Statistics Of
Poland's Democide:
Addenda*

By R.J. Rummel

The uprooting of millions was too many and would be morally wrong
---- Winston Churchill at the Potsdam Conference

If the conscience of men ever again becomes sensitive, these expulsions will be remembered to the undying shame of all who committed or connived at them
---- Victor Gollancz, Our Threatened Values

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INTRODUCTION

Of all the statistics I have presented on democide, two cases have been most controversial. One is for the democide by the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia 1975 to 1979. While my history and facts of this democide (link) are rarely challenged, my mid-
estimate of 2,000,000 (in a range of 600,000 to 3,000,000) murdered by the Khmer Rouge has received considerable criticism from the left as a gross overestimate. However, recent research by the Cambodian Genocide Program at Yale has come close to my figures:

Between 1975 and 1979, some 1,500,000 to 2,000,000 Cambodians died unnatural deaths from starvation, overwork, torture and execution [all democide].

20 percent of the entire Cambodian population -- men, women and children -- lost their lives in the Khmer Rouge revolution, very many of them through state-organized violence.

Another controversy is over my case study or statistics of the Polish post-World War II democide of the Reich and ethnic Germans under their control. This has aroused considerable discussion in Poland after one irate Pole published an attack on my web site. This caused some irate Poles to send me "fuck you" e-mails, but there were also attempts to refute my facts and arguments. Some complained or implied that I was biased because I ignored American democide (I did not), what the Germans did to the Poles (I did not ignore this either), Soviet treatment of the Poles (I also covered this), or that the deportation of Germans was done according to the Potsdam agreement (see below).

In general, there are two major issues the criticisms address. One is my estimate of the number of German's murdered. I believe that the evidence is clear that Poles murdered ethnic and Reich Germans in old and new Polish territory after the war. Although some Poles deny this, the question for the historian is not whether, but how many. And that is unknowable. All we can do is try to determine a reasonable estimate of the low and high toll, and within that some prudent mid-estimate, as I have done and will summarize below.

I must reiterate that I do not see these figures as the ultimate truth. They are simply my attempt to bracket what could have occurred with the most improbable low and high estimates, given what we know. Nor do I believe my mid-estimate, although I consider it that most supported by the evidence and scholarly or informed writings, to be anything more than an educated judgment. And this is all we can do, given the post-war political and social chaos, civil war in Poland, secrecy, partisan denial and exaggeration, and lack of a reliable, nonpartisan contemporary census. In short the best we can say is that
hundreds of thousands of Germans were murdered, possibly somewhere around a million-and-a-half, but surely, no more than several million.

A second major criticism is of my accusing the Polish government of this democide. Many argue that the Soviet's were fully in control of post-war Poland at all government levels and dictated Polish policies, and therefore the Soviets are responsible for any democide of Germans in post-war Poland, although Poles may have carried out Soviet orders. I want to deal with this critical point in detail, but first let me present a brief history of this period, and start with what happened to Poland during the war.

POLAND DURING WORLD WAR II

On September 1, 1939, German forces invaded Poland from the East, and as the Soviets had promised in a secretly signed agreement with Germany, on September 17 they invaded Poland from the West. The Polish government then fled to Rumania, where the President and Commander-in-Chief were interned. The Soviets and Germans wasted no time in agreeing on the border dividing Poland between them, after which the Soviets annexed their portion to the Soviet Union and Lithuania (but in less than a year Lithuania itself would be taken over by the Soviet Union). The Germans annexed Poznan, Gdynia, Bydgiscz, Katowice, Lodz, and Plock, while turning what remained of Poland into a German administered so called General-Gouvernement, under which Poles were to be Germanized.

No where in former Poland did a polish government exist, not even a puppet one. Although Poles did serve in one lower level administrative capacity or another, although there were Polish police, all operated under the direct orders of Germans or, until the Germans invaded the Soviet Union and incorporated Eastern Galacia into the General-Gouvernement, Soviet authorities. Any democide committed by Poles in whatever lower level official capacity they had, therefore, was the responsibility of the German or Soviet governments.

After the fall of Poland, a Polish government in exile was first established in France, and then with its defeat by Germany, the Polish government fled to London. Also, a reconstituted Polish Army was formed from exiles, overseas Poles, and those who had escaped from Poland, and it fought numerous battles along side the Allies against Germans and Italians. When the eventual defeat of Germany became obvious, and the liberation of Poland a matter of time, a diplomatic, political, and secret war began between Polish communists and anti-communists and against future Soviet domination of Poland. The issue was joined over whether the post-war government of Poland would be a freely elected democratic government, an independent communist government, or a Soviet puppet.

Even before the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, in the annexed territory of Poland the Soviets carried out the same kind of extermination and deportation campaign
they applied to all countries the Red Army occupied in Eastern Europe during or after the war. Red Army and party representatives encouraged workers and peasants to "take what belonged to them," to get even with their former "exploiters," with the capitalist or rich land owner or police official, and to beat and even kill them. If they could not do this on their own, the Red Army promised to help. Throughout their occupied Poland, the Red Army decreed a period of lawlessness. They gave some local authority to village committees they set up, with instructions to shoot anyone who disobeyed or ignored their orders, and local communists were given carte blanche to square accounts with enemies.

The Soviets arrested and imprisoned about 500,000 Poles during 1939-1941, including former officials, officers, and natural "enemies of the people," like the clergy. This was about one in ten of all adult males, and murdered. But those the Soviets only arrested and imprisoned were lucky. They also murdered about 65,000 Poles in this terror. In one notorious massacre, in incredibly cold calculation, the NKVD—the Soviet secret police—systematically executed possibly 14,471 former Polish officers, including political leaders, government officials, and intellectuals. Some 4,254 of these were uncovered in mass graves in Katyn Forest by the Nazis in 1941, who then invited an international group of neutral representatives and doctors to study the corpses and confirm Soviet guilt.

Then there were the Soviet deportations. During 1939 to 1941 the Soviets deported 1,200,000 Poles deported to the Soviet Union for forced labor or resettlement, of which perhaps 146,000 died. This number does not include those shot for failing or straying out of line during deportation, or disobeying an order.

To all this Polish misery, pain, and death we must add what the Germans did in the Poland they ruled. They shot former politicians, and government, cultural, professional, and intellectual leaders, or sent them to die in concentration camps. Just in the city of Bydgoszcz, for example, Germans murdered about 10,000 non-Jewish civilians in four months of occupation. And from 1939 to 1941, they deported en mass about 1,600,000 Poles, including 400,000 Jews. About 700,000 Poles were sent to Germany for forced labor, many to die there. And the most infamous German death camps had been located in Poland. Overall, during German occupation of pre-war Polish territory, 1939-1945, the Germans murdered 3,900,000 to 6,400,000 Poles, probably about 5,400,000, including near 3,000,000 Jews.

This human catastrophe inflicted by the Soviets and Germans on the Poles surely exterminated the best and brightest among the Poles, and nearly destroyed the human infrastructure for the post-war rebuilding of former political parties and a post-war government. This relative leadership void was intentionally made worse by Soviet actions. As they forced the German Army to retreat, crossed into Poland, and approached Warsaw, the Polish underground Home Army rose against the Germans and tried to take over Warsaw before the Russians could reach it. The Home Army was loyal to the Polish government in London, and on their behalf wanted to welcome Soviet forces into the city. The intent was to strengthen Polish demands for a free Poland after the war. The uprising was a disaster. The Russians halted their offensive near Warsaw and let the Germans
massacre the Home Army, while forbidding any American or British planes from dropping supplies for the Home Army. After 63 days, and the death of 200,000 civilians and over 10,000 Polish combatants, the Home Army capitulated on October 2, 1944. The Germans then deported the remaining population and demolished virtually all of what remained of the city.

As to who would govern Poland once the German Army was driven out the country, the Soviets left little doubt as to their intent to establish a communist satellite. Action toward this end began in 1943. When the Polish government in London asked the International Red Cross to investigate the Soviet Katyn Forest massacre, the Soviets used this as an excuse to break diplomatic relations with them. They then established in the Soviet Union a communist led Union of Polish Patriots, and began the formation of a separate 1st Polish Army that would fight along with the Red Army. This then would provide any Polish communist government in a liberated Poland with an already indoctrinated and controlled Polish military force.

Stalin had well prepared for the end of the war and the political subjugation of Poland.

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**THE GREAT SOVIET POLISH AND GERMAN LAND REDISTRIBUTION**

Once Hitler was defeated in 1945 and the Red Army lay like a smothering blanket across eastern Germany and Poland, the Soviet Union took a huge slice of Poland in the east inhabited by about 3,000,000 Poles, and including the cities of Lwow and Wilno. With no force that could say otherwise, the Soviets then took the free city of Danzig (which had been supervised by the League of Nations), and seized from Germany East Prussia, Eastern Pomerania, Eastern Brandenburg, and Silesia, and turned them over to Poland. These territories had for centuries been a big chunk of the German homeland and comprised 39,400 square miles (three times larger than Belgium and about the size of Austria), or 24 percent of 1937 Germany. According to the German Federal Ministry for Expellees, Refugees, and War Victims, 9,575,000 Germans lived in these eastern territories in 1939 (about 15 percent of Germany's population). Perhaps no more than a couple of hundred thousand Poles lived there as well.

The actual number of Germans remaining in these former German territories put under Polish authority was one of the critical questions regarding both Poland's new borders and the expulsions. The Polish representative to the Potsdam conference claimed there were only 1,500,000, the United States estimated 2,000,000. Stalin simply said that there were none--all those surviving the war had run away. Churchill, however, saw the true dimension of the issue. He predicted that 8,000,000 to 9,000,000 would have to be expelled, which is close to the subsequent 10,000,000 estimate of the West German government. A Polish census taken in early 1945, however, counted 2,076,000 in "recovered territories," but this was after mass expulsions of Germans had already taken
place, and the census was done when both the Soviets and Poles desired to minimize the count of remaining Germans, and thus foreign objections to their expulsion.

The great uncertainty in these estimates, or even in the Polish census were it reliable, is the vast number of German refugees that had fled before the Red Army into this territory, which after all they thought was German, or after fleeing further West were trying to return to their land or cities after Germany's defeat. There were also an uncountable number of homeless and disposed Germans from whom the Poles had seized land or homes. As it was, from these territories alone, possibly as many as nearly 8,169,000 Germans would be dumped into already overcrowded and famished regions of occupied Germany, most within two years.

In detail, what did this ethnic cleansing involve?

THE EXPULSION OF ETHNIC AND REICH GERMANS*

For an introduction to the expulsions themselves, see the opening paragraphs of Chapter 12 of my Death By Government.

Encouraged and abetted by Soviet forces, domestic extremists, and the new national governments, the expulsions of Reich and ethnic German refugees and those living in the territories turned over to Poland and in Poland itself were at first savage and deadly: Time and again, Germans, who for generations had lived in a town or village or on land they owned, were grabbed, looted, beaten, raped, and then often corralled until they could be forced into unheated freight cars and expelled to Germany -- sometimes without food or water for a trip taking many days, even weeks. According to the Berlin correspondent of London The Times, in 1945 Poles transported one group of evicted Germans in cattle cars from Danzig without water, food, or even straw on which to lie. When they finally reached Berlin, twenty were dead out of the eighty-three jammed into two of the trucks.

These expulsions were carried out with Red Army support and muscle, and gradually became more regularized, sometimes in the style of the infamous Soviet deportations of their Volga Germans, Crimean Tatars, Chechens, Ingush, and other national groups to Siberia or other inhospitable areas. Similarly, in new Poland, aided by the Red Army Poles would give whole German neighborhoods or villages a few hours, sometimes a half hour, or only a few minutes, to pack a bag. The Poles would then collect the Germans, take them to a train station, shove them aboard cars, and freight them to an occupation zone in Germany--never to allowing them to return--, and then confiscated all the property they left behind.

But for many of these Germans, if they were not killed beforehand expulsion was only part of their suffering. Red Army soldiers and Poles would often beat, rape, and rob the Germans of what few possessions they carried; resistance could mean death. Poles did kill thousands of Germans that were awaiting expulsion, and imprisoned many in camps
in which conditions "approached those of the murderous Nazi period, in which sadism was given free rein and internees were left to starve slowly to death." Note, for example, that of the 8,064 Germans in Camp Lamsdorf in Upper Silesia, 6,488 (including 628 children) died from starvation, disease, hard labor, and physical maltreatment. No doubt, "tens of thousands" similarly died in other Polish internment camps.

Many other Germans still remaining were deprived of their very means of survival: Soviet occupation troops and Poles expropriated German property, including businesses, homes, land, farm machinery, and livestock, and looted cereals, foodstuffs, and seed crops. Much of this property was then distributed among the Poles deported by the Soviets from the former Polish territory they took in the East, and brought into repopulate these former German territories. In fact, this provided the new communist-controlled Polish government an incredible wealth of former German property with which to reward its supporters and buy allegiance from the peasants.

Because of the mass flight of Germans before the Red Army and on going deportations, there also was a severe shortage of agricultural workers. Food had to be severely rationed, which meant famine among the Germans. Poles could purchase food in Polish shops; Germans had to rely on the black market, and after they had sold to Poles for a pittance whatever goods they saved from the looters or expropriators, there was virtually no way for them to earn more Polish money. Consider the plight of Germans in Breslau (now Wroctaw), Silesia, as documented by its archdiocese.

There, where the number of Germans who had remained behind was about 300,000, it has been determined officially that more than ninety per cent of the babies, a very large percentage of infants, many young mothers and old persons died of starvation. As a result of the shortage of fats, dysentery broke out and claimed many victims, all the more so as the medical supplies which had not been confiscated or stolen were soon exhausted. Since the dispensaries usually only sold their goods in exchange for Zloty [Polish money] ..., the majority of Germans were not in a position to buy any medical supplies. For the same reason it was practically impossible for them to obtain hospital treatment as a deposit of 200 Zloty ... had to be paid upon admission to a hospital. The Germans were obliged to sell the few possessions they had managed to save, such as linen, clothing, electric stoves, jewelry, etc., to the Poles in order to obtain zloty with which to buy a little food. It must be remembered that from May 8th [1945] onwards the Germans had been obliged to get along without receiving any Polish money (in the form of wage or salary) and without any official allocations of food rations. The misery and distress of the population in the towns was indescribable.

It is obvious that, under the circumstances, many persons were at their wit's end. The number of suicides increased at an alarming rate; in fact, there would have been even more suicides in Breslau had the gas supply been available.
The same conditions with slight variations also prevailed in the remaining German eastern territories under Polish administration. Famine raged throughout the country.  

To be sure, the Poles had suffered horribly under the Nazi occupation from September 1939 to the winter of 1944-45, as described above. It is easy to understand, while not one bit justifying, why after the war Poles would take revenge for all their pain and deaths at Nazis hands on the first defenseless Germans under their control. Few could argue with the Polish courier, Jan Karski, who told President Roosevelt, 

I would rather be frank with you, Mr. President. Nothing on earth will stop the Poles from taking some kind of revenge on the Germans after the Nazi collapse. There will be some terrorism, probably short-lived, but it will be unavoidable. And I think this will be a sort of encouragement for all the Germans in Poland to go west, to Germany proper, where they belong.  

It is even more important to recognize that there were also many Poles who treated German civilians with kindness and tried to protect them against the vengefulness of other Poles, often at their own risk. 

As the early disorganized expulsions from Poland and other countries disgorged Germans into the American and British occupation zones of Germany, the Western Allies became increasingly concerned about the inhumane nature of the expulsions and the impact on their zones of this influx of expellees. Germany itself was in a chaotic state. Whole cities had been destroyed by bombing or battle, the nation's economic and social infrastructure was in ruins, and about 25 percent of former German arable land had been given to Poland. Millions were homeless and without work; food was scarce, and in many urban areas there was a near disastrous famine. Health and medical services could not possibly handle the additional millions of starving, ill-clothed, homeless, and sick German refugees, evacuees, and expellees. 

In what remained of Germany, therefore, death was easy and frequent. Bodies lying in the street or along the roads and railroad tracks were no strange sight, mothers hugging dead children to their breast not uncommon. One Western reporter writing from Berlin pointed out that while the expected death rate was eleven or twelve per thousand; the actual was sixty-one per thousand in the first month of the Allied occupation of Germany--about six times what had been expected. But this doesn't tell the whole story, for it was the very young that suffered the most. Of 609 infants less than a year old during this first month in Berlin, 361 died. Into this postwar, man made human calamity that was postwar Germany in the summer of 1945, continued to be jettisoned 20,000 weak, hungry, and homeless per day, many soon to die.
After every day seeing in Berlin the results of these expulsions, American political advisor Robert Murphy cabled the U.S. Department of State in October 1945. Here is retribution on a large scale, but practiced not on the Parteibonzen, but on women and children, the poor, the infirm.... Knowledge that they are the victims of a harsh political decision carried out with the utmost ruthlessness and disregard for humanity does not cushion the effect. The mind reverts to other mass deportations which horrified the world and brought upon the Nazis the odium which they so deserved. Those mass deportations engineered by the Nazis provided part of the moral basis oil which we waged war and which gave strength to our cause. Now the situation is reversed. We find ourselves in the invidious position of being partners in this German enterprise and as partners inevitably sharing the responsibility. 37

Of course, many countries had been devastated by the war, and conditions throughout Europe were abysmal. France, Great Britain, and the United States were reluctant to divert needed food, clothing, tents, medicine, and other supplies from elsewhere in Europe to those who had been such brutal enemies just a few months previously. But as conditions deteriorated in occupied Germany and thousands died from starvation or disease during the terrible winter of 1945-46, 28 the Allies relented and allowed private international relief agencies to provide food and clothing.

As far as the Polish expulsions are concerned, getting any accurate count of how many Germans died or were killed is impossible. Poles murdered Germans before and during expulsion, and Germans died in Germany from what happened to them during the expulsion. Few public records were kept, of course, and calculation of the mortality has to depend on pre-and post expulsion population estimates in the expulsion area and the number of expellees in Germany. But, as noted, this also is clouded by the mass flight of Germans and their evacuation by the German Army during the war, and the attempt of many to return to their homes as the war was ending.

No wonder then that the estimates among Germans themselves for the human cost of the expulsion from the German eastern territories varies from 800,000 to 3,200,000 dead. 29 Even lower figures are available. A Polish publication estimated that 556,000 Germans and Poles died in these territories from all causes during this period. 30 The West German Federal Ministry for Expellees, Refugees, and War Victims calculated the loss from 1945 to 1950 as 1,225,000 for Germany’s eastern territories. 31 The German Statistisches Bundesamt in Wiesbaden put the number at 1,339,000 for just the former eastern territories. 32 Weighing a variety of such estimates, I calculate the dead for the eastern territories and old Poland as 415,000 to almost 3,100,000, probably around 1,600,000 Reich and ethnic Germans, as given in Table 12.1. In my view, this toll is the direct and indirect responsibility of the new Polish government (although aided, abetted, and promoted by the Soviets), as I will establish in the next section

POST-WAR POLISH REGIMES AND THE SOVIET UNION
When Soviet forces crossed into Poland in July 21, 1944, they established a Committee of National Liberation in Lublin led by communists and left-wing socialists, which then declared itself the sole legal government of Poland. It was soon transformed into a provisional government of Poland, within which considerable power was given to the communists, especially pre-war communist leader Władysław Gomułka, who was secretary-general of the communist Polish Workers' Party and became a deputy premier in the new government. The United States and especially Great Britain opposed all this. They wanted a provisional government of all major parties, including representatives of the London government, which would then arrange for free elections in Poland. But this was not to be. The Red Army and Polish communist forces controlled the ground in Poland, and Stalin would not allow British or American observers into Poland. At the Yalta conference in February 1945, the best that Roosevelt and Churchill could get from Stalin was the acceptance of a new Polish Provisional Government of National Unity (PCNL) formed out of the existing provisional government. It was to also include other "democratic leaders," and democratic elections were to be held as soon as possible. To Poles this decision is now quite rightly considered abject appeasement of Stalin, a betrayal of Poland similar to the British appeasement of Hitler at Munich in 1938, where the British and French accepted Hitler's demands for the succession of the German speaking Sudetenland of Czechoslovakia to Germany.

In June 1945, the new Polish government was set up with Gomułka and Stanisław Mikolajczyk, the pro-Western Prime Minister of the London government and head of the Peasant Party, as deputy premiers, and included representatives of all "non-rightist" political parties. With its formation, the United States and Great Britain transferred their recognition from the London government to the PCNL, although the Soviets continued to block their sending observers into Poland.

In effect, the Polish communists controlled the powerful positions in the PCNL, including over internal security and the economy, and had the support of the Red Army and Soviet agents. Already in March 1945, the Soviets had arrested and tried in Moscow 16 anti-communist members of the Polish underground. Moreover, communist Poles in the Soviet Union and elsewhere in Eastern Europe were encouraged to emigrate to liberated Poland, while through a campaign of terror, PCNL communists and Soviet forces gradually purged anti-communists and Polish nationalists from positions of authority in the government, independent political parties, universities, and media. From 1945 to 1948, the Soviets deported to forced labor or concentration camps in the Soviet Union from 3,000,000 to 6,000,000 Poles, of which 585,000 may have died. Hundreds of thousands and possibly near 1,000,000 Poles were killed in Soviet terror and repression. Moreover, Soviet and Soviet directed Polish forces fought a savage civil war against remnants of the Home Army and what remained of the non-communist underground, which was murdering Soviet troops, assassinating communist Poles, and sabotaging vital installations. This anticommunist uprising was hopeless and was finally defeated by the late 1940s at the cost of as many as 30,000 dead, about 20,000 of them communist activists and government officials, militia, and Polish and Soviet soldiers.
Moreover, beginning almost immediately in 1944, the PCNL moved towards totalitarian control over Polish society. It expropriated without compensation all large farms and arable land, and in 1945 it established a Soviet style Central Planning Office. In 1946 it nationalized all former German property, and all businesses employing over 50 workers per shift. However, with the communists not yet fully in power, with elections yet to be held, the very influential Catholic Church was largely left alone, and Mikolajczyk was able to rebuild a non-communist Polish Peasant Party, which membership soon exceeded the communist and their satellite parties. It even won a communist manipulated referendum during 1946, but the communists falsified the results.

Finally, the PCNL held the first parliamentary elections in 1947. But, it only allowed the opposition to communist or pro-communist candidates by those of the Polish Peasant Party, which by then had been made ineffective through harassment, intimidation, and arrests. About 100,000 party members had been arrested, and communist election officials had disqualified whole slates of party candidates, while in many cities the communists collected and marched pro-communist workers to polling places. All this and the rigging of results officially gave the communist, pro-communist, bloc of candidates over 85 percent of the votes. A new government was then created with a communist as President and communist Gomulka as a deputy premier, and the real power over Poland. All legal political opposition to the communists was effectively ended, and with a lose of what power he had and afraid of being arrested, Mikolajczyk fled to England.

Although this election finalized the victory of communism in Poland, it did not mean that Poland had become a full satellite of the Soviet Union. Gomulka wanted strong ties with the Soviet Union, but an independent internal policy. For example, he opposed the full collectivization of agriculture on the Soviet model, and would not condemn the communist ruler Tito's independent course for Yugoslavia, as had Stalin. Moreover, he declined to hold elections until 1947, regardless of Stalin's pressure to hold them earlier.34 But in 1948 he lost his hold over the government, was kicked out of the Politburo, and was replaced as secretary general by the old communist, Boleslaw Bierut, who wanted the strongest possible alignment with the Soviet Union. Gomulka was jailed in 1951 (he would be released and return to power in 1956, after Stalin's death).

Under Beirut, a purge of pro-Gomulka communists, those believed to support Tito, and others was initiated. And the totalization of communist control over Poland moved forward. With the official control over Poland's armed forces turned over to Soviet Marshal Konstantin Rokossovsky, Poland became a full Soviet Satellite. The last great source of Polish independence, the Catholic Church was finally taken over: its lands were nationalized, religious teaching in the schools was forbidden, and priests were imprisoned and executed. From 1948 to 1987, some 22,000 Poles, maybe as many as 54,000, were executed or otherwise killed by the communist regime.35

RESPONSIBILITY
Now for the question: who was responsible for the ethnic cleansing of Germans from new Poland?

First, these expulsions began as soon as a Polish administration moved into the new Western territory and took over government functions from the Red Army. These early expulsions were disorganized, random, and often deadly to the Germans deported. Regardless of the grave misgivings of the British and Americans at the Potsdam conference in August 1945, they agreed that the de facto border of Poland would include the former German Eastern territories, and authorized the deportation to Germany of millions of ethnic and Reich Germans within this new Poland. This declaration was not a command, but permission. The Polish government was responsible for who was deported and how. Second, there is no doubt that Soviet forces or Polish troops under their command were in military control of this land, but were they responsible for ethnic cleansing? Clearly, Stalin wanted all Germans cleared out of this territory, but the administration of this, the who and how was in the hands of Poles. Although communists were largely in control and many of their policies were consistent with Soviet aims— they were after all, communists—they also could act apart from Soviet desires and did so until after 1948. Gomulka wanted to pursue an independent Polish road to socialism, and refused to go along with Stalin's wishes on some important matters. Moreover, during the period when virtually all Germans were expelled, the Polish government, as clear from above, was not fully communist. Especially, with the formation of the PCNL, pro-Western, pro-democratic Mikolajczyk was a deputy premier and minister of agriculture and land reform. He was no figurehead. He was the pre-war leader of the influential Polish Peasant party and a member of the Polish legislature, and Prime Minister of the London Polish government in exile.

Also, Polish authorities managed the deportation and handling of Germans, including their ability to work, get health care and rationed food, and temporary housing until deportation; or their treatment in temporary concentration camps and deportation assembly points. The Soviets did not control this, although they certainly aided the Poles in this. To put this bluntly, because of the horrible suffering of Poles under the Germans, nothing could have protected the Germans, even German-Poles, from Polish revenge. And the Polish government was surely responsible for what deaths therefore occurred.

There are two other ways of looking at this question. One is to recognize the overwhelming power of the Red Army and Soviet controlled Polish Army, and assume, as do many of the Poles sending me e-mail, that the Polish government was acting directly under Soviet orders. But as the post-war Nuremberg Trials of Nazi leaders established, acting under orders does not relieve one of the responsibility for murdering unarmed, helpless people. This principle is now established in international law. Therefore, even if the Polish government acted under Soviet orders, its leaders—and thus the government—were responsible for the massive death toll and could have been tried for crimes against humanity.

A second perspective on this comes from the general treatment of their former communist rulers by the post-communist governments of East Europe. Although Sovit
satellites at the time, their officials have been and are being tried for what executions, forced labor deaths, terrorism, and other crimes they committed against their citizens. For example, Germany convicted the East German Politbureau member and security chief Egon Krenz of manslaughter for the shooting to death of East Germans trying to escape East Germany across the Berlin Wall. His defense was that since East Germany was a pawn of the Soviet Union, he was not acting independently. But, united Germany's highest court argued that this was no defense—that his shoot to kill orders violated international human rights. Similarly, 160 other former East Germans have been convicted or faced charges on these deaths along the Berlin Wall. Other East German leaders, such as the East German Defense Minister and his top aide were tried for manslaughter. And East German's leader 1971 to 1989, Erich Honecker, was charged with abuse of power, among other crimes, but was released from trial because of ill health.

Such trials also took place, or are underway, in Rumania and Hungary. And the parliament of democratic Poland passed a resolution giving the Warsaw Appeals Court power to determine whether former communist officials collaborated with the secret police. Said Stefan Niesiolowski, one of the authors of this resolution, "We have to accelerate the process of punishing Communist criminals because in Poland hundreds were killed and tortured and specific people were doing it. They have to be found and prosecuted. These are criminals."37

One cannot have this both ways. If communist leaders, and thus their governments, were responsible for their behavior, even though a Soviet satellite, then surely the Polish government is responsible for its post-war murder of Germans, especially since at this time the government still was far from being a satellite of the Soviet Union.

CONCLUSION

Over a million Ethnic Germans and Reich Germans in or from the new post-war Polish territories likely died, 1945-1948. They were killed directly, or died from starvation, disease, exposure, in concentration camps, or during or because of their deportation to Germany. Since these deaths were outright murder, or because conditions were forced on these people that would likely result in their deaths, this was democide. How many died will never be known, and it is even doubtful that we can come within several hundred thousand of the true total. As I often point out, the most thoroughly studied figures for the Holocaust, and with scholarly access to the relevant official archives, the best estimates of Jewish deaths still differ by as much as 41 percent.38 This is to say that such democide surely took place, but experts and scholars can legitimately disagree as to the number.

The more critical question is whether the Polish governments, 1945-1948, were responsible for the democide. The answer is yes, on several grounds. One is that there was a functioning and internationally recognized Polish government administering new Poland, and although the Red Army had an overwhelming presence, the government was
not fully communist, and could and did in many ways operate independently of Soviet wishes. Second is that even were the Polish government under full Soviet control, the Polish government still, according to international law, could not be excused from responsibility for the orders it carried out. Finally, with the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, trials have been held and former communist officials convicted and punished for their crimes against humanity and human rights while in office. If anything established the point, this does: Polish post-war authorities were responsible for the German ethnic cleansing and resulting democide. And thus this massive democide can be attributed to the Polish government of the time.

**NOTES**

* Part of this section is based on Chapter 12 of *Death by Government*.


2. See Table 6A of *Lethal Politics*.

3. FitzGibbon 1975, 446.

4. Zawodny 1962, 24. He gives a total of approximately 4,443 bodies found in Katyn forest.

5. See footnote 2.


7. See Table A of *Democide: Nazi Genocide and Mass Murder*.

8. von Wilpert 1964, 19, claims that this area has been part of the German homeland for over 700 years. However, Germany was not really one country until Otto von Bismarck united it in 1871. Before that Germany, had been fragmented into various states; even in the seventeenth century it consisted of some 300 principalities, free cities, and bishoprics.


10. de Zayas 1979, xxv.


12. So say the Germans. Poles claim a million lived there (Wiskemann, 1956, 121).

13. de Zayas 1979, 86.

15. For sources, see lines 285-303 of Table 7.1.


17. Gollancz 1948. 141.


19. de Zayas 1979, 124.

20. Ibid., 125-26, 128.

21. Kaps 1952/53, 69. It is true that most of the initial expropriation and looting was carried out by Soviet occupation forces. However, once the Polish administration was in place, it executed its own confiscation’s while doing virtually nothing to ameliorate the resulting disastrous conditions of the Germans; indeed, their policies seemed aimed at aggravating them.


25. Ibid.


28. It remains an open question whether these deaths were democide by the Allies. It depends on whether vital relief diverted from Germany did indeed save lives elsewhere or simply punished the German population for the Nazi horrors.


30. Ibid., 168.

31. de Zayas 1979, xxv.


33. See Table 8A of Lethal Politics.
34. See "The Conversation between Wladyslaw Gomulka and Josef Stalin on 14 November 1945, *Cold War International History Project Bulletin 11*.

35. See lines 2778 and following in Table 15.1 of *Statistics of Democide*.


37. I am sure that the quote is correct, but forgot to note the source on the internet, and later spent half-a-day trying to find it again without success. It may be that the server was down.

38. See the Preface to my *Democide: Nazi Genocide and Mass Murder*