

**PRIVATE AND PUBLIC, PERSONAL
AND POLITICAL:
EXPLORING GERMAN EXPELLEE
MEMORY TOURISM**

by

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Thomas Wolfe's sentiment that "you can't go home again" is commonplace, but for ethnic Germans expelled from eastern Europe after World War II this aphorism assumed a tangible truth. The 1945 Potsdam Agreements envisioned a European peace ensured by the concentration of all ethnic Germans in a truncated Germany. But, with the East-West divide of the Cold War expelled Germans found themselves cut off from former homes now under communist rule. Treaties could not mandate emotions, however. Over time expellees successfully integrated into the fabric of West German life but for most there always remained the emotional pull to return home to the *Heimat*.¹ Folks yearned to see their village square, to hike or ski in the local mountains, to attend their parish church, and to visit their family graves.

The great drama of the expulsion of about twelve million ethnic Germans from eastern Europe into occupied Germany² is frequently overshadowed by other events in 1945; atomic bombs were detonated for the first time, devastating news of the Holocaust began more vividly to unfold, and new wars began in China and Indochina. Though most German "expellees" came to Germany between 1945 and 1950, some continued to arrive as late as 1961. During most of the first fifteen or twenty years after the war many expellees focused primarily on finding their niche in a new society. The trauma of National Socialism, the war, and expulsion provided the backdrop against which expellees struggled to find their place in a new society without surrendering their attachment to the *Heimat*. As a result, expellees participated in a variety of private and public memory tourism rituals that maintained their link to the former homelands. Though not overtly explicit, the private rituals were inherently political acts. At the same time, rituals conducted in the public realm expressed a

political agenda both consciously and unconsciously.

Memory tourism, in this case, refers to both physical travel catering to memory needs and mental journeys to an imagined landscape. Located at the intersection between these private and public connections to the Heimat, expellee memory tourism contained a heavy dose of nostalgia that sought to remember things the way they were in the “good ol’ days.” Whether in the form of pilgrimages, reading travel books, or attending dance performances, memory tourism generally began as an individual and private act that evolved into group activities. Given the Cold War context in which they were made, these group activities made a political statement. The greater political context was the expellees’ claims for the right to return to their homeland and for compensation for losses suffered in the expulsion. Sudeten German political groups even asserted the validity of the Munich Agreements of 1938, arguing that that region of Czechoslovakia known as Sudetenland should be re-annexed to Germany. West Germany’s national interests in the Cold War included negotiating with her European neighbors to the east about security and human rights concerns while at the same time expellee political groups loudly proclaimed the right to reclaim their homelands in the eastern territories. The resulting charged political climate imbued even the most simple private act with political import, and thus memory tourism helped expellees maintain an emotional and political claim to their lost homelands.

Public and Private Memory

Numerous studies have explored the link between the traumatic experience of war and subsequent tourism grounded in that experience.³ Others link it more directly to memorialization and ritual memory of war, rather than an expression simple of tourism.⁴ Jay Winter has noted that participants in tours to World War I battlefields in the 1920s and 1930s turned those locations into “sacral landscapes,” and that those “sites of memory and sites of mourning [are] both public and private.”⁵ Pilgrims came on journeys of private mourning, but as the tourist industry adapted to accommodate them with printed travel guides, improved hostelry arrangements, and even organized tours through British travel agents, more and more the public appropriated

the memorial journey. British World War I veterans and their family members easily made the trips to northern France to revisit these “sites of memory.” Barred by political realities from taking the personally necessary trek, the same did not hold true for ethnic Germans expelled from their ancestral homes in Eastern Europe after 1945.

Even the language used to designate expellees blurred the boundaries between the personal and the political. The word “expellee” (*Heimatvertriebene*) was used exclusively by the non-German West to describe these people, and it was the word preferred by the expellees themselves. The term implies injustice and violent force. However, the general West German population, who did not welcome the new arrivals, tended to call expellees “refugees,” a word indicating a permanent loss and rootlessness. Official East German terminology was “*Umsiedler*” (resettlers or relocaters), connoting a degree of free choice absent in reality. The Czechs referred to the German expellees as “transferees,” a more value-neutral term in keeping with the language of the Potsdam Agreements. Clearly, the different terms used to designate the “expellees” revealed a conscious politicization of the issue by the affected populace and governments.

A closer definition of both halves of the compound word “*Heimatvertriebene*” exposes the political nature of the expellee condition. Expellees were people who had been *vertrieben*, that is expelled, driven out, hounded, and who had lost their *Heimat*. There is no equivalent word in English for the German concept of *Heimat*. Homeland is the translation usually employed, though it is only a partial definition. Even Germans have difficulty agreeing on the precise meaning. Duden, the acknowledged authority on the language, only lists approximate synonyms: “*Geburtsland, Geburtsort, Heimatland, Heimatort, Herkunftsland, Ursprungsland, Vaterland*” (Country of birth, place of birth, homeland, hometown, country of origination, country of origin, fatherland).⁶ G. C. Paikert, drawing on Eugen Lemberg, argues that,

Heimat refers not only to the actual home, possibly the house, yard, and the property which one claims as one’s own, but it also signifies the entire physical setting in which one was born, grew up or lived most of one’s life, and to which a host of personal interests and feelings are attached.⁷

Although the word is increasingly archaic, most seem to agree

that Heimat is the place of one's birth and closely connected to the landscapes of childhood. The emphasis on childhood is important, because Heimat is an emotionally loaded word that represents *Vertrautheit* and *Verlässlichkeit* (familiarity and reliability), two emotions intimately tied to the security of childhood.⁸ In this sense one type of Heimat is always lost, which may well account for the nostalgia that almost automatically connects itself to the word. Alfred Kerr's poem captures this feeling: "*Was ist Heimat? / Kindheit. Wiegenklang / Sprachgewöhnung und / Erinnerungszwang.*"⁹ Thus, expellees' claims for their right to their lost Heimat further connected personal memory with public politics.

Expellee Pilgrimages

Among the earliest acts of expellee memory tourism, and the most easily understood as such, were the numerous pilgrimages undertaken by religious expellees in the immediate post-war period.¹⁰ Pilgrimages had been an important aspect of popular religion in Silesia and the Sudetenland for both Protestants and Catholics to honor the Virgin Mary, patron saints, or local religious figures prior to the expulsion. After 1945 pilgrimages took on new meaning for expellees who used pilgrimages as both religious and memory tourism expressions. The pilgrimages also provided comfort for expellees confronted with very different religious practices, even within the same faith, in established western German churches they attended. For example, the order of Protestant services in the West disoriented Lutheran expellees for whom the call and response (*Wechselgesang*) of the pastor with the congregation was too "Catholic." Even worse was the "lack of any liturgy in the Calvinist areas" and the differences "between the Lutheran and Calvinist rites with regard to communion, catechism, and the decorations of the churches."¹¹ Sermons were too intellectual for the peasant ethnic German expellees and did not speak to their hearts.¹² Catholic expellees experienced similar alienation at western Catholic services. They complained that the Catholic Church in the West lacked the more emotional songs and prayers from the eastern Heimat, leading Catholic expellees to cling more strongly to a virtual parish, artificially continued in West Germany.¹³ Because expellees did not feel at home in their new parishes, their church attendance

declined.

Responding to the religious alienation, expellee organizations like the Sudeten German Catholic *Ackermann Gemeinde*, the expellee provincial associations (*Landsmannschaften*), or even individual expelled priests organized pilgrimages specifically for expellees that included special church services where parishioners could “sing and pray like at home.”¹⁴ One flyer advertised a 1946 pilgrimage to Werl, a popular pilgrimage site in West Germany, with the slogan “come pray in Silesian.”¹⁵ Entries in the Werl guest book testified to the emotional satisfaction experienced by Silesian pilgrims on such occasions: “We sang in our fashion, we prayed like at home. . . .”¹⁶ A participant in the first pilgrimage to Werl said, “[For] one day we could be at home, speak, sing and pray like at home.”¹⁷ Sudeten Germans in the region of Augsburg found a solitary chapel at Krumbad soon after the expulsion where they could celebrate as they did at home. As one pilgrim reported, “there we sang our songs and held our May devotions, like at home. We were terribly attached to these things. . . . Expellee experience at the chapel marked it as the beginning of a small pilgrimage site for expelled Sudeten Germans in the area.”¹⁸ Clearly, such pilgrimages brought expellees a memory of home.

In some instances pilgrimages rose above inter-confessional differences and appealed to expellees from specific geographic origins. This experience was particularly true of some so-called “Silesian pilgrimages” to Andechs and Amberg. Although both these locations honored Silesian patron saints in the Catholic tradition, Silesian Protestants also participated in the large pilgrimages to these sites and held their own services there.¹⁹ The weekend excursions carried great importance for the participants, and for their respective expellee groups. Wolfgang Jaenicke, head of the Bavarian Refugee Bureau, excused his absence from the office during the critical Munich-area refugee camp hunger strikes with the comment that he had to attend the Silesian pilgrimage for St. Hedwig.²⁰ While the pilgrimages began as purely religious and personal acts, they evolved into a testimony of a larger political identity, that of expellee. One early pilgrimage to Alt-Oetting that attracted “ten to twelve thousand Silesians, Sudeten Germans and Southeastern Germans” served just this purpose.²¹

Early pilgrimages often went to locations physically bordering

on the lost Heimat. Participants normally went for purely personal reasons; pilgrimages to lonely forest locations near the Czech border, for instance, provided expellees the opportunity to worship in ways they remembered from home, among themselves in “cathedrals of oaks and beeches.”²² To have a “view of the Heimat” became a standard part of pilgrimages to border sites, thereby fulfilling expellees’ personal purposes. But, the phrase also served an inherently political quality. Pilgrimage organizers arranged bus tours for Sudeten Germans to the German-Czech border as an official part of the program, where different stops permitted the travelers to look into their own section of the Heimat.²³ Combining the communal glance over the border with religious services converted the Heimat into hallowed ground. Ringing of the “Heimat Bells” in chapels on the border (either copies of church bells in the old Heimat or brand new ones with contemporary inscriptions) enhanced expellee consecration of their former homeland.²⁴

Gathering expellees on the border at what was always referred to as “the lost Heimat” was, in the Cold War context, a political act whatever the private motivation. The depth of emotion felt by the memory tourists insured a politicization of these expellee pilgrims. As late as summer 1955 the *Ackermann Gemeinde* (a Sudeten German Catholic organization) hosted a pilgrimage to the Dreisesselberg (Mount Dreisessel) in Bavaria’s Bohemian Forest. The mountain bordered on and provided vistas into Czechoslovakia. Over 1,000 pilgrims participated in what was for many their “first reunion with the Heimat.”²⁵ The two priests celebrating the mass spoke both in German and Czech. One emotional Czech expellee, brought to tears when the Lord’s Prayer was recited in Czech, sighed, “only now is it just like at home.”²⁶

Pilgrimage sites close to the Czech border were locations also familiar to Sudeten Germans from the pre-expulsion period. Especially attractive to these expellees were border sites, such as Neukirchen, Neuengrün, and Steinlohe, that housed cult objects from Bohemia.²⁷ The Neukirchen site, for instance, included special chapels and altars to the Bohemian saint Johann von Nepomuk, as well as a holy Madonna image that was believed to perform miracles. Even the revered icons became part of the politicization of memory tourism

as evidenced by the post-expulsion era renaming of the Neukirchen Madonna, first as the "Expellee Madonna" (*Flüchtlings Madonna*) in 1950, and the "Madonna of the Iron Curtain" in 1952.²⁸

Another feature of pilgrimage memory tourism was that some pilgrims sought to recapture or refigure a physical Heimat through the recreation of icons. Not uncommonly expellees fashioned copies of icons left behind in the eastern Heimat and placed them at favored pilgrimage sites in the West, thereby inventing post-war tourist sites away from the frontier.²⁹ Entirely new icons expressed expellees' frustration at their exclusion from their Heimat, including one at St. George's in a Munich suburb in the early 1950s on which was inscribed, "Holy Mother of God, lead us back to Bohemia," and signed, "[name unknown] with husband and two sons from Carlsbad."³⁰

Expellee pilgrimages did not continue much past 1955 as a widely practiced phenomenon. On one hand they were the victim of their own success; large numbers of pilgrims were simply too difficult to house and feed. The decline in the number of pilgrimages after 1955 also indicated the increasingly successful assimilation of the expellees into their new home parishes as time passed. Nevertheless, the impact of the early expellee pilgrimages lasted long after their decline, for those trips planted one seed of later memory tourism, namely pilgrimages back to the Heimat when the borders reopened after 1969. In the immediate post-war period, however, the pilgrimages represented important unified political actions for the expellees. For most of the 1950s and 1960s memory tourism was restricted to mental manifestations: reading of travel books or the "Our Heimat" section of the expellee newspapers, and attending cultural events such as slide shows and lectures, song and dance evenings, and reunions.

Armchair Memory Tourism

Expellee journalists and editors created and maintained an active press directed at fellow expellees. In 1953 one analyst counted 320 periodicals in circulation, including 234 newspapers aimed at specific expellee groups in West Germany.³¹ The Sudeten Germans published the largest number of newspapers by far. In 1953 there were eighty-four newspapers to serve a Sudeten German population of about 1.9 million in West Germany. The Silesian press followed

with some sixty-nine newspapers aimed at their population of just over 2 million.³² Proliferation of the expellee press began in 1948 when occupation authorities removed laws that required licenses to publish newspapers. Expellee newspapers continue to be created even today but peak appearances came in the 1948 to 1950 period.

Unique to these expellee newspapers was the page dedicated to the old Heimat that featured an article about a famed town or resort area of the lost Heimat, a sort of “travel by proxy” section. For instance, the January 1950 issue of *Das ganze Deutschland* featured a layout entitled “Lost Ski Areas” that included photographs of “*der Jeschken, das Riesengebirge, und Plattenberg im Erzgebirge*.”³³ What distinguished this “travel” section from contemporary models was that it proposed a mental trip to the past. *Die Brücke*, one of the weekly papers with the largest circulation, featured articles of this type on page five of every issue in the column entitled “*Die Brücke zur Heimat*” (The Bridge to Heimat). These articles recalled some beloved aspect of the Heimat whether it was a geographic location, a tradition, or a cultural figure. Adding to the flavor of by-gone times was the fact that the column was usually headlined in gothic script.³⁴ *Die Vertriebene Anzeiger* contributed reports on radio programs like “Traditional Ways from the Erzgebirge” and “Expellees Tell Their Stories,” and in articles that commemorated folkways of home, including one describing traditional Easter celebrations in different parts of the lost Heimat.³⁵ Heimat articles like these generally portrayed their subjects in a vein nostalgic of the past. Such portrayals served to keep a memory of the Heimat alive rather than to report and disseminate among the expellees a reality of the present. Reading the Heimat page of the expellee paper, then, amounted to a trip down memory lane by way of armchair tourism.

Visual images of the Heimat that revealed another component of memory tourism in which political concerns surfaced formed an important part of expellee mass publishing efforts. Wilhelm Turnwald’s *Sudetendeutsches Bilderbuch* (Sudeten German Picture Book), published by the *Kirchliche Hilfestelle München* (a Catholic expellee aid organization) in 1949, serves as a good example. This volume was a collection of captioned photographs of the Sudeten German Heimat, including, for instance, pictures of the Bränn marketplace,

the cathedral in Prague as seen from the Charles Bridge, and idyllic scenes of the Bohemian Woods or Egerländer landscapes.³⁶ On the surface the book was little more than a “coffee-table book” containing a series of nostalgic land and cityscapes. The politically oriented Sudeten German Landsmannschaft helped advertise Turnwald’s work; the press release commented, “the pain that comes with viewing the pictures will be surmounted by the pride that grips every German, not just Sudeten Germans.” One reader wrote, “give this beautiful picture book to all natives, so they can see what was stolen from us Sudeten Germans.”³⁷ These statements about the picture book clearly indicated the intersection of the personal and political aspects of memory tourism. The book recalled beloved, oft-visited locations while simultaneously evoking chagrin that those same locations were now unfairly, if not illegally, out of reach.

Memory tourism also produced substitute souvenirs, which were advertised in the expellee press. The tour of the Heimat taken through the Heimat pages thus yielded an ersatz photo album. For instance, in 1952 the well-known German porcelain manufacturer, Rosenthal, responded to requests from the Silesian Heimat Union by offering a series of decorative plates featuring scenes from the Silesian Heimat. Tourists could remember their armchair visits to the Breslau town hall, the Grüssau Monastery, or the Schneekoppe (a famous mountain in the Silesian Riesengebirge) with their Rosenthal plate.³⁸ Calendars with images of the Heimat also served as substitute souvenirs for many years. As late as 1996 a “Yesterday” series with photographs of Sudetenland, Silesia, Danzig, or other areas of the Heimat was produced with images dating from 1910 through 1940. In other words, the photographs provided memory tourist scenes from the pre-war and pre-expulsion eras.³⁹ The photos were intended to “make visible a piece of the past of your city”; the calendars, because of their photos of the eastern German locations, were best marketed to expellees and their children. While the photographs may seem devoid of any overt political content, the inclusion of former eastern German cities in a calendar series celebrating major German cities attests to a continuing need to cast the net of collective German memory broadly.

Festive Memory Tourism

One important way in which expellees maintained a sense of cultural cohesion in West Germany was through participation in one or more of the hundreds of expellee cultural groups. There were song and dance groups, *Trachten* (traditional costume) groups, literary circles, and history and geology groups—everything conceivable. The regularly scheduled local gatherings of evening table talks, Sunday afternoon beer garden picnics, women's meetings, group hikes or bicycle rides constituted an important part of the eastern German tradition.⁴⁰ The participation in such traditional activities in order to bring one "home" is yet another example of memory tourism. Even the casual audience of a performance group who viewed a cultural group's product was partaking of memory tourism. The infrequent observer of a song and dance evening or of a slide lecture, for instance, embarked on a brief memory tour of a remembered cultural life. The expellee press was rife with glowing announcements and reviews of such cultural evenings. The *Vertriebener Anzeiger* of 4 January 1952 reported that film and slide shows about aspects of the homeland were well received by the public. The paper speculated that the presentations carried a dual purpose: they showed the West Germans what had been lost through the Potsdam Accord and they awakened memories for the expellees themselves. The focus of the activities and expellee response again wedded public and private uses of memory.⁴¹

Expellees formed a variety of cultural groups, each with its own focus whose activities typically included performances or presentations to a larger audience. The Union of *Isergebirgler*, a cultural group in Waldkraiburg, Bavaria, for example, organized periodic "*Bunte Abende*," or variety shows that displayed traditional folk arts like song, dance, and comedy that were attended by the larger community in which expellees lived. The singing group was so successful that it eventually formed a separate organization, the *Gesangsverein Liedertafel*.⁴² Evidence of the popularity of cultural groups can be seen in the national chapter of the *Isergebirgler* gathering at Waldkraiburg on one weekend in 1961 that drew thousands of participants. Chapter members led parades of *Trachten*-clad members through the streets, played traditional music and hosted other cultural events.⁴³ Other such groups sponsored memory tourism through their informational

evenings and through their festive events.

Holiday celebrations offered expellees another opportunity to partake of festive memory tourism. The Silesian Landsmannschaft in Rothenburg ob der Taube (located in Baden-Württemberg) brought memories of home to Silesian expellees during Christmas and Spring celebrations. Their 1953 Christmas program included folk tales featuring Rübezahl, the mythical mountain spirit who inhabits the Sudeten mountains. In March 1954 the Silesian children's group in Rothenburg ob der Taube surprised both native and expellee locals with choral performances of the Silesian *Sommersingen* tradition.⁴⁴ Similarly, the Rothenburg branch of the German Expellee Union (*Bund Deutsche Vertriebene*) celebrated its 1954 May Day in eastern German fashion by erecting a May Pole (*Maibaum*) at the *Kapellenplatz* (chapel square), an event attended by all the Landsmannschaften and by several hundred other participants. The Union closed May by felling the May Pole and holding a dance to celebrate the end of the culturally important month.⁴⁵ A hybridization of Heimat traditions and post-war culture occurred at the Union's 17 June 1954 celebration of *Sonnwendfeier* (Summer Solstice Celebration) with the Day of German Unity, which connected the nostalgic eastern festival with a political call for reunifying Germany.⁴⁶

Memory tourism through cultural activities was important for expellees to keep alive their perceptions of the past; almost every weekend saw a *Heimattreffen* (Homeland Reunion). The bi-annual reunion of expellees from Sudeten Asch in Rehau, Bavaria provides such an example. Rehau is located about ten kilometers away from Asch, Czechoslovakia. In 1954 the civic leaders in Rehau established a *Patenschaft* for Asch.⁴⁷ Here Asch expellees reunited for a three-day weekend to revisit the Asch Birdshoot, one of their cultural traditions dating from 1801. In the course of this festival, the town folk parade through the streets in traditional costume while conducting a wooden bird to the local shooting range. At the range, the shooting master issued traditional commands as to the parts of the bird to be shot and the order in which they were to be shot. The parade of the bird was also the parade of the Asch folk dressed in traditional costume. Moreover, the commemorative aspect of the sharpshooters' festival combined with Heimat cultural evenings, speeches, committee meet-

ings, and class reunions to round out the memory tourism festivities. Indeed, according to an expellee, one of the highlights of the reunion was “the visit of the border, the view over to Asch, of Hainberg with its Bismarck tower.”⁴⁸ This hybridization of the event elevated it to an importance it did not have before the expulsion; instead of being one of many annual festive events, it has become a representation of the Heimat itself and, for the Asch expellee residents of Rehau, a site of memory tourism.

Often the political spilled over into these public festivities. In one case, over 5,000 expellees from Egerland gathered in Rothenburg in order to celebrate a similar reunion. The first day of the two-day event was devoted to “lectures and games, music and dance” performed by the expellees dressed in their colorful *Trachten*. The second day, however, turned to more serious matters when the participants passed a resolution addressed to the military occupation government that requested that the Egerland district, a former region of the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia, be incorporated as part of the state of Bavaria.⁴⁹

These festive activities are but two of the myriad of examples where memory tourism crosses from the realm of the personal to the political. The reunions themselves, in their cultural manifestations, served to provide visitors with a taste of home, which by definition only existed in their memories. But, they implicitly (and usually explicitly) contained a strong political element whereby expellees protested their expulsion and exclusion from home, and demanded change in their favor. The expellees were not willing to accept that the homeland was lost forever and that it could only exist in their memories; they took every opportunity to remind those in power that expellees were a sizable number of the population who required appeasement.

The annual national meetings of large groups like the Silesian and Sudeten German *Landsmannschaften*,⁵⁰ that typically attracted close to 500,000 people to their meetings, or the annual *Tag der Heimat* (Heimat Day), which included all expellees irrespective of geographic origin and attract almost as many attendees, provide graphic evidence of the blending of the personal and the political in expellee memory tourism. Even if the majority of the participants in these meetings attended primarily for the purpose of reviving memories of home

through meeting old friends, eating traditional foods, and enjoying traditional entertainments, the massing of so many people with a common political purpose demanded that their political message be heeded. On these occasions the Silesians and Sudeten Germans gave pointedly political speeches calling for the return or opening up of their homelands. In 1985 the Silesian Landsmannschaft aroused political passions in Germany by adopting for their annual convention the slogan, "Silesia Remains Ours," and passionately arguing that, "politically, the claim to our Heimat Silesia remains. It is not the lost Heimat, but rather the silently annexed, the stolen Heimat."⁵¹

Sudeten German leaders made similarly pointed remarks during expellee activities. For instance, in 1957 Speaker Rudolf Lodgman von Auen asserted that, "this peaceful demonstration . . . show[s] the world that we are determined to fight for our right to our Heimat always and everywhere, and . . . that our will to return home remains unbroken."⁵² The 1995 *Tag der Heimat* held in Gleiwitz, just on the German side of the Oder River, and which marks the eastern boundary to Poland, was attended by one-half million expellees. The political import of 500,000 expelled Germans standing in Gleiwitz, the staging point for the 1939 German invasion of Poland, demanding that the lost German territories be returned only five years after the reunification of Germany cannot be lost on anyone. Indeed, the demand for lost territory accentuates the political nature of a personalized cultural event.

Memory Tourism in the Heimat

The most physical manifestation of memory tourism for expellees, of course, was the act of taking a trip to the Heimat. However, not until the East-West rapprochement signaled, by the treaties signed after 1969 between West German and eastern European leaders in Moscow, Warsaw, Prague, and East Berlin, could many expellees make the trip. Once travel from West Germany to eastern Europe became easier, many former residents of the eastern areas and their children born in West Germany made the trip "back home." A veritable *Osttourismus* took off, or, as one wag called the bus tours he conducted to Poland, "*Heimweh* [Homesickness] Tours Internationalski."⁵³ However, both real and virtual trips to the Heimat began well before the completion

of negotiated treaties.

Return tours were possible in the 1950s, though bureaucratically difficult to arrange. More readily available were narrated tours in the Heimat press that provided some satisfaction to those who could not or would not travel there. This early memory tourism was a blend of romanticized visions and disturbing pictures of the new reality in the old Heimat. While photographs accompanying the text portrayed the beautiful landscape, the writing often emphasized the negative: everything was dirty, the streetcars too crowded, and the Poles let the street dust accumulate.⁵⁴ Visitors returning in the 1970s and 1980s seemed to have similar impressions but often remarked on how overwhelmed they were by both the beauty and the vastness of the landscape, and how the trees had grown during their thirty-year absence.⁵⁵ The younger generation usually remarked on the environmental damage.⁵⁶ One tour director noted that during the first two or three days of a fourteen-day bus tour, the West German tourists “find everything overwhelming. Then they notice what all has changed. And after two weeks they know that this is not the Heimat of which they always spoke at their *Stammtisch*.” Instead, once the expellee tourists returned to West Germany they talked about “the nasty police, who lure western tourists into radar speed traps, the potholes in the streets, the lukewarm drinks, broken elevators and rude waiters in the hotel.”⁵⁷

Despite their perceptions of the new Heimat, the expellees’ need to remember the Heimat of old remained undiminished. Useful to this understanding is a comparison of souvenirs expellee tourists to the eastern Heimat brought back to their new homes in West Germany and the possessions deemed necessary with the initial expulsion. When first expelled, expellees brought essential items, often packed in a last-minute panic as they tried to pare their possessions down to the allotted fifty kilograms. Souvenirs brought after the fact of expulsion when life had reached a relative stability demonstrates what had in the meantime become important to expellees in their memories of home. One of the most popular souvenirs brought back from visits to former eastern homes was soil (*Heimaterde*).⁵⁸ Heimaterde became a prized possession in many expellee homes, honored as a proud relic of the Heimat. The soil provided an important physical link to the

old Heimat and often occupied a prominent spot on the mantelpiece or in a glass cup in the corner shrine of expellee homes. So important was the Heimaterde that it often became part of an expellee's estate passed on to descendants. Heimaterde also provided the means of creating new popular traditions such as giving the soil as Christmas presents or awarding it as prizes. Not uncommonly, Heimaterde ceremoniously was mixed into the foundations of a new home or with the earth of newly acquired farmland in something akin to a good luck ritual.⁵⁹ This new tradition was so popular that it spurred a cottage industry that provided expellee tourists Heimat soil for relatively high prices; one Polish entrepreneur sold canning jars of Silesian soil to visiting expellees for 500 zloty each.⁶⁰ In keeping with the tradition of Heimaterde, for over fifty years returning visitors have also brought plants, flower seeds, and even young trees from the old Heimat into the new one.⁶¹

Others expellees returned with more substantial mementos. One father who traveled with his family from Hamburg to his family estate in East Prussia in 1975 happened upon his great-grandfather's gravestone. No longer at the cemetery, the gravestone was being used as a border marker in the fields. The family loaded the gravestone, as well as the estate's bell, into their car and brought them back to Hamburg. The gravestone was placed in the garden and the bell hung on the outside of the new home in Hamburg, both commemorating a lost Heimat while at the same time offering a site of memory tourism.⁶² Another expellee returning to his eastern Heimat in 1974 found the hundred pound stone balls that had adorned the entrance gates to his family estate's cemetery. He too loaded these relics into his car and brought them to his new home in the West where they graced the terrace. His son, demonstrating the amused tolerance of the second generation, commented that "they really work very well, one can't complain. The dogs pee on them, that gives a very pretty effect."⁶³

Taking at least one trip East to rediscover one's roots became almost *de rigeur* for descendants of expellees. A Polish chaplain commented in 1988 that "the Germans visit the Schneekoppe as pilgrims. It is a duty for them, like the journey to Mecca is for Muslims."⁶⁴ A minority of such memory tourists were transformed by the experience and began travelling to the old Heimat much as one

travels regularly to a vacation home. Ludwig Bauer, who had hated the Poles for years after his expulsion from Breslau, became a regular visitor. After meeting the people who lived in his former home, and who returned to him the wedding photo of his parents that everyone had thought was lost, Bauer broke down and cried in shame for hating the people who were now so nice to him. He made repeated visits, spending vacations helping to renovate his old home and bringing the needed wallpaper, paint, and plumbing fixtures from the West.⁶⁵ While Bauer claimed his motivation was that he could not stand to see the place in such disrepair, he clearly was reclaiming, metaphorically, ownership of his old house. Similarly the previous owner of a large West Prussian estate in Neumark made repeat visits to the property and the surrounding villages. His travel journals revealed that he still considered the estate his own and his will directed that should the estate again be returned to its rightful owner (himself), his son should inherit it. His frequent visits to his old home took the form of inspection tours complete with the bringing of gifts for “his” people. With the increased ease of travel to Poland, his one-time home had become his Heimat again.⁶⁶

Though many expellees traveled outside West Germany to pay homage to the Heimat, most such tourists made their pilgrimages without leaving the country. Indeed, memory tourism seldom took its participants far from home, sometimes not even necessitating leaving one’s house. One manner in which expellees became memory tourists was to recreate the lost Heimat as a museum piece. Small museums (*Heimatstuben*) that preserve the Heimat can be found throughout West Germany either as stand-alone entities or, more often, as rooms within a larger city edifice like the city hall or local history museum.⁶⁷ With their displays of nineteenth-century woodworking tools, fine arts, crafts, and Trachten exhibits, these “Heimatstuben” function as sites that can be visited to recall a bygone era. A more vibrant way of visiting the homeland without leaving western Germany is to go to a place like “Haus Schlesien” located near Bonn in Koenigswinter-Heisterbacherrott. The landscapes around this restored convent have been planted in part with plants native to Silesia. The buildings, grouped around a central courtyard, have been renamed after important towns in Silesia, and Silesian culinary specialties are served

in the restaurant. The administration also sponsors lectures, music evenings, folk dancing, and Silesian Christmas celebrations, all of which serve to induce the visitors to imagine they are in the Silesia their parents and grandparents told them about. This experience is metaphysical memory tourism at its peak that continues today.⁶⁸

Survival Tactics and the Politics of Memory Tourism

Memory tourism also provided an escape for expellees experiencing a sense of social ostracism. Expellees not only arrived in suddenly large numbers in a truncated Germany bereft of shelter, job, and cash resources but also one in which they were culturally different from native western Germans in their dialects, cuisine, and religious practices. Resentful western Germans shunned expellees on many fronts. “*Flüchtling*” (refugee) became a general swear word, augmented by variations that included “*Habenichtse*,” “*Bettlerpack*,” “*Rucksackdeutsche*,” “*Zigeuner*,” or “*Polacken*” (have-nots, beggar band, backpack Germans, gypsy, Polacks). Shopkeepers served all others ahead of expellees with the justification that real Germans should be given preference. One native housewife went so far as to add a bit of gasoline to the food she had prepared for her unwanted expellee lodgers while occupation authorities sometimes enforced housing orders at gunpoint.⁶⁹ Against such odds memory tourism functioned as a survival tactic.

The aforementioned examples of memory tourism all helped expellees legitimize their claim to the lost homelands *vis à vis* West Germany. Tributes to the lost homeland included in the expellee press as a matter of course served to memorialize the Heimat for its readership who were, in general, exclusively expellees and their offspring. In this manner expellees were able to keep alive their love of the Heimat. The pilgrimages or tours conducted to the border and the monuments expellees erected there that overlooked the Heimat functioned to preserve an emotional connection. They also presented a united front in making a pointed political statement about that connection. In spite of the obvious intent of the Potsdam Agreements that the population transfer be permanent, most expellees clung to the hope that the expulsion would one day be reversed and that they could regain their lost Heimat in eastern Europe. This hope, fueled

by their sense of injustice, remained at the core of expellee political activity in western Germany. As widely expressed in the expellee press, at political gatherings, and in public speeches, the main political goal of expellees remained the assertion of their right to return home (*Recht auf Heimat*). "For us expellees, this matter is problem number 1. Everything else is not so important and only is considered secondary," one expellee wrote to the Sudeten German leader Rudolf Lodgman von Auen.⁷⁰ Expellees were conscious that it would only be possible to return home once Europe was united and free. Indeed, the expellees even viewed themselves as potential liberators of eastern Europe. Lodgman voiced this idea at political meetings, claiming that "The Czech people can't speak for themselves, so it's up to the Sudeten Germans to free them. We can only get our Heimat back once the Czech people are free."⁷¹ Nostalgic yearnings for home could only be satisfied through political activity.

By its poignancy, the border monuments and pilgrimages reminded the German public at large of the expellees' special status as "victims" within West Germany and of the continuing sense of loss felt by the expellees. As Robert G. Moeller has persuasively argued, so successful was the expellees' self-portrayal that their self-proclaimed status of "war victim" was appropriated by the emerging West German nation in the 1950s to create a more comfortable, guilt-free identity.⁷² An important aspect of West German national identity included the suffering caused by the war, on which the expellee experience centered. Expellee memory tourism, which emphasized victimhood, suffering, and loss, thus found a receptive, if competitive, audience in the general West German public. Appropriation, however, did not mean acceptance for most of the West German populace who continued to view expellees as outsiders.

Conclusions

Pilgrimages, monuments, meetings of political groups, and the expellee press all served as policy statements to the larger West German audience. But memory tourism also had a specific function as a legacy to subsequent generations. The armchair tourism conducted through books and newspaper travel sections included expellee children, which created continuing family memories and contained

both idyllic memories as well as future claims for the Heimat. Reunions and especially physical travel to the old Heimat reinforced the connections of the younger generation to the Heimat and Heimat traditions. Leaders of expellee political and cultural groups always emphasized the critical role youth groups played at public reunions, for they represented the future of the movement.⁷³ Similarly, youth participation in memory tourism secured the continuing memory of Heimat.

Memory tourism, while carrying great weight as an informal ritual, only increased in importance when placed alongside formal rituals of politicized memorialization performed by expellee cultural and political groups. In this public context the political import of casual memory tourism becomes clear. Formal rituals at national expellee conventions included intoning the names of the lost territories while banners representing them were lowered to half-mast. Honoring the dead through a solemn roll call added an even more personal aspect of the ritual. These rituals transpired in full view, and quite consciously so, of the national and international media, and constituted vivid examples of how expellees used the act of memorialization to promote their claim in the public's political consciousness. The 1995 *Tag der Heimat* at Gleiwitz, as well as the 1985 "Silesia remains Ours" controversy, illustrate memory tourism carried to its political extreme. Memory tourism, then, whether practiced publicly by groups or privately by individuals or families, remained a powerful force for expellees to maintain a political claim on and a public reminder of the lands lost through the expulsion.

1. There is no precise English translation for *Heimat*, though homeland is the one most often used. Because of the ambiguity of English translations, this paper will employ the more precise German term, Heimat, unitalicized, throughout.

2. The exact figures: 6,944,000 from the eastern German territories ceded to Poland in 1945, 2,921,000 from Czechoslovakia, and 1,865,000 from the rest of eastern Europe. Joseph B. Schechtman, *Postwar Population Transfers in Europe 1945-1955* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1962), pp. 194-195.

3. Notable among such studies are Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) and David W. Lloyd, *Battlefield Tourism: Pilgrimage and the Commemoration of the Great War IN Britain, Australia and Canada, 1919-1939* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 1998).

4. See especially Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Modern in Cultural History* (New York: Bantam Books, 1989) and Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).

5. Winter, p. 1.

6. Wolfgang Müller, ed., *Duden "Bedeutungswörterbuch,"* v. 10 (Mannheim: Bibliographisches Institut, 1985), p. 328.

7. G. C. Paikert, *The German Exodus. A Selective Study on the post-World War II Expulsion of German Populations and its Effects*, Publications of the Research Group for European Migration Problems XII (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1962), p. 51.

8. Bernhard Waldenfels, "Heimat in der Fremde," *Worin noch niemand war: Heimat. Eine Auseinandersetzung mit einem strapazierten Begriff. Historisch-philosophisch-architektonisch*, Eduard Fuhr, ed. (Wiesbaden and Berlin: Bauverlag, 1985), p. 35.

9. "What is Heimat? / Childhood. Cradle songs / Language habits and / Forced memory." Alfred Kerr, *Heimat, Ein Lesebuch*, Manfred Kluge, ed. (Munich: Heyne, 1989), p. 186.

10. Georg R. Schroubek lists hundreds of such pilgrimages in his catalog of post-war pilgrimages, *Wallfahrt und Heimatverlust: Ein Beitrag zur religiösen Volkskunde der Gegenwart* (Marburg: N. G. Elwert, 1968), pp. 22-221.

11. Friedrich Spiegel-Schmidt, "Religiöse Wandlungen und Probleme im evangelischen Bereich," *Die Vertriebenen in Westdeutschland*, Eugen Lemberg and Friedrich Edding, eds., v. III (Kiel: Ferdinand Hirt, 1959), p. 49.

12. *Ibid.*

13. Adolf Kindermann writes "That expelled Catholics missed Heimat-like religious customs . . . led to their stronger connection to the continuing parish of the old Heimat in a virtual relationship." Adolf Kindermann, "Religiöse Wandlungen und Probleme im katholischen Bereich," *Die Vertriebenen in Westdeutschland*, v. III, p. 138.

14. Schroubek, p. 289.

15. *Ibid.*

16. Werl guest book, 12.9.1946, cited in Schroubek, p. 289.

17. Schroubek, p. 289.

18. 1952 report cited in Schroubek, p. 103.

19. Schroubek, p. 252.

20. Testimony of Wolfgang Jaenicke, *Protokoll über die Verhandlung gegen Egon Herrmann am 24 Februar 1949*, 4 March 1949, p. 30, Hoover Archives, Stanford, California.

21. "Wallfahrt der Heimatlosen nach Alt-Oetting," [1946], Henry Madden Collection, Hoover Archives, Stanford, California.

22. Ekkehard Kuhn, *Nicht Rache, nicht Vergeltung: Die deutschen Vertriebenen* (Munich: Langen Mueller, 1987), p. 220.

23. Schroubek, p. 253.

24. Schroubek, p. 251; 262.

25. Schroubek, p. 65.
26. Schroubek, p. 66.
27. Schroubek, p. 253.
28. Schroubek, p. 151.
29. Schroubek, p. 262.
30. Schroubek, p. 285.
31. Karl Kurth, *Handbuch der Presse der Heimatvertriebenen* (Kitzingen-Main: Holzner Verlag, 1953).
32. Hiddo M. Jolles, *Zur Soziologie der Heimatvertriebenen und Flüchtlinge* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1965), p. 276.
33. *Das ganze Deutschland*, January 1950.
34. See, for instance, *Die Brücke*, 1 May 1954, or any issue from that year.
35. *Vertriebener Anzeiger* 10 April 1952: 3; 1 July 1952: 2.
36. Wilhelm Turnwald, *Sudetendeutsches Bilderbuch* (Munich: Kirchliche Hilfstelle München, 1949).
37. Richard Mai, Verlag der Kirchlichen Hilfstelle, "Press Release" [no date], Lodgman papers 1948-1954, I/6 : 35/2, Sudetendeutsches Archiv, Munich.
38. *Vertriebener Anzeiger*, 20 February 1952.
39. "Sudetenland Gestern," 1996 Calendar (Heinsberg: m + m Verlag, 1982).
40. Hans. W. Schoenberg, *Germans from the East* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1970), p. 120.
41. *Vertriebener Anzeiger*, 4 January 1952.
42. Zita Ladwig, *Waldkraiburg—neue Heimat nach der Vertreibung* (Waldkraiburg, 1980), p. 25.
43. "10,000 beim Isergebirgler-Treffen in Waldkraiburg," *Mühldorfer-Anzeiger*, 3 July 1961: 3.
44. "Lagebericht zur kulturellen Förderung der Heimatvertriebenen in Rothenburg vom Juni 1954," cited in Paul Erker, *Vom Heimatvertriebenen zum Neubürger. Sozialgeschichte der Flüchtlinge in einer agrarischen Region Mittelfrankens 1945-1955* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1988), pp. 156-157.
45. Erker, p. 158.
46. *Ibid.*
47. It seems that the *Patenschaft* system did not operate as a mutual, sister-city, arrangement, as the post-war inhabitants of the eastern European town concerned were not consulted in the matter. Instead, the arrangement was between a West German town and expelled representatives, now resident in West Germany, of the town located in the old Heimat in eastern Europe. So the *Patenschaft* is located only in the realm of the imagination; it provides a means for substituting a physically reduced form of Heimat situated in a West German locale for the larger, old Heimat.
48. Juergen Greim, *In einer neuen Heimat* (Hof: Hoermann Verlag, 1990), p. 413.
49. "Treffen der Egerländer," *Die Brücke*, 16 July 1949: 3.
50. *Landsmannschaften*, often translated as "Provincial Homeland Associations," are organizations aimed at preserving expellee culture and political interests.

They often represent the most extreme expellee viewpoints, in that they claim they are the legitimate political bodies for the regions from which they were expelled, and in that they do not waver from the demand for an immediate restitution of the Heimat.

51. Silesian Landsmannschaft leader Herbert Hupka, writing in *Der Schlesier*, 11 January 1985: 1.

52. Sudetendeutscher Tag 1957 Stuttgart Letter, 15 April 1957, Lodgman papers, I/64.00.

53. Erich Wiedemann, " 'Ojottchen, im Reich haben sie uns vergessen.' Deutsche und Polen in den ehemaligen deutschen Ostgebieten," *Die Vertriebenen*, Siegfried Kogelfranz, ed. (Hamburg: Spiegel-Buch, 1985), p. 102.

54. Albrecht Lehmann, *Im Fremden ungewollt zuhaus: Flüchtlinge und Vertriebene in Westdeutschland 1945-1990* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1993), p. 110; Erwin Hirschberg, ed., *Eine Reise in die Heimat: Unsere Schlesien Heute* (Aachen: Hirschberg, 1955).

55. For example, Lehmann, pp. 112, 115; Walburg Lehfeldt, *Neues Leben: Als Flüchtling im Wirtschaftswunder* (Frankfurt/M: Limes, 1990), p. 91.

56. Lehmann, p. 109.

57. Wiedemann, p. 103.

58. Lehmann, p. 105.

59. Lehmann, p. 103-4; Marion Frantzioch, *Die Vertriebene. Hemmnisse, Antriebskräfte und Wege ihrer Integration in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Berlin: Dietriche Reimer Verlag, 1987), p. 126.

60. Wiedemann, p. 102.

61. Lehmann, p. 140.

62. Lehmann, pp. 140-142.

63. Lehmann, p. 140.

64. Cited in Lehmann, p. 108.

65. Wiedemann, p. 106.

66. Lehmann, pp. 120-123.

67. Over 380 such small museums dedicated to East German culture are listed in the German Ministry of the Interior's publication, *Ostdeutsche Museen und Sammlungen*.

68. "Veranstaltungsprogramm 1995," Haus Schlesien, Königswinter-Heisterbacherrott.

69. Joachim Schöps, " 'Die Bauern werden euch mit Heugabeln verjagen.' Die Eingliederung der Vertriebenen," *Die Vertriebenen*, Siegfried Kogelfranz, ed. (Hamburg: Spiegel-Buch, 1985), p. 33; Georg Müller and Heinz Simon, "Aufnahme und Unterbringung," *Vertriebene in West Deutschland*, v. I, p. 320.

70. Edmund Ripper, letter to Rudolf Lodgman von Auen, 21 May 1955, Lodgman papers, I/62.02.

71. Rudolf Lodgman von Auen, Address, Festliche Eröffnung, Sudetendeutscher Tag, Nuremberg, 19 May 1956, Lodgman papers, I/63.01.

72. Robert G. Moeller, "War Stories: The Search for a Usable Past in the Federal Republic of Germany," *American Historical Review* 101 (1996): 1007-1048.

See too Elizabeth Heinemann, "The Hour of the Women: Memories of Germany's 'Crisis Years' and the West German National Identity," *American Historical Review* 101 (1996): 354-395 for an analysis of West Germany appropriating the "victim" trope.

73. See, for instance, "Fahrplan," Lodgman von Auen papers, I/62.00.