

Song about Post-Memory and the Aftereffects of Expulsion (1985)

Abstract

Heinz Rudolf Kunze (b. 1956) is a popular singer and songwriter who, like so many other Germans, was the child of expellees. In his song “Expellee” [“Vertriebener”], he problematizes the definition of expellee, reflects on the generational effects of trauma, and asks what it means to be a German without a *Heimat*. The photograph underneath the lyrics shows Kunze and his band performing in Germany in 1988, three years after “Expellee” was released. A link to a live 2019 performance of the song can be found under Further Reading.

Source

Expellee

I'm not from Bochum and not from Berlin,
not from Frankfurt and, God knows, not from Köln.
I'm not from Hamburg (as many would think),
Not from Munich and not from Mölln.

I was born in a barracks
in the refugee camp at Espelkamp.
I was conceived on the Oder-Neiße line,
I've never understood where I came from.

I'm also an expellee.
I don't want retribution, just a bit of luck.
I'm also an expellee.
With a fixed address in Osnabrück.

My mother was so loyal that it makes my head spin.
My father was in the SS.
I'm called Heinz after an uncle who died in battle in France,
and Rudolf after Rudolf Heß

Everyone tends to their roots and speaks a dialect.
I never had time to learn one.
I was always on the move, without a place to call my own,
my business is survival and distancing.

I'm also an expellee.
Silesia was never mine at all.
I'm also an expellee.
I will be buried all over the world.

I've lived in Lengerich, in Hanover and Bad Grund.

Always feeling that I was in the way.
I'm also an expellee, never staying anywhere.
Home is where people hear me play.

Source: Heinz Rudolf Kunze, "Vertriebener" (1985).

Translation: Deborah Cohen

Recommended Citation: Song about Post-Memory and the Aftereffects of Expulsion (1985), published in: German History Intersections, <<https://germanhistory-intersections.org/en/germanness/ghis:document-250>> [July 14, 2025].