

“WALL OF BLOOD”: THE BALTIC GERMAN CASE STUDY IN
NATIONAL SOCIALIST WARTIME POPULATION POLICY, 1939-1945

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ABSTRACT

RICHARDS OLAFS PLAVNIEKS: “WALL OF BLOOD”: THE BALTIC GERMAN CASE STUDY IN NATIONAL SOCIALIST WARTIME POPULATION POLICY 1939-1945

(Under the direction of Christopher Browning)

This study begins with Hitler’s Reichstag Speech on 6 October 1939 in which he famously called the Baltic Germans ‘Heim ins Reich,’ focuses on their agonizing choice to resettle and on their wartime experiences, and ends with some reflections about the notion of Heimat for the Baltic Germans and their descendents today. It is based on research conducted in three archives: the National Archives and Records Administration in College Park, Maryland (NARA II), the Bundesarchiv-Berlin (BAB), and the Lastenausgleichsarchiv-Bayreuth (LAA). These archives hold, respectively, the records of the Reichskommissariat für die Festigung deutschen Volkstums (RKFDV), the records of the Einwandererzentralstelle (EWZ), and postwar interviews with Baltic German participants in the resettlement.

As the resettlement of the Baltic Germans was the only operation of its sort completed by National Socialist Germany, this case study can illuminate relations between Reich authority and the recipients of its ideological favor. The SS resettlement apparatus and its ideological aims remained constant in the face of changing wartime circumstances. What were the attitudes of the Baltic Germans, their goals, feelings, frustrations, worries, and aspirations, in the face of extraordinary circumstances?

The goal of this study is to render the Baltic Germans as human beings and to examine their experience within the context of mass population transfer, SS bureaucracy, ideological war, and multi-dimensional ethnic tensions.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>I. INTRODUCTION</u>	<u>1</u>
Hitler's Reichstag Speech of 6 October 1939	1
Brief International History of Population Transfer Leading to 1939	3
Overview of National Socialist Population Policy in Eastern Europe	5
Defending the Importance of the Baltic German Case Study	11
Historiographical Orientation	14
<u>II. THE HISTORY OF THE BALTIC GERMANS, 1200-1939</u>	<u>27</u>
Drang Nach Osten	27
Ruling Class Under Other Empires	28
World War One and the War of Independence	30
Minority in Free States, 1920 – 1934	31
Minority Under Dictatorship, 1934 – 1939	33
<u>III. UMSIEDLUNG</u>	<u>35</u>
The Moving Process During the First Resettlement	40
Classification Schema	45
<u>IV. NACHUMSIEDLUNG</u>	<u>49</u>

The Differences Between Umsiedler and Nachumsiedler.	49
Soviet Intimidation	51
Red Army Soldiers	52
<u>V. GETTING THROUGH THE WAR</u>	<u>53</u>
Life in the Camps	53
Discontent and 22 June 1941	56
Occupations.	61
Summary.	65
<u>VI. THE BALTIC GERMANS AFTER THE WAR</u>	<u>68</u>
1945 – 1991	68
1991 – present	69
<u>VII. CONCLUSION</u>	<u>72</u>
Abbreviations	74
Appendix A	75
Appendix B	76
Bibliography	77

I. INTRODUCTION

Hitler's Reichstag Speech of 6 October 1939

Early one Friday afternoon – the date was 6 October 1939 - 60,000 Baltic Germans sat near their radios. In their houses and apartments, in their factories and offices, in their favorite local bars and restaurants, they waited: Hitler was to give a speech in the Reichstag. This speech was his first since Germany's breathtaking five-week Blitzkrieg against Poland, and the Soviet Union's first, surprise stab at one of its neighbors to the west in almost two decades. War had not yet come home to their communities in Latvia and Estonia, but no Baltic German could say for certain that it would not. All that was clear was that a new violent chapter of European history was already being written all around them. What would Hitler say?

The radios were tuned in. About an hour into his speech, Hitler changed the subject from the recent conquest of Poland and his justification of it, to his plans for a lasting peace in the East, between the Soviet Union and Germany.

As the most important task, however: to establish a new order of ethnographic conditions, that is to say, resettlement of nationalities in such a manner that the process ultimately results in the obtaining of better dividing lines than is the case at present.¹

¹ Text of speech found at: <http://www.humanitas-international.org/showcase/chronography/speeches/1939-10-06.html> accessed 20 September 2007. Translation from the German provided by the website. All translations from German into English that appear in this paper are my own, unless otherwise stated. Whenever possible, English translations of German secondary sources have been used for ease.

He was calling for nothing less than the radical restructuring of Eastern Europe's ethnic composition. A hush settled over the listeners. Some faces became pensive, turning intently to the radio.

...for the east and south of Europe are to a large extent filled with splinters of the German nationality, whose existence they cannot maintain. In their very existence lies the reason and cause for continual international disturbances. In this age of the principle of nationalities and of racial ideals, it is utopian to believe that members of a highly developed people can be assimilated without trouble. It is therefore essential for a far-sighted ordering of the life of Europe that a resettlement should be undertaken here so as to remove at least part of the material for European conflict. Germany and the Union of Soviet Republics have come to an agreement to support each other in this matter.²

The words must have hung in the air, thicker than the cigar and cigarette smoke. There could be no mistake, and it must have come as a shock: Hitler was talking about them, the Baltic Germans standing in that very living room, sitting in that very office, drinking at that very bar. For them, then, there was to be no escape from the whirlwind of events.

In postwar interviews, Hitler's 6 October 1939 Reichstag Speech in which he famously called the Baltic Germans 'heim ins Reich' – this single event, more than any other – was mentioned.³ It could even be likened – in terms of its momentous importance

² Ibid.

³ The body of interviews being referred to is Lastenausgleichsarchiv – Bayreuth. Ost-Dokumentation 14: Berichte über das deutsche Volkstum im Baltikum (v.a. Umsiedlung). To my knowledge, it is the only such collection that is publicly accessible. The German Federal Archives describe the collection: "In the year 1959, the [German] Federal Archives and the Baltic Historical Commission signed an agreement (Az.3785) according to which they undertook to document the resettlement, the political situation, and the community life of the Baltic Germans before 1945. This documentation – which consists of 50 testimonies and eyewitness reports – was complete in the year 1959 and was transferred to the Federal Archives, where they exist as Ost-Dok. 14." "Im Jahre 1959 haben das Bundesarchiv und die Baltische Historische Kommission einen Vertrag (Az.3785) geschlossen, dem zufolge letztere die Durchführung einer Dokumentation der Umsiedlung, der politischen Situation und des Volkslebens der Baltendeutschen vor 1945 zu übernehmen hatte. Diese Dokumentation – sie umfaßt gut 50 Erinnerungs- bzw. Augenzeugenberichte – ist im Jahre 1959 abgeschlossen und dem Bundesarchiv übergeben worden, wo sie im Rahmen der Ostdokumentation den Bestand Ost-Dok. 14 bildet."

to the Baltic Germans listening – to the Kennedy assassination, the death of Princess Diana, or 9/11. Everyone could remember where they were when they heard the news. For them, this is when the Second World War began.

After some brief contextualization, this paper will show that the dissolution of the Baltic German community, in fact, began with Hitler’s Reichstag speech of 6 October 1939, and continued throughout the duration of the war as the Baltic Germans were dispersed across the Altreich, in the Warthegau, and along the war fronts in the Wehrmacht and the Waffen SS. In the final months of the war, order collapsed and it was every man for himself to escape the Soviets. Thus, the Baltic Germans began their World War Two story as a cohesive and unified ethnic minority in Latvia and Estonia, were split up into groups by the National Socialist regime according to its own political and racial criteria, further splintered in the face of German wartime requirements for soldiers and laborers, and ended the war as an utterly atomized group – or perhaps no real ‘group,’ as such, at all. The paper will conclude with an epilogue on the state of the Baltic Germans today.

Brief International History of Population Transfer Leading to 1939

The twentieth century has been called “the century of refugees” and the Second World War “the most appalling period in the history of migration.”⁴ The idea of mass population transfer and resettlement was not an innovation of National Socialist Germany. A major modern precedent for mass population transfer had been set by the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, under the provisions of which almost two million people were

⁴ Klaus J. Bade. *Migration in European History*. Allison Brown, trans. Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, Ltd., 2003, pp. 165, 166.

exchanged between Greece and Turkey by reason of their ethnicity. This type of “‘unmixing’ motivated by ‘nationality-based policies,’” was generally considered an unfortunate but creditable last resort to settle international disputes.⁵ The interwar period in Europe was the age of Wilsonian nationalism. Between the end of the First World War and the outbreak of the Second, minority ‘questions’ were routine flashpoints of international conflict in Europe. If not banal, the notion of population transfers and exchanges at least enjoyed a place within the diplomatic lexicon.⁶

After 1919, ethnic Germans were the most numerous minority in Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe.⁷ Millions of Germans “acquired minority status as a result of the treaties of Versailles and St. Germain and of the events that followed the conclusion of the peace.”⁸ And the minority issue, very much alive throughout the Weimar period, was a chronic source of international instability. In fact, because the subject could not be separated from the Versailles Treaty, it was grist for the mill of pan-German nationalists and, of course, Hitler. One often overlooked policy instituted by the Third Reich is that which endeavored to resettle ethnic Germans from all across Europe in the territories it annexed from Poland, with the aim of ‘Germanizing’ the area through demographic engineering. In the National Socialist mind, this “wall of blood” would then serve as the

⁵ Ibid., p. 199.

⁶ “There was nothing taboo about the forcible resettlement of population groups and entire peoples in the first half of the twentieth century.” Götz Aly and Susanne Heim. *Architects of Genocide: Auschwitz and the Logic of Destruction*. A.G. Blunden, trans. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2002, p. 285.

⁷ Joseph B. Schechtman. *European Population Transfers, 1939-1945*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1946, pp. 6, 24.

⁸ Schechtman, *Population Transfers*, p. 29. By 1925, their numbers were decreasing sharply. “The census of 1925 recorded about 1.35 millions Germans (2 per cent of the population), who in 1914 had lived outside the new German borders...Many of them were initially accommodated in refugee camps spread throughout Germany (‘homecoming camps’).” Bade, *Migration*, p. 199. Many peacefully migrated to within Germany’s new borders independently and still others returned after being prisoners of war.

main racial bulwark protecting the core German territories from the racial degeneracy of the East.

Overview of National Socialist Population Policy in Eastern Europe

From its inception, the extensive resettlement apparatus that eventually developed was a manifestation of National Socialist ideology. At its core was the fantasy of total ethnic consolidation. In fact, point number one of the ‘unalterable’ 25-point Program of the National Socialist German Workers’ Party was the following: “We demand that all Germans be united in a Greater Germany, according to the right of self-determination of nations.”⁹

After 1933, German foreign policy matched Hitler’s rhetoric, with National Socialist outreach and support being given to various ethnic German communities in Alsace and Lorraine, the Sudetenland, and elsewhere in Europe. National Socialist foreign policy operatives used ethnic German communities abroad as political tools to put pressure on foreign governments. Ethnic German sympathizers were recruited and guided by orders from Berlin concerning when to agitate and when to remain silent. Indeed, one of Hitler’s main pretexts for invading Poland – and thus starting the Second World War – was to rescue its ethnic German minority from alleged abuse. However, in the interests of larger foreign policy goals, Hitler was willing to ‘give up’ two such communities in 1939. In the first instance, Hitler instituted the ‘evacuation’ of ethnic Germans from the former Austrian territory of the South Tyrol as a concession to Mussolini. In the second, he ‘called’ the Baltic Germans ‘heim ins Reich,’ in order to ‘save’ German blood and spare

⁹ “Wir fordern den Zusammenschluß aller Deutschen auf Grund des Selbstbestimmungsrechtes der Völker zu einem Groß-Deutschland.”

the Baltic Germans from the impending Soviet occupation of Estonia and Latvia – under which they could, after all, potentially disrupt the strategic partnership between Germany and the USSR. These actions, at least, proceeded from reasons that are comprehensible, if reprehensible.¹⁰

But it was at this point that Himmler entered the story, and things became more complicated. Himmler was charged by Hitler with managing the emigration of the Baltic Germans and their resettlement in the former Polish territories that the Reich had annexed after its first successful Blitzkrieg. Himmler interpreted the order broadly and, on its basis, created “a whole new empire”: the grandiloquently-named Reichskommissariat für die Festigung deutschen Volkstums (Reich Commission for the Strengthening of Germanism), or RKFDV, with himself as its head.¹¹ Through the RKFDV, Himmler created “a population program out of a refugee and police action,” one guided by the autarkic, utopian National Socialist vision of a feudalistic eastern Lebensraum cleansed of non-German racial taint and made fruitful by German peasant-soldier labor.¹²

The entire resettlement effort thus became a thoroughly National Socialist one. The main organizations tasked with carrying out the screening and resettlement effort such as the Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle (Ethnic German Liaison Office) or VoMi; the Deutsche Ansiedlungsgesellschaft (German Settlement Corporation) or DAG; the Einwandererzentralstelle (Central Immigrant Office), or EWZ; the Rasse- und

¹⁰ Given the existing precedents, A.J.P. Taylor obliquely makes the argument that Hitler was being a rational European statesman in this first stage. To see his comments on the Sudeten and South Tyrol Germans, see A.J.P. Taylor. *The Origins of the Second World War*. New York: Touchstone, 1993, pp. 151-58 and pp. 80, 194, respectively.

¹¹ Robert Lewis Koehl. *RKFDV: German Resettlement and Population Policy, 1939-1945: A History of the Reich Commission for the Strengthening of Germanism*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957, p. 50.

¹² Koehl, *RKFDV*, p. 52.

Siedlungshauptamt (Race and Settlement Main Office), or RuSHA; the Deutsche Volksliste (German Peoples' List) or DVL; and the Zentralbodenamt (Central Land Office) were placed under the umbrella of the RKFDV.¹³ Thus, an SS office under Himmler's direct control gave the orders. The organizations themselves were either overtly SS or heavily suffused with SS personnel. Non-SS organizations such as the Interior Ministry were increasingly cut out of the decision-making loop. It is axiomatic that Nazi bureaucracy was byzantine in its complexity: rife with internal squabbling and overlapping jurisdictions, uneven at best in its efficacy, and usually malevolently capricious. The RKFDV and the organizations under its direction – some pre-existing the RKFDV and others created later – were no exception, despite the unified chain-of-command that existed on paper.

The actions of the National Socialist resettlement machine – namely, the RKFDV and its subordinate organizations – can be usefully conceptualized as having taken place in three phases. They can be roughly characterized as (1) a booming start between 1939 and 1942, (2) a period of stagnation in 1943, and (3) a retreat and rout in 1944 and 1945.¹⁴ The rise and fall of the RKFDV and associated agencies thus mirrored those of the Third Reich as a whole.

The first stage was a period of bureaucratic expansion, corresponding to the growing responsibilities the RKFDV was assuming – and the ever-greater ambitions behind them.¹⁵ Ultimately, in addition to taking on the task of resettling the ethnic

¹³ Hereafter, the organizations will generally be referred to by their acronyms.

¹⁴ Robert L. Koehl describes the phases after its creation as “Efflorescence” and “Disintegration and Collapse.” Koehl, *RKFDV*.

¹⁵ For a recent look at this aspect of National Socialist bureaucracy, see Thomas Eric Spring. “The Nazi Resettlement Bureaucracy and the Baltic States of Estonia and Latvia.” Ph.D. dissertation, The University

Germans living in South Tyrol, Estonia and Latvia, and Soviet-occupied eastern Poland and Lithuania, the RKFDV successively added the ethnic German populations of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina, Crimea, Volhynia, Romania, dismembered Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Slovakia and Greece. Wheresoever German arms traveled, so went Himmler's demographic engineering mechanism.

However, upon arriving on the scene, the National Socialists found the situation far less black-and-white than their ideology had prepared them for. Not only did meticulous files have to be kept on each settler with regard to his or her personal information, financial assets, and so forth, but examinations had to be conducted to determine the level of 'German-ness' of each person or family. The ambiguity surrounding the term 'ethnic German' gave rise to an intricate classification schema. 'Racial' and political evaluations determined the destination of each settler: for the top category, an expropriated farm or apartment in the annexed territory; for doubtful cases, the Reich for 're-Germanization;' and for the worst cases, either sent back home or possibly to a concentration camp.¹⁶ Families were usually kept together, although

of Wisconsin-Madison, 1999. In *ProQuest Digital Dissertations*; available from <http://www.proquest.com>, publication number AAT 9956214; accessed September 9, 2006. It is perhaps emblematic of the confused nature of the National Socialist population enterprise undertaken under the auspices of Himmler's Reichskommissariat für die Festigung deutschen Volkstums that there was widespread confusion even as to its proper abbreviation. For example, "Reichskommissar f.d. Festig. Dt. Volkstums [sic]" and "Reichskommissar f.d.F.dt.V." occur *on the same page in the same document*. LAA. Ost-Dok. 8/456. "Die Ländische Siedlung im Wartheland: Die deutschen Massnahmen von 1939-1944. Hermann Deuz, ab 1943 kom. Hauptstableiter der Landesbauernschaft Wartheland." 28.12.1955. Also, sometimes odd variations on the theme are found, such as "Festigungskommissar für das Deutschtum im Osten." LAA. Ost-Dok. 14/7. "Die Umsiedlung der Baltischen Volksgruppe zu Beginn des 2. Weltkrieges. Tonbandaussage. Dr. jur. Edgar Schwarz." 12. Oktober 1958, p. 21.

¹⁶ In the course of the research for this project, I came across very few cases of this last category, because of the types of sources I was focusing on. One quite striking case, however, deserves mention. Bruno Wulffius was a Baltic German who lived in Riga. In 1919, the retreating Bolsheviks murdered his mother, father, and only sibling. He was only an infant at the time. Bruno Wulffius grew up with his maternal aunt and uncle in Latvia. He was strongly pro-German and became a respected member of the Baltic German community. After 1933, he became vocally pro-National Socialist. In 1939, he was among the first to answer Hitler's call to 'return' to the Reich and was resettled in Posen in due course. In 1941, Bruno

National Socialist officials had few qualms about seizing ‘racially valuable’ children of mixed or dubious parentage, turning them into wards of the state and putting them up for adoption by German parents.

Although some of the costs of this vast operation were offset by the value of expropriated assets – which in any case were to be handed over in large part to the resettlers – there is no question that the economic damage due to population dislocation was immense for the Reich. The outlay for caring for the resettlers in transfer camps while they awaited suitable habitations alone was tremendous.

After waiting anywhere between months and, literally, years, in barracks-like camps, transplanted communities of ethnic Germans were settled together in contiguous areas, either urban or rural, in order to maintain “familiar human surroundings.”¹⁷ Separation from Poles, insofar as was possible given the demand for cheap Polish agricultural labor, was enforced. Sexual liaisons between ethnic Germans and Poles was punishable by death for both partners.

One interesting irony of the resettlement process was that, try as it might, the apparatus was never able to settle even a fraction of the number of people it succeeded in expelling, giving the lie to the old National Socialist ‘Volk ohne Raum’ trope. To refill territories decimated by deportations to the General Government – the ‘Siberia’ or ‘ethnic

attempted to join the SS. During a routine background check, the SD noticed hints that his father might have been Jewish. As suspicions rose, the routine check became extensive research, including genealogical charts and character witnesses, provided to establish Bruno's Jewishness. Apparently, his foster parents had never told him that his father was a Jew. Bruno Wulffius was sent to a camp in 1942. The case lends support to the idea that Baltic German youth was especially receptive to the National Socialist message. It also suggests that Jewish lineage was something to be hidden in Baltic German society. See: NARA II. Captured German Documents T74. Roll 8. RDV 54. 380436-380519.

¹⁷ Schechtman, *Population Transfers*, p. 335.

dumping ground' of wartime Germany – the Reich was ultimately forced to resort to coercive measures.¹⁸

Insufficient numbers of ethnic German resettlers and the disappointing lack of forthcoming Reichsdeutsche volunteers to become trailblazers of Germandom in the East prompted the formation of the Deutsche Volksliste (DVL) on 4 March 1941.¹⁹ Over the course of its existence, it managed to 'find' approximately 500,000 ethnic Germans of various categories.²⁰ In addition to helping tilt the demographic ratios in the annexed Polish territory in German favor, these measures conveniently increased the pool of candidates for service in the Waffen SS.²¹

After the commencement of Operation Barbarossa – and even more sharply after the German defeat at Stalingrad – the activities of the RKFDV were hampered by myriad difficulties. There were transportation and supply shortages, air-raids that prompted the main office itself to move out of Berlin, and, eventually, manpower shortages even in central offices as men were called for duty at the front. The year 1943 brought virtually “The complete cessation of German transfer and resettlement activities.”²²

¹⁸ “Police arrived with a confiscation and deportation order in one pocket and a Volksliste application in the other.” Koehl, *RKFDV*, p. 140.

¹⁹ Schechtman, *Population Transfers*, p. 345.

²⁰ “The violation of this holiest of National Socialist principles was so flagrant that certain influential party leaders declared the strongest opposition to the policy of superficially Germanizing Polish elements and insistently warned of the dangers inherent in these attempts to make Germans out of Poles.” Schechtman, *Population Transfers*, p. 346.

²¹ “If sufficient numbers of ethnic Germans were not on hand, that program implied, Hitler’s underlings could simply create more.” Doris L Bergen. “The Nazi Concept of ‘Volksdeutsche’ and the Exacerbation of Anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe, 1939-45.” *Journal of Contemporary History*. Vol. 29, No. 4. (Oct., 1994), p. 574.

²² Schechtman, *Population Transfers*, p. 351.

In the final stages of the war, the embattled system took on something of the character of a refugee relief organization. Resettlement operations existed as such in name only. The humans passing through – or finding themselves lodged uncomfortably somewhere within – the system at this stage were less settlers than refugees who required hasty evacuation in the face of the Red Army’s onslaught. The presence of ethnic German ‘splinters’ in Eastern Europe that Hitler had blamed for so much international tension in the 1930s abruptly vanished.

Defending the Importance of the Baltic German Case Study

As members of a discrete cultural group with almost 800 years of history behind them, the Baltic Germans virtually ceased to exist after the Second World War. What was the process that brought this rare event – the obliteration of an entire deeply rooted ethnic community – about? In 1939 and 1941, almost all of the 60,000 Baltic Germans living in Estonia and Latvia accepted the Reich’s invitation to “return home,” became Reich citizens, and settled on Polish land annexed to the Reich. They thereupon became pawns and, on Polish territory, co-perpetrators, in the National Socialist scheme to colonize German Lebensraum in the East. After the 1941 conquest of Estonia and Latvia by the German Army, Baltic German pleas to return to their old Heimat, now free from Soviet occupation, were ignored by the SS. In effect, the National Socialists went from the saviors to the jailors of their Baltic German charges overnight. The masses of Baltic Germans who fled the Soviet offensives of 1944 and 1945 were never able to coalesce into anything like their compact and united pre-war community, scattered as they were across Germany and the rest of the world as displaced persons. In the context of mass

population transfer, ideological war, and multi-dimensional ethnic conflict, why did they leave their homes? How did they view and adjust to their radically changed circumstances after committing? And what was their own verdict on their decisions later?

Given recent shifts in historiography, such questions as these are becoming more and more salient. German suffering is no longer a taboo subject of historical inquiry. For instance, Allied terror bombing, the widespread rape of German women by Red Army soldiers, and the mass expulsion of Germans from Poland and other Eastern European countries during the end and in the immediate aftermath of the war are all topics that have enjoyed respectable scholarly attention of late. The destruction of ethnic German communities, such as that of the Baltic Germans, by the SS warrants similar analysis, as a different kind of example of German suffering – one not only “provoked” by National Socialist Germany, but actually inflicted by it. While ostensibly designed to protect and “strengthen” ethnic German communities in Eastern Europe, the RKFDV and related organizations in actuality became a fearsome menace to them: uprooting and scattering them far and wide. The Baltic German community, for one, never recovered.

A second reason that the case of the Baltic Germans merits inquiry is because it can help shed more light on National Socialist ideology: it provides an additional angle from which to understand the so-called “racial revolution” of the National Socialists. The Holocaust is, of course, the most horrific and most researched manifestation of the forcible demographic engineering that was central to the National Socialist project. However, there was another side to this engineering. Not only were allegedly unhealthy elements like Jews to be excised from Germany’s racial body, but Germany could also be given a transfusion of supposedly healthy ethnically German stock that was surviving in

the East. Elimination and replacement were the two sides of the National Socialists' ideologically motivated scheme. Thus, the Baltic German case represents another opportunity to fill a gap in the historiography.

Admittedly, the Baltic Germans were only one group comprising about 60,000 persons out of a total of roughly 500,000 people who, over the entire course of the Second World War, were designated ethnic Germans and thereafter caught in the National Socialist resettlement program.²³ Still, "On the whole, the resettlement of the Baltic Germans can be considered the only fully realized German colonization experiment."²⁴ This example of National Socialist resettlement policy therefore offers a curiously under-utilized opportunity to better understand the Third Reich and its ideological aims.

With regards to these last two points – German suffering and National Socialist population policy, as they pertain to the Baltic Germans – it must be cautioned that like so many others, the Baltic Germans do not fit neatly into the victim / perpetrator matrix. Undoubtedly, the Baltic Germans, collectively, are among the roster of victims of the Second World War. When it was over, many had suffered and died, and the community as a whole was irretrievably dislocated and verging on disappearance.

But they were also the temporary beneficiaries of National Socialist crimes and thus co-opted into in the ranks of perpetrators. The farms and apartments given to the Baltic Germans in the Warthegau were forcibly taken by the relevant German authorities from their Polish and Jewish owners to be given over to the settlers. This turnover often occurred within a period of several hours, since cows still needed to be milked and

²³ Numbers, naturally, vary according to source. I have used the most frequently cited numbers.

²⁴ Schechtman, *Population Transfers*, p. 319.

chickens fed. The lodgings came complete with silverware and place settings, linens, furniture, livestock and the like. Thus, the Baltic Germans acquired at no cost moveable and immovable property that was simply stolen wholesale.

The source pool upon which this paper is based does not contain very much information on this subject, as important as it is. In the first place, the Einwandererzentralstelle was not responsible for this aspect of the resettlement and its records therefore do not include very much information about it. That responsibility belonged in large part to the Umwandererzentralstelle (UWZ), although a proliferation of different agencies cooperated or competed for the loot.²⁵ They worked as a pair, the one hand giving, and the other taking away. As for the Baltic Germans themselves, it is not an accident, nor is it particularly surprising, that this aspect of the resettlement process is glaringly absent from their postwar recountings.²⁶

This aspect of the Baltic German experience will not be a major focus of this paper therefore. However, it is important to always remember that the fates of the Baltic Germans were inescapably intertwined in this way with that of the dispossessed Poles and Jews whose property they received. What the Baltic Germans had come directly at the expense of others and this should never be forgotten.

Historiographical Orientation

²⁵ The bulk of the UWZ records are in Polish archives and were not part of the German records captured and filmed by the Allies after the war. They have subsequently been filmed for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum but were not consulted for this project.

²⁶ An example of this convenient memory lapse may be found in the 1985 collection of the stories of Baltic Germans who fled to Canada after the war which reads like a jeremiad: *The Baltic-Germans: Reminiscences*. M.F. Kuester, ed. Edmonton, Canada: Central and East European Studies Society of Alberta, 1985. The interviews held in the LAA collection similarly avoid the subject of the expropriation of Polish and Jewish property.

There flatly exists no in-depth historiography in English dedicated to the Baltic German case specifically, although a number of important works have been written about the resettlement of ethnic Germans generically, and thus of the Baltic Germans in passing. Of these, the major underlying questions investigated through the study of population transfer are those of how the National Socialist system as a whole functioned, as well as its relationship to the ideology of National Socialism and the Holocaust.

The first thorough, scholarly attempt to analyze National Socialist population policy was the book by American Joseph B. Schechtman, *European Population Transfers, 1939-1945*. Research began in 1941 with the sponsorship of the Institute of Jewish Affairs and was completed in 1946. Schechtman's was the definitive study for more than a decade and remains an extremely valuable source, even though not written by an academic historian, as such. Because of the nature of Schechtman's commission and the timing of the book's writing and publication, it is heavily oriented towards a public policy audience. The work was essentially written for what today might be classed as a policy think-tank.

Even this earliest survey of National Socialist resettlement observed that "Faced by a difficult situation, made even more formidable by the density of the population, the Reich laid down two fundamental propositions: first, Polish and Jewish elements must be forcibly dislodged; and second, German colonists must be settled in mass on the soil."²⁷ Thus, a dual policy was being pursued. In order to render feasible the immigration of tens or hundreds of thousands of people, as was envisaged, room had to be made, in keeping with rational economic thinking. "The simplest means of preparing occupational

²⁷ Joseph B. Schechtman. *European Population Transfers, 1939-1945*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1946, pp. 264-65.

opportunities for these persons was the expulsion of the corresponding Polish and Jewish elements from their positions.”²⁸ Schechtman makes the connection plain. “A careful study of the timing of the deportations reveals that they were a kind of function of the transfer operations.”²⁹ Yet, he does not elaborate.

Institutional histories of the RKFDV, the Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle, and, most recently, of RuSHA have been written, the better to understand National Socialism ideologically and in practice. The ways in which competing bureaucracies functioned and the role of the SS and Himmler in the endeavor are the larger underlying themes.

Robert Lewis Koehl built his academic career as an historian of National Socialist Germany, and the SS in particular. His first major work, *RKFDV: German Resettlement and Population Policy, 1939-1945: A History of the Reich Commission for the Strengthening of Germanism*, published in 1957, lay behind his path-breaking new analytical model.³⁰ The SS and its resettlement apparatus is certainly a case-study that lent itself to his new interpretation of the “neofeudal” functioning of the National Socialist state. Koehl’s aim for the book was “to relate the development of the whole program of imperialism via demography to the men and the government of Nazi Germany.”³¹ The outcome was the story of the “proliferation of Himmler’s power.”³²

²⁸ Schechtman, *Population Transfers*, p. 326.

²⁹ Schechtman, *Population Transfers*, p. 267.

³⁰ Koehl, *RKFDV*. The work began as his Harvard University doctoral dissertation. See *Ibid.*, p. ix. According to Lumans, Koehl has an “updated” version of this work: Robert Lewis Koehl. *The Black Corps: The Structure and Power Struggles of the Nazi SS*. Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983. Lumans, Valdis. *Himmler’s Auxiliaries: The Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle and the German National Minorities of Europe, 1933-1945*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993, p. 14. Also see: Robert Lewis Koehl. “A Prelude to Hitler’s Greater Germany,” in *The American Historical Review*. Vol. 59, No. 1 (Oct., 1953), pp. 43-65. Also see: Robert Lewis Koehl. “Feudal Aspects of National Socialism,” in *The American Political Science Review*. Vol. 54, No. 4 (Dec., 1960), pp. 921-933.

Himmler was the biggest ‘winner’ in a multi-dimensional, internecine power struggle within the National Socialist ruling elite that had ramifications for their respective retainers all the way down the line. The ethnic Germans caught in the machine were, to Koehl, simply “pawns” and thus another group to be counted among the victims of National Socialism.³³

Valdis Lumans, a Latvian-American whose childhood memories are of life in a displaced persons’ camp in the American occupation zone in Germany, has also made an important contribution to the historiography of National Socialist resettlement. He chose as his focus the Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle (VoMi), or Ethnic German Liaison Office, and traced its “evolution as a Third Reich institution” within the “chaotic mix of overlapping jurisdictions and competing authorities.”³⁴ He also demonstrated that the entire resettlement effort was even more than a thoroughly National Socialist one – it was defined almost exclusively by the SS. Lumans reached a different conclusion than Koehl on “the question of whether the Volksdeutsche served the Reich as willing accomplices, as ‘Fifth Columns,’ or were instead Nazi victims themselves, caught up in tragic circumstances.”³⁵ To Lumans, they were more than pawns: they were willing subjects and, in many cases, accomplices and collaborators.

³¹ Koehl, *RKFDV*, p. 1. In Koehl’s narrative, “The ethnic Germans were merely poor pawns in [Himmler’s] gambit to win control over this colonial territory.” Koehl, *RKFDV*, p. 74.

³² Koehl, *RKFDV*, p. 31. “The German wartime resettlement and population policy, in the hands of Heinrich Himmler, had been founded on the spur of a few moments of victory” once Poland had been defeated and a partnership with the Soviets formed. Koehl, *RKFDV*, p. 161.

³³ Koehl, *RKFDV*, p. 229. For a much less charitable contemporary account, see: Lundin, C. Leonard. “The Nazification of the Baltic German Minorities.” *Journal of Central European Affairs*. Vol. 7. (April 1947), pp. 1-28.

³⁴ Lumans, *Auxiliaries*, pp. 142, 13.

³⁵ Lumans, *Auxiliaries*, p. 14.

Götz Aly started publishing his own views of the resettlement process in the early 1990s, sparking the next generation of the historiography on National Socialist resettlement policy. Aly's works – in sometime cooperation with Susanne Heim – represented a dual breakthrough: not only did he radically advance historical thinking about the whole resettlement apparatus, but he further, in so doing, advanced the historiography of the Holocaust by directly connecting the two.³⁶ Aly proved the existence of a connection to the Holocaust that was direct and unavoidable and pointed him to certain radical and provocative conclusions.

Aly, it should be noted, was not the first historian to establish a link between the transfer of ethnic Germans into the annexed Polish territories and the simultaneous deportation of Jews to the General Government. As we have seen, even Schechtman was aware of a connection. However, Christopher Browning was the first historian to usefully investigate, in detail, exactly how that connection specifically related to genocide.³⁷ To Browning, the several over-arching demographic plans were in competition: the transfer of ethnic Germans to former Poland, the expulsion of Poles further east, and the expulsion of Jews still further east. While, on the one hand, “Nazi racial policy was radicalized in quantum jumps that coincided with the peaks of German military success,” their actual capacity to carry out their sweeping demographic plans could not match their

³⁶ Because this thesis has been propounded in a number of sources that I am viewing as a whole, but Susanne Heim is only credited for collaborating with Götz Aly on one of them, I will simply refer to Aly as the author in the body text for the sake of convenience. The footnotes will reveal if Susanne Heim should also be credited for a given point.

³⁷ Christopher R. Browning. “Nazi Resettlement and the Search for a Solution to the Jewish Question, 1939-1941,” in *The German Studies Review*. Vol. 9, No. 3 (Oct., 1986), pp. 497-519. This essay was reprinted in Christopher R. Browning. *The Path to Genocide: Essays on Launching the Final Solution*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

ambitions.³⁸ Though Browning's argument is far more nuanced and pays scrupulous attention to chronology, in essence it is that frustration at the difficulty of implementing mass population transfers significantly contributed to the decision for the 'Final Solution.' It proved logistically less feasible to effect the resettlement of so many Jews than to kill them outright. Deportation and resettlement or reservation plans preceded the notion of outright genocide of the Jews. The transfer of ethnic Germans, however, tied up the resources necessary for the expulsion of the Jews to the East. "The Jewish question was just as important, but not as urgent as *volksdeutsch* resettlement."³⁹ The murder of the Jews became, to National Socialist demographic planners, an expedient alternative.

Aly and Heim, several years after Browning put forward this thesis, claimed a far more controversial connection between the transfer of ethnic Germans and the Holocaust. It is for this reason that their thesis represents an important shift in the historiography.

To Aly, "it is clear that the Germans responsible for population policies sought to solve the problems that arose in implementing the *Heim-ins-Reich* program for the ethnic Germans at the expense of the Jews"⁴⁰ from the start. Aly argues that indeed a causal relationship between the two existed. The resettlement operations putatively undertaken on behalf of ethnic Germans were the other side of a coin that cannot be usefully examined in isolation from the events leading to the Holocaust – i.e. the forcible 'evacuation' of Jews from their homes and into ghettos and, eventually, camps. As Aly puts it: "historians have isolated individual questions from the overall context, thus

³⁸ Browning, *Path to Genocide*, p. 27.

³⁹ Browning, *Path to Genocide*, p. 24.

⁴⁰ Götz Aly, '*Final Solution*': *Nazi Population Policy and the Murder of the European Jews*. Belinda Cooper and Allison Brown, trans. London: Arnold, 1999, p. 9. Italics in original.

forfeiting the chance to analyze Himmler's race and resettlement policies in their complex totality and on the basis of their inner logic."⁴¹ One cause of the Holocaust, then, was the necessity of clearing space for ethnic Germans.⁴² Particularly important for the Baltic Germans especially was the availability of urban space – space where Jews were disproportionately concentrated. In view of the evidence Aly presents to demonstrate the fairly obvious link between the mechanism bringing ethnic Germans into the incorporated Polish territories and the – in many ways disquietingly parallel – mechanism forcing Polish Jews out, the wonder is how it was known, but largely ignored, for so long. Or, perhaps more accurately put: while widely acknowledged to have been the recipients of Jewish property on a large scale, Aly is the first to have cast *them* in the role of the wrecking ball.

Aly termed this series of improvisations that eventually gave rise to the Holocaust an “ethnic domino policy” and shows, by focusing on mid-level SS planners, “direct organizational connection between the settlement of ‘ethnic Germans,’ the expulsion of Poles and the deportation and murder of the Jews.”⁴³ It is not simply that the SS, as an organization, was in charge of both the resettlement of ethnic Germans and the implementation of the ‘Final Solution.’ A sizable proportion of upper- and mid-level SS personnel, as individuals, often found themselves executing both policies over the course

⁴¹ Aly, *Final Solution*, p. 11.

⁴² Götz Aly. “‘Jewish Resettlement’: Reflections on the Political Prehistory of the Holocaust,” in *National Socialist Extermination Policies: Contemporary German Perspectives and Controversies*. Ulrich Herbert, ed. Oxford and New York: Berghahn Books, 2000, p. 54. He at times leaves to one side “how the resettlement ought to be weighed in relation to other factors. Presumably, it was also impossible for the actors to discern the overlapping of prejudice, political program, practical benefits, and self-inflicted military and economic predicaments, and finally, the unleashed homicidal urges.”

⁴³ Aly, “‘Jewish Resettlement,’” p. 61. Also: Bade, *Migration*, p. 211.

of their careers.⁴⁴ Interestingly, Aly's argument, in some sense, is encapsulated by his statement that: "When, beginning in the autumn of 1941, German authorities spoke of 'deportation,' 'displacement,' 'resettlement,' or 'evacuation' of Jews while now in fact meaning murder, this should not be seen merely as an effort to camouflage their actions; it also serves as an indication of the evolution of events leading up to the Holocaust."⁴⁵

On this subject, it is important to note that one of Aly's main breaks with the rest of existing scholarship is the way he de-emphasizes the role played by ideology in general, and anti-Semitism in particular, as a driving factor behind the Holocaust. Instead, Aly views the Holocaust as a "byproduct" of the carrying-out of the National Socialists' "real" demographic objective of Germanizing the land. The extermination of the Jews was not a priority in its own right, but a consequence of other ethno-racial policies.

A whole new angle of inquiry into the resettlement of ethnic Germans, National Socialist ideology, and the origins of the Holocaust, will be explored by Doris Bergen in her forthcoming monograph entitled *Hitler's Chosen People: The 'Volksdeutschen' of Eastern Europe in the Second World War*.⁴⁶ While her work is yet to be published in monograph form, it is well worth noting the central points of her new argument as set forth in her recent essay, "The Nazi Concept of 'Volksdeutsche' and the Exacerbation of Anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe, 1939-45," as an indication of new lines in the field. Bergen puts National Socialist ideology at the center of her analysis, using it to help explain the noted anti-Semitism and its violent manifestations that the Germans encountered in Eastern Europe.

⁴⁴ Aly, 'Final Solution,' p. 8.

⁴⁵ Aly, 'Final Solution,' p. 9.

⁴⁶ See: http://kroc.nd.edu/faculty_staff/fellows/bergen.pdf. Accessed 16 March 2008.

The argument focuses on National Socialist language and notions of their racial mission in the East:

In the closed system of National Socialist thought, the mere existence of the Volksdeutsche provided some legitimation for the murder of millions. The idea that ethnic Germans would inherit the homes and possessions of people whom nazi ideology defined as unworthy Jewish lives made the so-called struggle for living space more concrete. At the same time, the notion that pure Germans had somehow been trapped outside the Reich and forced to suffer under alien rule provided Hitler's forces with a pretext to overrun eastern Europe. If the Volksdeutsche had not existed, the nazis might have invented them.⁴⁷

Further, Bergen argues that the nebulous and unstable definition of 'ethnic German,' in itself, enflamed ethnic tensions and, in particular, exacerbated anti-Jewish sentiment. "In a fundamental way, the dichotomy in nazi racial policy between Jews and Volksdeutsche created incentives for open support of anti-Semitic activity."⁴⁸ Their homes, businesses, land, and other property were essentially on the auction block, ready for any takers able to prove their Germanness. In addition to expropriated property, status as an ethnic German conferred other benefits such as additional rations and other privileges. Preservation of oneself and one's family, as well as crude greed, were motivating factors. The easiest way to demonstrate one's Germanness was to act National Socialist.⁴⁹ "[T]he tenuousness of the concept of Volksdeutsche encouraged anti-semitism as a way of establishing German credentials."⁵⁰ This, in turn, compromised such individuals and gave them a stake in the National Socialist project. This line of

⁴⁷ Doris L. Bergen. "The Nazi Concept of 'Volksdeutsche' and the Exacerbation of Anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe, 1939-45." *Journal of Contemporary History*. Vol. 29, No. 4. (Oct., 1994), p. 570. More: "For the purposes of the Einsatzgruppe, the existence of people who could be labeled 'Volksdeutsche' was more important than the cultural or racial authenticity of such claims." Bergen, *Volksdeutsche*, p. 571.

⁴⁸ Bergen, *Volksdeutsche*, p. 571.

⁴⁹ Bergen, *Volksdeutsche*, p. 574.

⁵⁰ Bergen, *Volksdeutsche*, p. 575.

reasoning may also help explain some of the willingness of various Eastern Europeans to help perpetrate the Holocaust. Doris Bergen's forthcoming monograph promises to take the subject in new directions.⁵¹

Interest in the subject of National Socialist population policy and ethnic Germans in Eastern Europe is growing, with at least one very recent dissertation on the subject and possibly more works to follow.⁵²

German-language historiography produced in the Federal Republic of Germany has been relatively kind to the Baltic Germans until recently. For example, a compilation of primary source documents purporting to demonstrate that the Baltic Germans are blameless for their fate is dedicated "To all those who, as a consequence of the partitioning of Eastern Europe into German and Soviet spheres of interest, lost their lives, their freedom, and their homeland."⁵³ It is clear from the context that the Baltic Germans belong to this category.

German-language historiography also showed an initial reluctance to link the story of the Baltic Germans with some of the larger themes mentioned above, particularly the Holocaust. This first phase generally produced jeremiads, possibly written by Baltic Germans themselves.⁵⁴ It seems that the historical profession at large took little interest in

⁵¹ It will also doubtless contribute to our knowledge of German occupation in the East in general, as well.

⁵² Thomas Eric Spring. "The Nazi Resettlement Bureaucracy and the Baltic States of Estonia and Latvia." Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1999. In *ProQuest Digital Dissertations*; available from <http://www.proquest.com>, publication number AAT 9956214; accessed September 9, 2006.

⁵³ "All denen, die als Folge der Aufteilung Osteuropas in eine deutsche und eine sowjetische Interessensphäre ihr Leben, ihre Freiheit und ihre Heimat verloren haben." *Diktierte Option: Die Umsiedlung der Deutsch-Balten aus Estland und Lettland, 1939-1941*. Dietrich A. Loeber, (Hg.). Neumünster: Karl Wachholtz Verlag, 1972.

⁵⁴ See, for example: Rimscha, Hans von. *Die Umsiedlung der deutschbalten aus Lettland im Jahre 1939*. Hannover-Döhren: Hirschheydt, 1960. Also see: Kroeger, Erhardt. *Der Auszug aus der alten Heimat: Die Umsiedlung der Baltendeutschen*. Tübingen, 1967.

them. Until the 1980s, most works adopt this usual framing: “Voluntary return home, or dictated option?”⁵⁵ According to the logic, if the Baltic Germans left voluntarily, this means that they believed in National Socialism, and ergo, are undeserving of sympathy. But if the oxymoronic “dictated option” was in fact the reason that they left their homes – that is, that they had no realistic choice but to comply with the terms set by the National Socialists – then theirs is a tragic story. The latter case is usually made.⁵⁶

More recent German-language historiography on the Baltic Germans is significantly more sophisticated.⁵⁷ Isabel Heinemann has also made an important contribution to the study of National Socialist population and resettlement policy, published a staggeringly in-depth institutional history of another RKFDV appurtenance in her 2003 *‘Rasse, Siedlung, deutsches Blut’: Das Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamt der SS und die rassenpolitische Neuordnung Europas*.⁵⁸ Though a tome, this work is highly interesting as it follows the lives and careers of one hundred ‘racial experts’ in the employ of the Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamt (RuSHA), or Race and Settlement Main Office, and attempts to assess their impact on the overall resettlement project as they floated through the various relevant organs, offering their ‘expertise.’ Heinemann, unlike most of the historians who preceded her, seems to think that the RuSHA is more

⁵⁵ “Freiwillige Heimkehr oder diktierte Option?” from Garleff, Michael. “Umsiedlung und Zweiter Weltkrieg,” in *Deutsche Geschichte im Osten Europas Baltische Länder*. Gert von Pistohlkors, ed. Berlin: Siedler Verlag, 1994. p. 534.

⁵⁶ Perhaps the last such work was Jürgen von Hehn. *Die Umsiedlung der baltischen Deutschen – das letzte Kapitel balteutscher Geschichte*. Marburg/Lahn: J.G. Herder Institut, 1984.

⁵⁷ It should also be pointed out that Aly and Heim wrote in German – I have used English-language translations for ease.

⁵⁸ Isabel Heinemann. *‘Rasse, Siedlung, deutsches Blut’: Das Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamt der SS und die rassenpolitische Neuordnung Europas*. Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2003.

important to understanding the unfolding of National Socialist population policy than the RKFDV or VoMi.

Heinemann also is ready to agree with Aly about the indivisible nature of the resettlement and the Holocaust. “It is to Götz Aly’s credit to have linked the analysis of National Socialist nationality politics with Holocaust research in the first place.”⁵⁹ She does not, however, go as far as he regarding the merely bureaucratic causes behind them, instead according great weight to National Socialist racial ideology – its “Kernelement” – as the primary driving factor.⁶⁰ Driven by ideology, they actively participated in the attempt to impose plastic surgery on the ethnographic face of Europe. Heinemann argues that the RuSHA exerted more influence on the goals and outcome of the program than previous scholars have credited it for.

Heinemann is in fundamental agreement with Aly and Heim that the need to make room for ethnic German settlers provided impetus to the deportation of Jews as well as the vast majority of Poles, who were judged racially un-Germanizable. However, the Holocaust is only at the center of her work by implication. Interestingly, as Heinemann traces the RuSHA and its personnel over time, she integrates National Socialist racial policies in the

⁵⁹ “Es ist das Verdienst Götz Alys, die Analyse der nationalsozialistischen Volkstumspolitik überhaupt erst mit der Holocaust-Forschung verknüpft zu haben. Heinemann, *Neuordnung Europas*, p. 36. “It is to Götz Aly’s credit to have directly connected the analysis of National Socialist population policy with Holocaust research.”

⁶⁰ Heinemann, *Neuordnung Europas*, p. 10. The book seems to contain a large number of typographical mistakes – understandable for a book nearly 700 pages long. On this same page, Raphaël Lemkin is referred to as Robert Lemkin.

occupied West with those in the East. This contribution alone is extremely valuable, as previous studies seem to have isolated West and East not only as simply different cases, but actually almost unconnected. Yet the same National Socialist organs and, often, even personnel had responsibility over both.

II. THE HISTORY OF THE BALTIC GERMANS, 1200-1939

This section will provide the necessary context in an abbreviated form, with the object of showing that, by and large, the Baltic Germans were a disaffected minority accustomed to past privilege in lands where they now faced increasing persecution. Although their conditions were objectively not by any means poor, and in comparison with ethnic Germans elsewhere downright princely, they still had some reason to look to National Socialist Germany for support.

Drang Nach Osten

National Socialist propaganda was often filled with images hearkening back to the medieval glory days of the Holy Roman Empire. It is one of the ironies of the effective dissolution of the Baltic Germans by the National Socialists that the Baltic Germans, as a group, had the closest historical ties to to this propaganda hobbyhorse.⁶¹ Their history in the Baltic began in the late 1100s, first as merchants, then as, literally, crusaders. National Socialist notions of conquering and civilizing the East often explicitly hearkened back to the original “Drang nach Osten.” A variety of indigenous tribes living along the Baltic Sea were subdued militarily, converted, and enserfed.

⁶¹ Also ironically, the so-called ‘neo-feudal’ model of analyzing National Socialist governance propounded by Robert Lewis Koehl was perhaps inspired by research into the RKFDV. See especially: Koehl, Robert Lewis. “Feudal Aspects of National Socialism,” in *The American Political Science Review*. Vol. 54, No. 4 (Dec., 1960), pp. 921-933.

Ruling Class Under Other Empires

Until the 1920s, the descendants of these conquerors, known as ‘Baltic Germans,’ enjoyed the lion’s share of political and economic control in Latvia, whether the territory was officially a part of Poland-Lithuania as it was in the 1500s, the Kingdom of Sweden as it was in the 1600s, or under the Tsars, as it was from the Great Northern War until the 1917 Russian Revolution.

Courland and Livonia came under Tsarist rule beginning in the early 1700s – the spoils of the Great Northern War with Sweden. The Baltic Germans continued to dominate the political, economic, and religious life in Livonia and Courland, as they had since the 1200s. By the eve of the 20th Century, suppressing the Latvians’ burgeoning nationalism was becoming a full-time job for Tsarist officials and their Baltic German collaborators. It is no coincidence that at the same time, the first sizable classes of Latvian university students were graduating. Prior to this emergence of Latvian national consciousness, upwardly mobile elements of the indigenous population tended to assimilate into the ranks of the Baltic Germans, even going so far as to adopt German names.⁶² This was actually judged a “Volkstumswchsel,” or change of ethnicity or nationality. Another advantage of this strategy sprung from the danger of the development of hereditary diseases in small, endogamous communities – a phenomenon always common to aristocratic classes everywhere. Baltic Germans were forced to “Germanize” Latvians to sustain a healthy gene pool throughout the 19th century and probably before. Racialist ideas were apparently not part of Baltic German discourse at

⁶² Gershon Shafir. *Immigrants and Nationalists: Ethnic Conflict and Accommodation in Catalonia, the Basque Country, Latvia, and Estonia*. New York: State University of New York Press, 1995, p. 132. Also see: Georg von Rauch. *The Baltic States: The Years of Independence, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, 1917-1940*. Gerald Onn, trans. Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1974, p. 7.

that time. In fact, one important study of the Baltic Germans during the second half of the nineteenth century found that their “belief that linguistic nationality was a subsidiary function of social class” led them “to view Latvian nationalism as a false front for social radicalism.”⁶³

When a hail of Tsarist bullets felled the priest Gapon in St. Petersburg, the relatively industrialized Baltic territories were ripe for an insurgency. The 1905 Revolution began in Riga’s factories as a movement directed at factory owners, many of whom were Baltic Germans, and turned into an agrarian revolt as news spread to the countryside and outlying towns. If the first phase was directed primarily against the partly Baltic German owners of the means of production in Riga and the Russian autocracy that protected them, then the second phase moved against the landed German aristocracy. The Baltic German presence was not as thick on the ground in small towns and rural areas as it was in urban industrial centers, but it was even more disproportionately influential. Here, the 1905 Revolution manifested itself in attacks by Latvian peasants on their German landlord’s latifundia.⁶⁴ Though by now much of the farmland of Livonia and Courland was formally owned by Latvians after their emancipation in 1817, they were still beholden in many ways to their wealthier Baltic German neighbors, and the resentment ran deep.⁶⁵

⁶³ Anders Henriksson. *The Tsar’s Loyal Germans: The Riga German Community: Social Change and the Nationality Question, 1855-1905*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1983, p. 107. It should also be remembered that Baltic German identity was by no means homogeneous and was itself riven by class conflicts. For example, “Questions like the propriety of artisan women extending their hands to be kissed by upper class gentlemen could assume crisis proportions” even after 1905 during supposedly pan-German nationalist gatherings! *Ibid.*, p. 114.

⁶⁴ Pun intended.

⁶⁵ For example, if the local Baltic Germans did not own the land that the Latvians worked (no longer actually owning the Latvians themselves), they would still typically own the mill that everyone needed to

A Latvian peasant militia constituted itself at the local level and something akin to a civil war broke out across the countryside of Livonia and Courland between rampaging peasants and a Baltic German militia, the Selbstschutz. Committees were elected to replace authority in Latvian villages and rural communes that had overthrown their Baltic German landlords or former-landlords and chased out any Russian police or military presence. Hundreds of farms and manors were burned, hundreds of partisans died on both sides. Martial law was declared from St. Petersburg, but the Tsar's government only regained control with the introduction of large numbers of Russian troops who took time to mobilize and arrive on station. In the interim period, the Baltic Germans were forced to hold their own. Order was not restored until December. The Revolution of 1905 lasted throughout the entire year in the Baltic territories.

The Tsar and the Baltic Germans cooperated in putting down the 1905 Revolution. Punitive expeditions were dispatched by St. Petersburg and were assisted by local Baltic Germans who pointed out who their targets should be. Much destruction of Latvian life and property ensued. A similar story played out in Estonia, although the bloodletting was not quite as severe.

World War One and the War of Independence

At the outbreak of the First World War, many Baltic Germans served in the Tsarist Army against German troops from the Kaiserreich. Because of their socioeconomic background, Baltic Germans were disproportionately represented in the officer corps. It seems that when the Russians began to lose badly, many either switched

use. They might also rent out horses or other draught animals or have exclusive hunting rights in forests. They would likely employ Latvian girls in their households. Others in nearby towns might sell Latvians clothing, tools, alcohol, etc.

sides or deserted. In 1917, prominent Baltic Germans even approached the Kaiser seeking to add the annexation of the Baltic territories in the form of the abortive “United Baltic Duchy” to the German war aims – a lobbying effort that, regardless of how seriously it was taken by the German government itself – not very – is a damning testimony to their relations with Latvians and Estonians.⁶⁶

In the chaos of the Russian Civil War between the Reds and the Whites, Latvians declared an independent state on 18 November 1918. There was open warfare between Estonians and Latvians allied against the Baltic Germans’ Baltische Landeswehr, German Freikorps freebooters, and associated Russian White reactionaries. This fighting continued for an entire year. The Latvians, Estonians, and remaining German forces then united in the face of the Red Army, which they repelled in 1920. By this time, everyone was tired of fighting, apparently, because they stopped.

Minority in Free States, 1920 – 1934

Especially in light of their perfidious plans to have Latvia and Estonia annexed to the Kaiserreich and their support of Freikorps depredations, what happened to the Baltic Germans during Latvia’s independence – and what did not happen to them – is quite remarkable. This minority had actively been killing Latvians and Estonians and had been deliberately acting to prevent Latvian and Estonian independence not only in the dim fog of remote antiquity, but within everyone’s living memory.

Latvian minority policy actually showed extraordinary forbearance and an understanding of the need for coexistence in the initial, parliamentary phase. While of

⁶⁶ See in this regard: Koehl, Robert Lewis. “A Prelude to Hitler’s Greater Germany,” in *The American Historical Review*. Vol. 59, No. 1 (Oct., 1953), pp. 43-65.

course punishing guilty individuals severely, Latvia's parliament, the Seima, refrained from punitive measures against the group as a whole.⁶⁷ They were citizens. They could vote.

Land reform was the harshest or most hard-hitting policy, and the one the Baltic Germans complained the most loudly about. The breakup and parceling out of the anachronistic and inefficient large estates would probably have eventually occurred according to the dictates of economics, and it far from utterly dispossessed the rural Baltic Germans. Still, these properties were regarded as ancient birthrights, and the policy rankled.

In the cities and larger towns, Baltic Germans had their own German-language schools. They were allowed to serve in the Latvian armed forces and their veterans received the same pensions as ethnic Latvians. Every week, German-language sermons were delivered in the Dom Cathedral, Rīga's largest. Baltic Germans were fairly represented in the universities. They were also able to form all manner of cultural and political groups through which to protect their rights.

There were, of course, exceptions to the general rule of Latvian tolerance. A radical Latvian nationalist group called the Perkonkrūsts, or Thundercross, hated the Baltic Germans even more than they hated the Russian Communists. The Latvian public,

⁶⁷ Statistics compiled by the Einwandererzentralstelle on the Baltic German resettlers of the winter of 1939-40 revealed that of a total of 61,934 potential settlers, only 27,433, or 44.29% were male. While this has, in part, economic reasons, as young men were the most likely to emigrate in search of work in the 1930s, the male population was, indeed, decimated in the course of the War for Independence. NARA II. T 74. R 16. RDV. 127. 387899. Der Reichsführer SS. Reichskommissar für die Festigung deutschen Volkstums. Der Menscheneinsatz: Grundsätze, Anordnungen, und Richtlinien. "Zahlenangaben über die einzelnen Umsiedlergruppen." 15. Oktober 1940. "Estland: insgesamt: 12,868 männlich: 5,892 weiblich: 34,501; Lettland: insgesamt: 49,066 männlich: 21,541 weiblich: 27,525; Est- und Lettland: insgesamt: 61,934 männlich: 27,433 weiblich: 34,501."

however, though its representative institutions, appears to have largely given its assent to their government's basically benign policy towards the Baltic German minority.

Minority Under Dictatorship, 1934 – 1939

Even under the so-called 'benevolent dictator' Kārlis Ulmanis, from 1934 until the takeover by the Soviet Union in 1939, Baltic Germans could hardly complain of widespread discrimination, much less the real sort of persecution that ethnic minorities faced in Romania, Lithuania, or, say, Germany. Ulmanis, for example, banned the radical nationalist group Perkonkrūsts, and otherwise tried to avoid drawing the attention of the Third Reich. There was still plenty of xenophobic nationalist rhetoric in the air, but this was Eastern Europe in the 1930s.⁶⁸

For their part, however, the Baltic Germans showed increasing sympathy for Hitler and the Third Reich, especially among the youth, which only knew growing up as a minority in countries in which they had little say in politics or the economy.⁶⁹ They were the only subset of the Baltic German population that strongly favored Hitler, impressed as they were, no doubt, by his foreign policy achievements and rhetoric about a united Germandom. It should also be remembered here, that in the context of the worldwide economic Depression, many young, male Baltic Germans emigrated in search of work, thus reducing further their proportion of the population. However, popular support for the

⁶⁸ For the only work I know of that deals with the particular topic of the Baltic Germans as an international issue between Germany and Latvia, please see: Valdis Lumans. "The Role of the Baltic German Minority in the Relations Between National Socialist Germany and Latvia, 1933-1941." Master's Thesis, The University of Florida, 1972. Although a Master's Thesis, this is an incredible work. It should also be noted that Lumans would go on to become probably the foremost expert on Latvia and the Second World War in the United States.

⁶⁹ The Baltic Germans constituted 2.96% of the population of Latvia according to the 1935 census, or 56,441 individuals. Alfreds Bilmanis. "Grandeur and Decline of the German Balts." *Slavonic and East European Review*. American Series, Vol. 3, No. 4. (Dec., 1944), p. 64.

National Socialists was never particularly strong in Latvia, and certainly did not approach the level of organized agitation of, say, the Sudeten Germans.⁷⁰ The Baltic German population according to the 1935 census stood at 62,144, or 3.19% of Latvia's total population.⁷¹ Estonia's Baltic German population was less than a quarter of that of Latvia, and made up an even smaller proportion of the total population.

⁷⁰ It should also be noted that the National Socialist regime never expended much effort on trying to recruit the Baltic Germans to its side, only setting up one National Socialist proxy organization in each country.

⁷¹ *Experiencing Totalitarianism: The Invasion and Occupation of Latvia by the USSR and Nazi Germany, 1939-1991: A Documentary History*. Andrejs Plakans, ed. Bloomington, Indiana: AuthorHouse, 2007, p. 13.

III. UMSIEDLUNG

It is vital to remember that the movement of the Baltic Germans took place in three waves – 1939/40, 1941, and 1944/45 – and that the nature and the content of these migrations changed over time. The relatively orderly, largely ideologically inspired immigration and resettlement in 1939/40 changed to the hasty departure of refugees evacuating Soviet-occupied Latvia in 1941, and finally mass flight before the resurgent Red Army in 1944/45.

One useful source – but one which must be used carefully – for information about the attitudes of the Baltic Germans themselves towards the first resettlement is the collection of interviews compiled in 1958 and 1959 by the German Federal Archives, in association with the Baltic Historical Commission. Most of the 50 or so interviewees were males who were prominent in Baltic German society at the time and who assisted the National Socialists in the resettlement effort.⁷² Some even became Party members. Their comments must be weighed accordingly, but are nevertheless a tempting source for insights into the mentality of the Baltic Germans and the Zeitgeist.

Strikingly, almost every interviewee independently introduced the topic of the Reichstag speech given by Hitler on 6 October 1939 with which this paper opened – and said that it was a bolt from the blue. One Baltic German youth leader, who was

⁷² Two interviewees, or 4%, were female.

presumably a Movement stalwart, related that “I also found it very difficult, that an old, culturally European land, a land in which the Germans had, for centuries been the leading strata and that in many respects bore a German face, just simply with a few words and with the stroke of a quill was relinquished.”⁷³ He was far from alone, if the interviewees are to be believed. According to another: “The selling out of the Baltics to the Bolsheviks, I viewed as Hitler betraying the West.”⁷⁴ There was real disillusionment, real disappointment. Another said: “I have to say personally that [the news] affected me like a blow from a club.”⁷⁵ Even committed National Socialist Baltic Germans had grave doubts as to the wisdom of the resettlement. A member of the Praesidium of the Volksgemeinschaft, the National Socialist proxy organization in Estonia, said 14 years later: “My family and I were naturally appalled.”⁷⁶ A youth activist said:

Yes, I am one of those who belonged to the [National Socialist] Movement, who very openly worked for it, and belonged at that time with the leadership of the youth, this mobilized youth. The news of the resettlement hit me with a terrible shock. I was altogether distressed. I wrote in my diary at the time this comparison: everything for which we had lived dissolved like a snowman we made as children melting in the spring. I naturally thought about everything our ethnic group had established in the course of 700 years, and how it was to disappear, just like a melting snowman. And the question: Has all of this been to any significance, have

⁷³ LAA. Ost-Dok. 14/7. Nr. I/35. “Die Umsiedlung der Baltischen Volksgruppe zu Beginn des 2. Weltkrieges. Tonbandaussage. Arved Freiherr von Taube, Dr. phil.” 6. Dezember 1958, p. 7. “Ich empfand es auch sehr schwer, daß ein altes europäisches Kulturland, ein Land, in dem die Deutschen seit Jahrhunderten die führende Schicht gewesen waren und das in mancher Hinsicht ein deutsches Gesicht trug, nun eigentlich mit wenigen Worten und mit einem Federstrich preisgegeben wurde.” Von Taube was Leiter des Amtes für Jugend- und Volkstumsarbeit.

⁷⁴ LAA. Ost-Dok. 14/7. Nr. I/37. “Die Umsiedlung der Baltischen Volksgruppe zu Beginn des 2. Weltkrieges. Tonbandaussage. Dr. Wolfgang Wachsmuth.” 28. April 1959, p. 2. “In der Preisgabe des Baltikums an die Bolschewisten sah ich einen Verrat Hitlers am Westen.”

⁷⁵ LAA. Ost-Dok. 14/8. Nr. I/39. “Die Umsiedlung der Baltischen Volksgruppe zu Beginn des 2. Weltkrieges. Tonbandaussage. Prakt. Tierarzt Victor Wessling/Wassiljew.” 16. Oktober 1959, p. 7. “Ich muß sagen, daß sie auf mich persönlich wie ein Keulenschlag gewirkt hat...”

⁷⁶ LAA. Ost-Dok. 14/7. Nr. I/37. “Die Umsiedlung der Baltischen Volksgruppe zu Beginn des 2. Weltkrieges. Tonbandaussage. Dr. Wolfgang Wachsmuth.” 28. April 1959, p. 1. “Ich und die Meinen waren natürlich erschüttert.”

these many generations who spent their lives for this land lived to any purpose, is not their entire meaning shattered by this resettlement?...These were the most difficult hours of my life, where I had to come to terms with the resettlement.⁷⁷

And yet another said, “The reaction to the news, that the resettlement of the east German ethnic splinters referred also to us, was consternation, absolute consternation.”⁷⁸ This theme – that the speech was entirely unanticipated by all but perhaps the very highest-level Baltic Germans to whom forewarning was apparently given in strictest confidence by Reich agents – pervaded the entire collection of interviews.

In the telling of the story, many Baltic Germans after the war couched their decision to resettle as no real decision at all, because there was also fear. The Soviet threat, in these narratives, was so great and so obvious that remaining behind was seen as suicide:

The situation was so clear-cut that there was no further need to question why I am participating in the resettlement, which ideational motives are causing me to. Rather, it was simply the preservation of physical existence... Others may have more or less followed from purely National Socialist motives without any doubts about the resettlement. All of these different groups... the absolute primary question: to remain and be Bolshevized, or to go to Germany.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ LAA. Ost-Dok. 14/2. “Pastor Balthasar von Bremen.” 1959. Pp.12-13. “Ich bin ja einer, der zur [NS] Bewegung gehört hat, der ganz exponiert dort gearbeitet hat, und einer, der eben damals zur Führung der Jugend, dieser bewegten Jugend – gehörte. Mich hat auf die Nachricht von der Umsiedlung wie ein furchtbarer Schock getroffen. Ich war vollkommen verzweifelt. Ich habe in meinem Tagebuch damals der Vergleich geschrieben: alles, wofür wir gelebt haben, das sinkt zusammen, wie ein Schneeburg, die wir als Kinder gebaut hatten, im Frühling zusammenschmolz. Ich habe natürlich daran gedacht wie unsere Volksgruppe im Laufe der ganzen 700 Jahre diese Land gebaut hat, und nun dies alles zusammensinkt, eben gerade wie ein Schneeburg, die zusammenschmilzt, und die Frage: Hat das alles überhaupt einen Sinn gehabt, haben diese vielen Generationen, die ihr Leben für dieses Land eingesetzt haben überhaupt noch sinnvoll gelebt, ist nicht ihr ganzen Sinn durch diese Umsiedlung zerbrochen? ... Es sind in meinem Leben mit die schwersten Stunden gewesen, die Stunden, wo ich mich mit der Umsiedlung abfinden mußten.”

⁷⁸ LAA. Ost-Dok. 14/2. Nr. I/5.“Die Umsiedlung der Baltischen Volksgruppe zu Beginn des 2. Weltkrieges. Tonbandaussage. Dr. phil. Heinrich Bosse.” 10. Oktober 1958, p. 7 “Die Reaktion auf die Nachricht, daß die Umsiedlung ostdeutscher Volkssplinter sich auch auf uns selbst bezog, war Bestürzung, schlechthin Bestürzung!” “Bestürzung” could also be translated as “confusion.”

⁷⁹ LAA. Ost-Dok. 14/7. Nr. I/34.“Die Umsiedlung der Baltischen Volksgruppe zu Beginn des 2. Weltkrieges. Tonbandaussage. Dr. jur. Werner Sticinsky.” 15. November 1958. pp. 15-16. “Die Situation war so eindeutig, daß gar nicht mehr danach gefragt zu werden brauchte, warum schließe ich mich der Umsiedlung an, welche ideellen Motive veranlassen mich dazu? Sondern es ging

Other Baltic Germans were able to find other ways to rationalize their decision to resettle. For example: “I am of the opinion that wars have the peculiarity of accelerating developments that are at hand. Seen this way, the resettlement of the German Balts out of Estonia [and Latvia] was a premature, but inevitable, conclusion, sooner or later, of a history of many hundreds of years, which we truly need not be ashamed of.”⁸⁰

The period was full of turmoil for the Baltic Germans, and rumors flew. In the unstable international situation, the Baltic Germans were reminded of the violence between themselves and the Latvian and Estonian populations only two decades before. Fear of being ethnically cleansed had some currency.

The German envoy didn't seem to consider this atmosphere of panic unjustified and unfounded, but asked us to consider what [else, other than resettlement elsewhere] one could do to rescue the German population. He saw the situation thusly: that probably Russian troops would march in, but before they would be able to occupy the land, there would be an interregnum during which the mob would control the country.⁸¹

This view was perhaps held by a tiny minority of Baltic Germans, and there is even some reason to believe that National Socialist functionaries were responsible for

einfach um die Erhaltung der physischen Existenz...Es mögen andere aus rein nationalsozialistischen Motiven sich mehr oder weniger ohne Bedenken der Umsiedlung angeschlossen haben. Alle diese verschiedenen Gruppen... absolut primären Frage: dableiben und bolschewisiert zu werden, oder nach Deutschland zu gehen.”

⁸⁰ LAA. Ost-Dok. 14/6. Nr. I/26.“Die Umsiedlung der Baltischen Volksgruppe zu Beginn des 2. Weltkrieges. Bericht. Dr. Bruno Meyer-Landrut.” Januar 1959, pp. 5-6. “Ich bin der Meinung, dass Kriege die Eigenheit haben, vorhandene Entwicklungen zu beschleunigen. So gesehen, war die Umsiedlung der deutschen Balten aus Estland ein zwar zu früh gezogener, aber über kurz oder lang unabwendbarer Schlußstrich under eine vielhundertjährige Geschichte, der wir uns wahrlich nicht zu schämen brauchen.” It should be noted that this source was not an interview, but a response to a questionnaire.

⁸¹ LAA. Ost-Dok. 14/7.“Die Umsiedlung der Baltischen Volksgruppe zu Beginn des 2. Weltkrieges. Tonbandaussage. Dr. jur. Edgar Schwarz,” p. 15. “Der deutsche Gesandte schien diese Panikstimmung nicht für unberechtigt und unbegründet zu halten, sondern gab uns zu überlegen, was man zur Rettung der deutschen Bevölkerung des Landes tun könnte. Er sah die Situation so, daß wahrscheinlich die russische Truppen einmarschieren würden, bis zur Besetzung des Landes durch die Truppen aber ein Interregnum entstehen würde, wo der Mob das Land beherrschen würde.”

introducing the idea into the discourse as a means of frightening the Baltic Germans into compliance. However, the rumor mill of the Baltic Germans did not even exclude such heresies as the following: "...the opinion that Hitler had actually only expressed a wish of Stalin" when he ordered the Baltic Germans to leave Latvia and Estonia. "Whether or not that's true, I don't know."⁸²

For many Baltic Germans, the actual moment of departure was the most difficult emotionally – probably much more difficult than the actual question of whether to stay or go. "They [the Estonians] saw the danger from the East...They understood how badly we felt to abandon Estonia. It was actually so, that when we boarded our ship in Reval to leave our homeland and Deutschland über Alles followed immediately by the Estonian national anthem were played – many broke into tears."⁸³

If postwar accounts are to be believed, even staunch supporters of the National Socialists had grave misgivings about the resettlement project, although they ultimately obeyed. Latvian and Estonian pressure was virtually nonexistent at either the governmental or popular levels. It should also be remembered that, under the provisions of the treaties signed between Germany and Latvia and Estonia, any Baltic Germans choosing to remain behind would no longer enjoy collective political rights as a protected minority in those countries. The pull of so many Baltic Germans eventually deciding to opt for resettlement, coupled with the push of the knowledge of becoming more isolated

⁸² LAA. Ost-Dok. 14/7. "Die Umsiedlung der Baltischen Volksgruppe zu Beginn des 2. Weltkrieges. Tonbandaussage. Dr. jur. Edgar Schwarz," p. 18. "...der Ansicht, daß Hitler eigentlich nur einen Wunsch Stalins ausgesprochen hat. Ob das stimmt, weiß ich nicht."

⁸³ LAA. Ost-Dok. 14/3. Nr. I/12. "Die Umsiedlung der Baltischen Volksgruppe zu Beginn des 2. Weltkrieges. Tonbandaussage. Dr. med. Werner von Glasenapp." 12. Oktober 1958, p. 6. "Sie sahen das Gefahr aus dem Osten...Sie verstanden, wie schwer es uns fiel, Estland zu verlassen. Es war tatsächlich so, daß als wir in Reval auf das Schiff stiegen und die Heimat verließen und das Deutschlandlied und gleich darauf die estnische Nationalhymne gesspielt wurde – viele in Tränen ausbrochen."

and vulnerable as an even smaller minority in Latvia and Estonia probably swayed many of those who sitting on the fence. By far the single most important push factor behind it all, however, was fear of the Soviet threat.

The Moving Process During the First Resettlement

The state-owned media praised a smoothly executed and streamlined, modern resettlement process and insisted on strict ‘message control.’⁸⁴ The reality was, predictably, rather less rose-colored, both for the state and party functionaries charged with executing it, and for the Baltic Germans themselves, albeit for different reasons.

Almost immediately, the National Socialists’ vision collided with reality. To begin with, the ‘racially pure’ group turned out to be a far cry from the superior ‘human material’ the National Socialists had fantasized about finding in the Baltic Germans.⁸⁵ The demographic makeup of the Baltic Germans did not compare favorably with that of the Reich in terms of proportions of fighting and working-age men. As already mentioned, statistics compiled on the settlers revealed that of a total of 61,934 potential settlers, only 27,433, or 44.29% were male.⁸⁶ And from that number could be deducted a high percentage who were too old to work or fight. Indeed, the population also had a significantly disproportionate number of elderly people, particularly women aged 50 and

⁸⁴ BAB. R69/1130. 1. Einwandererzentralstelle Gotenhafen. SS-Sturmbannführer Dr. Sandberger. An das Reichssicherheitshauptamt. Betr.: Propagandistische Behandlung der Baltenaktion.” 15.10.1939. Point number one was: “To prevent the arrival of foreign journalists.” “Ankunft von Auslandsjournalisten zu verhindern.”

⁸⁵ “Menschenmaterial,” or “human material” was a term in common usage to describe people and communities, in nakedly utilitarian terms, as to their potential use to the state.

⁸⁶ NARA II. T 74. R 16. RDV. 127. 387899. Der Reichsführer SS. Reichskommissar für die Festigung deutschen Volkstums. Der Menscheneinsatz: Grundsätze, Anordnungen, und Richtlinien. “Zahlenangaben über die einzelnen Umsiedlergruppen.” 15. Oktober 1940. “Estland: insgesamt: 12,868 männlich: 5,892 weiblich: 34,501; Lettland: insgesamt: 49,066 männlich: 21,541 weiblich: 27,525; Est- und Lettland: insgesamt: 61,934 männlich: 27,433 weiblich: 34,501.”

up.⁸⁷ To National Socialist thinking, such people could not fight, labor, or breed and thus, especially in wartime, were ‘useless mouths.’ Just as disappointing, if not even more so, was the unexpectedly high percentage of Baltic Germans who were sick or disabled.

According to EWZ evaluators, there was “an exceptionally high percentage of sick people and invalids among the Baltic group.”⁸⁸ It appears that the EWZ was so under-prepared to care for all of these sick individuals that it was compelled to request medical resources from the Wehrmacht.⁸⁹ Among the elderly were many suffering from heart conditions, diabetes, and angina. Also, cases of flu, bronchitis, diphtheria, “nutritional disturbances,” measles, and almost a dozen suspected cases of scarlet fever were found among young Baltic German children.⁹⁰

Curiously, a special transport seems to have been organized for several hundred Baltic Germans suffering from mental illnesses. Among them were cases of *dementia senilis*, schizophrenia, psychosis, “idiocy,” epilepsy, “mania,” organic brain damage, and, perhaps not surprisingly, depression. Not to be excluded were two full-blown psychopaths.⁹¹ It is ironic that the apparatus would have bothered transporting and

⁸⁷ See the chart in: BAB. R 69/1021. 25. “Der Altersaufbau der bis einschl. 31.1.1940 erfasster Rückwanderer aus Est- und Lettland und des Deutschen Reichs (Altes Reichsgebiet mit ehem. Österreich; Stand vom 1.1.1939). 31.1.1940.

⁸⁸ BAB. R 69/646. 5. “Der Verbindungsführer bei der Gauleitung Pommern. An die Einwandererzentralstelle Gotenhafen und an das Einsatzkommando VI mit der Bitte um Weiterleitung an SS,-Stubaf. Tschierschky zu Kenntnisnahme an Sicherheitshauptamt III E S. Betr.: Unterbringung der Kranken und Gebrechlichen im Gau Pommern. 31. Oktober 1939. “...eines besonders hohen Prozentsatzes von Kranken und Gebrechlichen bei den Baltischen Volksgruppen.”

⁸⁹ BAB. R 69/646. 6. “Der Verbindungsführer bei der Gauleitung Pommern. An die Einwandererzentralstelle Gotenhafen und an das Einsatzkommando VI mit der Bitte um Weiterleitung an SS,-Stubaf. Tschierschky zu Kenntnisnahme an Sicherheitshauptamt III E S. Betr.: Unterbringung der Kranken und Gebrechlichen im Gau Pommern.” 31. Oktober 1939.

⁹⁰ BAB. R 69/728. 20-23. “Erkrankte Baltendeutsche in Posener Krankenhäuser.” 13.11.39.

⁹¹ BAB. R 69/1015. 1-8.

processing these individuals even as, simultaneously, the regime was preparing to kill such people living in the Reich as “life unworthy of life” under the auspices of the T4 “euthanasia” program. Local German operatives involved in the resettlement would not have had knowledge of the T4 program, however. It is also possible that the families of these individuals and perhaps even the Latvian government insisted that they be included in the resettlement operation. At higher levels of the SS, the decision to transport such people may have been considered a useful smokescreen for the T4 program or it may simply have been a public relations decision. Their fate is unknown.

At least one Baltic German actually died during transport. The steamship *Steuben*, arriving at the port of Stettin on 9 November 1939, brought settlers from Riga, Mitau, Dünaburg, and Wolmar.⁹² Typically, these included 845 men, 1,350 women, 607 children aged 1-15, and 72 nursing infants. Among them, 66 individuals were classified as sick. One corpse was also aboard. After disembarkation, four rail transports took them to Posen, where they were to be temporarily housed in two schools.⁹³

A Latvian contemporary, who spent the war in exile in America, claimed in late 1944 that the Baltic Germans, on arriving in occupied Poland, immediately realized that they had made a mistake and renamed Gotenhafen, their main port of call, “Totenhafen,” or “harbor of the dead. In contrast, Latvia, or Lettland, was remembered by the resettlers as “Fettland,” or “fat land.”⁹⁴

⁹² That is, Rīga, Jelgava, Daugavpils, and Valmiera – all cities in Latvia.

⁹³ BAB. R 69/1127. 141. “Information. Posen.” 10.11.1939. This was not uncommon. Before their ultimate settlement in apartments or on farms, most Baltic Germans awaited their processing in schools, dormitories, athletic gymnasia, and other large public facilities, sleeping on floors with few hot meals.

⁹⁴ Alfreds Bilmanis. “Grandeur and Decline of the German Balts.” *Slavonic and East European Review*. American Series, Vol. 3, No. 4. (Dec., 1944), p. 77.

Yet the first resettlement was carried out as a model resettlement in as humane a fashion as possible. Several striking snapshots will suffice to demonstrate that the National Socialists conducted this population transfer like none other.

Impatiently awaiting early reports on the progress of the transportation of the Baltic Germans, SS-Sturmbannführer Tschierschky at the EWZ headquarters, which was still in Posen at the time, wrote: “The arrival of the animal transports is to be reported on next. When, for example, did the dog transport enter port?”⁹⁵ The transportation of sizeable numbers of farm animals that had economic utility, such as cattle, might be expected. But this document indicates that care was even taken to ensure the safe transport of the Baltic Germans’ pets.

As the settler families were being allotted their new homes, the *Ostdeutscher Beobachter* regularly ran a column listing unclaimed luggage items and maintained an office where the articles could be claimed between 10AM and 1 PM on weekdays. The descriptions were most detailed, listing baggage dimensions and contents in precise detail.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ BAB. R 69/1127. 245. “Der Chef der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD. Einwandererzentralstelle Nordost, Posen. An die Einwandererzentralstelle, Nebenstelle Stettin. Betr.: Namens- und Unterkunftslisten kranker Baltendeutscher.” 8.12.39. “Auch über eintreffende Tiertransporte ist fortlaufend zu berichten. Wann sind z.B. Hundetransporte eingelaufen?”

⁹⁶ For example, BAB. R 69/1027. “Wer vermißt Umsiedlergepäck? Auskunft durch die Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle, Posen.” *Ostdeutscher Beobachter*, 30.12.1940. Entry number 160 on the list is recorded as: “1 Koffer, 76x44x43 Zentimeter, mit 2 Bandeisen verschlossen. Inhalt: 1 gefütterte Pelzmütze, 1 weiße Weste mit 4 Perlmutterknöpfchen, 1 Frackweste, 1 Jackett mit 1 Abzeichen, 1 schwarzes Jackett, 1 Frack u. a. Kleidungsstücke, Bettwäsche, gez. “E. v. B.”, 6 Silberne Eßlöffel, gez “R. v. B.”, 6 Teelöffel (Silber), “R. v. B.”, 7 geblünte tiefe und 1 Frühstücksteller, gez. “Jardiniere B. & B.”, 2 Dokumente aus Pergamentpapier mit einem Siegel versehen, beginnend mit “Wir, Walter von Plettenburg...” und “Wir, Hermann von Bruggnen, genannt Hasenstamp”, 2 Hammer und 1 Kneifzange.” The presence of valuable silver items on the list suggests that theft on the part of officials, at least, was not a widespread occurrence during the resettlement.

There were approximately 400 or 500 Baltic German university students who were among the settlers.⁹⁷ Since they represented such a concentrated population, centering in Riga and Tallinn, they were apparently brought to occupied Poland together as a group, rather than with their families, and were settled directly into “former” Polish dormitories.⁹⁸ Remaining among friends, one can imagine the settlement, from their perspective, being an adventure rather than an ordeal.⁹⁹

Also, all of the sick Baltic Germans were to be kept in the presence of familiar faces. “It remains our intention that invalids who are accompanied by healthy family members who are able to take them along, be routed directly to Posen, in order not to separate them unnecessarily.”¹⁰⁰

In addition to human beings, provisions were also later made to transport to occupied Poland and thus preserve Baltic German cultural artifacts. “At the Reich archive

⁹⁷ BAB. R 69/100. 27. “Chef der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD. Einwandererzentralstelle Nord-Ost, Posen. An Herrn Dr. Streit, Beauftragten des Reichserziehungsministers und des Reichsstudentenführers für den Warthegau. Betr.: Unterbringung für die baltendeutschen Studenten in Posen.” 19.Nov.1939.

⁹⁸ BAB. R 69/1127. 270. “Der Universitätsbeauftragte des Reichstatthalters. Der Bevollmächtigte des Reichsstudentenführers. An den Leiter der Einwanderer-Zentralstelle Nost-Ost SS-Sturmabführer Dr. Sandberger. Betr.: Unterbringung der baltendeutschen Studenten in Posen. 27.11.1939. “...bisherige polnischen Studentenheime...”

⁹⁹ It is also appropriate to point out that, generationally, a far higher proportion of the Baltic German youth had been supportive of the National Socialist regime and its ideology than any other compact segment of the Baltic German population. One can imagine the awe in which some of them would have been when confronted with this tangible manifestation of the might of the National Socialist state. Swept from Latvia and Estonia and installed in a new university overnight – and one in an occupied country at that, freshly defeated by German arms.

¹⁰⁰ BAB. R 69/646. 5. “Der Verbindungsführer bei der Gauleitung Pommern. An die Einwandererzentralstelle Gotenhafen und an das Einsatzkommando VI mit der Bitte um Weiterleitung an SS,-Stubaf. Tschierschky zu Kenntnisnahme an Sicherheitshauptamt III E S. Betr.: Unterbringung der Kranken und Gebrechlichen im Gau Pommern. 31. Oktober 1939. “Es ist jedoch nach wie vor vorgesehen, daß Gebrechliche, die mit gesunden Familien mitkommen und von diesen unbedingt weiter mitgenommen werden können, direkt nach Posen weitergeleitet werden, um die Familien nicht unnötigerweise zu trennen.” It is jarring to see examples such as these in which the SS attempts to treat human beings like human beings. Of course, the whole project was fundamentally inhumane, and the people who the Baltic Germans were displacing could tell stories of their own about the SS’s ‘humane’ methods. This will be discussed below.

in Posen, in agreement with the Reichsführer SS as the Reichskommissar for the Strengthening of Germandom, a special Baltic German division will be established.”¹⁰¹

In a postwar interview, one Baltic German who had participated in the preservation of Baltic German material culture had the following to say about the enterprise: “During the resettlement all of these cultural goods, primarily pictures and archives, sculptures and a quantity of other assorted things that really couldn’t be counted as cultural goods since there was also some kitsch.”¹⁰²

Classification Schema

The National Socialists’ proclivity for establishing hierarchies everywhere they cast their gaze is notorious. Finding the ethnic Germans they encountered anything but uniform and homogenous, they deemed a system of categorization necessary. So it was with their classification of the Baltic Germans. These classifications were the first step in the disintegration of the Baltic Germans. Applying political and ‘racial’ criteria, Baltic German settlers were placed into a category, I – IV, according to evaluations by the separate Health and Citizenship departments of the EWZ and the opinion of officials

¹⁰¹ BAB. R 69/1027. 39. “Baltendeutsche Kulturgüter. Sammlung durch das Posener Reichsarchiv.” *Berliner Börsen-Zeitung*, Abendausgabe. 1.2.1941. “Bei dem Reichsarchiv in Posen wird im Einvernehmen mit dem Reichsführer SS als Reichskommissar für die Festigung deutschen Volkstums eine besondere baltendeutsche Abteilung eingerichtet.”

¹⁰² LAA. Ost-Dok. 14/3. “Die Umsiedlung der Baltischen Volksgruppe zu Beginn des 2. Weltkrieges. Tonbandaussage. Herrn Otto Eckert. Delegationsführer der Delegation zur Umsiedlung der Kulturgüter aus den drei Baltischen Staaten,” p. 8. “Während der Umsiedlung wurden nun diese ganze Kulturgüter, hauptsächlich Bilder und Archivalien, Skulpturen und eine Menge verschiedenartiger Dinge, die nicht einmal als zum Kulturgut zu rechnen waren, weil da auch Kitsch dabei war.” For a more recent assessment of Baltic German material culture, see: Helena Simkuva. “Cultural and Historical Heritage of Baltic Germans in Latvia: Research Results and Prospects,” in *The Baltic States at Historical Crossroads: Political, Economic and Legal Problems*. 2nd Ed. Talavs Jundzis, ed. Riga: National Academy of Sciences, 2001. pp. 405-26.

from the Race and Settlement Office.¹⁰³ Decisions were made not for individuals but for entire families. Based on its category, each family was either rejected outright (S-Cases), assigned for ‘re-Germanization’ in the Reich (A-Cases), or designated as ready for settlement in the East (O-Cases). These last were the most German, and hence the most trustworthy and valuable, to the reckoning of the panels. Because of this classification scheme, most but not all of the first wave of settlers were placed in the Warthegau.¹⁰⁴ The evaluation and processing, dubbed “Durchschleusung,” or ‘sluicing through,’ occurred all at once and usually took only several hours. Individuals filed past a battery of stations, each one representing another aspect of the information gathering and assessment process, from the value of immovable property a settler left behind to the color of the settler’s eyes.¹⁰⁵

Nothing involving the transfer of 60,000 human beings from one country to another over the course of a couple of weeks can possibly go off without any bizarre situations arising, and there were some hiccups. The example of the Baltic Germans of

¹⁰³ Disappointingly, the RKFDV’s *Menscheneinsatz* bulletin for 1940 does not seem to contain these guidelines. However, their application is universally attested to, however. They were never fundamentally altered although, as will be seen later, they were slightly tweaked for each ethnic German group.

¹⁰⁴ Probably fewer than 10% were sent to the Reich – mainly sick and elderly people and, occasionally, their families. It should also be pointed out that these classifications really meant something. In the context of World War Two German-occupied Europe, it could determine how much food your life was worth to the National Socialist state. To be considered *Volksdeutsche* was to be fed like *Reichsdeutsche*. BAB. R 69/414. 54. “*Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle – Völkische Schutzarbeit. An die Betreuungsstelle für Volksdeutsche. Betr.: Lebensmittelkarten für Volksdeutsche.*” 29. September 1942. “Today we have come to find out from the Reich Economic Ministry, that in the next few days an ordinance will be enacted, whereby ethnic Germans will be provided not foreign civilian workers’ rations, but normal rations, i.e. they will be treated as normal consumers.” “...wir vom Reichswirtschaftsministerium heute erfahren haben, dass in den nächsten Tagen ein Erlass herausgegeben wird, wonach *Volksdeutsche* nicht die für ausländische Zivilarbeiter vorgesehenen Wochenkarten erhalten, sondern normale Lebensmittelkarten bekommen, d.h. wie Normalverbraucher behandelt werden.”

¹⁰⁵ See Appendix A: Departmental Organization of the *Einwandererzentralstelle* During *Durchschleusung*, and Appendix B: The Main Assignments of the *Einwandererzentralstelle* for more detail.

English citizenship is interesting and sheds light on the relative importance, in the minds of the SS, of political versus 'racial' criteria.

On the advice of the Army High Command, the naturalization of citizens of enemy states (especially England), who are to arrive here in upcoming Baltic German transports in a strength of a total of 60 persons, is absolutely undesirable. Their naturalization is at this time to be deferred, even if those persons have a certificate of being ethnic German. Under no circumstances should these people be allowed to become aware of this command. It is requested that in such cases, the UWZ leader in Posen be informed in writing.¹⁰⁶

In another bizarre example, 25 Baltic Germans convicts who had been in Latvian and/or Estonian prisons were processed and awarded Reich citizenship.¹⁰⁷

There was a minority of Baltic Germans who did not take the opportunity to resettle in the winter of 1939-40. This newspaper report filed from Rīga after the completion of the resettlement is typical:

“German is hardly ever heard on the streets anymore. At most, similar sounds greet the ear: It is Jews, fiddling their corrupted jargon...All told, 90% of all Germans in Latvia followed the call of the Führer...A visit to the ethnic renegade in holy vestments, one Pastor Grass, was a tragicomic interlude...This Pastor, at that time, unfurled his counter-propaganda against our people...[Nevertheless] The stroke [i.e. the resettlement] will be final.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ BAB. R 69/560. 072. “Organisation. An die Staatsangehörigkeitsstelle, im Hause.” 2.Dezember 1939. “Nach Mitteilung des Oberkommandos des Heeres ist eine Einbürgerung von Staatsangehörigen von Feindstaaten (insbesondere England), die in nächster Zeit mit baltendeutschen Transporten etwa in einer Stärke von insgesamt 60 Personen hier ankommen sollen, durchaus unerwünscht. Es sollen diese Einbürgerungen zunächst zurückgestellt werden, auch wenn diese Personen eine Bescheinigung der deutschen Volksgruppe haben. Es darf jedoch diesen Personen in keiner Weise diese Anordnung zur Kenntnis kommen. Beim Vorliegen eines solchen Falles wird gebeten dem Leiter der Einwandererzentralstelle Posen schriftlich zu berichten.”

¹⁰⁷ BAB. R 69/280. 020. “Fernschreiben. Einwanderer nebenstelle Posen. An den Höhere SS- und Polizeiführer Ostsee. Betr.: Baltendeutsche Strafgefangene.” 15. Mai 1940. The crimes of the prisoners were not specified in the document.

¹⁰⁸ BAB. R 69/1027. 52. “Lettland nach Abzug der Deutschen.” Frankfurt. *Oder-Zeitung*. 8.1.1940. “Deutsch wird auf der Straße kaum noch gehört, höchstens ähnliche Laute bringen an das Ohr: Es sind Juden, die ihren korrumpierten Jargon mauscheln...Insgesamt sind 90 v. D[?]. aller Deutschen in Lettland dem Rufe des Führers gefolgt...Ein tragikomisches Zwischenspiel bedeutete der Besuch eine völkischen Renegaten im geistlichen Gewande (vestments), eines Pastor Graß... Dieser Pastor hatte seinerzeit eine Gegenpropaganda gegen die Volksgruppe entfaltet...Schlußstrich soll endgültig sein.”

Pastor Grass became well known as an infamous figure in the state-controlled German press, a boogeyman of sorts, and a symbol race treachery. He is even mentioned by name in postwar interviews, although he is dismissed as an exception who came to symbolize the vanishingly small proportion of Baltic Germans who did not resettle.¹⁰⁹ It should be pointed out that the interviewees have their own reasons to dismiss those who stayed behind as insignificant. In actual fact, fully ten percent of the Baltic Germans opted to stay behind in the winter of 1939/40, as the article surprisingly admits. Because of the notoriety awarded him in the National Socialist press and his ‘reactionary’ views, it is likely that Soviet authorities later murdered or deported Pastor Grass.

¹⁰⁹ See, for example: LAA. Ost-Dok. 14/7. “Die Umsiedlung der Baltischen Volksgruppe zu Beginn des 2. Weltkrieges. Tonbandaussage. Dr. jur. Edgar Schwarz.” 12. Oktober 1958.

IV. NACHUMSIEDLUNG

The Baltic Germans departed Latvia and Estonia for the Reich in two separate waves. The first, which has been described above, occurred during the winter of 1939-40. The second occurred in the spring of 1941 and involved the resettlement of approximately 20,000 persons. By the end of the Nachumsiedlung, almost no Baltic Germans remained in Latvia or Estonia who had had any opportunity to leave. Joining them were numbers of Latvians and Estonians who were accepted as “Baltic Refugees,” who account for the apparent numerical discrepancy by which more ‘Baltic Germans’ were resettled than actually existed.¹¹⁰

The Differences Between Umsiedler and Nachumsiedler

These were the guidelines set down by Himmler for the evaluation of the Nachumsiedler. The categories were virtually identical to those applied to the original settlers, except that the original settlers were presumed to belong to Group 1 unless proven otherwise.

¹¹⁰ German: Baltenflüchtlinge.

Group 1 consists of ethnic Germans who did not take part in the first resettlement, but who nevertheless have until now professed a positive attitude toward Germandom.

Group 2 consists of ethnic Germans who until now have been politically indifferent, but have otherwise been known to be decent people.

Group 3 consists of Latvians, Estonians, and other non-Germans.

Group 4 consists of ethnic Germans and non-Germans who have political attachments [have anti-National Socialist political backgrounds] or are suspect, as well as those predisposed to criminality [asocials] (prostitutes, etc.).”

Those belonging to Groups 1 and 2 will, immediately after their evaluation, be released from the camp and brought to their permanent work assignment once their work placement has been determined.

Those belonging to Group 3 are, as long as the Chief of the Security Police and SD do not express any objections, to be as a rule deported back to Estonia or Latvia as appropriate. This will not apply to such persons as may express their wish to stay in the Altreich, and against whom there are no objections in racial, health, or other respects to permitting them to remain. In doubtful cases these persons are to be presented to the suitable examiner of the competent Higher SS and Police leader.

Those belonging to Group 4 will be, according the results of their evaluation, remitted to the Security Police and the SD for eventual placement in a concentration camp.¹¹¹

Most of the Baltic Germans settled in the first action were virtually presumed to be O-Cases, as evidenced by their direct transportation to occupied Poland in preparation for immediate permanent resettlement. Not so those taking part in the Nachumsiedlung.

¹¹¹ NARA II. T 74. R 15. RDV 126. 387737. “Reichskommissar für die Festigung deutschen Volkstums. Stabshauptamt. Der Menscheneinsatz: Grundsätze, Anordnungen, und Richtlinien. Anordnung 43/AS: Einteilung der Flüchtlinge aus Estland und Lettland.” 4. August 1941.

Gruppe 1 umfasst die Volksdeutschen, die sich zwar der ersten Umsiedlung nicht angeschlossen haben, die sich aber trotzdem bisher positiv zum Deutschtum bekannt haben.

Gruppe 2 umfasst die Volksdeutschen, die bisher politische indifferent waren, sonst aber als anständige Menschen bekannt sind.

Gruppe 3 umfasst die Letten, Esten und andere Fremdstämmige.

Gruppe 4 umfasst die Volksdeutschen und Fremdstämmigen, die politisch belastet oder verdächtig sind, sowie die kriminell Vorbelasteten (Bordellmädchen usw.)

Die Angehörigen der Gruppe 1 und 2 werden sofort nach der Überprüfung in denendgültigen [sic] Arbeitseinsatz gebracht und nach erfolgter Arbeitsvermittlung aus dem Lager entlassen.

Die Angehörigen der Gruppe 3 sind, sofern der Chef der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD keine Bedenken äussert, grundsätzlich nach Estland oder bezw. Lettland abzuschicken. Dies gilt nicht für solche Personen, die den Wunsch äussern, im Altreich zu bleiben, und in rassischer, gesundheitlicher und anderer Hinsicht zu keinen Bedenken gegen ein Verbleiben, im Altreich Anlass zu geben. In etwaigen Zweifelsfällen sind diese Personen dem Eignungsprüfer des zuständigen Höheren SS- und Polizeiführers zu Prüfung vorzuführen.

Die Angehörigen der Gruppe 4 werden unter Vorlage des Überprüfungsergebnisses dem Chef der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD zur eventuellen Unterbringung in einem Konzentrationslager überwiesen.”

The Nachumsiedler – A-Cases almost by definition since they had either failed to show sufficient enthusiasm in their German-ness to apply for resettlement during the first action or else were ethnic Latvian or Estonian – found themselves distributed in camps all across the Reich, with the largest numbers in the Gaue of Mecklenburg (2,366) and Berlin (1,467). Only 1,376 were adjudged fit to be sent to the Wartheland. Close to 200 others immediately joined the Wehrmacht.¹¹² After their yearlong experience with the Soviets, many were probably desperately anti-Communist.

Soviet Intimidation

People were obviously desperate to leave Latvia and Estonia, as evidenced by the large numbers of applications to the German commission for participation in the Second Resettlement despite the obvious danger. In fact, in some ways, the operation resembled an evacuation. No one knew how long he or she would be trapped under Soviet occupation or that Operation Barbarossa was right around the corner. One list was compiled of 32 persons in Latvia who, after having been accepted for Nachumsiedlung in the Reich, were arrested by Soviet authorities. More than half of the names were German and almost all were residing in Riga. Most were arrested for reasons of espionage or counter-revolutionary activities.¹¹³ Their fates are unknown.

The Soviets didn't limit their targets of intimidation to those persons who were opting for Reich citizenship. Audaciously, they even attempted to threaten locals who were working with the German commission as volunteers:

¹¹² German: Nachumsiedler. Literally “after resettlers.” BAB. R 69/80. 023. “Verteilung der Balten flüchtlinge (ohne Lagerinsassen).”

¹¹³ BAB. R 59/235. 5-7. “Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle. Verzeichnis derjenigen Personen, die zur Umsiedlung ins Reich zugelassen sind, und inzwischen von dem Sowjetbehoerden verhaftet wurden Riga.” 29 Jan 1941.

On 26 February, Ms. Astrid Bladt (an assistant to the German district authority) was driving by taxi from the City Council Square on Ritter Street. She was followed by an NKVD car with two occupants. One of the occupants followed Ms. Bladt to Ritter Street 14, engaged her in conversation on the steps, and told her in Estonian: 'Before you continue, you will certainly have something else to tell me.' On the drive back, Ms. Bladt was escorted by a Russian car all the way to the office.¹¹⁴

Red Army Soldiers

Much to the embarrassment of Soviet officials, eleven Red Army soldiers attempted to register for the Nachumsiedlung. They were Baltic Germans who had been serving in the Latvian military when it was incorporated into the Soviet military.¹¹⁵ The Soviets placed every obstacle before them, and it appears that the German commission was unable to secure their departure.¹¹⁶ They must have known that they were risking their lives by applying. Their fates are also unknown.

¹¹⁴ BAB. R 59/235. 40. Br/Bl. Aktenvermerk. Betr.: Belästigung einer Mitarteiterin (Durch NKWD Beamten. Reval." 26. Februar 1941. "Am 26. Februar führt Flr. Astrid Bladt (Hilfskraft des Deutschen Gebietsbevollmächtigten) in einer Taxe vom Rathausplatz in die Ritter Strasse. Es folgt ihr ein NKWD Wagen, mit zwei Insassen, der hinter der Taxe anhält. Einer der Insassen folgt Frl. Bladt in die Ritterstr. 14, spricht sie auf der Treppe an, indem er ihr auf estnisch sagt: "bevor Sie fortfahren, werden Sie mir bestimmt noch etwas zu erzählen haben." Auf der Rückfahrt wird Frl. Bladt bis vor die Dienststelle vom russ. Wagen begleitet." Emphasis in original

¹¹⁵ BAB. R 59/235. 9-10. "Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle. Verzeichnis der optionswilligen Soldaten." 31. Januar 1941. Riga. Their names were: Georg Kuehn, Oskar Buchrot, Helmut Zieber, Bruno Stein, Erich Grünau, Heins-Eduard Berg, Arthur Jakobson, Harry Wihtol, Harald Dupper, Ilmar Ruppner, and Eugen Rosenberg. These are obviously not Estonian, Latvian, or Russian names.

¹¹⁶ BAB. R 59/235. 34. "Riga, den 15. Februar 1941." "In further short discussions, the subject of the granting of leave for the soldiers who have applied for resettlement has been gone over again. On the German side, it is pointed out that the ethnic German soldiers have still further difficulties placed in their way." "In weiteren kurzen Unterredungen wird noch einmal die Beurblaubung von Soldaten durchgesprochen, die sich zur Umsiedlung gemeldet haben. Es wird deutscherseits darauf hingewiesen, dass den volksdeutschen Soldaten noch weiterhin Schwierigkeiten in den Weg gelegt werden."

V. GETTING THROUGH THE WAR

Life in the Camps

Dozens of camps were set up in almost every district of the Altreich, including the Ostmark and Sudetenland, to accommodate the Nachumsiedler and the Baltic Refugees. These were not the kind of camps for which the National Socialist regime is now infamous. On the contrary, in these camps, the inhabitants were given adequate food, entertainment, and the ability to correspond with people outside the camp. They were internees insofar as were compelled to remain, on a temporary basis, until they had been processed and given work assignments and places to live. In the meantime, sport leagues and swimming activities were encouraged to keep the settlers healthy and amused while awaiting processing.¹¹⁷ The camps were also supplied with loaner radios from the Ministry for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda.¹¹⁸ For the Baltic Germans and Baltic refugees still waiting placement half a year after they evacuated Latvia and

¹¹⁷ BAB. R 59/78. 47. "Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle – Umsiedlung. Rundschreiben Nr. 11. An alle Einsatzführer. Betr.: Gesundheitliche Betreuung der Umsiedler in den Lagern durch Sport und Spiel." 3. April 1941.

¹¹⁸ BAB. R 59/78. 143. "Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle – Umsiedlung. Rundschreiben Nr. 61." 8.Sep. 1941.

Estonia, VoMi organized camp Christmas parties with separate activities for children and for adults.¹¹⁹ Female settlers petitioned successfully in various camps to be allowed to assist in the preparation of meals.¹²⁰

To expedite their processing, the EWZ established “Flying Commissions” to travel to the camps scattered throughout the Altreich by bus and train. Six of these flying commissions were established in March 1940 to assist in the processing of the original Baltic German resettlers and other ethnic Germans, and their number was expanded after the Nachumsiedlung. The commissions had their own motor pool, since the camps were usually far from train tracks. They also enjoyed having their own “Sonderzug,” or special train, for rare cases. “Vorkommandos” would arrive at the camp first in order to set up the tables and equipment, such as cameras, and to provide general logistics.

By February 1942, almost all of the Baltic Germans who still remained in the camps – approximately seven months after the Nachumsiedlung – were the elderly and others who were unable to work. These people were cared for.

Gottlieb Lutz, 62, and Helene Lutz, 75, and Anette Timberg, 72, Helene’s sister, wanted to be moved from the camps into a home together. Others, too, made requests. Alexander Palm, 82, wished to move to a home in Heidelberg because his children lived there. Sisters Helene and Julie Wann, aged 74 and 71, did not care where they were

¹¹⁹ BAB. R 59/78. 228. “Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle – Umsiedlung D. Rundschreiben Nr. 105. An alle Einsatzführer. Betr.: Weihnachtsfeiern in den Lagern.” 10 Dezember 1941.

¹²⁰ BAB. R 59/78. 128. “Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle – Umsiedlung. Rundschreiben Nr. 53. Betr.: Zubereitung des Essens in den Lagern durch Umsiedlerfrauen.” 20.Aug.41. “With circular number 42 it was pointed out that the settler women were to be consulted as to the preparation of meals...The inspectors have determined that in several camps this directive is still being ignored and the settler women are still requesting to be consulted in the preparation of meals.” “Mit dem Rundschreiben Nr.42 wurde darauf hingewiesen, dass die Umsiedlerfrauen bei der Zubereitung des Essens heranzuziehen waren. Laut einer uns zugegangenen Mitteilung des Referates –J- haben die Inspekture festgestellt, dass in mehreren Lagern dieser Hinweis unbeachtet blieb und die Umsiedlerfrauen nach wie vor bitten, bei der Zubereitung der Mahlzeiten herangezogen zu werden.”

moved, as long as they were moved together. Kurt Wilzing was only 8 years old, but his grandmother, Katherina Wilzing, 62, requested to be placed somewhere where she would be able to bring him up while he was going to school. There were many more cases.¹²¹

A testament to VoMi's attention to detail and, one almost wants to say 'compassion,' was its follow-up work. Rather than regard the Baltic Germans as "not our problem" after their processing and placement, VoMi kept tabs on its charges beyond the call of duty. For example, a scandal nearly erupted when VoMi learned that a retirement home to which it had sent several elderly female Baltic Germans was also used to rehabilitate Reichsdeutsch "asocials." In a frantic and obsequious response to VoMi's challenge, the regional director whose office was responsible for that particular facility wrote of his Baltic German charges:

They live in bright, airy halls with a wonderful view of the home's environs. None of the women have brought complaints. On the contrary, the condition of the beds, the good food, and the loving and humane treatment by the Sisters and the Head Mistress of the institution, as well as its scrupulous cleanliness are emphasized.

The 'asocial' women who were also inmates at the same institution were kept separated from the others.¹²²

¹²¹ BAB. R 59/141. 19. "Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle. Einsatzgau Mainfranken. Lager VIIIa.-Schloß Werneck. An die Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle Einsatzgau Mainfranken. Aufstellung der Baltenflüchtling, die in ein Altersheim untergebracht werden müssten." In another document, it is said of the Lutzes: "Infolge der nun eingetretenen Umstände, dass für manche eine Rückkehr in die Heimat besteht, haben sich beide narntäckig geweigert in das vorgesehene Altersheim zu gehen. Sie glauben fest in ihre Heimat zurückkehren zu können. Das Ehepaar L. gehört zur Bewertungsgruppe II." BAB. R 59/141. 25. "Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle. Einsatzgau Mainfranken. Lager VIIIa.-Schloß Werneck. An die Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle Einsatzgau Mainfranken. Betr.: Unterbringung des Ehepaares Gottlieb und Helene Lutz in ein Alterheim." 2. November 1942.

¹²² BAB. R 59/141. 29-30. "Landesfürsorgeverband Oberbayern. An die Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle, Einsatzgau Mainfranken. Betreff: Unterbringung volksdeutscher Baltenflüchtlinge." 21.10.1941. "Sie wohnen in hellen luftigen Sälen mit wunderschöner Aussicht auf die Umgebung des Heimes. Von keiner der Frauen wurden Klagen vorgebracht. Im Gegenteil wurde besonders die gute Beschaffenheit der Betten, das gute Essen und die liebe menschliche Behandlung durch die Schwestern und die Anstaltsoberin sowie die peinliche Reinlichkeit allseits hervorgehoben."

Discontent and 22 June 1941

All of these efforts – on the part, no less, of SS institutions – to ameliorate the situation of the Baltic German Nachumsiedler did little to suppress their desire to eventually return home. The German invasion of the Soviet Union that commenced on 22 June 1941 was a major turning point for everyone in the Third Reich, but for the Baltic Germans, this was especially momentous.¹²³ The launching of the Barbarossa campaign and the rapid German conquest of Latvia and Estonia introduced a whole new dynamic in the Baltic Germans' relationship with the Reich and the SS. Whereas the Umsiedler and the Nachumsiedler had up to that point been, if anything, grateful for the opportunity the Reich had given them to escape the Soviets, they now found themselves prisoners, after a fashion, of the very SS apparatus to which many believed, perhaps rightly, that they owed their lives.

The widespread wish among the Baltic German resettlers to one day return to their “old Heimat,” which for them was not the “Fatherland,” quickly became apparent to worried and frustrated Reich authorities. The Baltic Germans were not behaving as they were supposed to. This perception of course deepened with the Wehrmacht conquest of Latvia and Estonia, when the pipedream of an eventual homecoming suddenly became a realistic prospect and the assumed primary reason for their original resettlement – the Soviet threat – was apparently removed. Almost exactly one month after the

¹²³ For their part, the Latvians and Estonians back home had problems of their own – German occupation. Latvians living in exile in the West and who were therefore free to speak, vilified the Baltic Germans in the blackest terms. It could not have helped the Latvian or Estonian attitude toward Baltic Germans when Alfred Rosenberg, a Baltic German from Tallinn who had immigrated to Germany in 1918, was given the position of Reichskommissar für das Ostland, Lord of Latvia, Estonia, and Beyond. Anti-German sentiment was high in general, and increasingly so as the war and occupation progressed. There was renewed anger at the Baltic Germans as the new occupation regime was equated with the historic German role in the region. In other words, the feeling was: The Germans are doing it to us again! For an interesting primary source explaining the Latvian attitude, written by Latvian exiles in the United States, see: *Latvia Under German Occupation, 1941-1943*. Washington, D.C.: Latvian Legation, 1943.

commencement of Operation Barbarossa, and two weeks after the conquest of Latvia and Estonia, it became necessary for Himmler, the man at the top, to issue a verdict on the question of allowing the settlers to return to their homes. He decreed: “a resettling of the Baltic States with settlers out of this land [the Warthegau] is fundamentally out of the question.”¹²⁴ The SS had not just expended all that effort for nothing, and the ideologically motivated project would not be deterred by the desires of the Baltic Germans themselves, who were mere pieces on the board.

The state-controlled press quickly moved to spread the information. The following response ran in the *Königsberger Allgemeine Zeitung*, a daily that was read by the resettlers in the Warthegau:

With the commencement of the struggle against Bolshevism and the liberation of the old German Hanseatic cities in Baltic territory, the question has emerged in circles of the Baltic German population settled in the Wartheland, if they might not resettle after the war in their liberated former homeland. To this, Gauleiter and Reichsstatthalter Greiser clarifies in a fundamental decree, that a resettlement of the Baltic Germans in the Baltic Sea provinces will not take place. A 700-year

¹²⁴ NARA II. T 74. R 15. RDV 126. 387753. “Reichskommissar für die Festigung deutschen Volkstums. Stabshauptamt. Der Menscheneinsatz: Grundsätze, Anordnungen, und Richtlinien. Rücksiedlung in dei baltischen Staaten. 21. Juli 1941. “...eine Wiederbesiedlung der Baltischen Staaten mit Umsiedlern aus diesen Ländern grundsätzlich nicht im Frage kommt.” It is interesting that, at this early stage, Latvia and Estonia are actually referred to as states. Such a statement would soon become unthinkable. Intriguingly, there exists a report in a media publication stating that Lithuanian ethnic Germans were allowed to return home after Lithuania was occupied by the Germans. Unfortunately, it is almost illegible on the Berlin microfilm. The name of the paper can only be partially read and there is no date. BAB. R 69/414. 72. “Die Litauendeutschen kehren in ihre alte Heimat zurück! Ihre Umsiedlung war bloß eine der Gefahr vorbeugende Maßnahme des Führers.” Deutsch ??? 24. Jahr-Tagezeitung der deutschen sūdung[arn]???heller. No date. “Die aus Litauen 1939 ausgesiedelten Volksdeutschen werden laut einer neuesten Meldung wieder nach Litauen rücksiedelt. Die Deutschen von Litauen sind mit ihrer Heimat so tief verwurzelt, daß sie ihr wohl, Glück und ihre Zukunft nur in ihrer alten litauischen Heimat erblicken können.” Note that Volksdeutsche from Lithuania are not designated as Baltendeutsche. This is historically correct. Also, the article, by inference, implies that Baltic Germans did not powerfully miss their old homes in Latvia and Estonia. The title of the article reads: The Lithuanian Germans return back to their old home. Their resettlement was only a measure taken by the Führer to protect them from danger.” “Those ethnic Germans resettled out of Lithuania in 1939, will, according to the latest announcement, be settled back in Lithuania. The Germans of Lithuania are so deeply rooted with their homeland, that they can only envision their well-being, their happiness, and their future there.” “Die aus Litauen 1939 ausgesiedelten Volksdeutschen werden laut einer neuesten Meldung wieder nach Litauen rücksiedelt. Die Deutschen von Litauen sind mit ihrer Heimat so tief verwurzelt, daß sie ihr wohl, Glück und ihre Zukunft nur in ihrer alten litauischen Heimat erblicken können.”

chapter in the history of the Baltic Germans, far beyond the borders in advanced posts, is concluded by this war. The Baltic Germans have now been given the opportunity by the Führer to renew themselves and prove their high worth in the construction of the reconquered German core territory, that is to again be the breadbasket of the Reich.¹²⁵

National Socialist ideology fetishized the trope of the historical role of the Baltic Germans as warriors guarding the far-flung ethnic bastions in the East since the original Drang nach Osten. Despite this fantasy of timeless ethnic solidarity, the SS was apparently determined to end this “chapter.” Hitler had assigned them a new role in his designs for the East, and those who had been settled in the Warthegau with such effort and care were going to fulfill their role, their own personal desires notwithstanding.

This desire to return home was not only found amongst the Baltic Germans settled in the Warthegau, but also among the Nachumsiedler in camps in the Reich. The commandant of camp Felsenkeller in Thuringia wrote to his superiors at the EWZ headquarters to complain that the Nachumsiedler in his camp who had applied for permission to return to Latvia and Estonia still had not been issued the necessary identification papers to do so by the central authority in Litzmannstadt.¹²⁶ They had been

¹²⁵ BAB. R 69/1027. 21. “Keine baltische Rücksiedlung!” *Königsberger Allgemeine Zeitung*. 4.8.1941. “Mit dem Beginn des Kampfes gegen den Bolschewismus und der Befreiung der alten deutschen Hansastädte im baltischen Land ist in den Kreisen der im Wartheland angesiedelten baltendeutschen Bevölkerung die Frage aufgetaucht, ob die Baltendeutschen nach dem Kriege in die befreite alte Heimat zurückkehren sollten. Die Gauleiter und Reichsstatthalter Greiser hierzu in einer Grundgebung erklärte, findet eine Rücksiedlung der Baltendeutschen in die Ostseeprivinzen nicht statt. Ein 700jähriger Abschnitt in der Geschichte des baltischen Deutschtums, das weit vor den Grenzen auf vorgeschobenen Posten stand, ist in diesem Kriege abgeschlossen. Die Baltendeutschen ist jetzt vom Führer im Wartheland Gelegenheit gegeben, sich erneut aufs höchste zu bewähren am Aufbau eines wiedergewonnenen deutschen Kernlandes, das wieder eine Kornkammer des Reiches werden soll.” Identically worded reports also ran in other area papers, such as the *Preußische Zeitung* on the same day, presumably to ensure that word got around. BAB. R/691027. 28.

¹²⁶ One caveat has to be added. From the context, it can't be determined exactly what the commandant means by “Rückkehrausweis.” Sometimes, “Rückkehr” is used to refer to the ‘return’ of the Baltic Germans to the Reich. Sometimes it is used to refer to the return of the Baltic Germans from the Reich to Latvia and Estonia after Germany's conquest of those countries. Individuals would need a “Rückkehrausweis,” as Baltic Germans, for legal employment in Germany. Yet, since returning to live in Latvia or Estonia was generally off-limits to Baltic Germans, a document granting permission to return

causing him a headache with their demands. He wanted their papers forthwith: “Thus, the settlers concerned, who have already been held in the camp for close to 16 months, can finally be discharged and get secure work and places to stay. I request that henceforward such matters will be settled earlier.”¹²⁷

There were efforts to publicly counteract the impression that the Baltic Germans were being held in the Warthegau increasingly against their will, and to demonstrate that they were enthusiastic participants in the schemes of the National Socialists. However, the very necessity of such propaganda suggests the opposite. Rumors that the Baltic German settlers, as a group, were uncommitted to National Socialist principles and only left their homes to escape likely Soviet aggression were in circulation. One effort to dispel this notion appeared as a letter to the editor in a local publication in the Warthegau.

It is important that the ethnic Germans in Lodsch also learn how the Baltic Germans resettled, that on one word from the Führer they immediately packed their bags and returned to the Reich. The view still persists to some degree that the Baltic Germans fled the Russians but that is not the case

For emphasis, the author or authors ended their letter in the ‘German’ fashion: “Heil Hitler! The resettled Baltic Germans in Lodsch.”¹²⁸

would also have to be issued – a “Rückkehrausweis.” It’s a conundrum. I believe the latter is what is being discussed here, because of the late date. I can’t see how it would be possible that 16 months after the Nachumsiedlung, anyone still didn’t have a job who needed one. But 16 months or so sounds like an appropriately long time to get a bureaucracy like the UWZ to allow you to do something it didn’t want you to do – such as return home.

¹²⁷ BAB. R 69/280. 48. “Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle. Umsiedlung. Einsatzführung Thüringen. An den Chef der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD- Einwandererzentralstelle – Melde- und Ausweisstelle, Litzmannstadt. Betr.: Rückkehrerausweise.” 2. April 1942. “Damit die betreffenden Umsiedler, die nun bereits nahe zu 16 Monate in den Lagern festgehalten werden müssen, endlich zur Entlassung kommen können und in feste Arbeit und Wohnung kommen, bitte ich nunmehr um baldige Erledigung dieser Angelegenheit.”

¹²⁸ BAB. R 69/1027. 66. “Die Meinung des Lesers.” In what publication and on what date this letter was published is impossible to tell. “Die Baltendeutschen bitten, gütigt beifolgenden Artikel der ‘Revaler Zeitung’ Nr. 279 über die Umsiedlung der letzten Baltendeutschen auch in Ihrer Zeitung, deren Abonnenten wir jetzt sind, aufnehmen zu wollen. Es ist von Wichtigkeit, daß auch die Volksdeutschen in Lodsch erfahren, wie die Baltendeutschen umsiedelten und auf ein Wort des Führers bin sofort ihre

The authorship of the letter is very possibly spurious. By comparing the motivations and shared experiences of other ethnic Germans in Lodz with their own, the author or authors of this letter were attempting to equate the putative enthusiasm of other ethnic Germans to comply with National Socialist directives with themselves. A VoMi circular from August of 1941 informed the camp commandants thusly:

Recently, there has been an increase in the number of cases in which applications from settlers wishing to return to the territories from which they came (and which are now under Wehrmacht occupation) have been submitted directly to us, over the heads of the Einsatzführung. Such applications, when received directly from settlers, have up to now been turned down. Because the volume of these requests will become stronger and more frequent, it is to be requested that the camp commandants be informed to the effect that a return of the settlers to their territory of origin is not to occur. If any settlers are pigheaded and insist on their return, indicate it to the Processing Commission in cases in which they haven't yet been processed. In cases in which their processing has already been carried out, the camp commandant will just have to mobilize all of his ability to make it clear to the settler that a return will not take place.¹²⁹

Köfferchen packten und in das große deutsche Vaterland zurückkehrten. Teilweise besteht noch die Ansicht, daß die Baltendeutschen vor den Russen geflüchtet sind, daß ist aber nicht der Fall. [Indem wir hoffen, daß Sie unseren Wunsch erfüllen, zeichnen wir. Heil Hitler! Die umgesiedelten Baltendeutschen in Lods.]” Although it is beyond the scope of this paper, it is worth at least pointing out here that there were significant tensions between different groups of resettled ethnic Germans. See, for example: LAA. Ost-Dok. 8/456. “Die Ländische Siedlung im Wartheland: Die deutschen Massnahmen von 1939-1944. Hermann Deuz, ab 1943 kom. Hauptstableiter der Landesbauernschaft Waltheland.” 28.12.1955, p. 6. “Es gab auch Volksdeutsche die in dem Jahren 1940 usw die Meinung vertraten, dass der Einfluss der Baltendeutschen zu stark würde.”

¹²⁹ BAB. R 59/78. 127. “Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle – Umsiedlung. Rundschreiben Nr. 52. Betr.: Anträge von Umsiedlern auf Rückführung in die ehem. Aussiedlungsgebiete.” 20. Aug.41. “In letzter Zeit mehren sich die Fälle, dass Anträge von Umsiedlern direkt über die Einsatzführung uns vorgelegt werden mit der Bitte um Rückführung in die Gebiete, aus denen sie ausgesiedelt wurden, die aber jetzt von der Wehrmacht besetzt sind. Derartige Anträge, wenn sie von den Umsiedlern direkt gestellt werden, sind bisher abschlägig beschieden worden. Da der Anfall dieser Anfragen immer starker und grosser wird, darf gebeten werden, die Lagerführer dahingehend zu unterrichten, dass eine Rückführung der Umsiedler in die Aussiedlungsgebiete nicht stattfindet. Sollten einige Umsiedler starrköpfig sein und auf ihre Rückführung bestehen, so ware im Falle der noch nicht erfolgten Durchschleusung ein Hinweis der Durchschleusungskommission zu geben. In Falle der bereits erfolgten Durchschleusung muss der Lagerführer sein ganzes Können und Vermögen aufbieten, um den Umsiedlern klarzumachen, dass eine Rückführung nicht erfolgt.”

Occupations

According to the Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle's main office for Völkische Schutzarbeit, "The goal must be to give the settlers a new feeling of being at home as well as occupational security, through which he will be put in a position to create a new existence for himself."¹³⁰ While this is a refreshingly humanitarian sentiment, the Reich of course had its own reasons for finding work for the Baltic Germans, and the Baltic Germans theirs. Namely: many Baltic Germans were able to thwart the RKFDV and associated entities by seeking the sponsorship of other National Socialist and German state organizations, thus parleying their skills into tickets back home.

As part of their processing, data about the occupations of the settlers was collected. Before long, settlers were selected from such occupation lists in an attempt to fill occupational gaps in the German war economy. Most eager were the A-Cases: people who had been taken from their homes to listlessly fade away in inactivity in camps across the Reich.¹³¹

The job placement efforts of the Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle, in cooperation with the various other relevant National Socialist professional associations and employment agencies, appears to have been conducted smoothly for those people involved in the Nachumsiedlung.¹³² The commandants in VoMi camps ensured that doctors registered

¹³⁰ BAB. R 69/414. 170. "Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle – Völkische Schutzarbeit. An den Gaubeauftragten der Volksdeutschen Mittelstelle. Betr.: Betreuung von Umsiedler-A-Fällen." 20. Mai 1942. "Das Ziel muss sein, dem Umsiedler wieder eine neues Heimatgefühl und auch eine Beschäftigungsgrundlage zu geben, durch die er in die Lage versetzt wird, sich eine neue Existenz aufzubauen."

¹³¹ For an interesting, self-published, first-hand account, see: White, Irene Zarina. *Fire Burn: World War II Diaries*. Philadelphia: Xlibris, 2006. She and her mother were Group III (Baltic Refugees) who left Latvia during the Nachumsiedlung and opted to remain in Germany.

with the Reichsärztekammer in Berlin and their respective district offices in whichever Gau they were located.¹³³ The same process took place with all specialized professions and technical jobs.¹³⁴

The war effort also demanded skills that few besides the Baltic Germans could provide: trustworthy translators and interpreters for Estonia and Latvia. The Baltic Germans immediately grasped that this was an opportunity to take advantage of the wartime situation to escape the Warthegau and the camps. One Herr Wannag living in Lager Hellberg in Mecklenburg was advised:

Now, after Riga and Latvia have been freed again from the Bolsheviks, it is probably to be assumed that some of our Germans from this territory will be needed to fill many posts. In case you still have not found an assignment by the time you receive this letter, I recommend that you apply to the Army High Command as an interpreter, since they always need people with knowledge of languages.¹³⁵

Herr Wannag was not ill informed. In fact, a message had been transmitted by VoMi in a circular as early as October of 1941 that “At the High Command of the Armed

¹³² That is, at least relative to the nightmare scenarios experienced by ethnic Germans who entered the system later in huge numbers and sometimes wound up spending years sitting in a camp waiting for something to happen.

¹³³ BAB. R 59/78. 65. “Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle – Umsiedlung. Rundschreiben Nr. 22. Betr.: Entlassung von Ärzten aus den Reihen der Rücksiedler aus Estland und Lettland.” 3.5.1941.

¹³⁴ It was the same, for example, with apothecaries. BAB. R 59/78. 78. “Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle – Umsiedlung. Rundschreiben Nr. 30. Betr.: Entlassung von Apothekern aus den Reihen der Rucksiedler aus Estland und Lettland.” 28.5.1941.

¹³⁵ BAB. R 69/280. 033. “HENRY ESP. Landesgruppenleiter der Auslands-Organisation der NSDAP in Ungarn. Herrn Wilhelm Wannag.” 31.Juli.1941. “Jetzt, nachdem Riga und Lettland von den Bolschewiken wieder befreit sind, ist es wohl anzunehmen, dass ein Teil unserer Deutschen aus diesem Gebiet dort an vielen Stellen gebraucht werden wird. Falls Sie bis zum Erhalt dieses Schreibens noch keine Verwendung gefunden haben sollten, rate ich Ihnen, sich als Dolmetscher zum OKW zu melden, das immer Menschen mit Sprachkenntnissen benötigt.”

Forces is an urgent need of interpreters of Russian, who will be given assignments in POW camps in the Reich and in the newly conquered Eastern territories.”¹³⁶

Goebbels also needed bilingual personnel to help run his propaganda press in the occupied Baltic States.

The Reich Ministry for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda has turned to us with an urgent request to nominate one Baltic Nachumsiedler who speaks the Estonian language and three Baltic Nachumsiedlers who are proficient in the Latvian language, with possibility to act in a literary capacity. The employment by the Reich Ministry for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda presupposes that the Baltic Nachumsiedlers in question are in every respect reliable (Groups I and II), since they will be consulted in secret work.¹³⁷

The Allgemeine-SS Command Office began by screening the camps in the Reich for A-Cases – the camps became a convenient site for recruiting manpower.¹³⁸ Later, the SS became less forceful in its insistence that the O-Case families remain in the Warthegau. In such cases, the SS was robbing Peter to pay Paul. There are also strong indications that war-economic necessity quickly trumped the ideological resettlement project, since these people were, in effect, being taken out of the resettlement operation in favor of serving SS goals in other ways, especially in the Waffen-SS.

¹³⁶ BAB. R 59/78. 168. “Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle – Umsiedlung. Rundschreiben Nr. 70. Betr.: Bereitstellung von Umsiedlern für Dolmetscherzwecke in den Gefangenenlagern.” 1.Okt.1941. “Beim OKW besteht dringender Bedarf an Dolmetscher für Russisch, die in den Gefangenenlagern im Altreich und in den neu gewonnenen Ostgebieten zum Einsatz kommen sollen.”

¹³⁷ BAB. R 59/141. 214. “Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle – Umsiedlung D. An den Reichskommissar für die Festigung deutschen Volkstums, Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle, Einsatzführung Mainfranken. Betr.: Männliche Angestellte für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda.” 23 April 42. “Das Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda hat sich mit der dringenden Bitte hierher gewandt, ihm 1 Baltennachumsiedler, der die estnische Sprache spricht und 3 Baltennachumsiedler, die die lettische Sprache beherrschen, zu benennen und die Möglichkeit bereits schriftstellerisch tätig waren. Der Einsatz beim Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda setzt voraus, dass die infrage kommenden Baltennachumsiedler in jeder Beziehung zuverlässig sind, (Gruppe I und II) da sie für Geheimarbeiten herangezogen werden sollen.”

¹³⁸ See, for example: BAB. R 59/78. 173. “Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle – Umsiedlung. Rundschreiben Nr. 72. Betr.: Stenotypistinnen.” 8.10.41. “I request that inquiries be made in the camps and I be notified by 15 October 1941, if and how many shorthand typists are still available.” “Ich bitten, in den Lagern nachfrage halten zu wollen und mir bis zum 25. Oktober 1941 zu melden, ob und wieviel Stenotypistinnen gegebenenfalls noch zur Verfügung stehen.”

Settlers from Latvian and Estonia, who left behind an industrial, commercial, or craft enterprise in their country of origin can request to return to these areas and take over their enterprises again if:

- 1.) in the former Reich district they still have not been installed as owner or commissarial manager of a new concern and
- 2.) the abandoned enterprise is still capable of production.

Dependents of these settlers, who themselves are settlers or who are Baltic Refugees belonging to Groups I or II, are likewise eligible to return, if requested by their former boss. A return of settlers and Baltic Refugees to whom these conditions to not apply (especially farmers and peasants) will not take place.”¹³⁹

Still, the organization responsible for springing the most Baltic Germans from the Warthegau was probably the Wehrmacht. This fact did not go unnoticed by frustrated SS officials. Already in early October 1941, the UWZ had collected enough reports to perceive a serious problem: many of the able-bodied male settlers were being drained from the Warthgau into the insatiable Wehrmacht:

It has become evident that settlers who were mustered as front-line peasants [as the SS liked to call those resettled in the Warthgau], at the same time have volunteered for enlistment in the Wehrmacht and before their dismissal from their assignment as front-line peasants were called up in the Wehrmacht by the military district command.¹⁴⁰

Joining the Wehrmacht was one sure way to escape Poland and possibly even return home one day. Certainly many Baltic German men chose that option. However, the

¹³⁹ NARA II. T 74. Roll 15. RDV 114. 387858. “Anordnung Nr. 48/I. Vorg.: Rückkehr von Umsiedlern un Baltenflüchtlinge in das Gebiet des Reichskommissariats Ostland.” Undated duplicate copy. After August 1941. “Umsiedler aus Lettland oder Estland, die im Herkunftsland einen Industrie- Handels- oder Gewerbebetrieb zurückgelassen haben, können auf Antrag in diese Gebiete zurückkehren und ihre früheren Betriebe wieder übernehmen, wenn

- 1.) sie im bisherigen Reichsgebiet noch nicht in einem neuen Betrieb als Eigentümer oder kommissarischer Verwalter eingewiesen worden sind und
- 2.) der zurückgelassene Gewerbebetrieb noch einsatzfähig ist.

Gefolgschaftsmitglieder dieser Umsiedler, die entweder selbst Umsiedler sind oder als Baltenflüchtlinge den Gruppen I oder II angehören, können ebenfalls auf Antrag zurückkehren, wenn sie von ihrem ehemaligen Betriebsführer angefordert werden. Eine Rückführung von Umsiedler und Baltenflüchtlinge, die den vorstehenden Voraussetzungen nicht entsprechen (insbesondere von Landwirten und Bauern), findet nicht statt.”

¹⁴⁰ BAB. R 59/78. 170. “Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle – Umsiedlung. Rundschreiben No. 71. Betr.: Einberufungen von Frontbauern zur Wehrmacht.” 3.Oktober 41. “Es hat sich erwiesen, dass sich Umsiedler, die als Frontbauern gemustert wurden, gleichzeitig freiwillig zur Wehrmacht gemeldet haben und vor ihrer Abberufung zum Einsatz als Frontbauern durch die Wehrbezirkskommandos zur Wehrmacht einberufen wurden.”

motives behind this choice are open to interpretation. On the one hand, economic enticements and nationalism may have played a role in their volunteering. In the end, though, the situation in Poland must have been viewed as grim indeed if Wehrmacht service was seen as preferable to it. Given the growing threat of Polish partisan attacks on the newly-acquired homesteads of the Baltic Germans, Wehrmacht service may have seemed attractive, and at least then one would have a rifle. In any case, the Baltic Germans resettled in the Warthegau were melting away even before the Red Army's arrival in the area in 1944.

Summary

It is true that approximately 90% of the Baltic German population, without coercion, opted for Reich citizenship and put themselves into the hands of the SS in the first resettlement in the winter of 1939-1940. The emigration was relatively orderly, voluntary, and to the extent that the term "legal" can really be applied to any policy enacted by the National Socialist government, the Baltic Germans had legally renounced their Estonian and Latvian citizenship in favor of the citizenship of the 1,000-year Reich.¹⁴¹ They traveled by ship directly from ports in Latvia and Estonia to Gotenhafen and Stettin. After processing, a fraction of them were deemed unsuitable for resettlement in the Warthegau, either for reasons of age, health, or racial or political concerns expressed by their evaluators. A large majority remained in the Warthegau, with large concentrations in and around Posen and Lodsch, where they were installed in functioning farms and furnished apartments the inhabitants of which – Jews and Poles – had been 'evacuated.'

¹⁴¹ And its legal successors several years later, as it happened!

In the Baltic Germans' departure, "Much equipment, of course, was sold, some was left behind to be liquidated later, and many gifts were given to good Latvian or Estonian friends."¹⁴² The Latvians and Estonians actually felt some sadness, many having personal connections with Baltic Germans. The comments of a Latvian state official at the time summed up the mood: "The Latvian public looks at these preparations without hostility, without envy or taunts, and even with a certain empathy for the departing persons."¹⁴³ But also they feared the true meaning of this momentous event and for their own future. There may have even been a sense of betrayal, of being abandoned to the Soviets.

The Nachumsiedlung, which took place in the winter and spring of 1941, had a markedly different character from the first, and the people who were resettled had a much different experience. Latvia and Estonia were at that time under Soviet occupation and those wishing to leave were subject to intense Soviet intimidation. Rather than an orderly population transfer, this action took on the nature of an evacuation. Presumed of less racial worth or political reliability than the Baltic Germans who had volunteered for the initial resettlement in the winter of 1939-40, these people were sent to camps in the Reich to await processing before they could be assigned work and accommodations outside of their camp. By this point, the Latvians and Estonians could not blame the Baltic Germans

¹⁴² E.C Helmreich. "International Affairs: The Return of the Baltic Germans." *The American Political Science Review*. Vol. 36, No. 4. (Aug., 1942), p. 713.

¹⁴³ General Secretary M. Nukša. "Overview of the Repatriation of Baltic Germans," in *Experiencing Totalitarianism: The Invasion and Occupation of Latvia by the USSR and Nazi Germany, 1939-1991: A Documentary History*. Andrejs Plakans, ed. Bloomington, Indiana: AuthorHouse, 2007. For an interesting, conflicted, Latvian retrospective on the departure of the Baltic Germans, see: Adolfs Šilde. "Die Umsiedlung der Deutschbalten aus Lettland 1939 aus lettischer Sicht." *Acta Baltica*. Vol. 17. (1989), pp. 87-98. Šilde was a Latvian who fled to the West before the reconquest of Latvia by the USSR and became a prolific anti-Soviet, nationalist exile. During the war, he collaborated with the German occupation regime by writing pro-National Socialist newspaper articles for *Tevija*, German-occupied Latvia's semi-official mouthpiece.

for wanting to flee. In fact, the Nachumsiedler consisted of two major subsets: Baltic Refugees of Latvian and Estonian background, and Baltic Germans. Like the settlers before them, all were eventually subjected to evaluation according to the political and racial guidelines set down by the SS.

Operation Barbarossa was a major turning point for the Baltic Germans, since it seemed to hold the promise of returning home. The SS struggled to keep that door closed, but many Baltic Germans managed to get home, at least for a time. The Nachumsiedler, the bulk of whom were in the Reich, found it easier to return. National Socialist ideology had less invested in them. But rather than gradually settling into and becoming resigned to their new lives, the Baltic Germans of the Warthegau struggled ever harder to escape their assigned role. Some managed to leave. The Baltic Germans who were sent to camps in the Reich were quickly scattered far and wide, obtaining work across the Reich, in the military, or even back in Latvia and Estonia working for a variety of organizations. Ultimately, wherever they were, in the end they fled the advancing Soviet armies.

In general, as a preferred group, the Baltic Germans could hardly complain about their treatment by the Third Reich, especially in light of the absolute horrors that were inflicted upon other groups, not the least of whom were the Polish and Jewish owners of the properties that had been expropriated by the Reich and used to house the incoming Baltic Germans themselves. Yet, it speaks to the unspeakable nature of the National Socialist state that even this 'favored' group nevertheless found itself scattered and in shambles after the war courtesy of the ideological SS wrecking-ball. Probably everyone just wanted to be at home, like before the war. But for most Baltic Germans, it was a one-way ticket.

VI. THE BALTIC GERMANS AFTER THE WAR

1945 – 1991

The dissolution of the Baltic German community, in fact, began with Hitler's Reichstag speech of 6 October 1939, and continued throughout the duration of the war as they were dispersed across the Altreich, in the Warthegau, and along the war fronts in the Wehrmacht and the Waffen SS. In the final months of the war, order collapsed and everyone's overriding goal was only to escape the Soviets. Thus, the Baltic Germans began their World War Two story as a cohesive and unified ethnic minority in Latvia and Estonia, were split up into groups by the National Socialists themselves according to their political and racial criteria, further splintered in the face of German wartime requirements for soldiers and laborers, and faced the postwar years as an almost utterly atomized group flung across two Germanies and three continents – or perhaps no real 'group,' as such, at all.

The Baltic Germans who found themselves in the DDR never constituted any collective associations that have left a trace. Meanwhile, in the Latvian and Estonian SSRs, authorities were keen to efface all traces of German influence. Baltic German cemeteries were demolished. Old estates, landmarks, monuments, and the like were vandalized, removed, or forgotten and left to rot.

In the BRD, the Baltic Germans remained scattered.¹⁴⁴ Baltic Germans established or reestablished some cultural organizations, student fraternities, and genealogical societies, although only a few would last out the 20th Century. These organizations have dedicated themselves to preserving Baltic German history and marshalling the remnants of their community and continuing what traditions they can.

Small Baltic German enclaves also formed in the United States, Canada, and Australia, composed of Baltic German displaced persons.¹⁴⁵ These small groups have almost completely assimilated themselves into the majority population.

1991 – present

There was no exodus of Baltic Germans from abroad into Latvia and Estonia after the fall of the Soviet Union. Today, the Baltic Germans have no collective political goals. On the part of the Baltic Germans there is no desire for a return to ‘glory’ not only because the notion is absurd on its face and completely impossible, but because the times have changed. The kind of ideology that brought the Baltic Germans en masse out of Latvia and Estonia, out of their former homes, is barely even a ghost anymore in terms of contemporary European politics, with the significant exception of the territories of the former Yugoslavia. Today’s international diplomacy, Europe’s increasingly shared social and democratic political values, and the normalization of humanitarian ideals will

¹⁴⁴ The locations of the Baltic Germans interviewed for the Federal Archives in 1958-59 suggest this also, although it would be dangerous to read too much into this single sample: Bielefeld: 1; Bochum: 1; Bremen: 1; Düsseldorf: 1; Gladbeck: 2; Göttingen: 1; Hamburg: 1; Hannover: 7; Kiel: 1; Köln: 1; Lübeck: 1; Marburg: 1; Mehlem: 1; Neckarsulm-Amorbach: 1; Oldenburg: 1; Otterndorf: 1; Ravensburg: 1; Rietburg: 1; Rottenburg: 1; Schwabach: 1; Siegburg: 1; Uelzen: 1; Walsrode: 1; Wiesbaden: 1. 31 Baltic Germans living in 23 different towns and cities.

¹⁴⁵ For example, in the mid-1980s, an estimated 5,000 Baltic Germans lived in Canada. This number presumably includes those born after the war in Canada. *The Baltic-Germans: Reminiscences*. M.F. Kuester, ed. Edmonton, Canada: Central and East European Studies Society of Alberta, 1985, p. 12.

hopefully prevent the future application of such creative ways to destroy lives and communities as the National Socialists invented. It is a new Germany today, inhabited by new Germans (Baltic or otherwise). This is due in no small part to the new atmosphere in Europe fostered by the existence of the European Union. Germany was a charter member and Latvia and Estonia, only a few years ago, joined as well.

“Deutsch-Balten” is how the Baltic Germans preferred to be called after the war. They view “Baltendeutsch” as a National Socialist term, emphasizing their Germanness over their Balticness, and they cringe at the term because of what it has historically meant for them. They are not Baltendeutsche today but Deutsch-Balten – to emphasize their identity with the Baltic Peoples – although they have never been so German as they are now.

But can stepping off a plane in a country you’ve never seen before be a homecoming? Baltic Germans today return to Latvia and Estonia to admire the architecture in the old town, searching for plaques bearing German names on the old guild houses, storehouses, and guardhouses. They visit the cathedrals. They rent cars and look for neglected gravesites in the countryside.

Today, at worst, Latvians and Estonians are indifferent to the Baltic Germans and possess a fading memory of bygone and buried outrages, rendered indistinct by the passage of time because of the fresher outrages committed against them by the Soviet Union. At best, there may be a twinge of sentimentality amongst the Latvians who gaze up as the wind blows stiffly against the Latvian flag atop the tower of the old baronial castle at Sigulda, or look over the overgrown rubble of the ancient forts sprinkled across Kurzeme, when they remember the people who were there, but are no longer.

Like most countries in Eastern Europe, the Baltic States have not come fully to terms with their experience of the Third Reich. Under Soviet rule, public discourse on the subject was delayed, deformed, and full of denial. Thus another component of the current bond or lack of bond between the Latvians and the Baltic Germans is an unexpected common cause: neither wants to truly remember. The memories have been largely repressed, for who stands to benefit from their public remembrance? The Baltic Germans obeyed the dictates of Hitler and were, in effect, complicit in their own destruction. The Latvians and Estonians did not try to stop them. The Baltic Germans by their action, and the others by their inaction, can take little pride in this episode. For better or for worse, both sides seem to have let the sleeping dog lie. They are neighbors no more.

VII. CONCLUSION

Does Time, as the proverb says, heal all wounds? If so, how does the passage of time, which we call history, effect it? It begins with bloodshed in the place that Heinrich von Treitschke called “the classical land of peasant oppression.”¹⁴⁶ First in the 1905 Revolution, and then, only a few years later, in the Wars for Independence, Baltic Germans and Latvians and Estonians were killing each other. Stability set in during the period of Baltic independent statehood, although tensions twisted and throbbed beneath the surface. The year 1939 brought the Second World War and the resettlement of the Baltic Germans out of Latvia and Estonia, ending their 700-year presence in those lands. The war and its aftermath, to a large degree, saw the Baltic Germans destroyed or dispersed as a cohesive cultural and ethnic group. The year 1991 was a watershed. Baltic Germans could finally go back to their old Heimat.

Hitler called the Baltic Germans “heim ins Reich” in 1939. Where is home now? There is no more Reich, but there is a Federal Republic of Germany. Is that home now? Or was the real home of the Baltic Germans lost forever? In another generation, the descendents of the Umsiedler of 1939-1940 and the Nachumsiedler of 1941 will be in precisely what way ‘Baltic’ Germans?

¹⁴⁶ Quoted in Gershon Shafir. *Immigrants and Nationalists*, p. 131.

Theirs is a past largely relinquished. The distinctive Baltic German accent can now only faintly be heard.

ABBREVIATIONS

BAB: Bundesarchiv-Berlin

BRD: Bundesrepublik Deutschland (Federal Republic of Germany)

DDR: Deutsche Demokratische Republik (German Democratic Republic)

DAG: Deutsche Ansiedlungsgesellschaft (German Settlement Corporation)

DVL: Deutsche Volksliste (List of Ethnic Germans)

EWZ: Einwandererzentralstelle (Central Immigrant Office)

HSSPF: Höhere SS- und Polizeiführer (Superior SS and Police Leader)

LAA: Lastenausgleichsarchiv-Bayreuth

NARA II: National Archives and Records Administration II-College Park, Maryland

RKFDV: Reichskommissar/iat für die Festigung deutschen Volkstums (Reich
Commissioner for the Strengthening of Germandom)

RuSHA: Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamt (Race and Settlement Main Office)

UWZ: Umwandererzentralstelle (Central Immigrant Office)

VoMi: Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle (Ethnic German Liaison Office)

APPENDIX A

Departmental Organization of the Einwandererzentralstelle During Durchschleusung:

- A. Registration Office (Delegate from: Chief of the Order Police). Police registration collection/Card catalogue. Registration Cards = data list.
- B. Identification Office (Delegate from: Chief of the Security Police). Settler IDs.
- C. Photographic Office (Delegate from: Chief of the Security Police). Had the assignment of creating the necessary photographs, etc. for the Identification, the Health Cards, and the Aptitude Cards. Beyond that, it also made photographs for scientific and statistical purposes.
- D. Health Office (Delegate from: Reich Interior Minister and the Reich Health Leader). Health and hereditary biology.
- E. Race and Settlement Office (Delegate from: Race and Settlement Office).
- F. Citizenship Office (Delegate from: Reich Interior Minister). Examination of political and ethnic background (and previous attitude toward Germandom).
- G. Occupational Placement Office (Delegate from: Reich Work Ministry). Only associated from October 1939 – Summer 1940.
- Y. Property Office (Delegate from: Reich Finance Ministry). Only at Operational Staff and Branch Office levels. Had the assignment of checking property both brought and left behind. They were associated as a Reich bank liaison. This assignment was later assumed by the German Settlement and Trust Company.
- X. Statistical Office (Delegate from: Reich Statistical Office). Central data collection.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁷ This description comes from the Findbuch of BAB. R 69: Einwandererzentralstelle Litzmannstadt. "Fachstellen in der EWZ:

- A. Meldestelle (Abgeordnet von: Chef der Ordnungspolizei). Meldepolizeiliche Erfassung/Kartei. Meldekarten = Stammbblätter.
- B. Ausweisstelle (Abgeordnet von: Chef der Sipo). Umsiedlerausweis.
- C. Lichtbildstelle (Abgeordnet von: Chef der Sipo). Hatte die Aufgabe, die nötigen Lichtbilder herzustellen, u.a. für den Ausweis, die Gesundheitskarte, und die Eignungskarte. Darüber hinaus stellte sie auch Fotos für wissenschaftliche und statistische Zwecke her.
- D. Gesundheitsstelle (Abgeordnet von: Reichsminister des Innern u. Reichsgesundheitsführer). Gesundheit und Erbbiologisch.
- E. Rasse- und Siedlungs Dienststelle (Abgeordnet von: Rasse- und Siedlungs Hauptamt).
- F. Staatsangehörigkeitsstelle (Abgeordnet von: Reichsminister des Innern). Überprüfung: politischen und Volkstumszugehörigkeit (und des bisherigen Verhaltens in Deutschland).
- G. Berufseinsatzstelle (Abgeordnet von: Reichsarbeitsministerium). Nur von Okt. 1939 – Sommer 1940 angegliedert.
- Y. Vermögensstelle (Abgeordnet von: Reichsfinanzministerium). Nur bei Führungsstab und Nebenstelle. Hatte die Aufgabe, das zurückgelassene und mitgebrauchte Vermögen zu überprüfen. Ihr war die Verbindungsstelle der Reichsbank angeschlossen. Diese Aufgabe übernahm späterhin die Deutsche Umsiedlungs- und Treuhand GmbH.
- X. Statistische Stelle (Abgeordnet von: Statistisches Reichsamt). Zentralen Sammlung Daten. Bis auf die Statistische Stelle bestanden alle diese Dienststellen sowohl beim Führungsstab als auch bei den Nebenstellen und Fliegenden Kommissionen, wo sie von den zu erfassenden Personen in wenigen Stunden durchlaufen wurden. Die auf diese Weise durchgeführte Erfassung wurde 'Durchschleusung' genannt."

APPENDIX B

The Main Assignments of the Einwandererzentralstelle:

The UWZ had the following main assignments:

- (1.) Official Compilation [of records];
- (2.) Ascertainment of citizenship relationships with respect to naturalization;
- (3.) Final approval of settler's characteristics with respect to the examination of lineage and the possibility of re-Germanization;
- (4.) Decision on the departure of settlers; and
- (5.) Supplying all documents necessary for the departure of the settlers.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸ This description comes from the Findbuch in the Bundesarchiv-Berlin Lichterfeld for R 69.

“Die EWZ hatte folgende Hauptaufgaben:

- (1.) Behördlichen Erfassung;
- (2.) Feststellung des staatsbürgerlichen Verhältnisse, bzw. Einbürgerung;
- (3.) Endgültige Anerkennung der Umsiedlereigenschaft bzw. Überprüfung der Abstammung und der Möglichkeit der Wiedereindeutschungsfähigkeit;
- (4.) Entscheidung über den Ansatz der Umsiedler; und
- (5.) Bereitstellung alle für den Ansatz der Umsiedler notwendigen Unterlagen.”

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BAB. R 59/78. 65. "Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle – Umsiedlung. Rundschreiben Nr. 22. Betr.: Entlassung von Ärzten aus den Reihen der Rücksiedler aus Estland und Lettland." 3.5.1941.

BAB. R 59/78. 78. "Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle – Umsiedlung. Rundschreiben Nr. 30. Betr.: Entlassung von Apothekern aus den Reihen der Rucksiedler aus Estland und Lettland." 28.5.1941.

BAB. R 59/78. 127. "Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle – Umsiedlung. Rundschreiben Nr. 52. Betr.: Anträge von Umsiedlern auf Rückführung in die ehem. Aussiedlungsgebiete." 20. Aug.41.

BAB. R 59/78. 128. "Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle – Umsiedlung. Rundschreiben Nr. 53. Betr.: Zubereitung des Essens in den Lagern durch Umsiedlerfrauen." 20.Aug.41.

BAB. R 59/78. 143. "Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle – Umsiedlung. Rundschreiben Nr. 61." 8.Sep. 1941.

BAB. R 59/78. 168. "Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle – Umsiedlung. Rundschreiben Nr. 70. Betr.: Bereitstellung von Umsiedlern für Dolmetscherzwecke in den Gefangenenlagern." 1.Okt.1941.

BAB. R 59/78. 170. "Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle – Umsiedlung. Rundschreiben No. 71. Betr.: Einberufungen von Frontbauern zur Wehrmacht." 3.Oktober 41.

BAB. R 59/78. 173. "Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle – Umsiedlung. Rundschreiben Nr. 72. Betr.: Stenotypistinnen." 8.10.41.

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