, there is both anecdotal and archival evidence of brutal and fatal attacks on Jews in the months and years immediately after the war in Hungary and Poland—as well as in Czechoslovakia and Romania—though not much agreement on their scale. Numbers for "Jewish deaths" in Poland in this period range from 400 to 2,500.[63] This statistical disagreement is perhaps not surprising, given that there is no consensus on how many Jews had survived in the first place, but it also reflects a deeper set of uncertainties. With a few important exceptions, these attacks were isolated, and—unlike attacks on Germans in Poland or Hungarians in Slovakia—they were not part of an official government policy. Some were provoked by the return of Jews to homes occupied by others, some by political disputes, and it was not always clear which was which. Were Jews who returned to reclaim their houses murdered for their property—or for being Jewish? Were Jews who joined the security services murdered for being communists—or for being Jewish? Were robberies of Jews acts of anti-Semitism, or were they ordinary crimes?

Less ambiguous, at least in this narrow sense, were the anti-Semitic riots, sometimes called pogroms, which also took place in this period. From 1945 onward, outbursts of anti-Jewish violence unfolded in the Polish towns of Rzeszów, Kraków, Tarnów, Kalisz, Lublin, Kolbuszowa, and Mielec; in the Slovak towns of Kolbasov, Svinna, Komarno, and Teplicany; and in Ózd and Kunmadaras in Hungary.[64] By far the two most notorious riots took place in Kielce, Poland, on July 4, 1946, and in the Hungarian city of Miskolc a few weeks later, between July 30 and August 1.

In Kielce, the ostensible cause of the riot—hard though it is to believe such a thing was still possible in the twentieth century—was a rumor of blood libel. A Polish child, probably to avoid punishment for not coming home on time, told his parents he had been kidnapped by the Jews, who intended to make him a ritual sacrifice. He had, he said, been kept in the basement of the Jewish Committee building in Kielce, a kind of dormitory and community center where several dozen Jewish survivors were then living. His drunken father reported this to the local police; the police solemnly set out to investigate. But even as the occupants of the building were explaining to the police that they had no basement and thus could not have kept the child there, rumors began to spread throughout the town.

A crowd began to gather outside the committee building. An army unit arrived—forty soldiers from the Internal Security Corps. To the shock of the Jewish leaders inside, the soldiers began to fire not on the menacing crowd but at the Jews. And instead of dispersing the crowd, they joined it, along with policemen and members of the citizens' militia. When their shift ended, workers from a local factory joined in as well. During the course of the day, Jews were murdered in different parts of town, on the outskirts of the city, and on trains whose Jewish passengers had the tragic bad luck to arrive in Kielce. By nightfall, at least forty-two people were dead and dozens wounded. To this day, this ranks as the worst outbreak of anti-Semitic violence in postwar Eastern Europe.[65]

Although there were blood libel rumors in Miskolc in the days leading up to the riots—and although stories about Jews and Christian children had sparked violence in Kunmadaras and Teplicany—the Miskolc breakdown was actually caused by the arrest of three black marketeers, of whom two were Jewish. The story of their arrest was quickly passed around the town, possibly by the police, and a crowd was waiting for the men on the morning of July 31, when they were to be escorted from local custody to an internment camp. The crowd was already carrying signs: "Death to the Jews" and "Death to the Black Marketeers." When the prisoners appeared, the mob flung itself at them, murdered one of the men, and beat the other so badly he wound up in the hospital. The third—who was not Jewish—managed to escape.

That afternoon, the police, though notably absent during the earlier riot, arrested sixteen people for the public lynching. Outraged by these arrests, another angry crowd attacked and occupied the police station on the following day. This time, a Jewish police officer was murdered.

Genuine shock and outrage followed both of these events, which received a good deal of national—and in the case of Kielce, international—attention. The pogroms prompted fresh waves of emigration. As a Jew who lived in Łódź at the time explained, "although we sensed that our existence was anchored in quicksand, we didn't allow this sensation to affect our consciousness. We wanted to resume living again as human beings. The Kielce pogrom woke us up from our illusion. One shouldn't stay here even for a moment."[66]

Non-Jews were upset too. Polish and Hungarian intellectuals and politicians of all stripes wrote anguished condemnations deploring these remnants of anti-Semitism, so repellent in countries where memories of the Holocaust were fresh. The Polish state conducted a judicial investigation and put some of the perpetrators on trial, eventually doling out nine death sentences. In Hungary, the communist party Central Committee openly discussed anti-Semitism, probably for the first and last time, on the day following the Miskolc riot.[67] But the results of the subsequent police investigations and internal inquiries satisfied no one.

In both cases, elements of the regime were partly responsible. In Kielce, the police and security services not only failed to prevent the riot but actually joined the mob, along with the army: police participation had unleashed the crowd violence. In Miskolc, local police probably tipped off the crowds in advance that the speculators would be in the town center, and certainly melted away when the violence started. More importantly, Rákosi, though himself Jewish, had been in Miskolc only a week earlier, on July 23, when he gave a speech at a mass rally denouncing speculators: "Those who speculate with the forint, who would undermine the economic foundations of our democracy, should be hung on the gallows." At the same time, the Hungarian communist party put up posters and distributed brochures featuring caricatures of "speculators" looking like caricatures of Jews.[68] Apparently, the party hoped to focus popular anger about hyperinflation and poor economic conditions on "Jewish speculators"—and to deflect it from the communist party.[69]

In neither case is there any archival evidence of more careful advance planning, let alone international coordination, as some have alleged. Though Soviet agents and advisers were present in both cities—a Soviet NKVD officer in Kielce was even present at the riots—and despite the fact that these pogroms all took place in the same time period, it isn't possible, so far, to trace any direct Soviet involvement in their organization.[70] Nor is it clear that either the Russians or the local communists felt that the riots had benefited

them. Although both Hungarian and Polish authorities pinned the blame on the anticommunist movements and the church—a smear which, at the time, seemed to stick—in internal debates they recognized the riots as a sign of their own weakness. In Kielce, the different branches of the security services had argued with one another, failed to obey orders, and lost control of a mob on July 4, after all, which was hardly evidence of their competence. In the wake of the riots, several local party leaders lost their jobs.[71] The Hungarian communists were also unnerved by Miskolc. Rákosi blamed the riots on "fascist infiltration into our party" and vowed to prevent it from spreading.[72]

At the same time, both sets of riots undeniably had some popular support. As if from the depths of the Middle Ages, rumors that the Jews were killing Christian children or that Jewish speculators were robbing Christian peasants suddenly took hold in a few provincial Eastern European towns, even as their countrymen looked on in horror. Some think the explanation for this moment of madness is economic: the Polish historian Jan Gross points out that the mass killings of Jews during the war created "a social vacuum which was promptly filled by the native Polish petite bourgeoisie."[73] Uncertain of their status, fearful of losing what they had so recently gained, threatened by the new communist regimes, this social strata, Gross speculates, focused its ire on the returning Jews. There was certainly something to that, and many witnessed the same phenomenon in other countries. Heda Kovály, a Jewish camp survivor, returned to her family's Czech country house in 1945: "I rang the bell and, after a while, a fat unshaven man opened the door, stared at me for a moment and then yelled 'So you've come back! Oh no! That's all we needed!' I turned around and walked into the woods. I spent the three hours until the next train back to Prague strolling on the mossy ground under the fir trees, listening to the birds."[74] Fearing a negative popular reaction, in Hungary the communist party actually refused to advocate the return of Jewish property. In March 1945, *Szabad Nép* counseled Jews to have "understanding" for the Gentiles who now occupied their apartments, even if those Gentiles had been collaborators with the fascist regime. Party officials in Budapest also suggested that returning Jews "reach an agreement" with the inhabitants of their homes, something which, under the circumstances, was surely impossible.[75]

Others believe that something more profound than economic competition must have underlain the animosity. As the Polish historian Dariusz Stola points out, Poles—like Czechs, Hungarians, Romanians, Lithuanians—had

seen, heard, and even smelled the Holocaust to a degree unimaginable in Western Europe, including Germany:

> The psychological reaction to that kind of experience is complicated and completely irrational; the memory is a kind of convulsion, the feelings associated are intense and uncontrolled, and, most importantly, these aren't necessarily feelings of pity or sympathy . . . I'm not a psychologist but I lean toward this theory because I don't see any other explanation for certain horrific forms of behavior, for example when someone throws a grenade at an orphanage housing Jewish children.[76]

Here Stola is referring to an infamous incident: on the night of August 12, 1945, an unknown assailant did indeed throw a grenade into a Jewish orphanage in the village of Rabka, and then kept firing at it for another two hours. Astonishingly, no one was killed. But the orphanage was soon shut down and the children moved away.[77]

Stola's explanation, although voiced in 2005, isn't so far from the views of many Polish intellectuals at the time. In 1947, Stanisław Ossowski, an esteemed philosopher and sociologist, came to the same conclusion. "Compassion," he wrote, "is not the only imaginable response to misfortune suffered by other people . . . those whom fate has destined for annihilation easily can appear disgusting to others and be removed beyond the pale of human relations." He also observed, as others have done since, that those who had benefited in some material way from the destruction of the Jews were often uneasy or even guilt-ridden, and thus sought to make their actions seem legitimate: "If one person's disaster benefits somebody else, an urge appears to persuade oneself, and others, that the disaster was morally justified."[78]

Whatever the reason for the persistent hostility, it indeed helped persuade Jews to leave Eastern Europe and to emigrate to America, Western Europe, and above all Palestine. Some 70,000 left Poland for Palestine in the three months following the Kielce riots. They were helped and encouraged by a handful of Zionist organizations, founded or supported by groups in Palestine or the United States, which had been set up for this purpose. Under the terms of this arrangement, Polish Jews exited through agreed-upon border crossings in Silesia, then traveled on foot and in transport trucks through

Czechoslovakia and eventually on to one of the Mediterranean ports, where they embarked for Palestine (though some broke off and headed for other countries along the way).[79]

Eventually this mass movement began to embarrass the Polish regime—immigration to British-mandated Palestine was still illegal, and the British press had begun to write about it—and it was halted for a short period. But after the establishment of the State of Israel, Jews were once again allowed to leave, not least because the Polish state, then in the course of imposing economic centralization, was more than happy to rid itself of the Jewish community's small businessmen. In order to encourage emigration, the new government of Israel also negotiated a trade deal advantageous to the Polish government, effectively guaranteeing Poland an inflow of hard currency. The Romanian government struck a similar deal with Israel, and it is likely that the Soviet Union actively approved both agreements.[80] In Hungary, the American-Jewish Joint Distribution Committee—a major Zionist charity—paid the Hungarian government $1 million at about this time too. In exchange, 3,000 Hungarian Jews were allowed to leave for Israel immediately.[81]

Behind the scenes, several Eastern European states were even more supportive, far more so than their leaders would later admit. All of them, with the exception of Yugoslavia, had voted for the partition of Palestine in 1947: at the time, the Soviet Union supported the creation of the State of Israel, not least because Stalin believed Israel would quickly join the communist camp. Enthusiasm for Israel was high in Eastern Europe too—so much so that in late 1947 the Polish, Czechoslovak, and Hungarian governments all opened training camps for the Haganah, the Jewish paramilitary organization that formed the core of what would later become the Israeli Defense Forces. The Hungarian army and secret police force trained some 1,500 Hungarian Jews—and some 7,000 Polish Jews meanwhile traveled to Bolków, a small town in Silesia, where they received training from both Red Army and Polish army soldiers, and eventually from Haganah fighters. At the time, this program enjoyed both national and local support. In June 1948 the Central Committee of the Polish communist party allocated the group "a certain amount of weapons and a military training ground for drilling." In Bolków, drills took place in the open, the volunteers marched through the town singing, and when the recruits left for Palestine, via Prague and Marseilles, "there were flowers and banners—even Poles had a lot of sympathy for their freedom struggle," in the words of one ex-trainee. The program lasted until early

1949 and was intended to have long-term benefits: the Polish secret police kept lists of who had been through the training courses. Those who were communist party members were asked to agree to cooperate as informers, "even after they went on to Israel."[82]

With Israel's attainment of statehood, all travel ceased to be clandestine. In 1948, the Polish state travel agency, Orbis, organized the first regular train transport, again via Czechoslovakia, Austria, and Italy. After one or two successful trips (once Jews became convinced they were "really going to Israel, and not to Siberia") the applications to emigrate began to increase again.[83] The numbers went down again in the early 1950s, almost certainly thanks to Soviet pressure: Stalin's initial support for Israel had by then hardened into suspicion and paranoia. Nevertheless, by 1955 no more than 80,000 Jews remained in Poland: more than two-thirds of the survivors had left. The numbers were similar elsewhere in Eastern Europe. Between the years 1945 and 1957, 50 percent of Romanian Jews left their country, along with 58 percent of Czechoslovak Jews and 90 percent of Bulgarian Jews. Between a quarter and a third of Hungarian Jews left Hungary too.[84]

Out of those remaining, a disproportionate number chose to stay because they were communists, because they had high expectations of a communist regime, or because they had jobs in the communist state apparatus. This is only logical: at a time when anticommunists of all kinds were being arrested and killed, anticommunist Jews left Eastern Europe. And this is the final unusual thing about Salomon Morel: he was exceptional because he was a Jew who not only stayed but also joined the security police. Popular Eastern European mythology to the contrary, the majority of Polish Jews did not join the secret police. How could they have? Most of them had left or were planning to leave the country.

It is true that a small number of Jews did occupy very senior, very prominent positions in both the communist party and the communist security apparatus in Poland. Among them were Jakub Berman and Hilary Minc, Bolesław Bierut's top advisers on ideology and economics, respectively; Julia Brystiger, who ran the secret police department dedicated to the penetration of the Catholic Church; Józef Różański, the vicious chief secret police interrogator, and his deputy, Adam Humer; Różański's brother, Jerzy Borejsza, a writer who eventually came to control much of the postwar publishing industry; and Józef Światło, a senior secret policeman who later defected. This notorious group was never a majority. The best estimate, by the historian

Andzrej Paczkowski, puts them at about 30 percent of the secret police *leadership* in the immediate postwar period. After 1948 their numbers fell further. Without question, they attracted a disproportionate percentage of anticommunist resentment anyway.[85]

In Hungary, the situation was different because all of the leading Hungarian communists—Rákosi, Gerő, Révai—were of Jewish origin, as were many of the founders of the political police and the Interior Ministry, including Gábor Péter. Yet even in Hungary it is not at all clear that the Jews in turn favored the communists. Only a quarter of the Jewish population voted for the communist party in the 1945 elections. And although the number of visible Jewish party leaders remained high in the immediate postwar years, the percentage of Jews in the state apparatus began to fall after 1948, as the Hungarian communist party—like the East German communist party and the Romanian communist party—actively set out to recruit low-ranking members of the previous regime, especially policemen, in an open bid to become more popular in that milieu and to combat a stereotype of communists as "elite" or "alien" or indeed "Jewish." ("They aren't bad fellows, really," Rákosi told an American journalist, speaking of former members of the fascist party. "They were never active in it. All they have to do is sign a pledge and we let them in.")[86]

More importantly, the presence of Jews in leading positions in the Eastern European communist parties did not produce anywhere a set of policies that could reasonably be described as "pro-Jewish." On the contrary, communists, including Jewish communists, were extraordinarily ambivalent about Jewish history and Jewish identity, even as the Holocaust was unfolding. While in Moscow in 1942, Jakub Berman began to hear horrible stories about what was happening to the Jews of Warsaw. In due course, one of his brothers would be gassed in Treblinka. But he steeled himself against pity: true communists could not let the Nazis define their politics. In one of the letters he wrote to Leon Kasman—who was also Jewish—he advised his friend not to be sidetracked or distracted by the unfolding tragedy. "The situation of Jews in Poland is terrible," he wrote. "However, it seems to me that you can't put too much effort into this . . . for although the question of mobilization of Jewish masses in Poland into an active struggle against the occupier is important and valid . . . other things should be at the center of our attention."[87]

After the war, this ambivalence increased. In 1945 and 1946, Rákosi worried that too many of the antifascist trials were focused on "people who did

something to the Jews," which might not be popular.[88] Notoriously, Rákosi threw anti-Semitic comments into conversations, on one occasion offending the speaker of the parliament, Béla Varga, so much that Varga snapped at him, "your mother was a Jew and do not deny your mother." He would also issue blanket denials. When the Smallholder prime minister, Ferenc Nagy, commented at a cabinet meeting on the large number of Jews among the Hungarian postwar politicians, Rákosi calmly observed that the communist party didn't have this problem: "Luckily all our leaders are Catholic."[89] Even East Germany, with its almost nonexistent Jewish community, made distinctions early on in the honors bestowed upon former "Fighters Against Fascism," meaning mostly communists, and former "Victims of Fascism," meaning mostly Gypsies and Jews. As Jeffrey Herf puts it, "The old anti-Semitic stereotypes of the Jew as capitalist and passive weakling would continue to lurk within the muscular Communist discourse of East German antifascism."[90]

Part of this queasy relationship between Eastern European communists and Eastern European Jews might be attributable to the anti-Semitism of individuals, even the anti-Semitism of Jewish individuals. Some of it reflected Stalin's own anti-Semitism, which grew deeper with time, culminating in a purge of Soviet Jews in high positions just before his death. But at the deepest level, their uneasiness about Jews and Jewishness reflected the communist parties' insecurities about their own popularity. Knowing they were perceived as illegitimate by so many of their countrymen—knowing they were perceived as Soviet agents, to be more precise—they deployed traditional national, religious, and ethnic symbols in an effort to win support. This was particularly true in 1945 and 1946, when they still thought they had a chance to take power through elections. While Rákosi spouted anti-black-market and anti-Semitic rhetoric, the Hungarian communist party also championed the annual celebration of the 1848 "bourgeois revolution" and insisted, to the consternation of some old party members, that their followers carry national Hungarian flags as well as red party flags. As Rákosi explained, "We still have a problem with our patriotic character. A lot of comrades are afraid that we are deviating from the Marxist track. It has to be underlined demonstratively that we chose the red banner and the national flag . . . the national flag is the flag of Hungarian democracy."[91]

The German communists did the same, resurrecting the flag of imperial Germany even as the war was still being fought, the better to attract

ex-soldiers to their cause. They also bent over backward to honor traditional German heroes—for example, by celebrating a Goethe Year in Weimar in 1949 and holding a quadrennial Bach competition in Leipzig. The Poles also organized a Chopin Year in 1949. In August 1944, Edward Osóbka-Morawski, the leader of the Lublin provisional government, even publicly celebrated mass in honor of the "miracle on the Vistula," the Polish defeat of the Bolsheviks outside Warsaw in 1920, a national holiday with distinctly anti-Russian overtones. That strange event was made even stranger by the presence of General Nikolai Bulganin, at the time the representative of the Soviet Council of People's Commissars, and later the Soviet prime minister.[92]

The communist indulgence of anti-Semitism was part of this same way of thinking. Many hoped that by ignoring or even flirting with anti-Semitism, their party would seem more "national," more "patriotic," less Soviet, less alien, and more legitimate. In Poland, the thesis that the party's unpopularity was due to the presence of "too many Jews" came originally from the party itself. In 1948, when he had fallen out of favor, Władysław Gomułka, the leader of the wartime Polish communists and Bierut's great rival, wrote a long memo to Stalin, declaring that the Jews in the communist party were making it difficult for the party to widen its base: "Some of the Jewish comrades don't feel any link to the Polish nation or to the Polish working class . . . or they maintain a stance that might be described as 'national nihilism.'" As a result, he declared, "I consider it absolutely necessary not only to stop any further growth in the percentage of Jews in the state as well as the party apparatus but also to slowly lower that percentage, especially at the highest levels of that apparatus."[93]

Like anti-German feeling in the Sudetenland, anti-Ukrainian emotions in Poland, and anti-Hungarian sentiment in Slovakia, anti-Semitism finally became just another tool, another weapon in the party's arsenal. In this sense, the postwar history of the Jews belongs in the same chapter as the more vigorous forms of ethnic cleansing. In their quest for popularity, communist parties were willing to pump up hatred of Germans, hatred of Hungarians, hatred of Ukrainians, and, even in the region most devastated by the Holocaust, hatred of Jews. The Polish communist party would later return to this theme, expelling most of its own Jewish members in 1968.

And Salomon Morel? In the end, he was a "typical" figure of this period in only one sense: like many people who lived through the horrors of the war and the confusion of the postwar years, he played different roles in different

national narratives at different times. He was a Holocaust victim, a communist criminal, a man who lost his entire family to the Nazis, and a man consumed by a sadistic fury against Germans and Poles—a fury that may or may not have originated from his victimhood, and may or may not have been connected to his communism. He was deeply vengeful, and profoundly violent. He was awarded medals by the communist Polish state, was prosecuted by the postcommunist Polish state, and was defended by the Israeli state, though he had expressed no interest in moving to Israel until half a century after the war, and even then only after he started to fear prosecution. In the end his life story proves nothing about Jews or Poles at all. It only proves how difficult it is to pass judgment on the people who lived in the most shattered part of Europe in the worst decades of the twentieth century.