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Slave Laborers from Poland in the Third Reich between 1941 and 1944 as an Example of Forced Migration: Verification of the Numerical Findings

Robotnicy przymusowi z Polski w Trzeciej Rzeszy w latach 1941–1944 jako przykład migracji przymusowej. Weryfikacja wyników liczbowych

Abstract

In this article, the author attempts to verify previous findings on the number of forced laborers sent from occupied Poland to the Third Reich during World War II. Forced laborers are an example of the many forced migrations that took place during this armed conflict, but in contrast to the spontaneous movement of war refugees and displacements carried out by the German administration, these were mainly economic in nature, with the aim of obtaining free and semi-free labor. Unfortunately, the numbers reported in Polish historiography were not sufficiently documented, while those from German studies were likely understated. The proposal for a new estimate of this

Abstrakt

W niniejszym artykule autor podejmuje próbę weryfikacji dotychczasowych ustaleń dotyczących liczby robotników przymusowych wysłanych z okupowanej Polski do III Rzeszy podczas II wojny światowej. Robotnicy przymusowi stanowią przykład jednej z wielu przymusowych migracji, które miały miejsce podczas tego konfliktu zbrojnego, ale w przeciwieństwie do spontanicznych ruchów uchodźców wojennych i wysiedleń przeprowadzonych przez administrację niemiecką, miały one głównie charakter ekonomiczny w celu pozyskania darmowej i półdarmowej siły roboczej. Niestety, liczby podawane w polskiej historiografii nie były wystarczająco

phenomenon, presented in this text, takes into account both rationales and, for the first time, draws entirely on German forced labor statistics.

Keywords

forced laborers, WWII, forced migrations, General Government, The Third Reich

udokumentowane, natomiast dane pochodzące z badań niemieckich były zaniżone. Propozycja nowego oszacowania tego zjawiska, przedstawiona w niniejszym tekście, uwzględnia obie te kwestie i po raz pierwszy opiera się całościowo na niemieckich statystykach dotyczących pracy przymusowej.

Słowa kluczowe

robotnicy przymusowi, II wojna światowa, migracje przymusowe, Generalne Gubernatorstwo, III Rzesza Niemiecka

Subject and Purpose of the Study

Data relating to the number of forced laborers deported to the Third Reich during World War II was already collected as early as the 1940s. However, all of these estimates and calculations, on closer inspection, turn out to be subject to a logical error resulting from the political situation of Communist-ruled Poland at the time. It should be recalled that before World War II, the Republic of Poland was a multinational country, with Ukrainians, Jews, Belarusians, Germans, Lithuanians, Armenians, and representatives of other nationalities living there in addition to Poles. However, they were all citizens of the Second Polish Republic, so it is incorrect to regard only ethnic Poles as deported Polish citizens, and this is how it is often put in the studies to date. The authors of these studies are not consistent, sometimes giving only the total number of forced laborers from the General Government and the incorporated territories, while at other times additionally singling out workers of Ukrainian nationality.

To a certain extent, this is a source-related condition, but the lack of precision in the formulation of the research question is strongly apparent. The same is true of the issue of treating all eastern workers as “Ostarbeiter” and the lack of attempts to separate Polish citizens from them. On the contrary, they were all treated as Soviet citizens, despite the fact that a large number of them were in fact Polish citizens forced to accept Soviet citizenship.

While the question of deportations to Germany for labor from areas incorporated into the Third Reich and the General Government has been well documented by the perpetrators themselves in the official publication *Der Arbeitseinsatz im Gross-deutschen Reich*, it is not so clear how many forced laborers were deported from

Polish territories beyond the Bug River and not within the General Government. This was due to the forcible imposition of Soviet citizenship on the population of the occupied territories after September 17, 1939, which is why the post-war estimates concerned only Poles deported for labor and did not include other citizens of the Second Polish Republic.

State of Research

Szymon Datner, in his 1967 article, *Wywóz ludności polskiej na roboty niewolnicze do Niemiec* [The Deportation of the Polish Population for Slave Labor to Germany], accepts the figure of “about half a million Poles from the lands beyond Bug River”,¹ without giving any reasons for accepting it. It appears to have been taken from estimates of the Biuro Odszkodowań Wojennych [War Compensation Office],² (hereafter: WCO) which included only Polish citizens of Polish and Jewish nationalities, leaving out everyone else. Footnote number 65 in Datner’s work reads: “The figure for Polish citizens of Polish or Jewish nationality residing in the territories ceded to the USSR was ‘established by way of estimation on the basis of a percentage ratio of those deported for forced labor to the total population analogous to that found in the lands discussed in point I.’”³ This confirms that such a method of estimation did not include nationalities other than Polish and Jewish.

Table 1. Number of forced laborers as estimated by WCO as of 1944

Territory	Persons
1	2
the capital city of Warsaw	375,000
the city of Łódź	183,443
Voivodeship	
Warszawskie	2,540
Łódzkie	217,324
Kieleckie	74,167

¹ Szymon Datner, „Wywóz ludności polskiej na roboty niewolnicze do Niemiec,” *Biuletyn Głównej Komisji Badania Zbrodni Hitlerowskich w Polsce* 16 (1967): 37.

² Materials related to the report are dispersed between the Central Archives of Modern Records (Archiwum Akt Nowych) and the Institute of National Remembrance (Instytut Pamięci Narodowej), *Sprawozdanie w przedmiocie strat i szkód wojennych Polski w latach 1939–1945* (Biuro Odszkodowań Wojennych przy Prezydium Rady Ministrów, 1947).

³ Datner, „Wywóz ludności.”

1	2
Lubelskie	84,122
Białostockie	41,970
Gdańskie	18,073
Pomorskie	123,837
Poznańskie	169,943
Śląskie	60,692
Krakowskie	163,000
Rzeszowskie	105,029
Total	1,619,139

Source: Szymon Datner, „Wywóz ludności”, 36.

To this were added “incidents not included in the territorial statistics due to difficulties caused by migration movements and mass resettlement of the population, estimated at $\pm 20\%$ ”,⁴ or 323,825 people. In the end, the study adopted the following figures for the deported:

from the so-called Core Lands	1,619,139
from the lands beyond the Bug River	518,000
people not covered by statistics	323,825
total	2,460,964

The figure of 20% of deported laborers not included in the statistics is questionable, as the Germans kept and published the statistics of forced laborers in an official publication, and although it was not available to the general public, it could be consulted after the end of World War II.

Czesław Madajczyk, in his monumental work on the German occupation of Poland, takes a much more cautious approach to Datner’s estimate, considering the number of more than 500,000 deported for labor from the lands beyond the Bug River to be too high.⁵ Citing data from the Reichsarbeitsministerium,⁶ from Hans Frank’s diary, and from files from the Bühler trial, he gives the following numbers of people deported from Poland:

⁴ Datner, „Wywóz ludności,” 36.

⁵ Czesław Madajczyk, *Polityka Trzeciej Rzeszy w okupowanej Polsce*, vol. 1 (PWN, 1970), 251.

⁶ After Eva Seeber, *Zwangsarbeiter in der faschistischen Kriegswirtschaft. Die Deportation und Ausbeutung polnischer Bürger unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Lage der Arbeiter aus dem sogenannten Generalgouvernement. 1939–1945* (VEB Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, 1964), 144.

Table 2. Forced laborers from Polish lands (incorporated into Germany and the General Government) in the Third Reich (in thousands), 1970 estimate

Date	Total from Poland
1941-01-31	798
1941-04-29	873
1941-09-20	1008
1942-01-20	1032
1942-07-13	1244
1942-11-20	1345
1943-02-15	1370
1943-08-31	1622
1944-06-30	1625?
1944-08-15	1660
1944-09-30	1662

Source: Czesław Madajczyk, *Polityka Trzeciej Rzeszy w okupowanej Polsce*, vol. 1 (PWN, 1970), 251.

These figures do not include, as can be seen, the northeastern provinces, which were part of the Polish state in 1939–1945. It is interesting to note that a similar approach was taken by German historians, such as the previously cited Eva Seeber, whose full title of a work published in 1964 on the subject of forced laborers was *Zwangsarbeiter in der faschistischen Kriegswirtschaft. Die Deportation and Ausbeutung polnischer Bürger unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Lage der Arbeiter aus dem sogenannten Generalgouvernement. 1939–1945*⁷. This approach to the issue of the deportation of the population hides the actual scale of slave labor performed by the citizens of the Second Republic during World War II. An additional error was the inclusion of only ethnic Poles as “laborers from Polish lands,” which meant excluding from the 648,385 people 39,076 most likely Kashubians and Masurians, whom the German authorities did not recognize as Poles.⁸

Another author who has devoted several works to Polish forced laborers is Czesław Łuczak. In 1974, he published the book *Polscy robotnicy przymusowi w Trzeciej Rzeszy podczas II wojny światowej* [Polish Forced Laborers in the Third Reich during World War II], in which he estimated the number of those deported for labor as follows:

⁷ Seeber, *Zwangsarbeiter in der faschistischen Kriegswirtschaft*.

⁸ *Der Arbeitseinsatz im Großdeutschen Reich* 11/12 (1944), 10.

Table 3. Forced laborers from Polish lands in the Third Reich (in thousands), 1974 estimate

Territory	Number of laborers (in thousands)
From the General Government and the Białystok District (until July 7, 1944)	1,214
From the Warsaw Uprising	67
Poles from the incorporated lands	670
Persons of “other nationalities” from the incorporated territories	36
From the territories beyond the Bug River	500
Former Polish prisoners of war on whom civilian laborer status was imposed	300
From the Wartheland to France	23.5
Total civilian laborers	2,810.5
Employed prisoners of war	31
Total civilian laborers and prisoners of war	2,841.5

Source: Czesław Łuczak, *Polscy robotnicy przymusowi w Trzeciej Rzeszy podczas II wojny światowej* (Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 1974), 62.

This figure is clearly higher than that given by Czesław Madajczyk, as it includes 300,000 Polish prisoners of war (POWs) to whom, according to him, civilian forced laborer status was imposed. The most credible interpretation of the issue of 300,000 Polish POWs was presented by Mark Spoerer, who described the fate of these prisoners as follows: “Some of them, mainly ethnic Ukrainians, were released by the Wehrmacht at the beginning of 1940, because the Germans wanted to use this group to fight ethnic Poles. The rest of the POWs, with the exception of 37,000, were transformed, as it was described in Nazi bureaucratic jargon, into civilian workers.”⁹

Eva Seeber takes a different stance on this issue, stating that the number of 300,000–400,000 POWs was not included in the official statistics and ‘they are not listed because they were under the command of the OKW’. However, she does not provide any evidence to support this claim.¹⁰

⁹ Mark Spoerer, *Praca przymusowa pod znakiem swastyki. Cudzoziemscy robotnicy, jeńcy wojenni i więźniowie w Niemczech i okupowanej Europie w latach 1939–1945* (Muzeum II Wojny Światowej, 2015), 50. Originally published as *Zwangsarbeit unter dem Hakenkreuz. Ausländische Zivilarbeiter, Kriegsgefangene und Häftlinge im Deutschen Reich und im besetzten Europa 1939–1945* (Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2001).

¹⁰ Eva Seeber, *Robotnicy przymusowi w faszystowskiej gospodarce wojennej* (Książka i Wiedza, 1972), 163 [originally published as *Eva Seeber, Zwangsarbeiter in der faschistischen Kriegswirtschaft*].

Łuczak also added an additional 67,000 people deported after the Warsaw Uprising in 1944, 500,000 people from the lands beyond the Bug River (essentially repeating the figure given by Datner), the deportation of 23,500 people to France from the Wartheland, 36,000 people of “other nationalities” from lands incorporated into the Third Reich and 31,000 employed prisoners of war. It should be noted that the term “other nationalities” referred to the ethnic groups of Kashubians and Masurians, from whom the German authorities attempted to create separate nations.

The problem, however, is their number, which should have been 39,076, not 36,000, as Łuczak wrote. Interestingly, this number was repeated at this level in his 1979 publication, but disappeared in another work published in 1999 without a word of explanation for such an action. On the other hand, he overstated the number of people deported from the General Government, which he put at 1,214,000, a figure that is not borne out by German statistics, which put the number of forced laborers from the area at 1,053,027. Thus, the overstatement of the number of deportees to forced labor amounted to 160,973.

Also, his date of July 7, 1944, is not confirmed by *Der Arbeitseinsatz*, which publishes forced laborer counts as of June 30 and August 15, 1944. While it can be assumed that these are from another source, Łuczak gives several, without indicating exactly which source the controversial figure came from. Perhaps the figures include all those deported to Germany, including those who managed to return legally or escape from the labor force. The difference also includes those who died in the Great German Reich as a result of starvation, working beyond their strength, disease, abuse by their employer, or murder on more or less plausible pretexts.

Ulrich Herbert¹¹ writes that Czesław Łuczak obtained his statistical data, at least in terms of the number of people sent to work in Germany in individual years, from Gerhard Eisenblätter's dissertation published in 1969.¹²

Czesław Łuczak believed that a total of 2,841.5 thousand Polish citizens were sent to perform slave labor for Germany. This figure should be regarded as an overestimate of workers from Poland's eastern provinces and represents the maximum number of Polish citizens deported for forced labor. Łuczak upheld the figure of some 500,000 deported forced laborers from the areas beyond the Bug River,

¹¹ Ulrich Herbert, *Robotnicy zagraniczni w niemieckiej gospodarce wojennej 1939–1945* (Instytut Pileckiego, 2023), 667 [originally published as Ulrich Herbert, *Fremdarbeiter: Politik und Praxis des 'Ausländer-Einsatzes' in der Kriegswirtschaft des Dritten Reiches* (J. H. W. Dietz Nachfolger, 1985)].

¹² Gerhard Eisenblätter, *Grundlinien der Politik des Reichs gegenüber dem Generalgouvernement, 1939–1945* (PhD diss., Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität, 1969), Table 3.

while admitting that neither the methodology nor the basis for the calculations adopted by the War Compensation Office is known.

He himself gives the following reasoning: the territories occupied by the USSR had a population of about 6 million, of which the Germans slaughtered about 1 million Jews, and the rest fled from the Wehrmacht. Of the remainder, or 5 million people, as many as 10% were deported for forced labor.¹³ In doing so, it omits, for political reasons, those deported from the area by the USSR authorities in four deportations between 1940 and 1941.

He repeated very similar figures in 1979 in another book on forced laborers, adding – to previously published figures – 16,000 people deported from the General Government in November and December 1944.

Table 4. Forced laborers from Polish lands in the Third Reich (in thousands), 1979 estimate

Territory	Number of laborers (in thousands)
From the General Government and the Białystok District (until July 7, 1944)	1,214
From the Warsaw Uprising	67
From the General Government (Nov.-Dec. 1944)	16
Poles from the incorporated territories	670
Persons of "other nationalities" from the incorporated territories	36
From the territories beyond the Bug River	500
Former Polish prisoners of war who were forced to accept civilian laborer status	300
From the Wartheland to France	23.5
Total civilian laborers	2,826.5
Employed Polish prisoners of war	31
Total	2,857.5

Source: Czesław Łuczak, *Polityka ludnościowa i ekonomiczna hitlerowskich Niemiec w okupowanej Polsce* (Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 1979), 161.

In 1999, Czesław Łuczak issued a short publication popularizing the subject of Polish forced laborers during World War II: *Forced Labor of Poles in the Third Reich*. This 103-page booklet was devoid of scientific apparatus and included

¹³ Czesław Łuczak, *Polscy robotnicy przymusowi w Trzeciej Rzeszy podczas II wojny światowej* (Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 1974), 63.

significant abridgements compared to previously published books. It also omits 31,000 forced Polish prisoners of war (it is unclear whether this occurred due to a mistake or intentionally). The added value of the book is the appendix at the end, which contains an alphabetical list of German companies that used forced labor by Polish citizens.

Table 5. Forced laborers from Polish lands in the Third Reich (in thousands), 1999 estimate

Territory	Number of laborers (in thousands)
From the General Government and the Białystok District (until July 7, 1944)	1,214
From the Warsaw Uprising	67
From the General Government (Nov.-Dec. 1944)	16
Poles from the incorporated territories	706
From the eastern lands of the Second Polish Republic incorporated into the commissariats of the Third Reich Ostland and Ukraine	500
Former Polish prisoners of war who were forced to accept civilian laborer status	300
From the Wartheland to France	23.5
Total	2,826.5

Source: Czesław Łuczak, *Praca przymusowa Polaków w Trzeciej Rzeszy* (Fundacja Polsko-Niemieckie Pojednanie, 1999), 61.

In 2001, Łuczak returned to the issue of forced laborers with the publication of a book expanded territorially to include other German-occupied countries, *Praca przymusowa Polaków w Trzeciej Rzeszy i na okupowanych przez nią terytoriach innych państw (1939–1945)* [Forced Labor of Poles in the Third Reich and on the Territories of Other Countries Occupied by It (1939–1945)].¹⁴ The publication repeats the data from the previous book, without changing the numerical estimates, and maintains the total number of deportees at 2,826,500. This time, Łuczak gave detailed percentages of those deported from individual regions of the country, but there was no reflection from him that 10 percent for those deported from areas east of the Bug River appears to be an overestimate, if only because of the shorter period of German activity, than was the case in central Poland. The percentage of deported by region was as follows:

¹⁴ Czesław Łuczak, *Praca przymusowa Polaków w Trzeciej Rzeszy i na okupowanych przez nią terytoriach innych państw (1939–1945)* (Pracownia Serwisu Oprogramowania, 2001).

Table 6. Deported persons by region of Poland (in %), 2001 estimate.

Region	Date	Percentage of the deported
Wartheland	no data	12.2
General Government	June 1943	7.42
General Government (with Białystok region)	the end of 1944	10.3
Silesia and Pomerania	no data	c. 3.5
Radom district	June 1943	8.83
Kraków district	June 1943	8.76
Galician district	June 1943	7.20
Warsaw district	June 1943	6.22
Lublin district	June 1943	5.41

Source: Łuczak, *Praca przymusowa Polaków w Trzeciej Rzeszy*, 67.

As can easily be seen, 10–12% of those deported were recorded only in the Wartheland and the General Government, while in the eastern Lublin district it was only 5.41%, and in the Galician district 7.20%. Unfortunately, despite my attempts, I have not been able to reach the materials from the CSO (Central Statistical Office) archives, which supposedly contain sources showing the percentage of people deported for forced labor by individual districts.¹⁵ Looking at the figures themselves, however, it should be noted that achieving an average of 10.3% over the course of a year for the entire General Government would have been difficult, with component values below this percentage in individual districts. The figure of 10.3% even for the entire General Government is unrealistic and unconfirmed.

Therefore, in my opinion, the thesis of a very high (10%) percentage of deported people from the eastern provinces of the Second Polish Republic has no basis. To make matters worse, the book was deprived of footnotes, and the information given cannot be verified. The percentages given were taken from a previous work by the author himself,¹⁶ which referred to the already cited book by Czesław Madajczyk. However, in Madajczyk's publication one can only find data on the percentages of those deported from individual districts in 1943, while there is no information for the Białystok district.¹⁷ In turn, the *Der Arbeitseinsatz* never lists the origin of the forced laborers according to the districts of the General Government.¹⁸

¹⁵ The argument against accessing the collection was its poor state of preservation, but one can reasonably doubt the veracity of these claims.

¹⁶ Czesław Łuczak, *Polityka ludnościowa i ekonomiczna hitlerowskich Niemiec w okupowanej Polsce* (Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 1979), 160.

¹⁷ Madajczyk, *Polityka Trzeciej Rzeszy*, 236, 254.

¹⁸ *Der Arbeitseinsatz im Großdeutschen Reich* (1943).

Czesław Łuczak is not consistent in his reasoning; on the one hand, he writes about 300,000 people who were forced to accept the status of civilian workers, but on the other hand, he does not accept the fact that, if that had indeed happened, they would have been included in the statistics as civilian workers from Poland.¹⁹ Some of his 1974 claims are vague, to say the least, such as, for example: "This is because we only have data, and only roughly corresponding to reality, for deportations of persons from the General Government and the Białystok district; however, no such figures are available for lands incorporated into the Reich. We also have statistical compilations of those employed at various times in the Reich, with a breakdown between those from the incorporated lands and the General Government."²⁰ This sentence is contradictory: either we have data on workers from the incorporated lands or we do not – in this case, such data does exist.

Nor is it very clear on what basis he makes his claim that the data relating to the number of forced laborers from Poland is "roughly equivalent to reality," when it was based on monthly reports from the Arbeitsamts in Germany itself. I see no reason to believe that German officials of a totalitarian state falsified these statistics, which had the security classification "Nur für inneren Dienst! Jede Veröffentlichung verboten!" The statistical statements also include Polish prisoners of war, who were employed in violation of international law; their numbers fluctuated, steadily declining due to death or, far less frequently, dismissal.

The last major collective work on Polish forced laborers was published in 2005 under the title *Polscy robotnicy przymusowi w Trzeciej Rzeszy* [Polish Forced Laborers in the Third Reich].²¹ A reading of the Introduction, by Włodzimierz Bonusiak, raises some surprise, as the author denies the term used immediately after World War II for forced labor as "slave labor." Forced labor was slave labor, and that's how it was seen by German policymakers who said, "Agricultural work will be done by poorly paid foreign seasonal laborers. Without the restoration of a specific, modern form of serfdom, or, if you prefer, slavery, human culture cannot develop further."²²

The publication is divided into four sections: *Polish Forced Laborers in the Third Reich*, *State and Social Action for Moral and Material Compensation for Polish Forced Laborers*, *The Polish-German Reconciliation Foundation*, and *Illustrative Material*, of which the most interesting information is contained in the article by W. Bonusiak included in Part I, entitled *Recruitment, Deployment and Structure*

¹⁹ C. Madajczyk, who is cited by C. Łuczak, does not write about the forced imposition of status, but about the labor of 300,000 prisoners of war, without specifying its nature. Cf. Madajczyk, *Polityka Trzeciej Rzeszy*, 255.

²⁰ Łuczak, *Polscy robotnicy przymusowi*, 61.

²¹ Włodzimierz Bonusiak, ed., *Polscy robotnicy przymusowi w Trzeciej Rzeszy* (Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego, 2005).

²² Seeber, *Zwangsarbeiter in der faschistischen Kriegswirtschaft*, 33.

of *Polish Forced Laborers to Work in the Reich*. The author noted a problem with the classification used by the Germans for forced laborers from lands incorporated into the USSR, who created the category “Ostarbeiter” for them, regardless of their nationality or citizenship held in August 1939. “Ostarbeiter” were defined as persons residing in the USSR before June 22, 1941, excluding residents of the Baltic republics, the Galician district and the Białystok district. Ordinances pertaining to the General Government were extended to the latter two territories. Representatives of all nationality groups residing in the said territory were treated as “eastern workers,” with the exception of Soviet citizens of German nationality, since the territorial principle was considered more important than nationality.

This finding seriously complicates the calculation of the number of Poles who found themselves in the Reich as eastern workers or Lithuanians.²³ The author is to be commended for noticing this problem, unlike his predecessors, and the proposed solution for estimating the number of Poles deported from “Lithuania” is logical, although it contradicts data from *Der Arbeitseinsatz im Großdeutschen Reich*. According to him, the Germans deported about 40,000 people from the General Commissariat of Lithuania, of which 75% were Poles,²⁴ resulting in about 30,000 people. There remains the problem of Lithuanians who held Polish citizenship before the war and who were deported to Germany for forced labor, but due to the reluctance of Lithuanian collaborators to send their own countrymen to the Reich, the number was probably not very large.

This estimate is based on the number given by the Polish authorities (Delegation of the Government of the Republic of Poland to the Home Country),²⁵ but should be approached with some reserve, as it contradicts data in official German statistics. The latter put the number of Lithuanians working in the Third Reich on June 30, 1944 at 28,017, and in September at 24,091. The smaller number of people after three months was W. Bonusiak’s pretext for dismissing it as uncertain, although it should not be forgotten that this argument is not necessarily convincing, as this also happened when the figures for Poles were given.

The population deported from the General Commissariat of Belarus was estimated by W. Bonusiak on the basis of German reports, writing that “from the beginning of January 1942 to the end of July 1944, 133,162 people were deported for labor to the Reich,”²⁶ while rather arbitrarily assuming that 80% of them were citizens of the Second Polish Republic.

²³ Bonusiak, *Polscy robotnicy przymusowi w Trzeciej Rzeszy*, 72.

²⁴ Bonusiak, *Polscy robotnicy przymusowi w Trzeciej Rzeszy*, 76.

²⁵ Archiwum Akt Nowych, AK, ref. 202/II-53, k. 95. The accuracy of this shelf mark is uncertain; see: <https://www.szukajwarchiwach.gov.pl/zespol/-/zespol/50372> and https://collections.ushmm.org/findings/ RG-15.043M_01_fnd_en.pdf.

²⁶ Bonusiak, *Polscy robotnicy przymusowi w Trzeciej Rzeszy*, 77.

He made a different estimate of the number of forced laborers deported from the General Commissariat of Volhynia-Podolia. Assuming the same percentage of deportees as for the Galician district (i.e. 7.2 percent) and a population of 5,106 thousand in 1942, he arrived at an approximate number of forced laborers from this area of about 368 thousand. Although this calculation is debatable, it must be acknowledged that the data accepted to date on Polish citizens did not include such detailed information on territorial origin. According to calculations prepared by W. Bonusiak, the number of Polish citizens deported from the eastern territories was 531,000. This is still slightly higher than the figure of 500,000 given by Datner, which was later rejected by Łuczak.

Statistical and Geostatistical Analysis of Source Material

In order to verify the numerical findings reported by previous researchers, it was necessary to turn once again to the official sources published by the Third Reich, namely *Der Arbeitseinsatz im Großdeutschen Reich*.²⁷ This source is rarely found even in libraries in Germany, and most often its single issues appear without continuity. In Poland, I have not been able to find a single copy. Nor are issues of the magazine available as scans, except for the excerpts published by Mark Spoerer, dated September 30, 1944,²⁸ which can also be found in the digital version²⁹.

Nationality is defined vaguely in the source. The following categories of nationality (Staatsangehörigkeit bzw. mit den Herkunftsland) appear in it: Belgien, Frankreich, Italien, Ehem. Jugoslawien (ohne Kroatien), Kroatien, Niederlande, Ungarn, Altsowjetrussisches Gebiet (Ostarbeiter), Ehemal. Estland, Lettland und Litauen, Generalgouvernement und Bezirk Bialystok, Schutzangehörigkeit des Großdeutschen Reichs, Übrige Ausländer, Protektoratangehörige Arbeiter und Angestellte.³⁰ These categories reflect the administrative classification system used by the German authorities and do not correspond to modern national identities.

²⁷ The journal was published under this title from July 1943 until December 1944, when the last issue was published. Previously titled *Der Arbeitseinsatz im Deutschen Reich*, the content remained the same, although the content was not always constant. A distinctive feature was the reproduction of data from earlier issues for comparative purposes in later issues as well, making it possible to verify issues of possible corrections.

²⁸ Mark Spoerer, "NS-Zwangsarbeiter im Deutschen Reich. Eine Statistik vom 30. September 1944 nach Arbeitsamtsbezirken," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 49, H. 4 (2001): 665–84, https://www.ifz-muenchen.de/heftarchiv/2001_4_6_spoerer.pdf.

²⁹ Spoerer, "NS-Zwangsarbeiter."

³⁰ For some statistical tables, the breakdown is a bit more precise, distinguishing the former Baltic states and with additional national groups; see Table 7.

Occupied Poland was divided by German statisticians between the former Lithuania, the General Government with the Białystok District, and “protected by the Great German Reich.” The latter term was not specified anywhere, but it referred to the areas annexed to Germany, namely Gdansk Pomerania, the Ciechanow District, Polish Silesia and the so-called Wartheland. As can be seen, this makes it extremely difficult to correctly determine the number of those deported for forced labor from occupied Poland. This has led to a situation in which German historians consider only the territories of the General Government to be Poland, thereby understating the number of Polish citizens forced into slave labor for the Third Reich.

This is also done by the *Unabhängige Historikerkommission zur Aufarbeitung der Geschichte des Reichsarbeitsministeriums in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus* [Independent Commission of Historians to Reassess the History of the Reich Labor Ministry in the Time of National Socialism], which, in the person of Marc Buggeln of Humboldt University in Berlin, put the number of forced laborers from Poland in August 1944 at 1,659,764 people.³¹ It is difficult to explain this fact by mere inattention; this testifies either to ignorance of historical geography during World War II, or – which also cannot be ruled out – simply to ill-will and a deliberate desire to understate the number of forced laborers who were citizens of the Second Republic.

Table 7. Forced laborers by nationality, based on official statistics of the Third Reich, as of September 30, 1944 (source categories)

Nationality	Foreign and protectorate nationals, workers and employees, or Eastern European workers		
	Male	Female	Total
1	2	3	4
1. Belgium	170,058	29,379	199,437
2. Bulgaria	14,207	20,50	16,257
3. Denmark with Iceland	12,179	3,791	15,970
4. Finland	490	418	908
5. France	603,767	42,654	646,421
6. Greece	12,532	3,126	15,658
7. Great Britain and Ireland	382	368	750
8. Italy	265,030	22,317	287,347
9. Former Yugoslavia (excluding Croatia)	29,192	84,15	37,607

³¹ Marc Buggeln, „Die Zwangsarbeit im Deutschen Reich 1939-1945 und die Entschädigung vormaliger Zwangsarbeiter nach dem Kriegsende. Eine weitgehend statistische Übersicht,” *Working Paper Series A* 4 (2017), https://www.historikerkommission-reichsarbeitsministerium.de/sites/default/files/inline-files/Working%20Paper%20UHK%20A4_Buggeln_1.pdf.

	1	2	3	4
10. Croatia		43,071	17,082	60,153
11. Netherlands		233,591	20,953	254,544
12. Norway		322	520	842
13. Portugal		257	24	281
14. Romania		6,805	2,222	9,027
15. Sweden		475	363	838
16. Switzerland		11,835	5,179	17,014
17. Slovakia		20,857	16,693	37,550
18. Spain		6,790	335	7,125
19. Turkey		416	108	524
20. Hungary		17,206	7,057	24,263
21. United States of America		879	450	1,329
22. Former Soviet Russian territory (Eastern workers)	1,062,507	1,112,137	2,174,644	
23. Former Estonia	908	2,053	2,961	
24. Former Latvia	6,576	4,712	11,288	
25. Former Lithuania	20,966	9,584	30,550	
26. General Government and Bialystok District	684,328	368,699	1,053,027	
27. of which (No. 26): workers of Polish ethnicity	498,969	267,539	766,508	
28. of which (No. 26): workers of Ukrainian ethnicity	148,401	86,791	235,192	
29. Protected citizens of the Great German Reich	430,993	217,392	648,385	
30. of which (No. 29): workers of Polish ethnicity	404,212	205,097	609,309	
31. Other foreign nationals	16,081	6,467	22,548	
32. Unclear nationality	33,844	14,936	48,780	
33. Stateless persons	47,794	26,511	74,305	
Protectorate nationals Workers and employees	231,968	44,372	276,340	
Total (including Eastern workers)	3,986,306	1,990,367	5,976,673	

Source: *Der Arbeitseinsatz im Großdeutschen Reich* 11/12 (1944): 10–13.

There remains the question of recruiting forced laborers from other regions of occupied Poland. The first of these is Lithuania, which initially included an area around Vilnius measuring 8,336 km² and with a population of 537,000.³² Although it is nowhere explicitly stated that the term “Ehem. Litauen” also included the areas of Poland incorporated by Lithuania that were given to it by Stalin, given the acceptance of this fact by the Third Reich and the USSR, it must be assumed that this was

³² *Mały Rocznik Statystyczny Polski. Wrzesień 1939–czerwiec 1941* (Ministerstwo Informacji i Dokumentacji, 1941), 4.

indeed the case. As can be seen from the table (Table 7), the number of forced laborers coming from Lithuania was 30,550, most of whom were Poles,³³ since the Lithuanian authorities allocated mainly Polish people to the quotas in order to remove non-Lithuanians (Poles) from Vilnius. Adopting a percentage of 75% Poles among those deported for forced labor, following W. Bonusiak, we arrive at an estimate of 22,912 people at the end of 1944 who should still be counted as Polish citizens.

The second uncounted area from which the Third Reich deported people for slave labor is the territory incorporated in 1939 into the Belorussian SSR and later part of the Reichkommissariat Ostland, as Weissruthenien. This area (102,968 km²), was inhabited by an estimated 4,733,000 people as of August 31, 1939.³⁴ However, this figure (given by Polish statisticians in exile) cannot be used, because during the occupation of these lands by the USSR, there were mass deportations of the civilian population, who were treated as enemies of the Soviet state. This process was guided by class, as well as political and national criteria, which in any case was mainly directed against Poles.

Another major problem in estimating the number of forced laborers from the area is the change of borders after Germany's aggression against the USSR in 1941, and the creation of new administrative units for which we have no data on population. To resolve this issue, it was decided to independently develop an algorithm for estimating the population and number of laborers deported by the Third Reich.

First, from the 1931 census, the number of population according to all 261 counties was taken, which was extrapolated using information from the *Mały Rocznik Statystyczny Polski. Wrzesień 1939–czerwiec 1941* [Concise Statistical Yearbook of Poland. September 1939–June 1941], using information on the average annual natural increase rate of 12‰. This yielded the population of Poland in 1939: 35,111,389 people, very close to the CSO's estimate of 34,849 thousand.³⁵ Since the migration balance was slightly negative in 1931–1939 (it was –112 thousand people), the effect of external migration on Poland's population at that time was virtually negligible. Between 1931 and 1939, internal migration did occur, from the countryside to cities and, to a lesser extent, between Polish regions, but their level should not significantly distort the calculations made. The difference for Poland's largest cities was only plus 490,000 people out of a population of 35.1 million, or less than 14% over 8 years,³⁶ and concerned mainly central Poland.

³³ Bonusiak, *Polscy robotnicy przymusowi w Trzeciej Rzeszy*, 76.

³⁴ *Mały Rocznik Statystyczny Polski*, 4. Administrative division as of January 1, 1941, population as of August 31, 1939.

³⁵ *Mały Rocznik Statystyczny* (Główny Urząd Statystyczny, 1939), 40. As of January 1, 1939, the population at the end of the year, based on the natural increase for 1938, may have increased by 370,000, yielding as many as 35,219,000.

³⁶ *Mały Rocznik Statystyczny*, 36–43.

Map 1. Poland during the German occupation in the second half of 1941



Source: Drafted by Konrad Wnęk.

Of the published data on population during World War II, we have only the bilingual *Concise Statistical Yearbook of Poland*, published by the Ministry of Information and Documentation in Exile in London, *September 1939–June 1941*,³⁷ but the information contained therein represents the state as of January 1, 1941, i.e. before the war between the Third Reich and the USSR, hence it is not suitable for use for administrative areas created after that date. The author is not aware of any publication referring to the population status of Poland in 1941 with a breakdown of the new administrative units.

³⁷ *Mały Rocznik Statystyczny Polski*.

The basic analytical problem was to reclassify the resulting population by county into much smaller units. Using GIS software, the whole of Poland was divided into 389,498 units of 1 km². This first required the preparation of reasonably accurate digital maps. These were drawn by assembling a dozen or so sheets of German World War II maps at a scale of 1:300,000, the so-called *Übersichtskarte von Mitteleuropa*, giving them a georeferencing suitable for Poland, and then digitizing the lines of administrative divisions from 1939 to 1945.

The next step was to subtract the number of people deported deep into the USSR from the 1939 population 350,000,³⁸ and recalculate the grid exclusively for areas under Soviet occupation. It was decided to estimate the deported to labor in Germany only from those areas for which no data was available from the official statistical publications of the Third Reich Ministry of Labor, and omitting the area of the Lithuanian occupation. This area includes part of the territories of the Reichskommissariats of Ostland (excluding Vilnius) and Ukraine, which were part of the Polish state until 1939, with a size of 111,820 km², where an estimated 5,173,070 people lived after the deportations. Assuming a percentage of those deported for forced labor of 7.27%,³⁹ based on data from the Galician district in the General Government, the result was 376,082 forced laborers at the end of 1944 from the eastern territories, which is less than presented in the previously discussed studies, which assumed a figure of 500,000–537,000 people.

In order to obtain a time series from September 1941, the occurrence of the same dynamics of the phenomenon as in the General Government was assumed, and the final data were converted to time points from the source, with the results included in a table (Table 10). Łuczak's hypothesis, unsupported by statistical sources, of 300,000 prisoners of war not included in official statistics, was rejected. A summary of the number of deported persons at the end of 1944, along with a breakdown by area, is presented in a table (Table 8); a total of 2,219,234 persons were deported.

It should be remembered that the values presented here for the northeastern provinces, Vilnius and those deported after the Warsaw Uprising are estimates. At the same time, it is worth noting that this is the figure as of the end of 1944, not the number of people who were ever in forced labor in the Third Reich. It does not include those who were murdered there, escaped from the workplaces, or were released from them and sent home. The latter cases were rare and caused by the workers' ill health. It is extremely difficult to assess what the scale of these occurrences was, so the numbers given are minimum values.

³⁸ „Sprawozdanie z dyskusji dotyczącej liczby obywateli polskich wywiezionych do Związku Sowieckiego w latach 1939–1941.” *Studia z Dziejów Rosji i Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej* 31 (1996): 117–48.

³⁹ Madajczyk, *Polityka Trzeciej Rzeszy*, 254. C. Łuczak assumed 7.2% without rounding the value given by Madajczyk (7.27%).

Table 8. Number of forced laborers from Poland in Germany in 1944

Territory	Number of forced laborers	Source
The General Government and the Białystok District	1,053,027	<i>Der Arbeitseinsatz im Großdeutschen Reich</i> , 11/12, 30 December 1944
Vilnius Region	22,912	<i>Der Arbeitseinsatz im Großdeutschen Reich</i> , 11/12, 30 December 1944, and Author's calculations
Area incorporated into Germany	648,385	<i>Der Arbeitseinsatz im Großdeutschen Reich</i> , 11/12, 30 December 1944.
The northeastern provinces of the Second Polish Republic	376,082	Own estimations.
From the Warsaw Uprising (November–December 1944)	67,000	Łuczak, <i>Praca przymusowa Polaków w Trzeciej Rzeszy</i> , 61.
From the Wartheland to France	23,512	Łuczak, <i>Praca przymusowa Polaków w Trzeciej Rzeszy</i> , 61.
Polish prisoners of war	28,316	<i>Der Arbeitseinsatz im Großdeutschen Reich</i> , 11/12, 30 December 1944.
Total	2,219,234	

Table 9. Sex structure of forced laborers from Poland (General Government and incorporated territories only) between 1941 and 1944 (in %)

Date	Former Poland (Ehem. Polen)		General Government and Białystok district (General Gouvernement und Bezirk Białystok)		Protected status of the German Reich (Schutzangehörigkeit des Deutschen Reichs)	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1941-01-31	76.8	23.2	.	.	.	.
1941-04-25	76.2	23.8	.	.	.	.
1941-09-25	73.9	26.1	.	.	.	.
1942-01-20	73.7	26.3	.	.	.	.
1942-05-20	.	.	72.6	27.4	70.7	29.3
1942-07-10	.	.	71.9	28.1	70.1	29.9
1942-08-20	.	.	70.8	29.2	69.6	30.4
1942-10-10	.	.	70.7	29.3	69.3	30.7
1942-11-20	.	.	70.5	29.5	69.2	30.8
1942-12-31	.	.	69.9	30.1	68.9	31.1
1943-02-15	.	.	69.6	30.4	68.8	31.2
1943-03-31	.	.	68.9	31.1	68.6	31.4
1943-05-15	.	.	68.5	31.5	69.1	30.9

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1943-06-30	.	.	68.4	31.6	67.5	32.5
1943-08-15	.	.	68.1	31.9	67.4	32.6
1943-09-30	.	.	67.6	32.4	67.4	32.6
1943-11-15	.	.	67.4	32.6	67.1	32.9
1943-12-31	.	.	67.3	32.7	67.4	32.6
1944-02-15	.	.	67.3	32.7	67.1	32.9
1944-03-31	.	.	66.4	33.6	67.6	32.4
1944-05-15	.	.	66.4	33.6	67.2	32.8
1944-06-30	.	.	65.7	34.3	66.8	33.2
1944-08-15	.	.	66.0	34.0	66.9	33.1
1944-09-30	.	.	65.0	35.0	66.5	33.5

Source: *Der Arbeitseinsatz im Deutschen Reich* (1941–1943); *Der Arbeitseinsatz im Großdeutschen Reich* (1943–1944). Own calculation.

Table 10. Forced laborers from parts of Poland's eastern provinces (excluding Vilnius, Białystok district and Galicia district) in 1941–1944

Date	Number of forced laborers from Poland's northeastern provinces
1	2
1941-09-25	4,370
1942-01-20	9,526
1942-05-20	44,574
1942-07-10	120,515
1942-08-20	154,445
1942-10-10	172,741
1942-11-20	194,606
1942-12-31	218,476
1943-02-15	226,496
1943-03-31	233,101
1943-05-15	247,282
1943-06-30	267,704
1943-08-15	286,736
1943-09-30	296,803
1943-11-15	307,564
1943-12-31	313,382
1944-01-31	305,253
1944-02-15	321,581

1	2
1944-03-31	333,135
1944-05-15	342,814
1944-06-30	358,203
1944-08-15	367,800
1944-09-30	376,082

Source: *Drugi Powszechny Spis Ludności z dn. 9 XII 1931* (Główny Urząd Statystyczny, 1938); *Der Arbeitseinsatz im Deutschen Reich* (1941–1943); *Der Arbeitseinsatz im Großdeutschen Reich* (1943–1944). Own calculations. The same deportation dynamics as in the General Government was assumed.

Table 11. Polish military – forced labor prisoners of war
(*Die Beschäftigten Kriegsgefangene nach Nationalitäten*)

Date	Number of POWs
1	2
Jan. 1942	31,470
Feb. 1942	30,745
Mar. 1942	35,890
Apr. 1942	36,357
May 1942	36,273
Jun. 1942	35,987
Jul. 1942	34,768
Aug. 1942	34,285
Sep. 1942	34,086
Oct. 1942	33,484
Dec. 1942	31,346
Jan. 1943	30,168
Mar. 15, 1943	30,165
Apr. 15, 1943	29,797
May 15, 1943	29,454
Jun. 15, 1943	29,459
Jul. 15, 1943	29,334
Aug. 15, 1943	29,128
Nov. 15, 1943	30,548
Feb. 15, 1944	28,807
May 15, 1944	28,627
Aug. 15, 1944	28,316

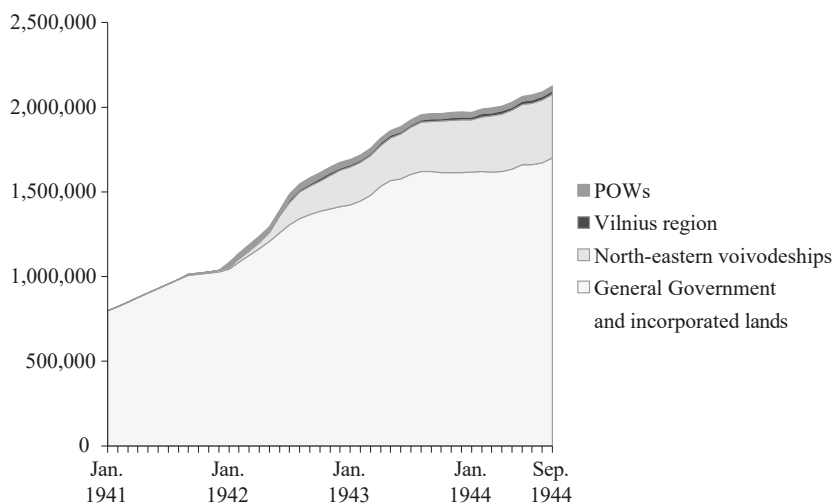
Source: *Der Arbeitseinsatz im Deutschen Reich* (1942–1943); *Der Arbeitseinsatz im Großdeutschen Reich* (1943–1944).

Table 12. Forced laborers from Vilnius region in 1942–1944

Date	Number of forced laborers
Jul. 10, 1942	14,935
Oct. 10, 1942	15,787
Dec. 31, 1942	14,180
Mar. 31, 1943	14,002
Jun. 30, 1943	14,288
Sep. 30, 1943	15,350
Dec. 31, 1943	17,113
Mar. 31, 1944	18,068
Jun. 30, 1944	19,513
Sep. 30, 1944	22,913

Source: *Der Arbeitseinsatz im Deutschen Reich* (1942–1943); *Der Arbeitseinsatz im Großdeutschen Reich* (1943–1944).

Figure 1. Number of forced laborers from the Second Polish Republic between 1941 and 1944



Note: The data have been resampled at one-month intervals. They do not include those deported after the Warsaw Uprising (67,000) and from the Wartheland to France (23,512).

Source: Table 13.

The final problem was to aggregate the partial results from the time series presented above. The data came from different time points, located at different distances between them, in some cases it was 10 days, in others 15, 30, 90 and so on.

For this reason, it was not possible to simply add the values from each series. Therefore, it was decided to resample to a period of one month in all series, and to fill in the missing data by linear interpolation. In this way, four time series with corresponding values at the same time points were obtained. The result is shown in the table (Table 13) and in the chart (Figure 1), note that the total for the last month, September, differs from that in Table 13, due to the failure to include 67,000 Warsaw residents deported after the 1944 uprising and those deported to France (23,512) from the Wartheland.

Table 13. Number of forced laborers from the territories of the Second Polish Republic between 1941 and 1944

Date		Number of forced laborers (total)
1	2	3
January	1941	798,101
February	1941	822,958
March	1941	847,815
April	1941	875,317
May	1941	901,766
June	1941	929,096
July	1941	955,545
August	1941	982,875
September	1941	1,012,563
October	1941	1,020,201
November	1941	1,028,095
December	1941	1,035,733
January	1942	1,085,500
February	1942	1,135,866
March	1942	1,186,660
April	1942	1,238,684
May	1942	1,296,439
June	1942	1,393,552
July	1942	1,486,797
August	1942	1,547,549
September	1942	1,581,793
October	1942	1,614,068
November	1942	1,645,233
December	1942	1,672,107
January	1943	1,689,907

1	2	3
February	1943	1,718,106
March	1943	1,757,231
April	1943	1,819,076
May	1943	1,863,019
June	1943	1,884,306
July	1943	1,925,712
August	1943	1,954,634
September	1943	1,960,797
October	1943	1,963,254
November	1943	1,967,178
December	1943	1,972,162
January	1944	1,970,169
February	1944	1,989,210
March	1944	1,995,429
April	1944	2,006,738
May	1944	2,027,920
June	1944	2,063,888
July	1944	2,072,048
August	1944	2,090,427
September	1944	2,125,117

Source: Tables 10–12. Own calculations.

Conclusions

In conclusion, it should be said that the research goal of verifying the number of forced laborers deported from Poland during World War II has been achieved. At the outset, the state of research was discussed, which, despite the existence of several significant publications, proved to be incomplete in terms of statistical material. The main problem of the work to date was the unreliable estimate of the population deported to labor in the Third Reich from the northeastern provinces, which was based on unspecified work by the WCO in 1947, where it was estimated at around 500,000 people. The second problem was the failure to include the population deported from the Vilnius region in older studies, as the first estimates were only undertaken by W. Bonusiak in his 2005 book. Similarly, the number of time intervals for which information has been given so far has been smaller, despite the fact that there are many more in the source publications.

In the present study, the changing boundaries of the occupied eastern areas of the Second Polish Republic were drawn on the basis of accurate German maps from World War II, and an appropriate portion of them was selected for geostatistical analysis, which made it possible to estimate the population deported from these areas to Germany for labor. Due to differences in dates in the time series, which contained data for people deported from different areas, it was decided to resample the series to standardize them. This made it possible to create series with equal one-month intervals, and to interpolate the missing data. Łuczak's hypothesis that Polish prisoners of war were included in the list of civilian forced laborers, but not recorded in official statistics, was rejected. The assumption was that even if such a fact had occurred, these prisoners of war would have appeared as civilian forced laborers and would have been included in those statistics. The revised figures are included in the tables in the text, and for the first time a series covering virtually the entire period of deportation was constructed. In addition, the gender structure of the deportees was determined, taking into account the time and area for which this was possible.

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Slave Laborers from Poland in the Third Reich between 1941 and 1944 as an Example of Forced Migration: Verification of the Numerical Findings

Summary

The research verified the previously reported numbers of forced laborers from Poland who were sent to Germany during World War II. Repeated theories in Polish historiography about the number of 500,000 laborers from areas beyond the Bug River were rejected. The thesis regarding lack of inclusion of Polish prisoners of war in German statistics was also not confirmed and new figures for 1942–1944, which had not previously been published, were provided. New data sequences were also established in a much more extensive time series, and the maximum number of forced laborers from Poland was estimated at circa 2,125,000 in September 1944. Attention was also given to the sex structure of forced laborers, and the corresponding proportions for the years 1941–1944 were given for those areas where this was possible.

Robotnicy przymusowi z Polski w Trzeciej Rzeszy w latach 1941–1944 jako przykład migracji przymusowej. Weryfikacja wyników liczbowych

Streszczenie

Badania zweryfikowały wcześniej podawane dane dotyczące liczby robotników przymusowych pochodzących z Polski i wysłanych do Niemiec podczas II wojny światowej. Powtarzające się w polskiej historiografii szacunki dotyczące liczby 500 000 robotników pochodzących z terenów za Bugiem zostały odrzucone. Nie potwierdzono również tezy o nieuwzględnieniu polskich jeńców wojennych w niemieckich statystykach i przedstawiono nowe, niepublikowane wcześniej dane liczbowe za lata 1942–1944. Ustalono również nowe dane w znacznie bardziej rozbudowanej serii czasowej, a maksymalną liczbę robotników przymusowych z Polski oszacowano na około 2 125 000 we wrześniu 1944 roku. Zwrócono również uwagę na strukturę robotników przymusowych według płci i podano odpowiednie udziały procentowe w latach 1941–1944 dla tych zagadnień, gdzie było to możliwe.

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