

Draft Concept for a Permanent Exhibition

FOUNDATION FOR DISPLACEMENT, EXPULSION, RECONCILIATION
DRAFT CONCEPT FOR A PERMANENT EXHIBITION

Foundation for Displacement, Expulsion, Reconciliation
Draft Concept for a Permanent Exhibition

Dr Gundula Bavendamm [Director]
Uta Fröhlich
Andrea Kamp
Andrea Moll
Johanna Wensch
Daniel Ziemer

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Translation: Rebecca M. Stuart

Credit
Marte.Marte Architekten: S. 7

Office address (until the opening)
Mauerstraße 83/84, 10117 Berlin

T +49 30 206 29 98-0
F +49 30 206 29 98-99
info@f-v-v.de

flucht-vertreibung-versoehnung.de

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Preface

This document is an integrated concept for the permanent exhibition of the Foundation for Displacement, Expulsion, Reconciliation. It was developed on the basis of the 2012 **conceptual framework and the core aspects of the foundation's work outlined therein**. The **"guidelines for the permanent exhibition"** contained in the framework document have been developed further, so that we can now present a concept that blends content, educational principles, and a spatial structure. While the initial concept in 2012 was for a linear chronological approach, this updated concept foresees a thematic-chronological exhibition structure. The planned permanent exhibition will extend over two floors and comprise three sections. The first floor above the ground floor (600 square meters) will house "The Century of Refugees – Forced Migration in Europe" (working title), an overview that will emphasize the historical significance of the subject, particularly in the 20th century. Thematic islands with expanded information on the causes, the phenomena, and discourse will give more depth on the subject, raise universal issues, and link it to the present day. On the second floor (700 square meters), **we will present the two sections "Flight and Expulsion of Germans in the European Context" and "Expellees and Refugees in Germany Since 1945"** (working titles). The focus here is on the flight and expulsion of Germans within the European context of World War II and Nazi policies of expansion, occupation, and extermination, as well as the subsequent integration of those German populations into West and East Germany, with repercussions that echo down to the present day.

A new academic advisory council was formed in December 2016 that worked closely with the foundation, providing excellent support for the development of the concept. Once the foundation board has agreed, this draft will become a binding basis for the exhibition. A preliminary design will then be developed in close cooperation between the foundation and the Atelier Brückner design office, which will give the presentation an aesthetic signature and a spatial design. At the same time, this concept will also be developed further concerning presentation, graphics, texts, maps, media, and an audio guide. The related research on individual exhibits will build on the level achieved as of March 2016. The complex, multi-phase planning process will produce a script that will form the basis for the production and implementation of the permanent exhibition.

Guidelines

The planned permanent exhibition will extend over two floors and comprise three sections. On the first floor of the exhibition, the section called "The Century of Refugees – Forced Migration in Europe" (working title) will occupy about 600 square meters and present an historical overview as well as thematic islands providing additional detail on the causes, phenomenon, and public discourse on the subject. On the floor above that, ca. 700 square meters will house the two sections "Flight and Expulsion of Germans in the European Context" and "Expellees and Refugees in Germany since 1945" (working titles). Those sections are laid out chronologically. The presentation on the second floor begins in 1938, after making a recourse to the forced emigration of Jews following the Nazi assumption of power. **The Nazi's expansionist policies triggered historical developments that, in the years to come, would lead to a culmination of flight and expulsion in the 20th century.**

This concept of the exhibition is a fulfillment and further development of the focus and contextualization laid out in the foundation's 2012 framework concept. The presentation will draw our attention especially to the expulsion and flight of Germans, placing it in two contexts. In the first section, we will present a European perspective on forced migration, concentrating on the 20th century; in the second, we will place it within the context of World War II and the Nazi expansion and extermination policies. The third section will also depict a European perspective, taking a closer look at the history of refugees and expulsion after 1945. We consider it of great importance to make a categorical distinction between forced migration and genocide. At the same time, the exhibition will illuminate the fact that the two phenomena have shared historical roots. **The foundation's fundamental stance on** understanding, multiple perspectives, and reconciliation will be underlined in a variety of ways in the exhibition. First, with a consistent historiographic approach to controversial subject matter, in the sense of a balanced overall narrative; by the presentation of key themes and universal issues with an orientation to the present and to daily life; by making various attitudes and controversies explicitly visible, and by presenting specific examples of reconciliation efforts in the past and the present.

The key aspect of the exhibition concept is a correlative link between the two exhibition floors. The section on the first floor is intended as an introduction for the exhibits on the second floor. At the same time, the second floor, with its focus on World War II and German experiences, will showcase examples allowing the viewer to delve more deeply into the European and universal subject matter on display on the first floor. A conceptual link will be created with the key themes and issues of the first floor echoed in the second floor displays depicting World War II and, in particular, the history of the Germans. This combination of an overview and a deeper view using examples is a useful instrument in museal education for developing historical-political opinions. All of the exhibition sections will be suited both structurally and in content to a tie-in with school curricula. The conceptual link allows for a diversity of educational programs and tours that cover both floors and work in either direction. The exhibition in its entirety is planned as a comprehensive proffer to a heterogeneous public. The exhibition sections, following different focal points but connected in content, accommodate a diversity of target groups and interests. The exhibition addresses visitors looking for an orientation on the subject matter, as well as those primarily interested in expulsion and flight during World War II, and the history of the Germans in particular.

The concept is distinguished by the way it integrates the building's architecture, using it to advantage. Most visitors will access the permanent exhibition from the foyer via the monumental staircase to the first floor. There you enter a spacious room with no supporting pillars, which allows for any kind of installation. It works well for the introductory section of the exhibition, **"The Century of Refugees – Forced Migration in Europe."** The exhibition space is set up without a defined path, presenting the subject matter primarily with media, maps, and three-dimensional displays. The aim is to engender a fundamental understanding of the causes, circumstances, progression, dimensions, and consequences of forced migration right up to the present day. The visitor will learn about the significance of state-mandated population resettlements in 20th century European history. The exhibition will make clear the power of official reasoning for displacing segments of a population, in particular on ethnic grounds, but also for religious, political, or social reasons. A prominent place in the exhibition hall will be allotted to a media installation that will provide an overview of the chronological, spatial, and quantitative dimensions of ethnic cleansing, expulsions, and flight within the context of war and other armed conflicts in Europe. At the same time, it will illustrate how civilizing counter-forces acted, introducing the concept of the protection of minorities in international law, and later the prohibition on expulsions. Several thematic islands will be grouped around this center point. They will examine key aspects of forced migration. Those include the issues of terminology and discourse, the meaning of nation and nationalism, force and violence, camps as transitory experiences, and international law as a means of curtailing and punishing expulsion. The thematic islands are conceived as cross sections of history and the subject matter. They will provide additional depth, highlight universal aspects, and link the subject to the present day.

The second floor will house the **"Flight and Expulsion of Germans in the European Context"** section of the exhibition. The different parts are set out chronologically, covering the period from 1938 to 1948. The bulk of the presentation is on forced migration during and after World War II. The main focus is the expulsion and displacement of Germans. This will be placed within the context of World War II, and Nazi expansion and extermination policies. It will be a vivid picture of the chronology, geographic dimensions, and magnitude, as well as the consequences of expulsions and flight for society and the individual. That includes the direct relationship between expulsions of Germans and other expulsions.

Other exhibition sections with parallel designs will explore the racist base of the Nazi policies of war, occupation, resettlement, and extermination, and the plans implemented in return by the Allies, the Polish and Czechoslovakian governments in exile, and Hungary for a European post-war order and the concomitant expulsion of Germans from areas of Europe.

Despite certain similarities, the evacuation, flight, and expulsion of Germans will be addressed distinctly and separately. The war and the rapidly changing front lines were decisive factors in the different situations in various regions. One important concern in the exhibition chapter on forced migration is presenting the experiential dimension. This perspective makes the diversity and intensity of experiences with expulsion clear. A historical narrative approach provides an opportunity to shed light on the mesh of relationships between the players, and illuminate their interests, motives, and scope for action. We will look not only at people directly affected, eyewitnesses, and those with advance knowledge, but also at the planners and organizers. Sidebars and maps will also examine the specifics of German settlement history in the various regions.

To do justice to the fact that many events occurred simultaneously and ran a complex course, the narrative is structured geographically-spatially within each chronological section. Case studies will illustrate changes at the local level and highlight causal connections. People and their life stories play an important role and can augment the core subject, both chronologically and thematically.

Finally, the third part of the exhibition, “Expellees and Refugees in Germany since 1945,” will explore the long-term consequences of flight and expulsion to society, which endure up to the present day. The subject, including the accommodation of immigrants and repatriated Germans, will be examined from the perspective of both the people who arrived and the Germany host society that took them in. This will include the role played by controversial public debates and reconciliation initiatives within Europe, as well as the passing down of memories across generations.

While media installations dominate the first floor of the exhibition, the second floor will focus on presenting original objects. The almost windowless space provides optimal conditions for conservation. The foundation has a considerable collection of three-dimensional objects, testimonies, and contemporary witness interviews. For the permanent exhibition, we will choose primarily exhibits that can be linked to a life story or a unique experience. Graphics and maps will play an important role in illustrating the paths of expulsions and flight of individuals and groups.

Multimedia presentations as a demonstrative instrument will be used throughout the exhibition. A fundamental curatorial concern is maintaining a critical eye with regard to the source of photographs and other exhibits. As one example, there are plans for stations that will allow for a variety of ways of examining an object. Finally, there are plans for interactive stations that will encourage visitors to engage and address the experiential level, in order to **establish a relation to one’s own life and to provide historical orientation. The educational and exchange work throughout the entire presentation is aimed at providing the public with a participative experience of the exhibition.**

The permanent exhibition

Structure

1. The Century of Refugees – Forced Migration in Europe [first floor]

1.1 Historical overview

1.2 Thematic islands – Causes, phenomena, discourses

- 1.2.1 Terminology and controversy
- 1.2.2 Nation and nationalism
- 1.2.3 Force and violence
- 1.2.4 Transit and temporary camps
- 1.2.5 International law and human rights

2. German Flight and Expulsion in the European Context [second floor]

2.1 Totality and border dissolution – German expansion policy and World War II (1938–1944)

- 2.1.1 Conditions: racial nationalism, racism, and the “Lebensraum” concept
- 2.1.2 Germanization and “Lebensraum” policies in occupied eastern Europe
- 2.1.3 The Soviet Union: Deportation of ethnic groups in World War II

2.2 Plans by the Allies and governments in exile for a post-war order in Europe using expulsions (1939–1945)

- 2.2.1 Simulation games: Early resettlement plans as part of the post-war planning
- 2.2.2 Negotiations and decisions by the “big three”

2.3 German evacuation and flight in the final months of the war (1944/45)

- 2.3.1 The end of the war in the eastern regions of the German Reich
- 2.3.2 Flight from East Prussia, West Prussia, and Danzig (Gdańsk)
- 2.3.3 Flight from Silesia, Pomerania, and eastern Brandenburg
- 2.3.4 Evacuation and flight from southeastern Europe

2.4 The ethnic and territorial new order of eastern Central and southeastern Europe (1944–1948)

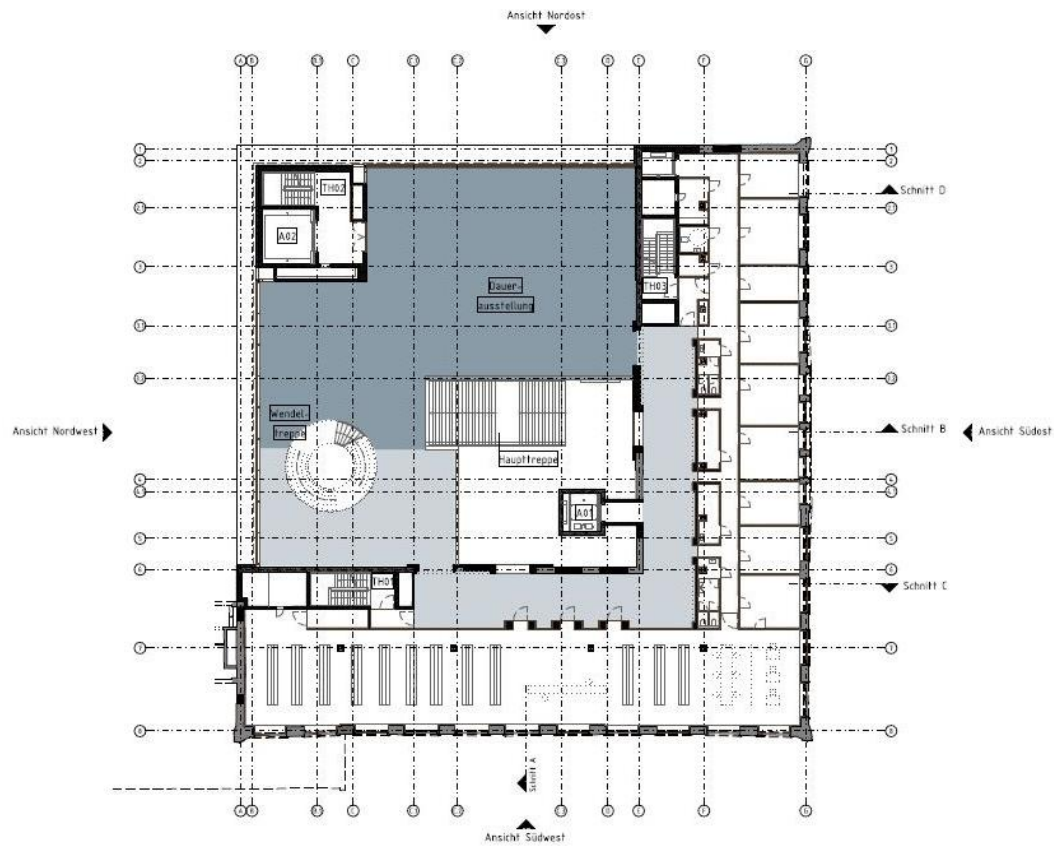
- 2.4.1 An overview of the ethnic homogenization of eastern Central Europe after World War II
- 2.4.2 Population displacement in connection with the Polish border shift to the west
- 2.4.3 Northern East Prussia under Soviet administration
- 2.4.4 Expulsions from Czechoslovakia
- 2.4.5 The situation of ethnic German minorities in Hungary, Yugoslavia, and Romania at the end of the war

3. Expellees and Refugees in Germany since 1945 [second floor]

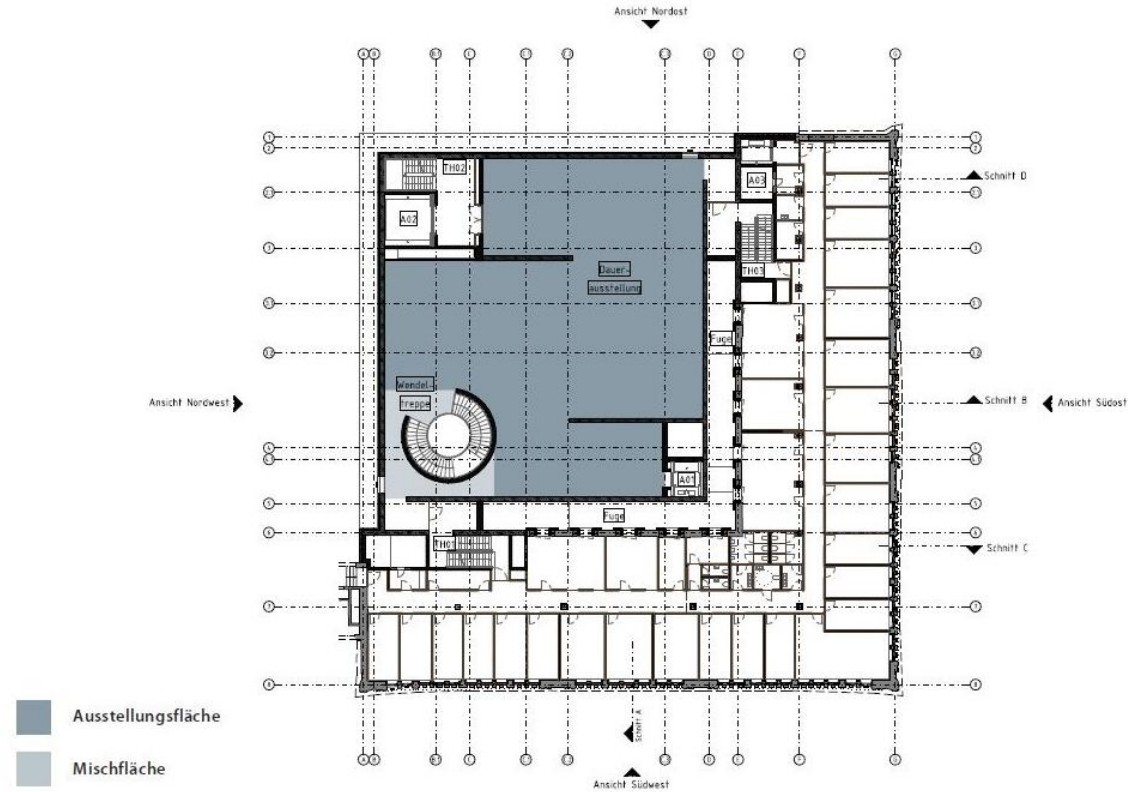
- 3.1 A social experiment
- 3.2 Society in conflict and the German question
- 3.3 Between polarization and understanding
- 3.4 Remembrance and memory in flux

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Ground plan, first floor



Ground plan, second floor



1. The Century of Refugees – Forced Migration in Europe [first floor]

1.1 Historical overview

The exhibition starts with a concise media installation in the middle of the exhibition hall on the first floor. It provides visitors with a fundamental overview of the enormous and largely unknown extent of forced population displacement affecting millions of people in Europe during the 20th century, as well as sketching out the causes and conditions of same. Dynamic maps, animations, and explanatory films will give the visitor an idea of the historical and societal relevance and current explosive nature of the subject. With a condensed presentation of the chronological, geographic, and quantitative dimensions of forced migration, the installation will trigger curiosity about the thematic islands surrounding it, which provide in-depth information.

The basic goal of the overview installation is to convey how forced migration was a constituent part of 20th century European history. It addresses the various forms of forced migration: Evacuations as a state measure for clearing out a region, usually for war-related reasons; flight, whether it be for ethnic or political reasons, usually within the framework of armed conflict, when it was not possible for those who had left to return after the fact; expulsions without inter-governmental agreements, which are often spontaneous and arbitrary (**“wild expulsions”**); **forced resettlement of population groups based on bi-lateral treaties**; and finally, deportations, either within a state or beyond the state's borders. In order to emphasize the objectives of state-ordered population displacements, the relatively new term ethnic cleansing will be used where appropriate. We will, however, make a fundamental distinction between ethnic cleansing and genocide, the planned and systematic extermination of groups persecuted on national, racist, ethnic, or religious grounds. At the same time, the lines between these two phenomena can sometimes be fluid. In the overview installation, this will be examined using the examples of the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust.

The overview installation deals with Europe as the locus of political dealings, including at times events that went beyond the geographic borders of the continent. The geographic focus is on two larger regions marked historically by a multi-ethnic population structure – Central and Eastern Europe - as well as the sphere of influence of the former Ottoman Empire, from the Balkans to the Middle East and in the Caucasus region. The exhibition will also touch selectively on issues beyond the extended European area to point to the global relevance of **the subject. That will be done with “global windows” that will cover notable instances of expulsions, including the forced resettlement of millions during the de-colonization of the Indian subcontinent in 1947/48.**

The overview starts at the beginning of the 20th century and goes right up to conflicts and waves of refugees in the present day, for instance in Syria and Iraq. Because the display is multimedia, the dates and figures on contemporary events can be updated even after the exhibition has opened.

The central installation shows that ethnic cleansing and expulsions almost always have, and continue to take place within the framework of armed conflicts. Wars provide the decisive enabling factors. Since the beginning of the 20th century, alongside the development of modern weaponry and logistics, it has been above all the ethnic basis of conflicts and the radicalization of nationalism in times of war that have led to previously unheard of violence against civilian populations. Ethnic cleansing can be a means of waging war, a strategic bargaining chip for subsequent peace negotiations, or even the actual goal of the war in the first place. Doubts about the loyalty of ethnic minorities become particularly virulent in times of war. Once they have been declared domestic enemies, their radical displacement from the majority society, and the denial of protection by the nation state can often be justified as a necessity.

The overview installation focuses on the three decades of war in 20th century Europe: The first war decade, from 1912 to 1923, led to a massive increase in forced migrations, initially in the Balkan region, then across the whole of Europe. At the end of World War I, nation states in largely multi-ethnic eastern central and southeastern Europe emerged that **followed the new concept of a people's right to "self-determination."** That challenge was met on the one hand with the protection of minorities under the aegis of the League of Nations that had been agreed upon in the Paris treaties, and on the other hand however, in the case of the Greco-Turkish war, with a forcible population exchange. In the decades to follow, the latter would set a precedent.

During the second war decade, from 1938 to 1948, expulsions and forced resettlement reached new dimensions in terms of totality, speed, and geographic scale. In 1938, the expansion of Nazi Germany triggered a chain of expulsions and forced resettlement that would not end until the consolidation of the European post-war order. In the end, the Germans themselves were subject to expulsion and resettlement in vast numbers. There are clear differences between the way the expulsions during this period were planned and executed by Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union, and finally the victorious Allies, as well as individual nations in eastern Central Europe. Yet at the same time, they are causally linked. In the wake of the experiences of World War II and the post-war period, humanitarian protection for refugees and expellees became a concern of the international community of states. The 1951 Refugee Convention drafted in Geneva established the legal status of refugees and is still in force today.

In the third war decade, with the 1990s Balkans wars at the end of the Cold War, nationalistic violence and war broke out once again. Despite the presence of UN peacekeeping troops, war crimes and concomitant expulsions could not be prevented. This was one factor leading to a permanent change in the international community's thinking. International law changed to include the right of return and a ban on expulsions, to be enforced militarily if necessary. Most of the forced resettlements, and the most extensive in terms of numbers, in 20th century Europe followed on the heels of wars. Both the legitimization of expulsions as well as the later bans, played out against the background of the international balance of power that prevailed at the time. The overview installation therefore focuses on an international conference in each of the three war decades. These are the 1923 Convention of Lausanne, the Potsdam Agreement in 1945, and the 1995 Dayton Accords, the three highest-profile and – in terms of the issues explored in the exhibition – most important 20th century resolutions by international negotiating partners on forced population resettlement. All three conferences came at the end of a war and were a reaction to the realities of ongoing expulsions or waves

of war refugees. In the case of the first two – Lausanne and Potsdam – they not only legitimized the expulsions *ex post facto*, the resulting resolutions actually went even further. The Dayton Accords, on the other hand, established the right of return for refugees. The goal of the overview is a presentation that comes alive and uses modern teaching methods to convey the goals, models, and actions of the nations involved in those conferences. It will examine the (co-)responsibilities and/or the scope of each participant country, and the role the resolutions played as later historical reference points.

1.2 Thematic islands – Causes, phenomena, discourses

Five historical cross sections will amplify the issues of forced migration touched upon in the overview. The thematic islands will address the causes and concomitant events of expulsion and flight, and sketch the political and societal debates they triggered in 20th century Europe. Not only will they provide visitors with explanations, they will be consciously designed to raise questions and explore controversies. Historical subjects will be explored from a present-day perspective, giving visitors a point of reference to their own lives and current discourse on the issues.

1.2.1 Terminology and controversy

Discussions of the history of forced migration always also involves dealing with the terminology. This part of the exhibition is dedicated to the terminology used to name and interpret the forced migration phenomena and events at the time they took place. The goal is to sensitize the visitor to the fact that terms used in everyday speech are fundamentally not neutral or (linguistically) unambiguous, but in fact always connected in both character and usage to a certain perception of reality. In the context of the exhibition's subject matter, the terms are often historically-politically loaded and a topic of controversy. Like visual motifs, linguistic terms often function as memory codes.

One main aspect is the history of the terminology in the complex “Flight and Expulsion of Germans.” After 1945, the German terms *Vertreibung* (“expulsion”) and *Vertriebene* (“expellee”) took on a specific, political meaning in Germany that had not existed in that form before. That meaning was determined by a variety of interests, but also by the image of the players held both by themselves and by others. The phrase *Flucht und Vertreibung* (“flight and expulsion”) became a kind of code at that time and has since been part of the German canon of *lieux de mémoire* or “realms of memory.” In West Germany, the 1953 Federal Law on Refugees and Exiles (BVFG) established for the first time legal terminology that is still under interpretation even today, including the term *Heimatvertriebene*, meaning ethnic Germans driven from their homeland(s) in Eastern Europe. There were, and continue to be right up to the present, however, completely different opinions on the meanings of the terms, as well as how those affected describe themselves. In the official language of East Germany, the term used was *Umsiedler* (“resettler”), which camouflaged the coercive nature of the process. Particularly among the “resettlers” themselves, there was only limited use of the term.

In other languages and cultural memories, such as in Polish and Czech, the term “expulsion”, when translated literally, is particularly emotionally freighted. So in Polish, the terms that have become accepted are *przesiedlenie* (resettlement) and *wysiedlenie* (displacement) or *wygnanie* (exile). The Polish terms *przesiedlenie* and *wysiedlenie* are stronger than their German counterparts *Umsiedlung* and *Aussiedlung*; they both carry connotations of force

and terror, since their usage derives from experiences during the Nazi occupation. In Czech, **the word odsun (literally “transfer”) is used to describe the organized, forcible resettlement of ethnic Sudeten Germans after the war.** In German discourse, the Polish and Czech historical narratives are often held to task for trivializing the issues. The belief is that until they use the **word “expulsion” to describe historical events, they are not accepting their own responsibility for them.**

The politically charged nature of the terminology, which is linked to competing memorial cultures, can be conveyed with the media history of specific terms (“career of a term”). The display will also provide a brief look at the terminology available in other languages to describe the events covered in the “Flight and Expulsion” section, and the connotations those terms carry.

There will be a glossary, with explanations of the specific terms used in the exhibition (expulsion, deportation, forcible resettlement, population exchange, evacuation, flight, ethnic cleansing, transfers, etc.). It will explain what the terminology concept for the entire exhibition and the definitions that are linked to it. The aim is to make it clear that the concept of terminology use in the exhibition was based on a process of discussion, consideration, and conscious choice.

1.2.2 Nation and nationalism

A central aspect of this thematic island is a brief historical cross-section of the development of the modern nation state. In the modern world, the nation state is an overarching principle of the world order. This station **shows the historical “invention of the nation,” which re-**interpreted prior historical forms, traditions, and identities, and joined them into a self-contained whole. We will present two different national identity constructs that diverge in form, but are historically interwoven with each other. The French and American models of a citizen nation developed beginning at the end of the 18th century defined nationality as primarily political. This is contrasted with the effective model in place in Germany and eastern Central Europe beginning in the 19th century of an ethnically homogeneous nation state, with affiliation based on fixed criteria, in particular ancestry and the idea of a common culture.

The organization of a nation state certainly allows for the protection of minorities, and space for their development. Yet nation states have time and again pursued the goal of eliminating from their sovereign territory minorities deemed foreign. This thematic island will look at this phenomenon using case studies from various eras. It will look at the manifestations and context of nationalism, as well as the dynamics that led not only to marginalization, but also to expulsion and even extermination of certain population groups. Examples of some of the case studies might be: The reciprocal suspicion and deportation of citizens believed to be agents of foreign powers during World War I; the extreme intensification of nationalist, race-based thinking and the concomitant propaganda during the Nazi regime; and the nationalist historical politics and myth making used to escalate the conflicts during the 1990s Balkan wars.

Finally, the thematic island will address the opinions and perspectives of the visitor. It will ask whether they see themselves as part of a majority or minority; when and where do they feel marginalized by others; what shapes their concept of their own nations; and what does their

own nation mean to them, including in terms of its regional placement or of Europe as a whole.

1.2.3 Force and violence

The focus of this part of the exhibition is the violent experiences that those impacted by flight, expulsion, and forced resettlement have had. It will illuminate the fact that violence is the key means of asserting ethnic homogeneity. Fear of violence, and violence itself, sends people into flight, and expulsions are also accompanied by violence. Experiences of violence are shared by people fleeing or being expelled, whether in the present day or 100 years ago. This will be illustrated with a selection of concise contemporary witness accounts from **various historical contexts. The presentation's diversity of voices will also illustrate how** violent experiences can vary. A wide range of force and violence will be presented – from structural violence such as the stripping people of their rights or property, to actual physical violence, which begins with threats, might continue with insufficient provisioning and catastrophic transport conditions, and culminate in personal bodily violence. We will cast a particular eye on sexual violence within the context of ethnic cleansing, shedding some light on a subject that is often deemed taboo. Various forms of violence are experienced as a **violation of the victim's dignity, and often result in trauma with long-term impact**, including on succeeding generations.

All the situations in history in which people have been expelled have one thing in common: they are distinguished by an asymmetry between the people perpetrating the violence and those who suffer it. In addition to looking at the various forms of violence, this section of the exhibition will primarily examine who it is exercising the violence, how it begins, and what the goal is of using it. A personal experience as the victim of violence in ethnic conflicts is often preceded by violence subjected upon others.

1.2.4 Transit and temporary camps

This thematic island will look at an historical and thematic cross-section of the phenomenon of camps for expellees and refugees (internment, deportation, reception, and transit camps). In the context of the present day, the refugee camp has developed into a universal icon of the 20th and 21st centuries.

As the eye of the needle for deportations, the internment camp was a constituent part of the expulsion process, which was accompanied by stringent monitoring, and often by violence and capriciousness by the camp supervisors. A reception camp, on the other hand, could be described as an institution for the categorization of humans, the allocation or denial of rights, and for their organized integration. The latter can be clearly distinguished from the iconic concept so closely bound up with 20th century history of a camp as a place of terror and murder, of repression and re-education. The tales of woe that bring people to a reception camp are linked with the humanitarian aspects of support and protection. But an historical look back at the barracks and mass housing for expellees and refugees in 1945 Germany is evidence in many cases of the necessary structural repurposing of existing Nazi prisoner of war or forced labor camps.

This thematic island is dedicated to the dimensions of transitory and provisional arrangements, the interface between deportation and reception, between leaving and arriving.

The camp was a realm of experience and a social microcosm. The situation experienced under provisional arrangements is the subject of much testimony by those who went through it. It is about waiting and hoping, with the thoughts alternating between what has been lost and what lies in the future. On top of all that uncertainty, there are the daily battles with the close quarters, noise, inadequate hygiene, and the loss of self-determination. One formative experience in temporary situations is the time spent there, which can range from just a few days to many years. A key characteristic of camps is that they separate their inhabitants from the surrounding population. Separation and isolation in internment and deportation camps lead to an enduring sense of helplessness. Camps as microcosms represent not only the daily experiences of their occupants, but also those of the supervisory, administrative, and care personnel.

The camp also provides a functional structure. In that sense, camps can be seen as places for administrative action and monitoring. During their time in temporary accommodations, people are subject to examination, interviews, and finally categorization. These play a central role in the decision on whether they will be rejected or admitted, accepted or refused. The camp as a universal icon. Here we present an historical-current comparison of media reporting on reception camps. Pictures of provisional mass housing and tent cities, close-ups of exhausted people and children looking with curiosity directly into the camera were and are used consciously in the service of differing interests.

1.2.5 International law and human rights

This thematic island will highlight the role of international law as a counter-force to state policies of violence, and the interaction between political, moral, and judicial norms. Ethnic cleansing by national governments is in no way a phenomenon limited to the 20th century, but rather continues even in the present day. At this juncture, the exhibition will raise issues **related to law and responsibility. Why was the “Lausanne model”** – a bilaterally agreed upon population exchange – favored for so long despite the devastating consequences for the populations involved? Of the entities responsible for ethnic cleansing, which have so far been held accountable? Can we prevent expulsions today? Why and in what way did our understanding of justice and our idea of humankind change by the end of the 20th century? What was the relationship then and what is it now between individual rights and collective rights (human rights versus protection of minorities)?

The first section is dedicated to the subject of “modern international law.” We offer visitors a narrative of hope seen from the present. But we will also stress the limits of judicial power to shape and steer events. Well into the Cold War, the population exchange between Greece and Turkey under the terms of the 1923 Lausanne Convention was considered a possible model for solving the problems of minorities. At the same time, the League of Nations, founded in 1920, tried to function as an international arbitrating body for the protection of minority populations. In the present day, expulsions are no longer part of legitimate agreements between states; within an international framework, they are branded as unlawful and prosecuted accordingly. The aim of this section of the exhibition is to help the visitor understand that modern international law, in the wake of the military and humanitarian

catastrophes of the 20th century – in particular **the Nazi's extermination policies** – has developed into a framework and network of international legal regulations and institutions to protect civilian populations.

That increasingly judicial codification will be shown – possibly in the form of a mock courtroom – using the example of the International Criminal Court in The Hague, which began functioning in 2002. That institution has so far, and will in future, deal with legal cases that the public and the international political community considers controversial. So using current examples, the visitor will gain insight into the possibilities, and the limits of international criminal law, the area of conflict between universal rights and realpolitik. We will also take a closer look at the predecessors to the ICC, the ad-hoc tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. The fundamental aim is to make it clear that international law is not based on a timeless principle of law, and that its development was not linear. Instead international law, including criminal law, is based on a variety of judicial sources and in certain situations is repressed by political interests. The influence of the international system of powers is and was of key significance for the legitimization as well as the proscription of expulsions.

The second section of this thematic island is devoted to examining human rights within the framework of international law, since the development of international law since 1945 has been decisively determined by the discourse on human rights. We will present legal sources in their historical and current context that are central to expulsions and genocide. There are several issues of rights to be discussed here, for example whether the human right to self-determination and the proscription of expulsion or deportation amounts to a right to a homeland, and therefore a right of return. Modern-day democracies put the protection of individual and civil rights ahead of the sovereignty principle. At the same time, democratic nations invoke their own national judicial systems, which leads to discrimination against people of other nationalities. One important educational goal of the exhibition is to raise the consciousness of visitors, in particular young visitors, about that conflict of interests, which has one again become volatile in the present day.

2. German Flight and Expulsion in the European Context [second floor]

2.1 Totality and border dissolution – German expansion policy and World War II (1938–1944)

The 1938 Munich Agreement and the subsequent gradual dissolution of Czechoslovakia **marked the beginning of Germany's policies of expansion, resettlement, expulsion, and extermination.** The Nazi leadership aspired to effect a new demographic order for large sections of Europe as settlement areas for Germans, and as an immense reservoir of labor and natural resources for the German empire. That goal was also the basis of the secret protocol in the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of August 1939 and the German-Soviet Frontier Treaty in September of that year. With those agreements, Germany and the Soviet Union re-drew borders and delineated their respective spheres of influence in Europe. They were preparation for the destruction of the Polish state, which was carried out a few months later. Beginning in 1939, Nazi Germany led a war of conquest and extermination in Poland, and in the Soviet Union from 1941, which was a conscious break with prevailing international conventions of war. The German aggression was driven by racist goals and settlement policies.

The Nazis pursued their attempts to implement the idea of German "lebensraum in the east" with extreme brutality. They established sweeping ethnic cleansing as an instrument of population policy in eastern Central Europe – not least of all against German-speaking **minorities.** The "return to the empire" ("Heim ins Reich") **resettlement policy represented a break with the previous policies toward ethnic Germans living outside the country.** It was the beginning of the end for many German-speaking minorities in eastern and southeastern Europe.

2.1.1 **Conditions: racial nationalism, racism, and the "Lebensraum" concept**

The Nazi model of organization for both domestic and foreign policy was based on a biology-based ideology of superior and inferior races. Taking in members of the German "master race" and "people without space" (Volk ohne Raum) was the basis of an expansive foreign policy with the goal of regaining and winning new "German lebensraum." The Nazi folkloric, nationalist policies before the beginning of World War II stylized the ethnic Germans living outside the borders of the Reich as the carriers of unadulterated German culture, and viewed them as an instrument of racial policies for future German colonization and Germanization of newly-conquered areas. The ideology of German lebensraum in the east led in 1941 to the **formation of the "Master Plan for the East"** (Generalplan Ost or GPO) commissioned by Heinrich Himmler, who was at the time the Reich Commissioner for the Consolidation of German Nationhood. Various versions of this gigantic resettlement plan envisioned the expulsion or murder of at least 30 million people in the occupied territories, so that four million ethnic Germans could be re-located there.

Within the Reich, the goal of "racial" homogeneity was the basis of a policy that stigmatized certain population groups as "alien to the people" (volksfremd) and purposefully excluded them from the Nazi "people's community" (Volksgemeinschaft). The exhibition will look at the

marginalization of Jews in Germany that began in 1933, as part of the “racial cleansing” of German society. Many Jews attempted to escape the Nazi’s systematic persecution by fleeing abroad. In the autumn of 1938, more than 17,000 Polish Jews living in Germany were violently expelled. After the start of the war, Nazi Germany’s anti-Semitic policies were also directed at Jews living in the occupied territories. Those policies were increasingly radicalized. The German invasion of Poland in 1939 marked the start of a phase of systematic expulsions and deportations to ghettos. Although resettlement and deportation plans (the “Madagascar” and “Nisko-Lublin” plans) were discussed and partially implemented until 1940, in 1941 the systematic murder of European Jews began. Some six million people fell victim to the Holocaust.

2.1.2 Germanization and “Lebensraum” policies in occupied eastern Europe

The annexation of the Sudetenland by the German Reich in October 1938, which was sanctioned by the western powers, triggered large waves of refugees. Some 170,000 people, most of them Czech, but also people who had previously fled Germany, as well as Sudeten Jews and opponents of the Nazi regime, fled the Sudetenland for the interior of the country. When the rest of Czechoslovakia was annexed six months later, it had enormous consequences for the local population and for those who had previously fled the Sudetenland, who then faced renewed hardship. Another aspect of this subject is the role of the Sudeten German Party, as well as the previous minority policies between the wars. The 1939 German invasion of Poland marked the beginning World War II. The SS played a key role in the “ethnic conversion” (“Umvolkung”) of Europe and “germanization” of parts of the conquered territories. The main stage for this campaign was occupied Poland, where almost one million residents were expelled in the first six months of the war. At the same time, the Soviet Union, which occupied eastern Poland in accordance with the secret protocol of the Molotov-Ribbentrop agreement, forcibly resettled significantly more than 300,000 Poles in that region.

The German plans included the resettlement of “ethnic Germans” from southeastern Europe and the Baltic to the Wartheland and Danzig–West Prussia districts. The process and effects of the resettlements are at the center of the exhibition narrative. The “ethnic Germans” were both beneficiaries and victims of the resettlement policies, in a grey area between choice and force. Many Germans took over farms previously run by Poles who were expelled or imprisoned, but for many resettlement also meant years spent in camps. In addition, resettlers were subject to racial verification. All the resettled Germans were later subject themselves to flight or expulsion.

At the same time as the attack on the Soviet Union, the SS was also still working on the German plans for colonization (Master Plan for the East, general settlement plan). Numerous academics were part of this planning of population policies. Because of the way the war was going, only parts of the plan were put into operation. One example is the German settlement set up in the Zamość region. The police, the SS, and the German army were responsible for expelling, displacement, and murder of the local Polish and Jewish population. The link between “ethnic conversion” and the Holocaust will be illustrated using two case studies. One deals with the SS offices (immigrant and resettlement central office, ethnic German office) and the ghetto in Litzmannstadt (Łódź). The other is what was called an “exchange” of forced laborers in the winter of 1942/43, in which the “Zamość action” replaced Jews working in armaments factories in Berlin with Polish forced laborers; this is evidence of the link

between the settlement plans and the deportation of Jews from the territory of the Third Reich.

With the introduction of the “German People’s List” (Volkliste) in March 1941, the Nazi authorities developed a procedure for the classification and selection of populations. The practice of the “racial” verification of settlers, as well as the introduction of the “German People’s List” made clear the specific character of the racially based policies.

Southeastern Europe had enormous economic and strategic importance for the German Reich. In the run-up to the German troop’s invasion of the Soviet Union, Romania, Hungary, and Bulgaria all entered into alliances with the Nazi state. The Germans’ attempt to force Yugoslavia to cooperate failed due to resistance from the kingdom’s military and its civilian population, and Germany decided to attack the country. Within a few weeks, German armed forces had occupied Yugoslavia and established a ruthless occupation regime. After splitting Yugoslavia up, the independent state of Croatia was created. The fascist Ustaše regime there, a puppet state of Germany and Italy, expelled and murdered Serbs and Jews.

Germans living outside the country played an important role in the expansion of the Armed SS, since the armed forces had a claim to priority recruiting within the German Reich. That was particularly evident in southeastern Europe. Romanian and Hungarian Germans, as well as members of the German minority in Yugoslavia joined the Armed SS, some voluntarily, some as conscripts. It was here that the SS division Prinz Eugen was formed, the first SS division made up entirely of ethnic Germans, who fought locally – meaning against their own neighbors. In addition, using regional ethnic conflicts to their advantage, the occupying Germans also accepted Bosnian Muslims and Albanians in the SS.

Beginning in the summer of 1941, the German Reich led a new kind of war against the Soviet Union – a war of extermination. Millions of people fell victim to the “Commissar Order,” the brutal occupation regime, and the concerted exploitation of the country. The Nazi plan for a new ethnic order in eastern Europe envisaged murdering a large portion of the civilian populations of Poland, the Baltic region, and the western Soviet Union, or allowing them to starve to death. One expression of that plan was the Nazi policy of hunger in the Soviet Union, which not only served to maintain the Germans’ ability to wage war, but was also aimed at decimating the Soviet population. One prominent example was the Leningrad Blockade, which claimed the lives of about one million residents.

Forced evacuation and displacement, and expulsions were an essential component of German warfare and its occupation rule in the Soviet Union. They occurred primarily as part of either economic exploitation, or strategic military considerations. Some three million people were directly affected by the ruthless actions against the civilian population. The destruction the Germans wrought during their conquest and occupation, as well as the “scorched earth” policy they followed during their retreat robbed a large number of people of their livelihood, and often prevented them from returning to their homes – even after the end of the war.

2.1.3 The Soviet Union: Deportation of ethnic groups in World War II

In response to the invasion and rapid advance of German troops, the Soviet authorities forcibly resettled numerous ethnic groups, which had been resident on the territories of the

Soviet Union since the time of the Czars. The deportations were undertaken as preventative military measures or to punish people for suspected or real collaboration with the Germans. This was linked to the dissolution of the national-territorial demarcations of autonomous regions created in the 1920s. The complete deportations during the war years were the apex of a Soviet resettlement policy that had begun in the 1920s and become increasingly motivated by ethnic concerns during the 1930s. The first of these total deportations, between September 1941 and March 1942, involved as many as 900,000 Volga and Black Sea Germans. As a preventative measure as part of a series of large-scale campaigns by the NKVD secret police, they were deported to various regions in Kazakhstan and Siberia. Between November 1943 and May 1944, six additional ethnic groups – the Karachay, Kalmucks, Chechens, Ingush, Balkars, and Crimean Tatars – were accused of collaborating with the enemy and deported to Siberia and Central Asia, a total of ca. one million people. The suspicion of collaboration, which was only partially founded, led to the collective punishment of entire ethnic groups.

2.2 Plans by the Allies and governments in exile for a post-war order in Europe using expulsions (1939–1945)

This chapter will be designed in parallel to chapter 2.1. It will provide an overview of Allied planning for expulsions on the path to a new order in Europe following the World War launched by the Germans. Germans were the largest group of people affected by those **plans. The station will show that “segregating” ethnicities by “transferring” parts of a** population was an accepted measure in international politics. The actual decisions regarding eliminating or tolerating minorities were primarily based on the attitudes and interests of the **“big three”** – the USA, Britain, and the Soviet Union, and only secondarily on those of the eastern Central European states. The elements that made up the meshwork of conditions for the expulsion and forced resettlement of Germans towards the end and in the wake of World War II were a post-war order involving the creation of stable, ethnically homogenous areas under the aegis of the victorious powers; retribution and punishment for the aggressive expansion and occupation policies of Nazi Germany (and its allies); and specific powerful **state interests. Both the German “Heim ins Reich” policy and the forcible Greek-Turkish exchange played a large role in the planning as precedents.**

2.2.1 Simulation games: Early resettlement plans as part of the post-war planning

The first plans for the resettlement of Germans from eastern Central Europe were formulated shortly after the start of the war. This section spans until 1942, when the British war cabinet, reacting to the Lidice massacre, declared the Munich Agreement invalid and generally **agreed to the “transfer” of German minorities to Germany in cases where it would be “necessary and desirable.”** The British government’s dialogue with the governments-in-exile of Poland and Czechoslovakia played a significant role in this phase. The exiled governments pushed for the restoration of the nation states that had been destroyed by the German Reich through border changes and the resettlement of Germans. Despite divergent opinions, an **academic paper commissioned by the British government supported the “deconcentration”** of ethnic groups as a viable means of achieving lasting stability in eastern Central Europe. This phase was marked by the fundamental agreement on forced resettlement of Germans, without defining the specific extent of the displacements.

2.2.2 Negotiations and decisions by the “big three”

After the German invasion of the Soviet Union, Britain and the USA entered into an alliance with the Soviets with the aim of shattering Nazi control over Europe. After the 1943 turning point in the war on the eastern front, it was first and foremost the Soviet Union with its effectively occupied territories that drove the process of deciding on the expulsion of Germans. Because the Soviet Union bore the main burden of the war in Europe until 1944, making it an indispensable ally, at the Teheran and Yalta conferences, Britain and the USA compromised with the Soviet claims on eastern Poland, by agreeing on principle to moving Poland's border to the west. The Soviet Union based its claim on the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. The negotiating partners were aware that the deal would mean displacement of the Polish and German populations in the east.

The start of the expulsions of Poles from the Soviet republics of Ukraine, Belarus, and Lithuania at the end of 1944 increased the pressure to agree to the deportation of Germans from the eastern part of the German Reich, which was earmarked for new Polish settlement. In the winter of 1944, in a speech to the House of Commons, Winston Churchill announced **the plan of the “big three” for a “total expulsion” of Germans from the areas promised to Poland. The concept of an almost surgical solution via “population transfers” formulated in the speech and elsewhere had very little to do with the chaotic and brutal implementation that followed shortly thereafter.** In early summer of 1945, the enormous number of people evacuated or fleeing the advancing Red Army, as well as the arrival of those subject to the **“wild expulsions” in Poland and Czechoslovakia, completely overwhelmed the military authorities in occupied Germany.** That state of affairs led to isolated incidents of criticism, particularly in Britain, of the way things were handled as well as of the resettlement solution itself, but that criticism played no role in the political decision-making process. In the summer of 1945, the **“transfer” of the remaining Germans in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary was set out by the big three in the Potsdam Agreement.** In reaction to the **“wild expulsions” of the preceding months, the Western Allies especially insisted that future expulsions be conducted in an “orderly and humane manner” (Potsdam Agreement, Article XII).** But that principle was very often not observed in practice.

2.3 German evacuation and flight in the final months of the war (1944/45)

Because fleeing from war is a phenomenon distinct from organized expulsions, it will be dealt with in a separate chapter. The focus of it will be the flight of Germans from eastern central, southeastern, and eastern Europe. There were regional differences and varying motivations for the sometimes hurried flight of Germans from the advancing Red Army. Not least of all were soldiers who relayed to the Germans in letters or on home leave news about the war crimes in the East, making them legitimately afraid of acts of retaliation. Beginning in 1943, the Nazi propaganda consciously began to fuel those flames of fear. The German authorities had no uniform, organized evacuation procedures. In some cases, individual flight was banned under threat of draconian punishment; in other cases, there was an evacuation, but it often came very late. When in doubt, military interests always took priority. The line was fluid between an organized evacuation and improvised flight. In many cases, the flight was not linear in one direction, but intermittently marked by back-tracking. In some areas, the Red Army caught up with the refugees, sometimes with fatal consequences. Flight often ended in expulsion, or the standing ban on return transformed it into de facto expulsion. There were clear regional differences in the death toll due to varying circumstances.

The various waves of flight will be depicted in close correlation to the events of war and the shifting front lines. The exhibition will flesh out the differing situations in the various regions and review earlier events. Biographical displays will demonstrate the scope of differing experiences. The focus of the section is on the flight of Germans, however we will also touch on other groups.

There is a wealth of objects to illustrate this particular subject. We will provide multiple perspectives on the photos and objects, with the aim of challenging assumptions. One issue to be addressed is why the images of flight have taken on greater potency in German memory than those of expulsion.

2.3.1 The end of the war in the eastern regions of the German Reich

The final phase of the war was characterized by a renewed escalation of violence. While the Red Army pushed West across a broad front with the Vistula-Oder Offensive, and hundreds of thousands of Germans took flight, the Nazi regime continued its frenzy of annihilation. To illustrate the concurrency of events, the exhibition will present a specific slice of time. A case study of the final week of January 1945 will depict events that happened in almost perfect synch: The 9,000 deaths when the Soviets torpedoed the MV Wilhelm Gustloff, filled mainly with refugees; the German massacre of 3,000 prisoners from one of the Stutthof satellite concentration camps on the beach at Palmnicken; the premiere of the Nazi propaganda film “Kolberg”; the death marches from the concentration camps, which often ran parallel to the routes taken by those fleeing; the Red Army liberation of the Auschwitz concentration camp. This will be supplemented by individual recollections of flight.

2.3.2 Flight from East Prussia, West Prussia, and Danzig (Gdańsk)

Until the autumn of 1944, East Prussia as the easternmost German province remained almost untouched by the war – not least of all the aerial war raging daily in western Germany at the time. So for the people in that region, flight was a particularly harsh shock, resulting in particularly strong pictures entering the canon of German imagery. Soviet military tactics were aimed at isolating East Prussia, so the possible escape routes were cut off early on. There was panic and disorganized flight, especially since Erich Koch, the gauleiter, or head of the East Prussian Nazi administrative district, initially prohibited preventive flight under threat of draconian punishment and no preparations were made for an evacuation. People fled across the frozen Vistula Bay, hoping to cross the Vistula Spit and reach Danzig.

There were evacuation plans in place for West Prussia, but they were not implemented until very late. Nonetheless, some 70 percent of the German population managed to flee. Many fled to the coast, trying to reach ships in Danzig, Gdingen, or Hel. Numerous refugees from East Prussia also took this route, which proved safer than the land route, despite the Soviet sinking of several ships.

When flight was not possible and Germans encountered Red Army soldiers, the latter often acted with brutality against the civilians. There was looting, arson, rape, and murder. The Red Army excesses were marked by the ideology of expiation and vengeance, which had taken center stage beginning in the autumn of 1944 in the inflammatory tactics of the Soviet **military leadership. That was compounded by the soldiers’ individual experiences** – in recapturing Soviet territory, they had been confronted with the terror and mass murder

perpetrated by the German occupation regime, and the crimes of the German army as they withdrew.

On October 20/21, 1944, Red Army soldiers murdered German civilians in the East Prussian town of Nemmersdorf. This example will be used to explore the issue of the Nazi propaganda machine's use of Red Army crimes. After the German army re-captured the town, propaganda was published intended to strengthen the civilians' will to resist, but which instead triggered panic.

2.3.3 Flight from Silesia, Pomerania, and eastern Brandenburg

Because the advance of the Red Army was slower there, flight from Silesia was overall less rushed and therefore claimed fewer lives. The Upper Silesian coal mining region was unusual; due to German orders not to leave in order to maintain production, the entire area, including its working population, came under the control of the Red Army.

The people of Silesia often fled on trains or on foot to the protectorates of Bohemia or Moravia, which had been spared the worst acts of war until then. Refugees from southeastern Europe and other regions also gathered there. Although initially safe, those refugees were expelled after the war along with the Sudeten Germans.

The phenomenon of collective suicide among civilian populations will be illustrated with examples from Pomerania. The civilian fear of the Red Army, the flames of which were fanned not least of all by Nazi propaganda, led to numerous incidents of entire families or even parts of communities committing group suicide.

In this section of the exhibition, we will turn our particular attention to Breslau (Wrocław), the largest city in the territories of eastern German. On February 15, 1945, the Germans declared the city a "fortress" (Festung) to be defended, which brought with it a ban of leaving. That led not only to the complete destruction of the city, which had thus far remained almost unscathed, but also to a three-month battle that killed more German civilians than soldiers.

2.3.4 Evacuation and flight from southeastern Europe

Evacuations of southeastern Europe in 1944/45 were initiated by the Ethnic German Center (Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle) and supported by the German army. We will go into detail on event in northern Transylvania as an example of an evacuation campaign deemed successful. From there, village by village, small town populations traveled some 1,000 kilometers to Austria, while people from the cities were transported either by train, or in the vehicles of Germany army troops as they withdrew. The operation was well organized and timely, so there were few fatalities as a direct result of the evacuation.

In the province of Vojvodina, occupied by Hungary since 1940, evacuation began as early as the spring of 1944, turning into flight by autumn 1944. There were differing degrees of organization from place to place. For instance, evacuation plans existed for Serbian Banat, but they were not implemented. In the Bačka region, there were initially no evacuation plans, but mass flight began on October 6, 1944. By contrast, Syrmia and Slavonia were almost completely evacuated in the autumn of 1944.

One focus of this sub-section is on the organization and practice of the flights by civilian agencies, as well as privately within families.

2.4 The ethnic and territorial new order of eastern Central and southeastern Europe (1944–1948)

This section will examine the main phase of the forcible population displacements in Europe in the 20th century. Our main perspective will be on the expulsions of Germans, resulting in between 12 and 14 million refugees and expellees, and hundreds of thousands of dead. Two-thirds of the Germans deported to the four Occupation Zones came from eastern regions of the German Reich that had been relinquished to Poland and the Soviet Union. The other third were members of German minorities in eastern central and southeastern Europe. It is important to show that German expellees were not a homogenous group, but rather had fates that varied from group to group, and from individual to individual. Putting the expulsions of Germans within the context of other forcible resettlement waves in eastern Central Europe during this period illustrates not only the extent of the expulsion of Germans, but also the close connection between the way individual actions were carried out. Since the forcible resettlement of population groups and the new settlement of the affected areas generally constituted parallel processes, the latter aspect comes into focus. Due to the complexity of the subject matter, resulting from events and processes happening simultaneously in different geographic areas, the narrative is divided into four geographical blocks. They are Poland and the eastern German areas annexed to Poland, northern East Prussia under Soviet administration, Czechoslovakia, and southeastern Europe.

It's important to a full understanding of this period of ethnic homogenization that the large majority of the population displacements were undertaken as part of establishing a post-war order, meaning after the military conflicts had been resolved. They took place under the difficult circumstances of the first few post-war years, and badly affected war-damaged regions, shattering societies whose rule of law had been weakened. The aggravating circumstances under which the forcible resettlements were undertaken resulted in most of the displaced people experiencing them as very dramatic, as well as presenting enormous challenges to the host societies into which they were resettled.

In addition, many of the expulsion and resettlement operations – at least in some phases – were marked by a high degree of violence. Violence was often consciously used as an effective means of forcing people to leave, and to more rapidly achieve the goal of "ethnic deconcentration". That can be seen primarily in the case of the German expellees, but can also be seen in other groups, such as the Poles, Ukrainians, Hungarians, Serbs, Croats, and Italians. We examine the role of deeply-rooted animosity, and long-standing national, ethnic, and social conflicts. It is obvious that, in the case of the Germans, in addition to existing conflicts, their more recent status as warmongers and occupiers played a decisive role. The total expulsion of all Germans was based on the principle of collective guilt and collective punishment. In the case of Poland, there was also the idea that it should be granted German territory as compensation for the damage done during the war, as well as for the eastern territories occupied by the Soviet Union. This chapter focuses on the narratives of action and experiences of groups and individuals during the expulsion campaigns. In addition to the experiences of those subject to forcible migration, we will provide multiple perspectives by also taking a look at the people directly tasked with carrying out the resettlements, and their

motives. At the same time, examples of humane behavior and solidarity will illustrate the broad scope of action that was possible.

Experiences, life stories, and objects with personal meaning will illuminate the range of possible experiences, and provide understanding of how experiences of forced migration can be seen as universal and substantive.

2.4.1 An overview of the ethnic homogenization of eastern Central Europe after World War II

This station of the exhibition ties in to chapter 2.2 on the plans of the Allies and governments-in-exile for Europe's post-war order; it provides a complete overview of the expulsions and forcible resettlements that were actually carried out. Following the destruction of World War II, the massive population displacement between 1944 and 1948 once again changed the demographic structure of eastern Central Europe profoundly and permanently. The exhibition will use a dynamic map to convey an idea of the chronology, geography, and numbers involved in those events, and how the ways the various forcible measures were carried out interlocked with each other.

2.4.2 Population displacement in connection with the Polish border shift to the west

The expulsion of Germans from the eastern territories of the German Reich (East Prussia, West Prussia, Danzig, Pomerania, eastern Brandenburg, Silesia) and Poland was closely linked with the arrival of Polish populations forcibly resettled from the eastern regions of Poland that had been turned over to the Soviet Union. To illustrate that link, this part of the exhibition will present a comparison of the ethnic homogenization of the lost German and Polish territories. Documents signed in 1944 between the Polish Committee of National Liberation (PKWN) and the governments of the Soviet republics of Belarus, Lithuania, and Ukraine provided for resettlements aimed at homogenizing the population of regions on both sides of the new **border. Despite the fact that the documents declared the resettlements “voluntary”, a look at** the Polish-Ukrainian nationality conflict illustrates that there were often external forces at work. Because of the virulent and brutal Polish-Ukrainian civil war that raged even after the Soviet conquest of eastern Poland, there was enormous pressure to emigrate, particularly on the Polish side.

The forced resettlement westward of the eastern Polish population took place under the difficult circumstances of the final months of war and the first few months after the end of the war in Europe. The severe disruptions to food supplies, transport, and telecommunications had a significant detrimental effect on the resettlement activities. The communities of newly resettled Poles in the regions that the propaganda called **“reclaimed territories” were made up of people expelled from eastern Poland, resettlers from** central Poland, and people returning to the country from other places (for instance, forced laborers returning from Germany). Differing material situations and motives led to tensions between the individual groups. The situation was exacerbated by the war damage in the former German territories, which was extreme in some cases, and the web of often adversarial relationships between the German, Polish, and Soviet players.

The Polish government regarded the presence of Germans as an impediment to the process of incorporating those territories into central Poland and populating them with Poles. So the idea was to expel as many Germans as possible, even before the Allies had made a

fundamental decision about their "transfer." At the start of this phase, Germans who had fled at the end of the war were prevented from returning to their homes. That was followed by the **unofficial "wild expulsions" of Germans from areas near the border, carried out by Polish army units**, which reached a peak in June 1945. These were carried out with enormous brutality and led to a high death toll and substantial material damages.

In carrying out anti-German measures, the Polish authorities were backed by special statutes issued at the end of the war. Very open to interpretation, these laws fostered discrimination and disenfranchisement of Germans, resulting in expropriation, internment, and exploitation. Those Germans experienced feelings of impotence and sheer distress, as well as feeling like strangers in their own homeland, so many perceived the forced resettlement as a way out of a desperate situation.

After the Allies resolved on an "orderly and humane transfer" of the Germans at the Potsdam Conference, the phase of organized expulsions began. For the expellees, the procedure was **anything but "orderly and humane," as we can see in the example of Operation Swallow**, the 1946 expulsion of the German population east of the Oder and Western Neisse rivers, sending them into the British occupation zone. In particular during the cold winter months, people froze, and died from other causes, since the freight trains used for the transports often lacked stoves, fuel, or sufficient food supplies. In addition, the expellees often fell victim to robberies and violent attacks during transport.

In some regions, Germans were forcibly prevented from leaving because they were needed for their professional skills or as unskilled labor for the construction of the Polish post-war economy. In addition, hundreds of thousands of people (for instance, from Upper Silesia or Masuria) were forced to prove their supposed Polish ancestry and to assume Polish citizenship.

2.4.3 Northern East Prussia under Soviet administration

The emigration of the German population from the Soviet-administered north of East Prussia differed fundamentally from what went on in Poland and Czechoslovakia. While the latter two countries wanted to force the Germans out as quickly as possible, in the Soviet part of East Prussia they were held back, since the Soviet government wanted to use them as labor and for their professional skills for reconstruction. That was possible because the Potsdam Conference did not reach any decisions on the German population in northern East Prussia. Thus the Germans were outside the scope of the Potsdam Agreements, so the Soviets were not obligated to keep the other Allies informed on the number of Germans in their region, or the deadlines and procedures for deporting them. The daily conditions until they could depart were marked by hunger, mass fatalities, arbitrary acts, and forced labor. In the early period of Soviet military administration, there was a legal vacuum, which led to multiple violations by members of the Soviet military. As early as February 1945, the Red Army began to forcibly transport adults capable of working to the interior of the Soviet Union. Most of the remaining German locals were herded from one town to the next, constantly uprooting them within their home region. More than 100,000 German civilians died in the years before 1948. It was not until 1947/48 that three large-scale campaigns led to the resettlement of the Germans to the Soviet occupation zone in Germany. The last transports arrived in East Germany in 1951. Both before and during the forced resettlement of the German population, the area that had been renamed Kaliningrad Oblast was settled systematically in two phases.

The majority of the new, Soviet settlers came from areas in central Russia and were actively recruited to the area to help with the reconstruction of industry and agriculture.

2.4.4 Expulsions from Czechoslovakia

Immediately following the 1945 Prague Uprising and the end of the German occupation, the Czechoslovak government began a phase of ostracism, disenfranchisement, and expropriation of the German as well as the Hungarian population. The basis of the actions **were the Beneš Decrees, a series of edicts begun during the war by the Czechoslovak government-in-exile under Edvard Beneš and later legitimized by the National Assembly.** They **declared these populations to be “persons with an unreliable attitude to the state”** and stripped them of Czechoslovak citizenship.

As in Poland, the aim was to expel the largest possible number of Germans before the planned conference of the **“big three”**. **Before being expelled, the Germans were subjected** to disenfranchisement, expropriation, internment in camps, and excesses of violence (i.e. Ústí and Postoloprty massacres, the **“Brno death march”**). Regional examples make it clear that the excesses against the German population were not spontaneous outbreaks, but rather **almost always organized actions based on the state mandate.** The dynamics of the **“wild expulsions”** were linked to the Czechoslovak government’s desire to create a reality on the ground before any Allied determination. With the Potsdam Agreement, the Allies directed the **governments of Poland and Czechoslovakia to put an end to the “wild expulsions.”** The organized expulsion of Germans into the American and Soviet occupation zones began in 1946.

In Potsdam, the Allies agreed on the expulsion of Germans from Czechoslovakia, but not of the Hungarian population, so in 1946, Czechoslovakia and Hungary made a bilateral agreement for a population exchange. This applied to the Hungarian-speaking inhabitants (Magyars) in southern Slovakia, and the Slovaks living in Hungary. The agreement provided for the forced resettlement of as many Hungarians from Slovakia as Slovaks in Hungary who signed up for resettlement to Slovakia. In addition to forced migration to Hungary, the Magyars were also deported to Bohemia, which not only ensured that Slovakia would become more Slovakian, but also helped ameliorate the labor shortage in Czechoslovakia’s western regions.

The Czechoslovak government instituted extensive programs to re-populate the areas that had formerly been inhabited by Germans. They were largely voluntary in 1945 and 1946, but in 1947, compulsory measures were also used, although they remained largely unsuccessful. At the same time, **there was a wave of remigration to the country’s interior, which led in the long term to the depopulation of entire districts.**

2.4.5 The situation of ethnic German minorities in Hungary, Yugoslavia, and Romania at the end of the war

The expulsion of German minorities from the southeastern European states differed greatly from the forced migration procedures in the eastern part of the German empire, not only in methodology and outcome, but also within the region itself. The experiences of those effected were correspondingly varied. Hungary actively lobbied the Allies for the right to

expel its minorities; Yugoslavia deported its German minority without the assent of the Allies; while Romania forwent expulsions.

Even before Hungary had begun developing plans for how to deal with the German minority, at the end of 1944 and in January 1945, the Red Army deported 35,000 Hungarians and members of the German minority to Soviet labor camps. Beginning in mid-**1945, Hungary's** provisional government actively lobbied the Allies to be allowed to deport its entire German minority. Economic considerations played an important role. The government issued a series **of decrees that severely curtailed Germans' personal and property rights.** Hungary, which had itself pleaded with the Allies for permission to expel its minorities, was the only country authorized under the Potsdam Agreement to forcibly resettle its German population. Beginning in 1946, the Hungarian government began expelling the German minority, taking political and economic factors into consideration, but it was done with substantially less violence than in other countries. The Germans in Hungary were marked by strong loyalty to the Hungarian state by comparison with other German minorities in eastern Central Europe, so they assumed that their forced migration would be only temporary. The ethnic and political criteria that the Hungarian authorities had presented to the Allies were increasingly eclipsed by social and economic arguments. One determining factor was the necessity of accepting the Magyars who had to leave Slovakia under the terms of the Slovakian-Hungarian population exchange. Some 150,000 members of the German minority were forcibly deported from Hungary to the American occupation zone in 1946, and another 50,000 to the Soviet occupation zone in 1947/48. About half of the German population was able to remain in Hungary.

After many Germans were either evacuated or fled Yugoslavia after the victory of the communist People's Liberation Army of Yugoslavia, those who remained were subject to particularly harsh reprisals. This was done out of a belief in the collective collaboration of all Germans with the German occupiers; there was no review of individual behavior during the war. As early as November 1944, the Anti-fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ) issued a decree for expropriation of German property and the stripping of their civil rights. The Red Army deported Germans to the Soviet Union for forced labor. At the turn of the **year 1945/1946, the Yugoslavian government called for a "transfer" of the** German minority under the terms of the Potsdam accords, but the western powers, as well as the Soviet Union, declined to approve it. The entire German population was systematically interned in a network of camps. Forced labor, mistreatment, malnutrition, and insufficient medical care resulted in an extremely high mortality rate, in particular among children and the elderly, with some 60,000 people dying. Part of the German population managed to flee to Hungary before 1947. When the camps were disbanded in 1948, the survivors had to agree **to three years' forced labor in order to reclaim Yugoslavian citizenship and other civil rights.** Only after the completion of their labor service – and for young men, only after fulfilling subsequent military service – could those affected relinquish their Yugoslavian citizenship and leave the country, for which they had to pay high fees. Of the Germans who remained in Yugoslavia, several tens of thousands came to Germany in the 1950s under a family reunification policy.

When the war ended, the vast majority of the German minority in Romania was still living in their home towns and villages. They experienced looting and violent assaults by both Soviet army troops and Romanians. But these were not nearly as bad as those in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia. The central traumatic event for the Romanian Germans was

the mass displacement in January 1945, when ca. 70,000 of them who were able to work were sent to Soviet labor camps. Those deportations were part of the reparation claims that the western powers had granted the Soviet Union. After the large majority of those deported returned in 1949, the survivors were allowed to remain in Romania. Although Romania considered the expulsion of the German population, it never got as far as the concrete planning stage. Although there were no expulsions, beginning in the 1960s, Germans increasingly emigrated from Romania to West Germany. Nonetheless, until the iron curtain fell, there was an intact German minority in Romania.

3. Expellees and Refugees in Germany since 1945 [second floor]

The third section of the permanent exhibition is organized in four chronological stages, following the history of roughly 12.5 million refugees, expellees, and ethnic Germans expelled from their homelands in the eastern territories (Heimatvertriebene) in postwar Germany. Their different paths and experiences in East and West will be part of an integrated exhibition narrative. The presentation will also shed light on the immigration that took place parallel to this process of integrating ca. 4.5 million ethnic German emigrants from Eastern Europe into the Federal Republic of Germany, as well as the minorities still living in eastern Central and southeastern Europe today.

The far-reaching medium and long-term consequences of forced migrations on socioeconomic, political, and memory culture levels will be clearly exemplified. The multifaceted, conflictual examination of the expulsions represents a seismograph of sorts for a multigenerational process of a society seeking its identity. It took a long time, both in Germany and in the countries of eastern Central Europe, before the expulsions and the attendant cultural and territorial losses could be acknowledged as irreversible. For many, working through the painful experiences associated with expulsion and flight is still, even now, an ongoing process. Because the concept of integration was for many years reduced to a material perspective in West Germany, other dimensions of the arrival of these newcomers in Germany were neglected. For this reason, the immaterial consequences will also be discussed here. In addition to issues of recognition and integration, dealing with themes surrounding expulsion is and was always also part of the discussion on social and personal identity following the Nazi period and World War II. The entire scope of individual reactions also needs to be made visible, from revisionism to suppression, acceptance of the expulsion as punishment for guilt, to efforts at reconciliation.

The profound consequences of forced migrations following the Second World War affected not only East and West Germany, but also numerous other European countries. The exhibition presents the slow coming together of millions of new arrivals – about one-quarter of the population in the two Germanys – and the German host society as the history of a relationship. The focus is on the experiences and living situations of the refugees and expellees, but this will also be contrasted with those of local residents. Looking back over history, integration was a difficult and protracted process, but it proved ultimately to be a successful social experiment. The exhibition will demonstrate that the course that was taken was by no means clear from the outset, and in general it turned out to be more difficult than it may sometimes appear. The acceptance of the refugees and expellees was constitutive for German postwar society.

The significance of flight and expulsion in terms of memory culture was always also a political argument. Public debate closely linked to the prevailing economic climate largely determined **Germany's relationship with its eastern neighbors, and was extremely relevant to the process** of communication and reconciliation. The chronological structure of this section of the exhibition is based on the key stages in a gradual transition. **It will show that a society's** efforts to deal with the consequences of forced migrations can best be told as an intricate, interconnected story.

Another important aspect that is highlighted in this section of the exhibition is the tension between public memory culture and family memories. Special attention is therefore paid to **the personal experiences of loss connected with expulsion and flight that remain in a family's** memory and can be passed down from generation to generation. The public image is informed to today especially by the expellee interest groups. This generally took and takes place in keeping with the policies of the federal and state governments.

3.1 A social experiment

No one, not even the Allies, had a plan in mind when in 1945 millions of refugees and expellees started flowing into the occupation zones, where there were still more than ten million displaced persons and millions of evacuees. Together the victorious powers pursued a policy of assimilation with the arriving Germans. The exhibition will illustrate how the German civilian administrations, under the direction and supervision of the occupation forces, and under the most difficult of circumstances, organized the registration, housing, and provisioning of these people. Because the major cities were largely destroyed, most of them were assigned to rural areas. The flow of newcomers was provisionally channeled everywhere into camps, compulsory housing, and emergency shelters. Relief efforts by the churches played a very important role in alleviating the hardship. In addition to the need to counter the explosiveness of the social situation, the Allies also reacted to possible political risks posed by the refugee issue by distributing the new arrivals among the occupation zones and quickly naturalizing them, while prohibiting them from forming political parties.

This section of the exhibition will focus on the living situations and experiences of the refugees and expellees. **It will establish the fact that there was no “welcoming culture” in Germany at the time.** Instead, there were actual battles over the allocation of the scarce resources – accommodations, food, jobs. At the same time, different mentalities, religions, and socializations clashed in the most limited of space. From the local population came deep-seated prejudices, ostracism, and discrimination, although understanding, a willingness to help, and solidarity were also expressed. For refugees and expellees, the feeling of being uprooted, insecurity due to their provisional existence in camps and barracks, and the desperate search for relatives were among the most profound experiences of that period. That was exacerbated by high unemployment and jobs outside their trained professions, combined with social downgrading. Feelings of alienation, on the one hand, and rejection, on the other, would linger for a long time.

As a result of the influx of millions of people, German post-war societies went through extensive structural changes, although there were significant regional differences. The proportion of refugees and expellees in the population ranged from initially three percent in the French zone, to up to 50 or more percent in Soviet-occupied Mecklenburg. **The religious map of Germany changed to a degree not seen since the end of the Thirty Years' War in 1648.** In 1949 it remained unclear whether 8 million refugees and expellees in the Western zones and roughly 4.5 million in the Soviet zone could be successfully integrated in the long term. The large volume of expellees among those emigrating overseas was a clear indication of that uncertainty.

3.2 Society in conflict and the German question

This section of the exhibition will look at the state measures for improving the social and economic participation of the refugees and expellees as a result of abandoning the assimilation model that had been preferred until then. These included, in West Germany, the Equalization of Burdens Act (1952) and the Federal Expellees Act (1953). The expansion of housing developments, and the construction of new cities, made it possible to gradually shut down the refugee camps. Expellees were also settled in economically prosperous regions. The rapid economic recovery in West Germany within the framework of the Cold War was certainly the most significant prerequisite in resolving the massive social problems. **The expellees played an essential role in West Germany's economic miracle. Nevertheless, as the presentation will clearly show, the process of integration took much longer and was much more difficult than it seems in retrospect.** As late as 1960, almost half of expellees participating in a survey said that they wanted to return to their region of origin. By contrast, we will show that East Germany faced fundamentally the same challenges, but took different paths in the course of building up a communist social system. These basically amounted to assimilation, and an attempt to expunge all memories of flight and expulsion.

With the establishment of the Federal Ministry for Displaced Persons, Refugees, and War Victims in West Germany in 1949, the task of integration had taken its place on the federal agenda. The first homeland associations were formed in 1948, which consolidated in 1958 to form the Federation of Expellees (BdV). Many associations, such as the Catholic Ackermann community, chose not to be involved with the BdV, and many expellees did not join any organizations at all.

At the level of party politics, the influence of the League of Expellees and Disenfranchised (Bund der Heimatvertriebenen und Entrechteten, BHE) party was short-lived. The exhibition will examine the ministry, associations, and parties against the background of personnel continuity from the Nazi state to the West German republic.

The Charter of the German Expellees of 1950 will also be discussed. The homeland associations used it to express first and foremost their socio-political demands toward the West German government. In addition, it postulated **the "right to one's homeland" and the "renunciation of revenge and retaliation."** The exhibition will present the entire spectrum of interpretations of this very controversial document. The homeland associations did intensive mobilization at their annual meetings and the expellees were an important constituency. West German municipalities started sponsoring expellee groups from former German cities and counties. In East Germany, expellees did not have any special status. On the contrary, as a result of **the strict policy of assimilation, the "repatriation question" was already deemed resolved by the early 1950s.** Certainly, a disproportionate share of expellees left the Soviet occupation zone and later East Germany.

The exhibition will demonstrate that the expellee issue always carried great foreign policy significance, especially in relations with the countries of eastern Central Europe. The government in Bonn did not recognize the Oder-Neisse line as the border. The overarching German Question remained unresolved. West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer avoided making a **clear-cut statement on the future of Germany's territories in the East, thus nurturing expectations within the expellee associations that no longer corresponded to the political reality.** At that time in particular, the strong position of the expellees was an important

domestic policy factor and the concomitant Cold War rhetoric. There were efforts during this time to have the expulsions recognized as Stalinist crimes. In addition to the moral dimension, it was also a political argument, for which citing the highest possible number of victims played a significant role. In that dual context, it is also important to look at the driving force of the expellee associations in supporting West Germany's **accession to the international Genocide Convention in 1954.**

3.3 Between polarization and understanding

This chapter addresses the fundamental social upheaval of the 1960s, which brought a change in West German debate on the expulsions. The related change in foreign policy was certainly only possible under the favorable circumstances of an international policy of **détente between the two superpowers. Basically, it was about giving West Germany's relations with the countries of Eastern Europe, and with East Germany, a new foundation.** The **exhibition will bring out the meaning of the churches' groundbreaking gestures of reconciliation** for this new orientation, which grew out of, among other things, the Tübingen Memorandum (1961), the Memorandum of the Protestant Church in Germany (EKD) on the Situation of the Expellees (1965), and the correspondence between the Polish and German Catholic bishops (1965), and which was accompanied by fierce criticism. The governments of Ludwig Erhard and Kurt Georg Kiesinger had already set new accents with trade agreements **with the eastern Central European countries and the "peace note" of 1966. It was ultimately the social-liberal (SPD-FDP) coalition under Willy Brandt that implemented the course change to a new Ostpolitik, or eastern policies.** This culminated in the treaties between Bonn and Moscow (1970), Warsaw (1970), and Prague (1973), as well as the 1972 Basic Treaty between West and East Germany. These treaties recognized the Oder-Neisse line as **Poland's western border and affirmed the inviolability of the borders.** Subsequent to the Treaty of Warsaw, the departure of 120,000 ethnic Germans from Poland was regulated and mutual pension claims were agreed upon. With respect to Czechoslovakia, the Munich Agreement and the transfer of the Sudetenland were declared null and void. The détente policies made it easier for expellees to travel to their former homelands. Consequently, expellees and their descendants also contributed to greater understanding between the old and the new homeland by means of cross-border contacts. The rapprochement at a foreign policy level also made pioneering **German-Polish city partnerships possible. Bremen and Gdańsk were the first cities to make such a connection in 1976. On the East German side, Dresden and Wrocław had already concluded a partnership agreement in 1959.**

The exhibition will demonstrate that the new ostpolitik was highly controversial in West German society. Important evidence of this is the passionate debate of May 1972 on the ratification of the Ostverträge, treaties between West Germany and countries of the Eastern Bloc, one of the largest controversies in the history of the Bundestag. Some factions of the Free Democratic Party (FDP), but especially the center-right Union parties (CDU/CSU) severely blasted the government policies. As a result of the conflict, the expellee associations distanced themselves more from the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and moved closer to the CDU/CSU. In particular, the associations participated in complaints of unconstitutionality against the Basic Treaty between the two German states, and against the other east-west treaties. Despite the substantial opposition mobilized against the Ostverträge and the policies between East and West Germany, the expellee associations were forced to admit that not only a majority of Germans, but even many expellees had by that point resigned themselves to the loss of the territories in the East. The public influence of the organized politics of the

expellees had already diminished considerably in the 1970s. This was due not least of all to the fact that a younger generation of the expellee families had become well integrated. The age structure of the associations and decreasing membership also played a role. During this period, the preservation of the cultural heritage of the historical regions of origin developed into an important focus. On the basis of Sec. 96 of the Federal Expellees Act, a number of regional museums, research institutions, and libraries were founded.

3.4 Remembrance and memory in flux

The last section of this chapter portrays how the end of the Cold War once again fundamentally changed the basic conditions for the societal process of negotiations on the expellee issue. The fall of the Iron Curtain set the course for Europe to grow together peacefully. Under the Two Plus Four Agreement, Germany confirmed the existing borders once and for all under international law, and renounced any future territorial claims east of the Oder-Neisse line. Unlike the situation in the early 1970s, this time there were no major debates on the border issue. Through German unification, two societies were growing together in which for decades the subject of expulsions had been dealt with in entirely different ways. For decades, expellees in East Germany had been able to maintain their identity only in the private sphere. For expellees and their descendants it also became much easier to travel to the ancestral regions they had been forced to leave at the end of World War II. Since then, many expellees have become active in charitable activities, either privately or with organized expellee associations, or involved in the restoration of cultural monuments. In this way they are contributing to reconciliation just as Polish and Czech initiatives do, which are increasingly appreciating the German past as part of their own regional identity. There have also been important symbolic gestures of understanding at an international level.

The growing echo of the subject of expulsion in the cultural sector, media, and literature in **unified Germany is viewed within a larger context. In the 1990s, German society's view of its own history had already broadened.** This led, on the one hand, to critical debates on the role of the German armed forces in the war of extermination and the construction of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe (Holocaust Memorial) in the center of Berlin. On the other **hand, there was also more commemoration of the Germans' experiences of loss. This was** particularly manifested in literature and the media. Important signals, for example, were the documentary "Die grosse Flucht" (The Great Flight, 2001) broadcast on German television (ZDF), **and the publication of Günter Grass's novella "Im Krebsgang"** (2002, published in English in 2004, Crabwalk). The subject has also long since become a topic in popular culture, such as cookbooks with traditional recipes. Another phenomenon that can be observed for some time is the rediscovery of the concept of Heimat, or homeland, within the framework of a lively and multifaceted debate.

The subject nevertheless continues to hold great potential for conflict in both domestic and **foreign policy. This is evident in the debates on the "Prussian Trust," on the interpretation and validity of the "Beneš decrees," and on the establishment of a national site of remembrance** of flight and expulsion of Germans. The initiative of then BdV president Erika Steinbach and the SPD politician Peter Glotz, which led to intense polarization, was not successful. In 2008 the German parliament (Bundestag) resolved to establish the Foundation for Displacement, Expulsion, Reconciliation under the umbrella of the German Historical Museum in Berlin. This link served to integrate the history of the expellees at an institutional level into the cultural

memory of unified Germany, and explicitly place it in the context of cultural work aimed at understanding and reconciliation.

In the twenty-first century, flight and expulsion remain a recurrent global challenge that German society also continues to face anew. In the 1990s, pictures of war and expulsion in **the former Yugoslavia reawakened for many memories of the experience of losing one's** homeland. In 2015, at the height of the flow of refugees into Europe, the word **"refugee"** was declared the Word of the Year. For many people, discussions about the consequences of flight and expulsion remain even today linked with fears, prejudice, empathy, and a willingness to help.