



Review

Reviewed Work(s): *Belonging to the Nation: Inclusion and Exclusion in the Polish-German Borderlands 1939–1951* by Kulczycki, John J.

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Despite this reservation, Pudłocki's volume provides an excellent discussion of the political, diplomatic and intellectual history of Poland and Britain in the interwar period. The analysis is careful but never dull, and Pudłocki's use of Dyboski helps the reader grasp the complex position of Poland in the interwar years. The book will be of great use to those interested in Polish diplomatic and intellectual history, but also to those studying the role of institutions and intellectuals in propaganda missions.

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Kulczycki, John J. *Belonging to the Nation: Inclusion and Exclusion in the Polish-German Borderlands 1939–1951*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA and London, 2016. 402 pp. Maps. Tables. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$49.95: £36.95: €45.00.

PROFESSOR EMERITUS JOHN J. KULCZYCKI has devoted his newest monograph to the history of the Polish-German borderlands during and after World War Two. Whereas in the English-speaking world, the expulsions of Germans have received a great deal of scholarly attention, this book unravels the selection criteria and practices that caused borderland inhabitants to stay or leave. Following in the footsteps of Hugo Service's study (*Germans to Poles: Communism, Nationalism and Ethnic Cleansing after the Second World War*, Cambridge, 2013), Kulczycki shows the concrete consequences of the assumption that all people have a national identity, and that that identity aligns with language and/or ethnicity in the Polish-German borderlands, which was a unique case given the provisional status of the borderline.

The book marvellously situates the processes of ethnic homogenization in their historical time, starting with the gathering of statistical ethnographical data throughout Europe in the 1870s, data relied upon while applying the principle of national self-determination after World War One. It then illustrates how research on ethnic Germans living abroad, the so-called *Volksdeutsche* (p. 20), as well as the Polish Western idea, legitimized aspirations of territorial expansion. 2.8 million people (p. 46) were categorized in a register according to their 'supposed degree of Germanness' (p. 300), following the annexation of the borderlands to Germany during World War Two. Kulczycki demonstrates how elastic this process proved to be. After the war, when Poland's territory shifted westwards, the reclassification of inhabitants formerly categorized as Germans appeared extraordinary flexible once again, despite the attempts of Polish authorities to install a clear dichotomy between Poles and Germans, and make the Germans leave the country.

Employing a three-phases approach commonly used by Polish scholars (rather than the overall term approach of expulsions more common in German and English language literature), Kulczycki separates the 'evacuation and flight before the arrival of Soviet Red Army' (chapter 3), 'a wild expulsion from the end of the war until the Potsdam Conference' (chapters 3–6), and the 'organized resettlement following the Potsdam Agreement' (p. 67) (chapters 7–10). The author then highlights the de-Germanization measures implemented afterwards (chapters 11–12), and ends with the final phase of verification in the form of migration to Germany in the early 1950s (chapter 13).

Kulczycki meticulously dissects how selection criteria were set, how they were understood by the people implementing them, and by the people to whom these criteria applied. He reveals how differently people were treated depending on the level of national awareness they possessed (pp. 110, 226); how criteria became rigidly uniform when the Polish government was concerned about the profile of its voters (p. 169), but became more pragmatic when a lack of a skilled labour force was feared; how by 1949 Polish authorities occasionally verified people without possessing declaration papers (p. 273). Later, Kulczycki sheds light on the different ways de-Germanization measures were implemented locally. Borderland inhabitants, for example, chose where to marry depending on whether they needed to have their names Polonized or not (p. 257).

Throughout the chapters, Kulczycki explains why it was not only policy measures that impeded locals from identifying as Poles. He points out how both Soviet Red Army soldiers and later the up to four million new settlers moving to the borderlands did not distinguish locals from Germans. Or how, despite the Catholic Church contributing to the essence of what the Polish nation stood for, Upper Silesians found in religion an identification positioning themselves above national understandings.

Kulczycki's broad synthesis of the complicated processes of verification and rehabilitation is to be warmly applauded. In contrast, however, Service, by providing case studies, was able to dissect more deeply the influence of successive waves of new settlers on local verification practices. In addition, while relying on the literature in Polish and German published mostly during the first fifteen years after the collapse of Communism, and making use of a collection of published sources mainly containing Polish administrative documents, Kulczycki leaves the vast collections of ego documents that are nowadays available largely untouched.

This book is a long-awaited standard work explaining how Europe was engineered on the illusion that nationality, language and/or ethnicity coincide. It is a basic read for students and professional historians of twentieth-century Europe, as well as for international policymakers.

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