

Once-German Areas Taken Over by Poles

Sixth of a series

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Former German Portions of Poland Show Neglect on Farms and in Cities

Wroclaw—a new community of ago. For the first time in centuries, the entire area is populated by Poles.

The same thing has happened all over the sections of western and northern Poland which used to be German. This area, about the size of Kentucky, makes up more than a third of present-day Poland. A few figures are necessary to show what's happened.

Eight million Germans have gone from this area and more than six million Poles have moved in as new settlers. Modern Europe has never known any movement of peoples on such a scale. What Churchill once called the "disentanglement of populations" in Eastern Europe has started again after coming to a halt during recent Stalinist years.

As a concession to the Polish government under Gomulka, the Russians have opened their borders to permit Poles caught in the Soviet Union to return to their own country. Poles are crossing at the rate of 10,000 a month, taking what they can carry on their backs, and most of them are being resettled in former German territories.

At the same time, the Poles have opened their borders to let the few remaining Germans emigrate, if they wish. Every week or so, a special Red Cross train steams out of Gdansk, formerly Danzig, filled with Germans. More than 60,000 are expected to move this year into West Germany alone to rejoin relatives they haven't seen for more than 10 years.

Old Claim Established

In human terms, this "disentanglement" of Poles and Germans has been hard and bitter for both, but in political terms, it offers some insurance for the future peace of Europe. When the Poles now say, "These territories are Polish," their claim rests on more than the fact that they were part of Poland 300 or even 600 years

Poles will admit is that the newly acquired territories can never be anything but Polish. They would rather scrape along in the Polish way than ever submit to German direction and German "efficiency" and all that it implies.

NEXT: What the Germans think about their lost lands.

The Polish settlers have not yet done well in rebuilding and developing these new lands. The newcomers are not the farmers the Germans were and they have not had understanding help from their Communist government. On a 200-mile trip through the "recovered territories," we didn't see a single tractor or any of the other modern equipment the government in Warsaw had bragged about. We asked a farmer near Opole whether he had machinery. "Oh, yes," he said, "I'll show you." He took us to his barnyard and showed us a collection of horse-drawn plows and beaten-up harrows.

This "machinery" would have been antique 50 years ago on a New England farm. The entire area suggests a vast neglect of agriculture by a government which until last year was putting all its effort and money into heavy industry.

Warsaw Had Priority

The picture of neglect is just as bad in war-damaged cities. Wherever a ceiling stands intact, new settlers have crowded in, usually a family to a room, as in Russia. New housing has been slow in coming. "You see, Warsaw had to be rebuilt first," a newcomer in Wroclaw told us.

The only part of the area which looked bustling and vigorous was the mining and factory complex of Upper Silesia, where one city merges into the next for nearly 25 miles. What the Poles need here is more modern mining machinery, which they're hoping to obtain with United States credits and better management, a thing which will take years to develop.

If Germans were here instead of the Poles, no doubt things would look tidier and more efficient. A few Poles will admit this—even to foreigners like ourselves. But what no