

GERMANS DISPLACED FROM THE EAST:
CROSSING ACTUAL AND IMAGINED
CENTRAL EUROPEAN BORDERS, 1944-1955

DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

At the end of World War II the Allies demilitarized, divided, and democratized Germany. The dismantling of Germany involved setting up four zones and eventually two states, the Federal Republic and German Democratic Republic (GDR), and also giving large German territories to Poland and the Soviet Union, which required the initiation of a forced population transfer of the Germans who lived in those areas. Whether they fled as the Soviet troops advanced, or faced the postwar expulsions arranged by the Allies, the majority of Germans from the Eastern territories, approximately 12 million altogether, survived the arduous trek West. Roughly 8 million ended up in West Germany; 4 million went to the GDR. This dissertation comparatively examines the postwar, post-flight experiences of the German expellees in the Federal Republic and GDR in the late 1940s and 1950s. This analysis involves an examination of four categories of experience: official images of the expellees, their self-images, their images as outsiders, and expellees' reaction to these outsider-images.

The two Germanies' expellee policies differed dramatically and reflected their Cold War orientations. West Germany followed a policy of expellee-integration, which highlighted their cultural differences and encouraged them to express their uniqueness. The Federal Republic initially sought unification on the basis of 1937 borders; thus

expellee identity should be expressed in order to maintain links to the lost territories, which they wished to regain. GDR expellee policy involved silencing their self-expression and forcing them to meld with the existing population. The GDR sought to erase the Germanness of the lost territories and thus allow them to stay in Russian and Polish hands; the expellees in East Germany were forced to give up ties to their homeland.

This dissertation thus highlights expellee resettlement policies as they related to the political orientation of the two Germanies and the integration experiences of the resettled Prussian populations. The war-torn Germanies both managed to integrate millions of expellees and have proven to be useful examples for historians and policy-makers in evaluating the ever-recurring and global problem of forced migration.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BA-B	Bundesarchiv Berlin
BA-K	Bundesarchiv Koblenz
BBZ	Britische Besatzungszone, or British Occupied Zone
BHE	Block der Heimatvertriebenen und Entrechteten, or Voting Block of the Germans expelled from their Homeland and Deprived of their Rights
BrLHA	Brandenburgisches Landeshauptarchiv
CDU/CSU	Christlich-Demokratische Union/ Christlich-Soziale Union, or Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union
DGA	Deutsches Gedächtnisarchiv
DM	Deutsche Mark
EKD	Evangelische-Kirche Deutschland, or Protestant Church of Germany
FDJ	Freie Deutsche Jugend, or Free German Youth a GDR youth group
GDR	German Democratic Republic
IMIS	Intitut für Migrationsforschung und Interkulturelle Studien, or Institute for Migration Research and Intercultural Studies
KPD	Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands, or Communist Party of Germany
LA-SH	Landesarchiv Schleswig-Holstein
LHA-M	Landeshauptarchiv Magdeburg
LHA-S	Landeshauptarchiv Schwerin
LDP	Liberal Democratic Party
NRWHSa	Nordrhein-westfälisches Landeshauptstaatsarchiv
NS-O	Niedersächsische Staatsarchiv Osnabrück
RM	Reichsmark
SBZ	Sowjetische Besatzungszone, or Soviet Occupied Zone
SED	Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands, or Socialist Unity Party
SMAD	Sowjetischen Militäradministration in Deutschland, or Soviet Military Administration
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands, or German Social Democratic Party
StA FfO	Stadtarchiv Frankfurt (Oder)
Stasi	Staatssicherheitsdienst, or the GDR's State Security Service
ZVU	Zentralverwaltung für deutsche Umsiedler, or the Central Administration of German Resettlers in the SBZ

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In response to its actions during World War II, the Allies occupied, demilitarized, divided, denazified, and democratized Germany. In dismantling Nazi Germany the Allies established four occupied zones, eventually set up two states, and also gave large German territories to Poland and the Soviet Union and, in so doing, initiated a forced population transfer of the millions of Germans who lived in those areas and other parts of Central and Eastern Europe. Among the territories lost were East Prussia, West Prussia, and Pomerania, the three states forming the initial core of the Teutonic Knight's Prussia. Whether they fled as the Soviet troops advanced or faced the postwar expulsions agreed to by Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin, the majority of Germans from the Eastern territories and Central and Eastern Europe, approximately 12 million altogether, survived the arduous trek West. Roughly 8 million ended up in the Federal Republic; 4 million went to the German Democratic Republic (GDR).

This dissertation examines the postwar, post flight experiences of the German expellees in both Germanies in the late 1940s and 1950s, beginning with their arrival and ending roughly with their economic integration in the mid 1950s. This comparison

highlights the policies of the very different Federal Republic and GDR towards resettling massive expellee populations, policies that proved to be successful, despite their dramatic differences. Because the war torn Germanies both managed to integrate millions of expellees, they prove to be useful examples for historians and policy-makers dealing with the ever-recurring problem of forced migration and the resulting refugees.

An examination of expellee integration experiences can provide valuable insights into the political development of the two postwar German states and help deepen our understanding of the differences and ultimate similarities between both postwar Germanies. West Germany followed a policy of expellee-integration that highlighted the expellees' cultural differences and encouraged them to express their cultural uniqueness. The GDR's policy toward the displaced Germans involved silencing their self-expression and forcing them to meld with the existing population. These differences reflected Cold War rhetoric: West Germany initially sought reunification according to the 1937 borders, thus expellee identity should be expressed in order to maintain the link to the lost territories, which they wished to regain. The Soviet-oriented GDR sought to erase the Germanness of the lost territories and thus allow them to stay in Russian and Polish hands; therefore the expellees in that Germany were forced to give up all ties to their homeland. Despite the fact that governmental policies differed dramatically, displaced Germans in West Germany and the GDR shared similar arrival experiences and social tensions. This dissertation thus highlights successful expellee resettlement policies as they related to the political orientation of the two Germanies and the integration experiences of the massive resettled populations.

Displaced Germans' integration relied on a three-way dialogue between the newcomers, the public officials, and the local population. This dialogue not only involved three groups who were often at odds with each other, rather also occurred in many forms and in multiple arenas. In his book *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, James Scott referred to interaction "between subordinates and those who dominate" as transcripts. According to Scott, "public transcripts" were "openly avowed" records of what was said. This discourse could be spoken, printed, or communicated through gestures or expressions. The purpose of public transcripts was to reinforce the current set of power relationships and the unanimous consent to those relationships of all parties involved. Scott also described "offstage" discourse, which he termed "hidden transcripts." Although Scott used this terminology especially to describe the domination and also self-expression of subalterns and other subjugated peoples, "structures of domination" play a role in every society.¹

Thus, although I am not attempting to suggest that subordination occurred to the same degree in the postwar Germanies as had been the case in Scott's case studies, the language he employed can be expanded and also applied to the GDR and the Federal Republic. Both governments established policies that they expressed through public transcripts that urged integration of the displaced Germans according to the respective official political orientation of the two states. However, in both cases integration required the full participation of the newcomers as well as the existing population.

¹ James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), 2, n.1, 52-53, 4, 55.

Officials sometimes found the two segments of their societies more prone to reject the official policies concerning the integration of the displaced Germans and to express this rejection through hidden transcripts.

Expulsions in the past and present

The Germans from the Eastern territories were certainly neither the first nor the last group to face mass expulsions from their homelands. In the past decade, the topic of forced migration has been in the news regularly. That Albanians were expelled from Kosovo is but one of the most recent examples of mass-expulsion; forced migration certainly has a long history. Even if the discussion is limited to North American and European history of the past five centuries, the examples are numerous: the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492, the flight of the Protestants from Louis XIV's France, the forced migration of the Protestants from Salzburg in the eighteenth century, the expulsion of the Protestants from Quebec, the flight of the Loyalists during the American Revolution, Indian removal policies during Andrew Jackson's presidency, the expulsion of the Jesuits from Bismarck's Germany, the Nazis' removal and subsequent extermination of the Jews from Central Europe during World War II, the expulsion of the Poles from Eastern Poland at the end of World War II due to the Soviet absorption of that territory, among many other examples.

Whereas many of these earlier examples stemmed from religious or political persecution, especially during the twentieth century expulsion became a factor of racial and ethnic-cleansing policies. Recently scholars have also categorized the expulsion of

Germans from the East as an example of "ethnic cleansing," since the Germans were expelled precisely *because* they were Germans.² However, other factors were involved in the expulsion of the Germans from the Eastern territories at the end of and following World War II. This example of expulsion was a component of the Allied efforts to weaken Germany, to dissolve the state of Prussia, to strengthen Poland and Czechoslovakia, to diminish chances for postwar German aggression, and to appease Stalin's demands.

Discussions of German expellees often focus on the roughly 12 million displaced Germans as a single category; thus including in one group both Reichsdeutsche from East Prussia, West Prussia, Pomerania, and Silesia, as well as Volksdeutsche from the Sudetenland, the Baltic states, Slovakia, Hungary, Rumania, Russia and the former Yugoslavia. The term "Reichsdeutsche" generally referred to Germans who had lived in Germany according to either its 1871 borders or sometimes its dimensions in 1918. The Reichsdeutsche lived as the majority population in areas such as East Prussia, West Prussia, Pomerania, and Silesia that had been relatively consistently part of the German empire or Austrian empire. Thus for the Reichsdeutsche the expulsion did not entail their removal as an ethnic minority and the term "ethnic cleansing" becomes less applicable.

"Volksdeutsche" was a term apparently first used under National Socialism to refer to

² Hans-Ake Persson discussed the expulsion as an example of ethnic cleansing in a talk titled "Settling the Peace, the Cold War, and the Ethnic Cleansing of Germans in Central and Eastern Europe" on 5 November 1998 at the Institut für Migrationsforschung und Interkulturelle Studien, Universität Osnabrück. See also Norman Naimark, *Fires of Hatred: Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2001); Philipp Ther and Ana Siljak, eds. *Redrawing Nations: Ethnic Cleansing in East-Central Europe, 1944-1948* (Lanham, Boulder, New York, Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, INC., 2001).

German ethnic minority groups.³ Living in pockets in disparate areas in Central and Eastern Europe, the Volksdeutsche were a minority population and their experience of expulsion could arguably be considered an example of "ethnic cleansing." Therefore, the expulsion of the Germans from the East was not, as most historians categorize it, a monolithic event, rather it involved two disparate types of population removal. The Volksdeutsche experienced ethnic cleansing, while the Reichsdeutsche experienced an expulsion with little comparison in history. A majority group was expelled from what they envisioned as "their" Germany and then "repatriated" into a new and sometimes unknown Germany. Examinations including all the above-mentioned displaced Germans encompass therefore not only around 12 million people, but also cross experiential, confessional, and cultural boundaries.

The expulsion and resettlement of the Germans from the former Eastern territories

This study emphasizes the cultural experiences of the displaced Germans in the Federal Republic and the GDR during the late 1940s and 1950s, beginning with their arrival and ending with their economic integration. Although this study focuses on the Reichsdeutsche expelled from East Prussia, West Prussia, and Pomerania, many of the experiences described and conclusions drawn could be applied to all displaced Germans. The Reichsdeutsche under examination here, whether they fled to the Federal Republic or

³ Eugen Lemberg, "Der Wandel des politischen Denkens," in *Die Vertriebenen in Westdeutschland: ihre Eingliederung und ihr Einfluss auf Gesellschaft, Wirtschaft, Politik und Geistesleben*, 3 vols., eds Eugen Lemberg and Friedrich Edding (Kiel: Ferdinand Hirt, 1959), 437-439. See also, Joseph B. Schechtman, *The Refugee in the World: Population and Displacement* (New York: A.S. Barnes and Company, 1963),

the GDR, shared a common but complex set of closely linked mostly Protestant cultures forming a unique heritage, which in many instances had deep roots going back seven centuries. (Expellees from Silesia, as well as most Volksdeutsche, were often Catholic.) The regional, class, and political variations were equally deeply rooted, but the shared experience of losing their historically-German homeland forged a unity among the displaced Reichsdeutsche that had not previously existed.

These Prussian and Pomeranian refugees and expellees entered postwar German societies where they faced integration into regimes consciously attempting to distance themselves from Prussian traditions, associations, and reputation. The unique--mostly masculine--baggage associated with the label "Prussian" complicated the governmental and societal responses to the expellees. Some Germans blamed traditional Prussian militarism and exaltation of warrior virtues for the emergence of the Nazi regime. This perception was complicated by the fact that after 1947 Prussia was no longer a geographic entity and in many ways lived only within the memories and traditions upheld by the mostly female expellees. Integration entailed varying degrees of assimilation and led to tension between preserving the unique culture and identities of the Prussian expellees, and fitting them into the new societies. This integration also required an extensive amount of both physical and emotional rebuilding: for the refugees and expellees the flight or expulsion threatened their lives, families, traditions and identities.

Who were these refugees and expellees and why would they form a distinct group in their new post-resettlement environment? Whether they fled as the Soviet troops advanced at the end of the war, or faced the postwar expulsions stipulated by the Potsdam

peace accords, most of the Germans from the East, approximately 12 million altogether, survived the long and arduous trek West. (There were around 15 million Germans living in the Eastern territories and Eastern and Central Europe by the end of the war. Roughly 8 million ended up in the Federal Republic, 4 million went to the GDR, nearly 2 million died, 1 million--mostly Silesian Catholics--stayed.)⁴

Of the 12 million Eastern Germans pushed out of the East, how many had lived in the regions under examination in this study? According to a 1939 census, over five million Prussians and Pomeranians had lived in the Eastern territories.⁵ However, the Bundesausgleichsamt reported that there were 3,360,000 East Prussians, West Prussians and Pomeranians in the postwar Germanies by 1950. (Estimates from 1950 suggest that 2,220,000 of the Prussian expellees lived in West Germany and 1,140,000 in the GDR.)⁶ Excluding the wartime casualties and death by natural causes, how can one account for the contraction of the population?

The estimates of how many Prussians died during the flight, internment, deportation, or expulsion vary widely, but likely they number in the hundreds of thousands.⁷ Many of them fled in 1944 or early 1945 as the Soviet Army conquered

⁴ Reichling, Gerhard, *Die deutschen Vertriebenen in Zahlen: Teil I, Umsiedler, Verschleppte, Vertriebene, Aussiedler, 1940-1985* (Bonn: Kulturstiftung der deutschen Vertriebenen, 1995), 30, 36, 51, 53, 55.

⁵ Werner Nellner, "Grundlagen und Hauptergebnisse der Statistik," in *Die Vertriebenen in Westdeutschland*, vol. 1, 126. Reichling, *Die deutschen Vertriebenen in Zahlen: Teil I*, 62.

⁶ Reichling, *Die deutschen Vertriebenen in Zahlen: Teil I*, 61.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 36. Reichling included a table which indicated that by 1950, 910,000 expellees from the Eastern territories died as a result of either the expulsion (765,000) or the deportation to forced labor camps in the East (145,000).

more territory in Eastern Germany, some of those who fled were captured, most of those who stayed--whether because they refused to flee or because they had been captured--faced internment followed by expulsion between late 1945 and 1950. Generally only those Germans who possessed skills considered desirable to the new Polish government and who renounced their Germanness were permitted--or even forced--to stay. (Perhaps surprisingly, Polish officials apparently regarded Catholics as more generally acceptable.) On the other hand, Königsberg was governed by the Soviets and likewise its residents faced internment and forced labor, and then eventual expulsion. In addition, especially between February and April 1945, some Eastern Germans experienced deportation to remote parts of the Soviet Union and internment in Soviet labor camps. Thus, some Eastern Germans died in the war or due to the departure or postwar internment, the majority fled or was expelled, and a small number assimilated and stayed.

Displaced Reichsdeutsche fled primarily to the British and Soviet Zones (BBZ and SBZ) of occupation. Their final destinations generally depended on whether the flight was over land or across the ice, whether they fled or were expelled and when, and their level of exhaustion. As the new heads of their families, it was the women who most frequently led their children and elderly relatives to safety. The families arrived in overcrowded and devastated cities often with no more than the possessions they could carry, and they had to find lodging and the means for survival. Once the refugees and expellees arrived within the boundaries of postwar Germany this reversal of gender roles

was necessarily maintained; the women had to try to rebuild their lives and create a new home for their families. This initial postwar period is often referred to as the "Hour of the Women."⁸

Postwar Germany faced a demographic imbalance, often referred to as the so-called Frauenüberschuss (surplus of women), that also contributed to this reversal of traditional gender roles. Robert Moeller reported that a 1946 West German census indicated "that for every 100 males, there were 126 females."⁹ In a 1946 East German census there were 133 women for every 100 men. The statistics are more startling when one looks at the expellees. According to the same 1946 East German census, there were 1,487,700 male and 2,050,700 female expellees.¹⁰ As these figures indicate, women constituted the majority of Germans displaced from their Eastern homelands. Virtually any man old enough and fit enough to serve in any military capacity was gone. The remaining men in the Eastern territories who had not been killed in service or sent to the POW camps after being captured on the front, if able-bodied, were sent to forced labor

⁸ Elizabeth Heineman, "The Hour of the Women: Memories of Germany's 'Crisis Years' and West German National Identity," *American Historical Review* (vol. 101, Nr. 2, April 1996): 354-395. Christian Graf von Krockow, *Hour of the Women*, trans. Krishna Winston (New York, Harper Collins, 1991); originally published as *Die Stunde der Frauen: Bericht aus Pommern 1944 bis 1947 Nach einer Erzählung von Libussa Fritz-Krockow* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1988).

⁹ Robert G. Moeller, *Protecting Motherhood: Women and the family in the politics of postwar West Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 27. In the Western zones, then, women made up 55.75 percent of the population in 1946.

¹⁰ Peter-Heinz Seraphim, *Die Heimatvertriebenen in der Sowjetzone*, (Berlin, Duncker & Humblot, 1954), 56. In The SBZ, then, women made up 57.08 percent of the population in 1946. When one examines the expellee population, that figure was 57.95 percent in 1946.

camps set up in Poland and the Soviet Union by the occupation authorities. As a result, those women who were themselves not deported to forced labor camps in the East had to lead what remained of their families to safety.

The experiences of the refugees and expellees in the different zones of occupation diverged immediately during the harsh postwar years. Housing, food shortages, and finding work were problems faced in every zone, but the Soviets responded to the problem of housing the incoming expellees, termed "resettlers" by the new government, faster than the other occupying powers. In the Soviet Zone the goal was to house the resettlers, and not to store them in overcrowded camps, as was often the case in the Western zones. Although living conditions were certainly not luxurious in the Soviet Zone, the initial conditions were often better there than in the other zones. However, many resettlers who arrived in the Soviet Zone rejected the socialist system being set up, and many resettlers also had a lingering fear of the Soviets. Therefore many Germans from the Eastern territories who arrived in the Soviet Zone fled a second time, leaving what was to become the GDR for the Western Zones/West Germany. This second flight sometimes led to divorces, divided families, and conflict.

The very existence of the displaced Germans in the postwar zones was an immediate concern for the officials setting up the new Germanies. The arrival of twelve million homeless, jobless, often malnourished and sometimes sick Germans within the borders of the postwar Germanies proved to be no easy task for the new officials. Many displaced Germans hesitated in embracing the new Germany as their new Heimat. In some cases the Germans from the Eastern territories could not be convinced that the

Heimat was lost forever, thus they waited years before they even purchased such essential items as a mattress or furniture. Their argument was that they would be going home soon anyway and would not want extra baggage.¹¹

In addition, the often hostile behavior of the indigenous local population towards the displaced Germans frequently intensified their homesickness: many reports in the archives mention sadistic indigenes who sought to make the expellees and resettlers feel as unwelcome as possible. Group consciousness and cohesion among many displaced Germans was strengthened in part as a reaction to their outsider status. Government officials both at the local level battled against overt unfriendliness among the indigenes. Indeed many reports from the SBZ/GDR indicate that officials issued fines or even prison terms for behavior that hindered the integration of the resettlers into the population. Using the terminology of James Scott, the government tried to create the appearance of unanimity among the disparate groups through the use of public transcripts that supported the official policy and presented a harmonious socialist society.¹² However, many indigenes perceived the displaced Germans as being too backward, too foreign, too Eastern, too Slavic, and expressed their rejection of the newcomers through hidden transcripts. That many indigenes treated the arriving expellees and resettlers as social and even racial inferiors created a setback for the government's policy of absorption and also contrasted with the official version of the new harmonious socialist Heimat.

In the GDR the "resettlers" were key in Cold War politics. That these Germans were urged to merge with the other citizens of the New Germany and forget past

¹¹ Inform-Nr. 47/50, Amt für Information, HA Informationskontrolle, Berlin, 3 April 1950, p. 2-3, Bundesarchiv Berlin (BA-B), NY 4090, 561.

geographical allegiances and identities in order to preserve the peace-border with Poland was a key aspect of East German Cold War politics. The subject of the flight or expulsion of the Germans from the former Eastern territories was taboo in the GDR, indeed even the word "expellee" was to be avoided due to the revanchistic overtones and the possible threat to the peaceful relations between the GDR and its Eastern neighbors. In order to avoid calling this group of roughly 4 million displaced Germans either refugees (which implied they would be heading back at some point) or expellees (which implied that their removal was unjust), the new government suggested the word "resettler" (Umsiedler) as a more acceptable alternative. However, by the early 1950s, even the word "Umsiedler" was to be avoided: the government strongly encouraged the "resettlers" to view themselves as SBZ/GDR citizens without any distinctions based on heritage. Indeed the SBZ/GDR government strongly encouraged all of its citizens to view the advance of the Red Army as a welcome event in their recent history, freeing them from the shackles of the Nazi oppressors. Indeed the subject of the expulsion was taboo, as was the subject of the mass raping. The GDR government did not encourage the formation of resettler organizations, or the erection of museums or monuments. Instead the government encouraged silence. Despite tremendous pressures to melt into the existing population, many resettlers in the late 1940s and early 1950s attempted to maintain the traditions that made them unique and thereby express their group consciousness as Germans from the Eastern territories. Hence, again using the

¹² Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 55.

terminology of James Scott, the resettlers took part in the development of a dissident subculture and through shared hidden transcripts expressed implicit resistance against assimilation.¹³

During the early stages of the creation of the Federal Republic, the new West German government created a Bundesministerium für Vertriebene, Flüchtlinge und Kriegsgeschädigte (Ministry for Expellees, Refugees, and War Victims--POWs and bombed-out Germans) and encouraged the formation of expellee political and cultural organizations for the improvement of their circumstances and the preservation of their culture. Through the ministry the government promoted and sought to subsidize the creation of monuments and museums, the education of German children about Eastern Germany, and the establishment of annual events honoring the expellees and their culture. Indeed the government accorded the expellees a unique status in the society of the Federal Republic. The government also created the Lastenausgleich (Equalization of Burdens), which helped to fund the improvements in their living conditions. Through the political party of the expellees, the Block der Heimatvertriebenen und Entrechteten (BHE, Voting Block of the Germans expelled from their Homeland and Deprived of their Rights), and organizations such as the Bund der Vertriebenen (Federation of the Expellees), in addition to the many Landsmannschaften (clubs or organizations for Germans from the former territories), the expellees formed an influential special interest group working for their rights, the rights of their children, and the rights of the ethnic Germans who remained East of the Oder.

¹³ Ibid., 15, 63, 65-66, 157.

The expellees in West Germany played a significant role in Cold War politics; especially during the 1950s and 1960s monuments sprang up across West Germany supporting the reunification of Germany, which had been divided into three parts as a result of World War II. The three Germanies were as follows: West Germany of course formed the basis of the Federal Republic, "Middle Germany" (Mitteldeutschland) experienced Soviet domination in the form of the German Democratic Republic, and the third part of Germany, "Eastern Germany," was divided between Poland and the Soviet Union. These monuments, in addition to widely distributed pamphlets and flyers, argued that Germany was un-dividable (unteilbar); it was just a matter of time before the Communists would be vanquished and Königsberg would be Königsberg again, and Danzig would again be Danzig. Up until the late 1960s, the West German chancellors also repeatedly and publicly assured expellees that their homelands were not lost forever, and that they would be going home soon. Thus, the West German government tried to create the appearance of unanimity through the use of public transcripts, which depicted a general social desire for reunification of Germany according to its 1937 borders.

An interdisciplinary comparative study of integration processes, emphasizing the expellees' cultural experiences, and the social and governmental attempts to promote or hinder the identity and cultural traditions of expellees in the postwar Germanies immeasurably advances our understanding of the complex nature of postwar German politics and identities. Recently documentaries, historians, literature, movies, and museum exhibits have emphasized the differences between the postwar Germanies; indeed there were many ways in which they were dissimilar. However, the present work

also examines the ultimate similarities between both Germanies, and suggests provocative insights into both continuity and change in German and Central European cultures, politics, and traditions within the last six decades.

General comments concerning the historiography

The existing literature on expellees and their integration into West Germany is vast and ranges from works written by those who experienced the departure, to reports composed by the politicians and administrators who directed the integration, to sociologists, political scientists and historians who studied both. Initially, interest in the expulsion and the integration of the displaced Germans was widespread. However, with the shift in West German policies towards Ostpolitik in the late 1960s, scholars began to avoid such topics and even regard them as taboo. But since reunification and the official recognition of Germany's Eastern border, the number of scholarly monographs and especially edited volumes (the so-called Sammelbände) published on aspects of expellee integration has been at times overwhelming. In her annotated bibliography published in 1989, Gertrud Krallert-Sattler described nearly 5,000 works on the subject of expellees that were already in print.¹⁴ Now the total number of such publications has certainly far exceeded her estimations.

Already in the 1950s the West German government and postwar scholarly community expressed an interest in utilizing expulsion stories in the promotion of their

¹⁴ Gertrud Krallert-Sattler. *Kommentierte Bibliographie zum Flüchtlings- und Vertriebenenproblem in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, in Österreich und in der Schweiz* (Wien: Braumüller, 1989)

political agenda. Some prominent West Germans embraced the trauma of the flight and expulsion as part of the West German collective memory, thereby enabling Germans to share the status of victims of Hitler's War. Robert Moeller's recent monograph *War Stories* (2001) discussed the role that the German POWs and expellees played in allowing West Germans to take on the status of victims. He contended that West German politicians, historians, and film makers emphasized the suffering of these two groups of Germans at the expense of discussions of victims of Nazi genocide.¹⁵

Indeed initially the West German government viewed publicizing the trauma of the expulsion as politically expedient. Between 1954 and 1960, the Federal Ministry for Expellees published a collection of witnesses' reports about the Soviet offensives in the Eastern territories, the flight, the internment, and the expulsion. A scholarly commission led by Theodor Schieder assembled and edited this multi-volume work, entitled *Die Vertreibung der Deutschen Bevölkerung aus den Gebieten östlich der Oder-Neisse*.¹⁶ Altogether this project involved "three generations of German historians," including Werner Conze, Martin Broszat, and Hans-Ulrich Wehler. Recently the German historical community has been debating the Nazi past of some of the most prominent historians, including Schieder and also Peter-Heinz Seraphim, and the role their wartime experiences

¹⁵ For a discussion of expellees as the "most important representatives of German victimhood," see, Moeller, "Remembering the War in a Nation of Victims: West German Pasts in the 1950s," in *The Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany, 1949-1968*, ed. Hanna Schissler (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), 84, 86, 100. Also see, Moeller's *War Stories: The Search for a Usable Past in the Federal Republic of Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

¹⁶ Theodor Schieder, *Die Vertreibung der Deutschen Bevölkerung aus den Gebieten östlich der Oder-Neisse. Dokumentation der Vertreibung der Deutschen aus Ost-Mitteleuropa*, vol. I/I (n.p.: Bundesministerium für Vertriebene), 24 E.

played in their later academic endeavors. However, given the diverse political backgrounds of other scholars who had been involved in Schieder's project, the value of *Die Vertreibung der Deutschen Bevölkerung aus den Gebieten östlich der Oder-Neisse*--both as a secondary and primary source--is arguably not dramatically lessened by Schieder's participation.¹⁷

Perhaps the work that addressed the largest array of subjects involving the social, political and cultural integration of expellees was the three volume 1959 work, *Die Vertriebenen in Westdeutschland*, edited by Eugen Lemberg and Friedrich Edding. This rather exhaustive study of both the integration of expellees into their postwar society as well as their influence in West Germany was both an evaluation as well as a documentation of the expellees' official image as according to representatives of the government and the academic community, as well as a collection of perceptions and concerns from prominent expellees themselves.¹⁸

Following several decades of general avoidance of the subject, in the mid 1980s the German scholarly community demonstrated a wave of interest in the integration of expellees. One of the most significant contributions from this period was the 1987 volume edited by Rainer Schulze, Doris von der Brelie-Lewien, and Helga Grebing, a volume that primarily assessed the gaps in the historiography concerning German expellees.¹⁹

¹⁷ Winfried Schulze and Otto Gerhard Oexle, eds., *Deutsche Historiker im Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1999). See especially, Mathias Beer, "Der 'Neuanfang' der Zeitgeschichte nach 1945: Zum Verhältnis von nationalsozialistischer Umsiedlung- und Vernichtungspolitik und der Vertreibung der Deutschen aus Ostmitteleuropa," 279-296.

¹⁸ *Die Vertriebenen in Westdeutschland*, 3 vols, eds. Lemberg and Edding.

Through the early 1990s, the majority of the existing works on the integration of expellees into West German society centered on political and economic issues--and they virtually excluded detailed discussions of the loss, creation or preservation of group consciousness under new circumstances. Uwe Kleinert's work focused mostly on economic integration of the expellees. Johannes-Dieter Steinert's articles and monographs dealt with political organizations established by the expellees. Marion Frantziach's work centered on the economic and social integration of the expellees from a broad perspective, covering every group to some extent although she herself was of Silesian descent and emphasized their experiences in her work.²⁰

In the 1990s, some works addressing cultural experiences of expellees began to emerge. Albrecht Lehmann's works and some of the articles which appeared in Sylvia Schraut and Thomas Grosser's *Die Flüchtlingsfrage in der deutschen Nachkriegsgesellschaft* were some of the first academic evaluations of this aspect of expellee experience.²¹ Some of the most notable examples of more recent works examining cultural integration experiences included Rainer Schulze's edited volume,

¹⁹ Rainer Schulze, Doris von der Brölie-Lewien, and Helga Grebing, eds., *Flüchtlinge und Vertriebene in der westdeutschen Nachkriegsgeschichte: Bilanzierung der Forschung und Perspektiven für die künftige Forschungsarbeit* (Hildesheim: Verlag August Lax, 1987).

²⁰ Marion Frantziach, *Die Vertriebenen. Hemmnisse, Antriebskräfte und Wege ihrer Integration in die Bundesrepublik* (Berlin: Reimer, 1987); Uwe Kleinert, *Flüchtlinge und Wirtschaft in Nordrhein-Westfalen, 1945-1961. Arbeitsmarkt--Gewerbe--Staat* (Düsseldorf: Schwann, 1988); Johannes Dieter Steinert, *Vertriebenenverbände in Nordrhein-Westfalen* (Düsseldorf: Schwann, 1986)

²¹ Albrecht Lehmann, *Im Fremden ungewollt zuhaus* (München: Beck, 1991); Sylvia Schraut and Thomas Grosser, eds., *Die Flüchtlingsfrage in der deutschen Nachkriegsgesellschaft* (Mannheim: Palatium-Verlag, 1996)

Zwischen Heimat und Zuhause, which focused on Celle, and Manfred Jessen-Klingenberg's article, "'In allem widerstrebt uns dieses Volk.'"²² These works began to evaluate expellee interaction with indigenes, the self-perception of expellees, as well as the cultural activities of the group in West Germany. Excluding Lehmann, most of these authors limited their study to a particular region or sometimes district, thereby limiting the scope of their conclusions.

Indeed most historians and political scientists have devoted their attention to studying the refugees and expellees according to where in the Federal Republic they settled. A vast majority of the secondary sources focused specifically on the postwar homes of the expellees. Uwe Kleinert's work often centered on expellees in North Rhine-Westphalia. Friedrich Prinz generally worked on expellees in Bavaria. Rainer Schulze often examined expellees in Celle.²³

Among the many scholarly works written about the expellees as yet only a limited number focused on expellees originating *from* certain regions. It has been less common for studies to group the expellees according to their place of origin--East and West Prussia, Silesia, the Sudetenland, the Banat region, etc., categories that for most refugees

²² Rainer Schulze, ed., *Zwischen Heimat und Zuhause: Deutsche Flüchtlinge und Vertriebene in (West-) Deutschland, 1945-2000* (Osnabrück: secolo Verlag, 2001), Manfred Jessen-Klingenberg, "'In allem widerstrebt uns dieses Volk:' Rassistische und fremdenfeindliche Urteile über die Heimatvertriebenen und Flüchtlinge in Schleswig-Holstein, 1945-1946," *Regionalgeschichte Heute: Das Flüchtlingsproblem in Schleswig-Holstein nach 1945*, ed., Karl Heinrich Pohl (Bielefeld: Verlag für Regionalgeschichte, 1997)

²³ Uwe Kleinert, *Flüchtlinge und Wirtschaft in Nordrhein Westfalen, 1945-1961*; Friedrich Prinz, *Integration und Neubeginn* (Munich: Bayerisches Staatsministerium für Arbeit und Sozialordnung, 1984); Rainer Schulze, ed. *Unruhige Zeiten. Erlebnisberichte aus dem Landkreis Celle 1945-1949* (München: R. Oldenbourg, 1990.)

and expellees have more meaning. For example, Alfred Karasek-Langer's work dealt with religion and tradition, but generally focused on the Donauschwaben and other expellees in Bavaria. Mathias Beer generally focused on expellee-Volksdeutsche from Southeastern Europe.²⁴ A work that focused on the expellees from "Old Prussia" as a postwar category or the attempted preservation of Prussian traditions by the expellees has until now been absent from the historiography.

Although there are already many books written about the expellees in West Germany, it must be emphasized that they are mostly in German. There are regrettably few books about the expellees in English. In the 1960s, Joseph Schechtman produced several works on population displacement and refugees in which expelled Germans appeared prominently.²⁵ In 1970, Hans Schoenberg published an excellent dissertation about the Eastern Germans that is, however, difficult to find, and also now over thirty years old.²⁶ Alfred-Maurice De Zayas wrote books that emphasized the horrors of the expulsion, but since his primary purpose in writing about the subject was to advocate the expellees' right to get their homelands back, his works did not attempt to present a

²⁴ Beer also argued for examinations of expellees according to their place of origin. See, Beer, "Selbstbild und Fremdbild als Faktoren bei der Eingliederung der Flüchtlinge und Vertriebenen nach 1945," in *Die Flüchtlingsfrage in der deutschen Nachkriegsgesellschaft*, eds., Sylvia Schraut and Thomas Grosser (Mannheim: Palatium-Verlag, 1996), 46.

²⁵ Joseph Schechtman, *Postwar Population Transfers in Europe: 1945-1955* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1962); Schechtman, *The Refugee in the World*.

²⁶ Hans Schoenberg, *Germans from the East: A study of their migration, resettlement, and their subsequent group history since 1945* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1970)

balanced historical account.²⁷ Since reunification several Americans have written dissertations about expellees, however, they did not attempt to compare the cultural experiences and integration of expellees in the GDR and Federal Republic.²⁸

More recently several historians have produced or compiled English-language or translated works addressing ethnic cleansing in Central and East-Central Europe. Such works sometimes included the expelled Germans among their case studies. Norman Naimark's *Fires of Hatred* and the volume edited by Philipp Ther and Ana Siljak, *Redrawing Nations*, are two excellent examples.

Excluding these two works, scholars who have addressed expellee experiences have generally focused on their integration and have quickly summarized or altogether avoided discussions of the flight or expulsion. Why? How should historians discuss the complexities of the perpetrator status of the Germans? Can the perpetrators of World War II and the Holocaust also be victims of the war and postwar period? Does the perpetrator status negate all forms and degrees of suffering? This controversial subject presents scholars with a set of challenges: because the Germans were the aggressors

²⁷ See for example Alfred de Zayas, *Anmerkungen zur Vertreibung der Deutschen aus dem Osten* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1986); (in translation) *A Terrible Revenge: The Ethnic Cleansing of the East European Germans, 1944-1950*, trans. John A. Koehler (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994) ; *Nemesis at Potsdam: The Expulsion of the Germans from the East* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977).

²⁸ For example see the dissertations from Karen Gatz, "East Prussian and Sudeten-German Expellees in West Germany, 1945-1960: A comparison of their social and cultural integration" (Indiana, 1989), Brenda Melendy, "In Search of Heimat: Crafting Expellee Identity in the West German Context, 1949-1961" (University of California, Santa Cruz, 1998), Karin Hall, "Humanity or Hegemony: Orphans, Abandoned Children, and the Sovietization of the Youth Welfare System in Mecklenburg, Germany, 1945-1952" (Stanford, 1998), and Pertti Ahonen, "The Expellee Organizations and West German Ostpolitik, 1949-1969" (Yale, 1999).

should the deaths and suffering resulting from aerial bombing, war-related population displacement, deportation to the Soviet Union, and forced labor be ignored?

Excluding West German scholars in the first postwar decade, most historians of Germany indeed ignore any subject that might contribute to notions of German victimhood. German historians are now addressing these issues in upcoming conferences and in recently published books such as Joerg Friedrich's *Der Brand: Deutschland im Bombenkrieg, 1940-1945* (2001). Friedrich controversially suggested that the British bombing policies of population centers constituted war crimes. Should these events be ignored because the Germans were the initial aggressors of the war? Do discussions of what they experienced at the end of and following the war necessarily lessen the guilt of the Germans for the Holocaust?

In the GDR scholars and authors generally avoided the taboo topic of the displaced Germans. One of the exceptions was the Saxon playwright Heiner Müller, who wrote the comedy *Die Umsiedlerin: oder Das Leben auf dem Lande*.²⁹ Müller based the play, which was first performed in 1956, on a short story by Anna Seghers. Because GDR officials regarded the piece as subversive, Müller was eventually kicked out of the

²⁹ Louis Helbig discussed both Müller and the trends in GDR resettler literature and the relaxation of restrictions in literature in, "Gemeinsamkeiten und Unterschiede in Darstellungen von Flucht, Vertreibung und Eingliederung in der westlichen und östlichen Literatur Deutschlands," *50 Jahre Flucht und Vertreibung: Gemeinsamkeiten und Unterschiede bei der Aufnahme und Integration der Vertriebenen in die Gesellschaften der Westzonen-Bundesrepublik und der SBZ-DDR*. Manfred Wille, ed. (Magdeburg: Block, 1997), 69-88. For a discussion of the few portrayals of resettlers in East German (DEFA) film, see, Thomas Heimann, "Umsiedler im Spiegel von Wochenschau und Film in der Sowjetischen Besatzungszone bis 1949," *Die Flüchtlingsfrage in der deutschen Nachkriegsgesellschaft*. Sylvia Schraut and Thomas Grosser, eds. (Mannheim: Palatium-Verlag, 1996), 377-393. See especially his discussion of Artur Pohl's *Die Brücke*, 389-390.

writers' guild (Schriftstellerverband) and future performances were prohibited. The play focused on the social interaction between the various groups in rural farming communities, including the new farmers (Neubauern)--many of whom were so-called Umsiedler or resettlers--who received land as part of the Bodenreform. One of the characters in the play described the end of the war, the arrival of the resettlers, and the complications associated with the Bodenreform: "Out of the East came the Treks, resettlers[,] like locusts, brought hunger with them and typhus, the Red Army came with the bill for four years of war, cruelty and scorched earth, but with peace and the Bodenreform. Boot-licking was no longer the order of the day. It was not yet a bed of roses: there was too much wasteland. Too little livestock, no tractors."³⁰ In the 1950s GDR officials generally did not welcome this kind of social critique.

Indeed, since the subject, even the word "expellee," was taboo in the SBZ/GDR, West German scholars conducted some of the earliest examinations of the experiences of displaced Germans in the area. Peter-Heinz Seraphim's *Die Heimatvertriebenen in der Sowjetzone* and Dieter Storbeck's *Soziale Strukturen in Mitteldeutschland* represented examples of the West German critique of the "other Germany."³¹

³⁰ Heiner Müller, *Die Umsiedlerin: oder Das Leben auf dem Lande* (Berlin: Rotbuch Verlag, 1975), 50-51.

³¹ Peter-Heinz Seraphim, *Die Heimatvertriebenen in der Sowjetzone*. Schriften des Vereins für Sozialpolitik, Gesellschaft für Wirtschafts- und Sozialwissenschaften. Neue Folge, Band 7/1 (Berlin: Verlag von Duncker & Humblot, 1954); Dieter Storbeck, *Soziale Strukturen in Mitteldeutschland: Eine sozialistische Bevölkerungsanalyse im gesamtdeutschen Vergleich* *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft in Mitteldeutschland*. Herausgegeben vom Forschungsbeirat für Fragen der Wiedervereinigung Deutschlands beim Bundesminister für gesamtdeutsche Fragen, Band 4 (Berlin: Dunker & Humblot, 1964).

The SBZ/GDR academic community generally avoided the topic until the mid 1980s. At that time several doctoral students at Magdeburg completed dissertations on the integration of the "resettlers" in Thuringia and in Saxony. In the early 1990s further regional studies of economic integration of the expellees in the Soviet Zone/GDR appeared.³² Also during that decade Manfred Wille, Michael Schwartz, Wolfgang Meinicke, and others published collections of articles, often collections of papers given at conferences, that explored the economic, political, and social integration of the expellees in the GDR.³³ Philipp Ther's publication of his 1997 dissertation comparing German expellees in the GDR with Polish expellees from Eastern Poland also made an important contribution to the existing literature.³⁴ New edited volumes, often addressing both the

³² Regine Just, "Die Lösung des Umsiedlerproblems auf dem Territorium der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, dargestellt am Beispiel des Landes Sachsen (1945-1952)," Ph.D. diss., Magdeburg, 1985; Steffi Kaltenborn, "Die Lösung des Umsiedlerproblems auf dem Territorium der Deutsche Demokratischen Republik, dargestellt am Beispiel des Landes Thüringen (1945-1948)," Ph.D. diss., Magdeburg, 1989; Michael Rusche, "Die wirtschaftliche und soziale Eingliederung der Vertriebenen in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, 1945 bis 1949," Ph.D. diss., Magdeburg, 1996.

³³ Dierk Hoffmann and Michael Schwartz, *Geglückte Integration? Spezifika und Vergleichbarkeiten der Vertriebenen-Eingliederung in der SBZ-DDR* (München: R. Oldenbourg, 1999); Damian van Melis, ed., *Sozialismus auf dem platten Land: Tradition und Transformation in Mecklenburg Vorpommern von 1945 bis 1952* (Schwerin: Helms, 1999); Alexander von Plato and Wolfgang Meinicke, *Alte Heimat--neue Zeit: Flüchtlinge, Umgesiedelte, Vertriebene in der Sowjetischen Besatzungszone und in der DDR* (Berlin: Verlag-Anst. Union, 1991); Manfred Wille, "Die Integration der Vertriebenen in Deutschland-Möglichkeiten und Grenzen-" Symposium vom 25. bis 29. April 1991, in Magdeburg; Manfred Wille, Johannes Hoffmann, and Wolfgang Meinicke, eds., *Sie hatten alles verloren: Flüchtlinge und Vertriebene in der sowjetische Besatzungszone Deutschlands* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1993); Manfred Wille, ed., *50 Jahre Flucht und Vertreibung: Gemeinsamkeiten und Unterschiede bei der Aufnahme und Integration der Vertriebenen in die Gesellschaften der Westzonen-Bundesrepublik und der SBZ-DDR* (Magdeburg: Block, 1997).

³⁴ Philipp Ther, *Deutsche und polnische Vertriebene. Gesellschaft und Vertriebenenpolitik in der SBZ-DDR und in Polen, 1945-1956* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck

situation in the SBZ/GDR as well as the Western Zones/Federal Republic, appeared-- indeed appear--with regularity. As informative as such compendia may be, the general lack of connections between the contributions can be regrettable. Each individual author examined some micro aspect of expellee integration in every detail and yet often no effort was made to draw overarching conclusions or make broader comparisons (nor did the authors of such volumes seek to do so). Indeed, much has been accomplished in this field; yet excluding the work at hand, a comprehensive comparative examination of the cultural experiences and integration of the expellees in both postwar Germanies has not yet appeared.³⁵

A comparison of the cultural experiences and integration of expellees in the GDR and Federal Republic is made richer by a combination of the careful examination of relevant archival materials as well as the critical use of first-hand accounts and structured interviews. Indeed several authors recently contended that oral history is "indispensable" for any analysis of expellee experiences.³⁶ However, to date, few historians have utilized interviews in their examinations of displaced Germans in the postwar period. Klaus Bade and his colleagues at the Institut für Migrationsforschung und Interkulturelle Studien

& Ruprecht, 1998).

³⁵ Alexander von Plato called for comparative analyses in his essay, "Vergangene Perspektive? Schwerpunkte, Fragen und Probleme der Flüchtlingsforschung vor und nach der Wende" in *Vertriebene in Deutschland: Interdisziplinäre Ergebnisse und Forschungsperspektiven*, eds. Dierk Hoffmann, Marita Kraus and Michael Schwartz (München: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2000), 107.

³⁶ See, for example, Dagmar Semmelmann, "Zur Integration aus lebensgeschichtlicher Sicht: Eingliederungsverläufe von Flüchtlingen und Vertriebenen in der SBZ/DDR dargestellt am Sonderfall Eisenhüttenstadt," in *Geglückte Integration? Spezifika und Vergleichbarkeiten der Vertriebenen-Eingliederung in der SBZ-DDR*, eds. Dierk Hoffmann, and Michael Schwartz (München: R. Oldenbourg, 1999), 323.

(IMIS) conducted interviews with expellees in the Osnabrück area already in the 1980s. They then published excerpts of some of the interviews as *Zeitzeugen im Interview*.³⁷ Some of the interviews carried out by IMIS-affiliated researchers have also been used-- alongside interviews conducted by the author--in this text. Alexander von Plato and Wolfgang Meinicke's *Alte Heimat—neue Zeit: Flüchtlinge, Umgesiedelte, Vertriebene in der Sowjetischen Besatzungszone und in der DDR* represented another important contribution to the historiography. Von Plato and Meinicke based this work on interviews conducted in the new federal states, especially Eisenhüttenstadt; such interviews conducted by von Plato and his associates for this as well as other projects are housed in the Deutsches Gedächtnis Archiv in Lüdenscheid. Some relevant interviews from this archive have also been included in my work. However, prior to my project no scholars have sought to utilize archival material as well as interviews in a comparative examination of expellee experiences in both Germanies.

General comments concerning oral history

Scholars frequently debate the value and methods of Oral history. Conducting interviews clearly involves what Henri Rousso called the "phenomena of memory,"³⁸ and there is certainly little argument to be made against the notion that memory evolves.

Should historians therefore neglect memory, hence interviews, as a valuable source of

³⁷ Klaus J. Bade, *Zeitzeugen im Interview: Flüchtlinge und Vertriebene im Raum Osnabrück nach 1945* (Osnabrück: Rasch, 1997)

³⁸ Henri Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 2.

information concerning events in the recent past? As mentioned above, interviews provide often a fuller, but sometimes contradictory picture when compared with what researchers can glean from reports contained in archives. Yes, memory evolves and therefore asking someone decades later about their postwar experiences may sometimes result in an alteration or even repression of key events, and certainly also some confusion about exact names and dates.³⁹ No one can expect to attain reliable hard facts from the average interview; however, interviewees reported what they perceived, and they believed their perceptions to be real. Such perceptions were real in their consequences.

It is also important to note that when writing about people's experiences, historians privilege written sources: however, what bureaucrats and politicians wrote in reports and in intra-office letters, and what journalists reported in their articles is not necessarily more reliable. Therefore a careful use of both archival materials and interviews can provide a more balanced account than either source could alone. For many issues relating to expellee perceptions of their new Heimat and their role and reception in that new Heimat, interviews and first-hand accounts are often the only source.

I complemented my archival research by conducting qualitative interviews with over 75 refugees, expellees, and resettlers, roughly two-thirds of whom were women.

³⁹ Daniel L Schacter, *Searching for Memory: The Brain, the Mind and the Past* (New York: Basic Books, 1996.) Schacter contended that elderly adults have often played an important role in the preservation of personal and cultural memories through story-telling, i.e. they have formed the collective memory for many societies. He suggested that contemporary Western societies disregard this story-telling function of elderly people, but with recent Holocaust research interest in elderly people telling about their experiences has been revived. Schacter contended that although specifics may not be remembered or remembered correctly, "On balance, however, our memory systems do a remarkably good job of preserving the general contours of our pasts and of recording

My concern was to find men and women from different economic backgrounds and age groups, who held different political beliefs and had varying experiences in the postwar Germanies. Indeed I did find a range of interviewees: some with working- and others with middle-class backgrounds, some of whom were already parents in 1945 and also some who were infants or children, some of whom came from families who supported Hitler while others had been involved in Socialist parties until they had been dissolved, and also expellees with varying degrees of post-flight success. In general the interviews lasted about two and a half to three hours, although some continued on for several days and lasted up to 12 hours.

These structured interviews were qualitative in form and followed a list of approximately 50 questions, which asked the interviewees to discuss their experiences before, during and after the flight or expulsion. The questions focused on the relationships between expellees and indigenes (Einheimischen), the government's expellee policies, the impact the interviewees' experiences and background had on their new postwar life, and what efforts--if any--the interviewees had made to preserve their unique culture and traditions. Due to the lack of official records on the subjects in the archives, on the situation of women and also the expellees who fled to the GDR, interviews were the most fruitful source of information for their experiences during the integration process and their attempts to preserve their traditions and identities. The interviews I conducted also indicated that personal experiences often differed from what was contained in the official record.

The tension between what the expellees themselves say about their experiences, and what was reported in the official record, as contained in files in archives, became a central issue in my research. The analysis of this tension is an important addition to the current research on the subject of the images and perceptions of expellees in the postwar Germanies.

My findings emphasized the necessity of conducting both archival research and interviews. For example, in the official record, there is little mention of women's experiences. Through interviews I encountered women who single-handedly led their families to the West, rebuilt their lives, taught their children Prussian customs and traditions, and often participated in political and cultural organizations that worked for the rights of expellees and sought to preserve Prussian culture. Most historians have relied on the official record for information about the integration of expellees. The result is that they have produced informative studies that largely omit about two-thirds of the group under examination.

Heimat, Einheimische and other translation difficulties

Any work that involves conducting the interviews and archival research in one language and then writing it down in another will result in some translation difficulties. This applies to the subject under examination here. Many of the words that are used to describe the experiences of expellees in the postwar Germanies are nuanced, complex words with and a great deal of emotional baggage. The key words "Vertriebene" (expellee) and "Umsiedler" (resettler) are thankfully fairly easy to translate accurately.

Unfortunately with this project that is where the ease of translation ends. Some German words used in this dissertation cannot easily be translated; because these words appear frequently in the text, they will neither be underlined nor italicized. Definitions are generally provided the first time the word appears in the text and a glossary of key terms is also provided.

Many historians have already noted the difficulty of translating the word "Heimat," which literally translates as home or homeland, however, it also connotes a rich tapestry of meanings relating to one's personal and deeply-rooted ties to the ancestral soil, heritage, customs, gastronomy, dialect, landscape, etc. There is much debate concerning the etymology, frequency, and evolving meanings of the word "Heimat." In the postwar Germanies, "Heimat" took on connotations colored by the Nazi past; for many Germans, "Heimat" is a word too tainted for further use. However, when I asked expellees "what do you think of when you hear the word "Heimat?," they often simply smiled and became nostalgic. For them this word had a great deal of significance and was very much connected to the way they understand their experiences and identities. The word "Heimat" conjured up for many interviewees romanticist associations with the landscape, flora and fauna, and philosophic or literary traditions of their homeland.

In a 1984 article, Christian Graf von Krockow asked readers of *Die Zeit* "what is that actually--Heimat?" He answered that perhaps "Heimat" is quite simply "das Verlorene," (the lost) and argued that this was a very German question. The subtitle of the article summed up his argument: "Heimat: A concept triggers melancholy and longing. Indeed the term sounds beautiful, now that it exists no longer." He contended that a "gilded" Heimat was not merely a lie, kitsch, or sentimentalism; Germans were

dreaming of the Heimat, and indeed screaming for the Heimat. Although his family was expelled from Pomerania, he argued that not just the expellees, but rather all Germans have lost the Heimat. He suggested that American materialism and desire for things modern have taken over. He concluded by asking Germans this time to find a moderate road.⁴⁰

American historians have also grappled with the Heimat concept. Celia Applegate's *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat* looked at the Pfalz as a case study of a regional Heimat, examining the relationship between particularism and nationalism in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. One of her conclusions was that Pfälzer Heimat movements were regional or local in orientation. Ultimately, Applegate suggested that understanding German particularism was central to grappling with German identities.

A Nation of Provincials also contained one of the best, most comprehensive English language discussions of the word "Heimat." Applegate's work examined the German roots of the word "Heimat," in addition to its rebirth in the early nineteenth century. She suggested that Heimat "came to express a 'feeling of belonging together' (Zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl)" that crossed class, confessional, and gender lines. Applegate contended that "Heimat" was linked to an effort to maintain "Gemeinschaft" (community) in the face of "Gesellschaft" (society). She also posited that after 1945, "Heimat" experienced a rebirth as the Germans tried to create a new acceptable postwar

⁴⁰ Christian Graf von Krockow, "Heimat: Ein Begriff löst Wehmut aus. Doch das Wort klingt erst schön, seit es die Sache nicht mehr gibt," *Die Zeit*, nr. 41, (12 October 1984), 21.

German identity that somehow encompassed traditional provincialist tendencies.⁴¹

Indeed the expellee conception of Heimat also involved a *Zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl* that fit with Applegate's emphasis on *Gemeinschaft*. However, the meaning of Heimat for the expellees had less to do with the victory of *Gesellschaft* over *Gemeinschaft*; for many expellees Heimat was what was lost through the flight and expulsion.

In one of the most comprehensive German language works to examine the concept "Heimat," *Der Heimat-Begriff: Eine begriffsgeschichtliche Untersuchung in verschiedenen Funktionsbereichen der deutschen Sprache*, Andrea Bastian traced the etymological development of the word "Heimat" from Old High German, and examined the shifts in meaning and perception of the word over the past three centuries. Bastian conclusively proved that this use of the word Heimat was prominent in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Romanticist literature and was very much connected to Romanticism.

Bastian concluded that most Germans see a connection between the words "Heimatgefühl" (Heimat-feeling) and "Geborgensein" or "Geborgenheit" (security).⁴²

The author further stated that most Germans understand the word "Heimat" in emotional-cultural terms to be connected with where they were born, where the landscape appeals to them, where there are other people who speak as they do, where they feel comfortable.⁴³

⁴¹ Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford: University of California Press, 1990), x. Applegate discussed Ferdinand Tönnies' distinction between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, 6.

⁴² Bastian, Andrea, *Der Heimat-Begriff: Eine begriffsgeschichtliche Untersuchung in verschiedenen Funktionsbereichen der deutschen Sprache*. Reihe Germanistische Linguistik, eds. Helmut Henne, Horst Sitta, und Herbert Ernst Wiegand (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1995), 33-34.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 86.

Bastian also discussed authors such as Siegfried Lenz and Günther Grass and their use of the word "Heimat" when they described the former Eastern territories. The author stated that the term now has so much baggage that for several decades many Germans avoided it altogether.⁴⁴ This is not the case for the expellees, many of whom preferred the term "Heimatvertriebenen" (those who were expelled from the Heimat) to simply "Vertriebenen" (expellees). "Heimat" had a special resonance and conjured feelings of nostalgia for many expellees.

Alexander von Plato contended that because the postwar period brought such radical and rapid change all Germans lost their Heimat following World War II; thus, the integration experiences of the displaced Germans were an extreme case of the general integration of Germans into the new postwar society.⁴⁵ Beyond von Plato's reflections on the general loss of Heimat as the new Germany emerged, many Germans had lost their homes and neighborhoods in air raids, and many Nazis lost their jobs and social standing. Why then would the displaced Germans form a unique category in postwar German societies?

The Germans displaced from the Eastern territories at the end of or following World War II lost not only their homes, wealth, possessions, jobs, social standing, reputations, and often family members, they also literally lost their Heimat. Those

⁴⁴ Ibid., 140-141.

⁴⁵ Alexander von Plato, "Fremde Heimat: Zur Integration von Flüchtlingen und Einheimischen in die Neue Zeit," in *"Wir kriegen jetzt andere Zeiten," Auf der Suche nach der Erfahrung des Volkes in nachfaschistischen Ländern*, eds. Lutz Niethammer, Alexander von Plato, *Lebensgeschichte und Sozialkultur im Ruhrgebiet 1930 bis 1960*, vol. 3. (Berlin, Bonn: Verlag J.H.W. Dietz Nacht, 1985), 210, 213.

Germans, who lost the state they believed in or who lost their jobs, social standing, or their homes in air raids, still had some form of physical access to their Heimat. It may not have been easy to rebuild their lives, but such Germans had the opportunity to see familiar surroundings, often the house in which they grew up, a recognizable landscape, or the places where they played as children. They often had access to collections of photos, correspondence, family heirlooms, etc. And they often had the opportunity to hear familiar dialects and expressions. The Germans displaced from the former Eastern territories were literally barred from seeing their Heimat. Those Germans who survived were scattered across the four zones; in expellee newspapers there are still missing persons' advertisements from people searching for lost relatives and friends. Thus, the Eastern German Heimat was not merely dramatically altered--as was postwar Germany, rather this Heimat was forbidden.

It would be erroneous to assume that the word "Heimat" resonated only with German refugees and expellees who left the former territories at the end of and following World War II. As illustrated by a lecture held by Fritz Stern in Berlin in 1995, the loss of the "Heimat" occurred earlier for some groups and as a result of Nazi racial policies. Stern described his father's tears as they left Breslau in 1938. He expressed "the mourning of a destroyed past, the worry about a future full of uncertainties" that he and his family as German Jews felt as they were forced to leave their Heimat and come to America. Stern explained that Heimat "shaped the unconscious self-awareness" and identity. "We experience in that which we call Heimat, the most intense expressions of attachment also with nature: with forest and meadow, with smell and sounds, with all that to which we have become accustomed, usually also family memories, the place in the

house or garden that is linked to the parents or ancestors." As von Krockow had also expressed in his writings, Stern contended that recognition of Heimat came after one had lost it. "And certainly: Usually the loss first produces the realization of the irretrievable value of the customary, the Heimat, Heimat is like the air one breathes--one becomes first aware of it, when it disappears or is poisoned. And an image of the Heimat is thus generated in the memory."⁴⁶ Indeed, for many people who experienced an expulsion or flight, such images were all that remained of the Heimat.

In addition, almost any word with the root "Heimat" or "Heim" presents difficulties for the translator. To be sure, most of these words can only be translated with an awkward phrase: "Heimkehrwille" (the will to return to the Heimat), "Heimkehrer" (which means one who returns to the German Heimat), "heimatlos" (which refers to the state of being removed from one's Heimat), or "Heimatlose Heimkehrer" (an ironic GDR term for the soldiers who had come from the Eastern territories, faced internment in POW camps, and returned to an unfamiliar German Heimat). Excluding the word "Heimweh" (homesickness), to use a translation merely obscures the meaning of the word.

Another German word which proves difficult to translate is "Einheimischen," which means "locals," yet does not have the same connotation. "Locals" refers to the population from a particular area, yet in popular usage brings to mind a sort of parochial

⁴⁶ This lecture was held in 1995 at a conference in Berlin, titled "Verlorene Heimat--50 Jahre Danach." Fritz Stern, "Anstelle eines Nachworts: Verlorene Heimat," See, *Verlorene Heimat: Die Vertreibungsdebatte in Polen*, eds. Klaus Bachmann and Jerzy Kranz, Center for International Relations (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1998), 297-298; originally published as *Przeprosic za wypędzenie?* (Znak, Krakow, 1997).

backwardness. The word "natives" is no less problematic. "Local inhabitants" is perhaps more accurate and yet very clumsy. The only acceptable translation for the word *Einheimischen* is "indigenes."

Still another word that cannot easily be translated is "Landsmannschaften," which has been translated as "homeland associations." Trying to translate this word results in an awkward solution. *Landsmannschaften* are clubs or organizations for Germans from the former Eastern territories, clubs that focus on a certain regional pride and attempt to preserve regional traditions.

Lastly the words "Ostpolitik," "Ostdeutsche Wochen," "EKD-Ostdenkschrift," and "Ostgrenze" all translate rather clumsily due to the German word "Ost." "Ost" in this sense refers to what used to be called Ost- and "Mitteldeutschland" (in other words: Eastern and Middle Germany). Eastern Germany during the postwar years meant the former Eastern territories, and "Middle" Germany referred to the GDR. "Ostpolitik" therefore meant policies and politics concerning West Germany's relationship with the GDR and with the current powers controlling the former Eastern territories (i.e. Poland and the Soviet Union.) *Ostdeutsche Wochen* were weeks for the celebration and remembrance of Eastern and "Middle" German culture, especially in the West German schools. The *EKD-Ostdenkschrift* was the *Evangelische-Kirche Deutschlands* (Protestant Church of Germany's) Memorandum concerning the future of the former Eastern territories. The *Ostgrenze* referred to the border between the GDR and Poland. Excluding the word "Einheimischen," I have chosen *not* to translate the other words listed here.

General comments concerning findings of this study

One of the most surprising findings of my work is that certain key experiences of expellees and refugees in the Federal Republic did not differ dramatically when compared to the experiences of their brethren in the GDR. During the 1940s, both expellees and resettlers had similar arrival experiences, they faced a lack of material possessions, housing shortages, and often malnutrition. During the 1950s, living conditions improved dramatically for the expellees in West Germany and less so for the resettlers in the GDR. However, many expellees in the Federal Republic and resettlers in the GDR continued to have related social problems: they both continued to face tension and hostility from local populations, they both continued to feel that their respective governments had not done enough to help them in their time of need, and they both continued to have problems integrating and finding a new Heimat.

Through interviews and also archival research I discovered that the integration experiences of expellees, refugees, and resettlers differed in accordance with whether they lived in rural areas or big cities. I analyzed these two milieus for the British Zone and Federal Republic and also the Soviet Zone/GDR. My analysis also involved a comparison of several categories of experience: age group (were they children or adults during the flight and the postwar years), place of origin (rural or urban), type of departure (evacuees, refugees, expellees, internment camp inmates, POWs), gender, religious orientation, and class status. Middle-class refugees, who originally lived in a city and afterwards also lived in a city, were able to integrate themselves more quickly than working-class refugees. Protestant expellees who arrived in Catholic villages after being

expelled often had tremendous difficulties, for example farmers in villages in the Emsland often reacted in a hostile fashion to the arrival of expellees. East Prussian women who had been deported to Siberia and had spent 4 to 5 years as forced laborers in a Soviet labor camp often arrived in the GDR after being released. They were frequently treated as criminals in their new society and suffered from terrible health problems as a result of the living and working conditions in the labor camps. In general the younger the refugees and expellees were, the fewer problems they had during their integration. However, there were many instances in villages of the local indigene kids attacking the "refugee kids." These general findings have been supported by my interviews with over 75 people and also archival research. These above-mentioned categories had a bigger impact on the arrival experiences of the expellees, refugees, and resettlers than whether they arrived in the British or the Soviet Zone.

After pointing out the surprising similarities between the experiences of expellees in the Federal Republic and the resettlers in the Soviet Zone and GDR, it is imperative also to highlight the dramatic differences between the opportunities for political expression in the two postwar Germanies. The experiences of the resettlers in the Soviet Zone and GDR and the expellees in the British Zone and Federal Republic began to diverge dramatically during the 1950s and especially in terms of their participation in politics. The government in the Federal Republic financially and politically supported expellee efforts to preserve a distinct identity and culture, while the GDR government sent secret police to observe and, if necessary, arrest anyone who attempted publicly to preserve their Prussian traditions.

Thus while the Federal Republic urged expellees to preserve their connection to their homeland and their memories of the flight, the GDR created an environment in which resettlers were unable openly to discuss their experiences. They repressed, sometimes willingly, their memories of their homeland and their expulsion. Some resettlers were forced to silence public discussion of their longing for the lost homeland and the tragedies they may have suffered during the flight, internment or expulsion. Others sought political or social advantages through assimilation of the values of the new Germany. Through my research I determined that the majority repressed memories of their homeland and the flight; however, these memories would resurface after more than four decades of silence as the political environment allowed such forms of expression. The memories of the flight and of the loss of the Prussian homeland haunted both those expellees in the Federal Republic who were allowed public expression and also the resettlers in the GDR, for whom discussion of such topics was forbidden.

These differences in the opportunities for political expression in the two Germanies began to disappear again after reunification. After decades of either repressing their identities as Prussian expellees or, as occurred in some communities, taking part in a dissident subculture and participating in illegal resettler organizations, the reunification of Germany enabled the resettlers who had lived in the Soviet Zone and GDR to join their West German compatriots in openly forming Landsmannschaften, cultural organizations, and erecting monuments. Thus the Prussian expellees and resettlers to varying degrees preserved their unique set of identities and cultural heritage

in both postwar German societies. After the reunification of Germany the resettlers who had settled in the GDR once again began to share experiences with the expellees who went to the Federal Republic.

This work is a case study of two divergent but successful policies concerning the integration of expellees displaced due to forced migration of an unprecedented magnitude. Four major categories of post-war experience were examined: the official image of the displaced Germans, their self-image, the image of expellees as outsiders, and their reaction to this outsider-image.⁴⁷ Despite the problems relating to this massive resettlement and despite the differences in the varying approaches to integration in both West Germany and the GDR, the Prussian expellees were successfully integrated into both postwar German societies. The majority of Prussian expellees, however, preserved their unique set of identities and cultural heritage. Whether in the Federal Republic or in the GDR, the Prussian expellees maintained a love of and longing for their Prussian homeland. Thus, in spite of its allied dissolution in 1947, in very interesting ways "Prussia" persisted.

⁴⁷ Several case studies in edited volumes have also discussed aspects of self-images and/or outsider-images of expellees. See, for example, Beer, "Selbstbild und Fremdbild," 31-53; Notker Schrammek's contribution to Stefan Donth, Christian Kurzweg, Notker Schrammek, and Irina Schwab, "Aufnahme und Integration von Flüchtlingen und Vertriebenen in Sachsen von 1945 bis 1952--Vorstellung eines Forschungsprojektes," *Geglückte Integration? Spezifika und Vergleichbarkeiten der Vertriebenen-Eingliederung in der SBZ-DDR*, eds. Dierk Hoffmann and Michael Schwartz (München: R. Oldenbourg, 1999), 360-364.

CHAPTER 2

ALTPREUSSEN: FROM THE TEUTONIC ORDER UNTIL THE END OF WORLD WAR II

Why did Germany play a central role in the two World Wars of the twentieth century? In the postwar periods when the victors began forming their policies and establishing their view of the origins of the wars, one power seemed more obviously aggressive than the others. The Allies pondered Germany's role in these wars and many of them suggested a link between one major aspect of Germany's cultural and political development and the gruesome events of the twentieth century. The Allies often looked to Prussia as the main culprit for German aggression.

Whether it was the expansionist policies of the Teutonic Knights, the bureaucratic and military might of the landowning Junkers, or the aggressive policies of Frederick the Great, Bismarck, or Wilhelm II, Prussia was perceived as a militaristic, warmongering power that demanded the total obedience of its people and sought to subjugate its neighbors. Popular portrayals of Germans, including wartime propaganda (especially in World War I) and movies, frequently depicted the Germans wearing Prussian uniforms and spiked helmets, or Pickelhauben, and slaughtering the innocent. If the Allies often perceived Prussia to be a malevolent force in German history, which Prussia did they

mean? By 1871 "Prussia" encompassed nearly all Northern German states. However, Allied depictions of Germans in Prussian uniforms and references to Prussia as a seedbed of militarism focused on a more limited interpretation of Prussia: both the Old Prussia (Altpreußen) of the Teutonic Knights and Brandenburg-Prussia under the Hohenzollern.

Since the Allies generally perceived the wars to have been in large part manifestations of Prussian militarism, they sought to punish Prussia more severely than the rest of Germany. At the end of World War II the Allies decided that in order to preserve peace Prussia must be eliminated; this elimination was achieved both indirectly through the expulsion of the Germans from Old Prussia and especially through the creation of many new states in the place of what remained of the former state of Prussia after the pruning back of the Old Prussian territories. But was all of Prussia equally punished? If not, where was the most severe punishment enacted, and why?

The expulsion of the Eastern German population from Old Prussia following the end of the war took place due to an array of diplomatic reasons, fears, prejudices, and a general desire to punish the Germans--especially the Prussians--and thereby preserve the peace. The expulsion took place primarily due to Stalin's machinations and his desire for territorial aggrandizement. The other Allies agreed to these significant border shifts in Central Europe in part due to war-weariness and the presence of Red Army troops in the area. However, a major factor in the implementation of these geographical changes and the subsequent forced migration of millions of Germans was the belief that the presence of Germans in the East threatened the peace and stability of Europe, as had also been the case under the Teutonic Knights.

The presence of Germans in Eastern and Central Europe took two forms: the Volksdeutsche, or German ethnic minority groups, who lived in pockets throughout Central and Eastern Europe, and the Reichsdeutsche who lived in the Old Prussian territories and also in Silesia. The Allies proposed to remove both groups, the Volksdeutsche through what today would be called ethnic cleansing, and the Reichsdeutsche through unparalleled mass population transfers. The constellation of reasons for the forced migration of the Reichsdeutsche included the Allies' desire to move Poland West, thereby granting Stalin Eastern Poland and Königsberg, while granting Poland valuable land and ports along the Baltic. The Allies perceived that the expulsions necessitated by this massive border shift could be to some extent justified in part by the perceived connection between aggressive militarism and Prussia, especially the Old Prussia of the Teutonic Knights.

Images such as those from Sergei Eisenstein's 1937 film, *Alexander Nevsky*, fueled the perceptions that the evils of German militarism could be traced back to the Teutonic Knights and their brutal Baltic Crusade, a crusade that the Poles still erroneously prefer to portray as anti-Polish in orientation. The legacy of the Teutonic Knights certainly played a role in the execution of the expulsion and the concurrence of the other Allied powers to such an unparalleled historical event.

The founding of "Prussia" under the Teutonic Order

The arrival of the Germans in the area later called Prussia already had begun in the thirteenth century, following Duke Konrad of Masovia's declaration of a crusade

against the neighboring Baltic tribal group, the Pruzzen. To lead this crusade Konrad selected a military order, the Teutonic Knights, whom he invited into the area in order to conquer and proselytize the heathens. In exchange for dealing with the Pruzzen, the German Order received their territory, territory that took its name from the subjugated tribe, thus Preussen or Prussia. Following Prussia's later territorial expansion at the Congress of Vienna in 1814-15, the areas that had already been Prussian before 1806 were named "Altpreussen" or Old Prussia. This term especially referred to the territories east of the Elbe River and was sometimes further limited to East and West Prussia, the former lands of the Teutonic Knights.¹

The Order of the Hospital of Saint Mary of the Germans in Jerusalem initially consisted of citizens of Bremen and Lübeck who ran a hospital for wounded Germans after the failure of the Third Crusade. This order emerged in the early 1190s and gradually expanded its services to include running a hostel. By 1198 the purpose of the Order had shifted and the transformation into a military Order took place; thereafter, they were called the Deutscher Ritterorden, or Teutonic Knights, and they established a German language monastic rule and shifted their orientation from caring for the crusaders to taking part in crusades themselves.²

¹ See the definition for "Altpreussen" from the *Lexikon der deutschen Geschichte: Personen, Ereignisse, Institutionen; von der Zeitwende bis zum Ausgang des 2. Weltkrieges*, ed. Gerhard Taddey (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1983), 37. For an example of this definition in use, see, for instance, Erich Maschke, *Polen und die Berufung des Deutschen Ordens nach Preussen* (Danzig: Danziger Verlags-Gesellschaft, 1934), 5 ff.

² For a detailed examination of the organization and structure of the Teutonic Knights, see Alan Forey, *The Military Orders from the Twelfth to the Fourteenth Centuries* (Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1992).

The most significant of the crusades the Teutonic Knights took part in was the Baltic crusade in the thirteenth century.³ The Polish principality of Masovia was plagued by the existence of a group of pagan Baltic tribes, the Pruzzen, who for years conducted damaging raids and disrupted the spread of Christianity in Northeastern Europe. The Pruzzen pursued nature worship and followed religious and social practices that had been influenced by the Vikings and involved human sacrifice, blood feuds, and polygamy. Missionary efforts proved generally unsuccessful and often ended with bloodshed.⁴ In 1224 and 1228 Duke Konrad of Masovia contacted Hermann von Salza, the first Grandmaster of the Teutonic Knights, promising him Culm if he would send an army to quell the Pruzzen and remove the threat they posed to Polish and Pomeranian Christians. Frederick II, emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, issued the Golden Bull of Rimini in 1226 and thereby authorized the subjection of the pagans and permitted Hermann von Salza to accept Konrad's offer of Culm and to keep any other lands the Teutonic Knights might acquire. Pope Honorius III approved the transactions; he also felt that further missionary activity in the area was pointless. By 1228 small numbers of Teutonic Knights had already arrived in the area and initiated their crusade against the Pruzzen.

The crusade the Teutonic Knights led against the pagan Pruzzen involved brute force; the natives who did not accept both Christianity as their religion and the crusaders as their new lords were often killed. William Urban suggested that this crusade was "a

³ For an extensive timeline and discussion of when certain areas were obtained by the Order, see Göttinger Arbeitskreis, *Ostdeutschland: Ein Hand- und Nachschlagbuch über alle Gebiete ostwärts der Oder und Neisse* (Kitzingen-Main: Holzener-Verlag, 1953), 42-49.

⁴ William Urban, *The Prussian Crusade* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1980), 248, 69.

war of intimidation, almost a war of extermination, and it ended only when the natives surrendered, accepted missionaries, and paid taxes." Not surprisingly many Pruzzen struggled with accepting the new religion. The Christian virtues of poverty and obedience--and the professed chastity of the Teutonic Knights--contrasted with the worldview of the Baltic tribes.⁵

The Teutonic Knights were superior military strategists, better trained, had more sophisticated weapons, and were thus often successful in situations where they faced the Pruzzen in combat. Additionally the Pruzzen experienced a significant problem: they did not pose a united front against the Teutonic Knights; not only were tribal conflicts common, but many of the Pruzzen with wealth and influence switched sides. Many of them joined with the Christians, surrendered their lands only to regain them as fiefs, and then fought with the crusaders against the remaining pagans. The Pruzzen felt no loyalty to "Prussia" because it did not actually exist as a unified entity.⁶

During the thirteenth century the Teutonic Knights struggled with their mastery over the area as the Pruzzen continued to lead small-scale but wide-spread insurrections, insurrections which the Order put down using force.⁷ Frequently the Teutonic Knights answered insurrections with the burning and plundering of Pruzzen villages. They also built defensive structures in order better to control and Christianize the territory in their domain. They built forts, castles and convents as they conquered new territory and

⁵ Ibid., 114, 250. See also F. L. Carsten, *The Origins of Prussia* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 2.

⁶ Urban, *The Prussian Crusade*, 118.

⁷ James Charles Roy, *The Vanished Kingdom: Travels Through the History of Prussia* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1999), 53

established a complex economic, military and monastic system. In 1309 the Teutonic Knights obtained additional territory and thus expanded their domain to include East Prussia, West Prussia, and Pomerania.

In order to make their new territory more viable, the Teutonic Knights wanted to attract immigrants; thus it is not surprising that the system they established was designed to appeal to Christians in the Holy Roman Empire or even in Slavic areas. For example in 1233 the order drafted the Charter of Culm (Kulmer Handfeste) which determined the administration, laws, and liberties available to Christian inhabitants of all German settlements in Prussia.⁸ This charter permitted often greater liberties than in other parts of the Empire and allowed enterprising Christians opportunities they may not have had elsewhere. The second and third sons of German noble families, among other German and non-German immigrants, sought to establish themselves in the new frontier as farmers, merchants, and businessmen. Non-German Christian settlers were welcomed as Germans if they agreed to live under German law.⁹ Gradually the Teutonic Knights shifted their activities from crusading to acting as landlords and businessmen, and by 1410 the realm they established contained 93 towns, around 1400 villages, a network of roads, dikes, flourishing port cities such as Danzig, and an impressive array of forts and castles.¹⁰ By the early fifteenth century the Teutonic Knights functioned less as a military order and more as a business entity.

⁸ Carsten, *The Origins of Prussia*, 52-54, 63. In *Ostdeutschland* the Kulmer Handfeste was described as the Magna Charta of Prussia, 43.

⁹ Urban, *The Prussian Crusade*, 353.

¹⁰ *Ostdeutschland*, 47. Roy suggested other figures in *The Vanished Kingdom*, 52. He stated there were 54 towns and 890 villages. The time period is, however, not indicated.

In 1410 at the Battle of Tannenberg Polish and Lithuanian forces joined together to fight against the Teutonic Knights, an increasingly unwanted presence which encumbered Polish and especially Lithuanian territorial expansion. After the Teutonic Order suffered a devastating defeat at the hand of the combined forces, the Order was left bankrupt and faced severe reductions of their military and political power. And within several decades Poland gained control of West Prussia. The Prussia of the Teutonic Knights had been crushed.

During the sixteenth century what remained of Prussia was secularized and declared a duchy by the last Grandmaster Albrecht von Brandenburg.¹¹ As Prussia turned to Lutheranism, a new political force emerged which would enable Prussia gradually to regain lands lost due to the defeat in 1410, and ultimately allow Prussia to expand beyond any territorial dimension ever imagined by the Teutonic Knights. The new political force was the Hohenzollern ruling family.

The nineteenth-century historian and polemicist Heinrich von Treitschke described the defeat of the Teutonic Knights and the rise of the Hohenzollerns in Prussia in his essay *Das deutsche Ordensland Preussen*. This German colony was at first unstable, Treitschke argued, due to its catholic base, Pan-Slavism, and multi-ethnicity; once the land was controlled by the Hohenzollerns, and was secularized, the Germans reigned supreme. First published in 1862, Treitschke's book called for the Hohenzollerns to unite Germany and lead it on its mission, just as the Hohenzollerns gained control of

For a description of Danzig during this time period, see Roy, *The Vanished Kingdom*, 67.

¹¹ *Ostdeutschland*, 52-53.

Prussia in 1525, and led it on its path to greatness.¹² Prussia, and its chancellor Otto von Bismarck, indeed played the foremost role in the 1871 unification of Germany, a unification based upon the "Blood and Iron" principles for which Bismarck is famous.

In World Wars I and II Prussian militarism, as historically demonstrated by the Teutonic Knights, but also by Frederick the Great, Bismarck, and Wilhelm II would be perceived as fueling German aggression which, in the twentieth century, resulted in the deaths of millions of Europeans. Modern film portrayals of the Teutonic Knights, including Sergei Eisenstein's 1937 epic, *Alexander Nevsky*, and the East German DEFA film, *Kreuzritter*, certainly suggested that the evils of German militarism can be traced back to the Teutonic Knights and the Baltic Crusade. The legacy of the Teutonic Knights is certainly still central in popular perceptions of Prussia and German military aggression and expansionism. As such, the Allied perception of the need to eliminate Prussia in order to preserve peace influenced the decision to expel the Germans from Old Prussia and to dissolve Prussia once and for all.

The Allied decision to expel the Germans: Yalta und Potsdam

Already in late 1943 at the Teheran Conference the Allies began discussing territorial changes in central Europe. At this point Stalin voiced an interest in a westward shift of Poland, demanding not only the Soviet appropriation of Eastern Poland, but also suggesting as compensation, Poland's acquisition of Germany's Eastern territories. In

¹² Heinrich von Treitschke, *Das deutsche Ordensland Preussen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1958), 85-86.

addition, Stalin expressed an interest in obtaining the ice-free port of Königsberg.¹³ The Allies debated these territorial changes, which were referred to as the Curzon Line and the so-called Line of the Oder.¹⁴ The future of the government of Poland and its economic system concerned Churchill and Roosevelt and urged them to seek to appease Stalin's demands.

At the Yalta conference in February 1945 Stalin, Churchill, and Roosevelt continued to debate territorial changes. Stalin expressed persistent interest in a new Western border for Poland along the Oder and the Western Neisse rivers. Churchill expressed concern with Stalin's proposal due to the massive population transfers it would entail; he suggested that the Eastern Neisse river might serve as a more reasonable border and lower the numbers of Germans who would necessarily face resettlement. In his comments on the conference in *The Second World War: Triumph and Tragedy*, Churchill recreated the conversation with Stalin. Churchill stated that "moving six million Germans back to Germany [. . .] might be managed, subject to the moral question,

¹³ Winston Churchill, *The Second World War: Closing the Ring*, vol. 5 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1951), 362, 403. Churchill's *The Second World War* volumes 5 and 6 are used extensively in this section. However, it must be noted, that these books consisted not only of compilations of letters, reports, and summaries of conversations, but also commentaries, commentaries that Churchill drafted later and which, given the date of publication, were most certainly colored by his perception of Cold War tensions. Klessmann cited an entry from Churchill's memoirs from February 27, 1945 where he expressed positive feelings about interaction with Stalin and repeatedly stated that the leaders of the Soviet government were honorable, W. Churchill, *Memoiren*, Bd. VI, 2 (Stuttgart, 1954), 70, cited in Christoph Klessmann, *Die doppelte Staatsgründung: Deutsche Geschichte 1945-1955* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982), 348.

¹⁴ Hans-Georg Lehmann, *Der Oder-Neisse Konflikt* (München: Verlag C. H. Beck, 1979), 27. See also Herbert Kraus, *The Status under International Law of the Eastern Territories of Germany: within the frontiers of the Reich as at December 1937* (n.p., February 1963), 18

which I would have to settle with my own people." He feared that a large number of British citizens would be "shocked" at forced transfers of millions of people. Stalin apparently replied "that there were no Germans in these areas as they had all run away."¹⁵

Ultimately, both Churchill and Roosevelt faced the difficult situation of needing to appease Stalin due to the presence of Soviet soldiers in Central Europe. In addition, Churchill and Roosevelt sought Soviet involvement in defeating Japan.¹⁶ Thus Stalin's demands for Eastern Poland as well as Polish compensation in Eastern Germany would face increasingly less resistance from the Western Allies. Churchill later regretted not using maps more extensively in these deliberations and not having a firm enough grasp of the distinction between the two branches of the Neisse River.¹⁷

¹⁵ Winston Churchill, *The Second World War: Triumph and Tragedy*, vol. 6 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1953), 374. Lehmann, *Der Oder-Neisse Konflikt*, 30. Klaus-Dietmar Henke attributed Churchill's expression of concern about "the moral question" to the Potsdam conference. See, Henke, "Der Weg nach Potsdam--Die Alliierten und die Vertreibung," in *Die Vertreibung der Deutschen aus dem Osten: Ursachen, Ereignisse, Folgen*, ed. Wolfgang Benz (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Verlag, 1995), 80.

¹⁶ Letters and defining the terms for "Unconditional Surrender" from Prime Minister (Churchill) to Sir Alexander Cadogan, 19 April and to Foreign Minister and Cadogan, 23 April 1944, Appendix B, Book 2, Churchill, *The Second World War: Closing the Ring*, 706. Churchill also expressed apprehension concerning Stalin's demand for four million German males as a source of forced labor to rebuild Russia. The Yalta Protocol did contain a reference to the "Use of German labor" as part of the reparations to be extracted. See the text of the Jalta Protokoll, section V., as contained in Ingo von Münch, ed., *Dokumente des Geteilten Deutschland: Quellentexte zur Rechtslage des Deutschen Reiches, der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik* (Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 1968), 14.

¹⁷ Germany would have retained a significant portion of Silesia had the Eastern branch of the Neisse river been selected as the new border. For this discussion, see Churchill, *The Second World War: Triumph and Tragedy*, 374-375, 377.

In a letter from 16 March 1945 Churchill discussed with Roosevelt further developments concerning border issues and the Eastern Germans. He stated that "all entry into Poland is barred to our representatives. An impenetrable veil has been drawn across the scene." British and American officers and representatives who were already in Lublin "have been requested to clear out." Churchill further commented, "There is no doubt in my mind that the Soviets fear very much our seeing what is going on in Poland. It may be that, apart from the Poles, they are being very rough with the Germans. Whatever the reason, we are not allowed to see. This is not a position that could be defended by us."¹⁸ In July Churchill asked Stalin if they might be permitted to send representatives into Poland "with full freedom to move about and tell us what was happening?"¹⁹

At the Potsdam Conference in July 1945 Stalin continued to face less opposition. Stalin's insistence on shifting borders proved more difficult to reject due to the presence of Soviet soldiers in Central Europe. Additionally the fact that Poland's occupation of the Eastern German territories had already taken place, made border deliberations more awkward.²⁰ As indicated by Churchill in his commentary in *The Second World War: Triumph and Tragedy*, Churchill and Truman viewed the area in question as part of the Soviet Zone that Stalin had given to Poland for administrative purposes. Stalin denied taking this action and justified the presence of Polish forces in the region: "[T]he

¹⁸ Letter from Prime Minister to President Roosevelt, 16 Mar. 1945, Churchill, *The Second World War: Triumph and Tragedy*, 429.

¹⁹ Churchill mentioned no response. *The Second World War: Triumph and Tragedy*, 664.

²⁰ Lehmann, *Der Oder-Neisse Konflikt*, 33-34.

Germans have fled and the natural and indeed the only solution is to set up a friendly administration of Poles. This does not commit us to any particular boundary, and if the Conference cannot agree about one it can remain in suspense."²¹

Also at the Potsdam Conference, Churchill asked how they could assimilate eight million transferred Germans into "what was left of Germany" and expressed doubt that every German had actually already fled. Churchill apparently had sources indicating that perhaps more than two million Germans were still in the area (actually at that time roughly five and a half million Germans were still in the former Eastern territories under discussion).²² According to Churchill's commentary Stalin contended that "Not a single German remained in the area which he proposed to give to the Poles."²³

Churchill's primary concern in this matter was finding sufficient room and food for the transferred Germans: "The Result [of Stalin's proposed border changes and policies] would be that the Poles and the Russians had the food and the fuel [produced in

²¹ Churchill, *The Second World War: Triumph and Tragedy*, 654-655, 660.

²² Friedrich von Wilpert, *The Oder-Neisse Problem: Towards Fair Play in Central Europe*, (Bonn, Brussels, New York: Atlantic Form, 1964, 1969), 80-81. Also see a conversation between Churchill and Byrnes mentioned in *German Eastern Territories*, 89. Also in Churchill's *The Second World War: Closing the Ring* references were made to the extensive examinations of maps of the area affected by the proposed Oder Line, examinations which took place at the Teheran Conference in 1943. In his comments on the Yalta Conference in *The Second World War: Triumph and Tragedy* Churchill expressed regret that maps were not used as they discussed border changes and which branch of the Neisse River should mark the new border, 374. Also the figures cited in *The Second World War: Triumph and Tragedy* fluctuate wildly. For example, in his discussion of Yalta, Churchill made reference to moving six million Germans "back to Germany" (374) In his discussion of Potsdam on page 648 he questioned the feasibility of moving eight million Germans. Likewise in recalling conversations at Potsdam Churchill stated "some people" believed that "more than two millions were still there" (656)

²³ Churchill, *The Second World War: Triumph and Tragedy*, 655-657.

the former Eastern territories], while we had the mouths and the hearths." He reminded Stalin "of his remark at a previous meeting about not allowing memories of injuries or feelings of retribution to govern our policy." According to Churchill, Stalin stated that his remark "did not apply to war criminals." To which Churchill replied: "But not all eight and a quarter millions who have fled are war criminals."²⁴ After July 25, the last day Churchill attended the conference, Clement Attlee replaced him as Prime Minister and British representative. Stalin no longer had a powerful and vocal potential counterpart at the negotiating table.²⁵

Article XIII of the Potsdam Agreement stated that any population transfer should be both "orderly and humane."²⁶ Churchill expressed concern that such a large group of Germans could not be removed in an "orderly and humane" fashion; had he known that the size of the population to be transferred was significantly larger than he apparently expected, he may have realized the impossibility of effectively carrying out Article XIII. In his commentary contained in *The Second World War: Triumph and Tragedy*, Churchill also expressed concern about the future of the territory and the "starved and swollen" populations of the Western zones: "For the future peace of Europe here was a

²⁴ Ibid., 661-662, 666.

²⁵ Manfred Görtemaker, "Potsdamer Konferenz (17.7-2.8.1945), in *Deutschland unter alliierter Besatzung, 1945-1949/55*, ed. Benz (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1999), 216.

²⁶ For the exact wording of Article XIII of the Potsdam Agreement see: Münch, ed., *Dokumente des Geteilten Deutschland*, 42-43. See also von Wilpert, *The Oder-Neisse Problem*, 79. See also Göttingen Research Committee, ed., *German Eastern Territories: A Manual and Book of Reference dealing with the regions East of the Oder and Neisse*, trans. Helen Taubert and Anni Mückenheim (Würzburg: Holzner, Würzburg, Publisher, 1957), 97.

wrong, beside which Alsace-Lorraine and the Danzig Corridor were trifles. One day the Germans would want their territory back, and the Poles would not be able to stop them."²⁷

At the Potsdam Conference the Allies postponed the permanent demarcation of Germany's Eastern border until a final peace settlement. This issue has been the subject of much debate. Many postwar West German authors suggested that the Allies had no intention of establishing the Oder-Neisse-Border as a legally binding and permanent German-Polish frontier. They often argued that the Oder-Neisse-Line, as determined by the Yalta and Potsdam conferences, was temporary because the conferences did not produce the necessary peace settlement. In *Dokumente des Geteilten Deutschland*, Ingo von Münch contended that the language of the document made a clear distinction between the future of Königsberg and that of the other former German territories. In the case of Königsberg, the Potsdam Agreement spoke of "the ultimate transfer to the Soviet Union"²⁸ of the city; however, in contrast, the former German territories East of the Oder and Neisse River "shall be under the administration of the Polish state."²⁹ Von Münch thus concluded that this significant difference in wording indicated a differentiation between the Allies' intentions on the one hand towards Königsberg and conversely towards the former Eastern territories as a whole.³⁰

²⁷ Churchill, *The Second World War: Triumph and Tragedy*, 648.

²⁸ section VI, "City of Königsberg and the Adjacent Area" in Münch, ed., *Dokumente des Geteilten Deutschland*, 40.

²⁹ Potsdamer Abkommen vom 2. August 1945 (Auszug), section IX, "Poland" extract cited in English in full in Münch, ed., *Dokumente des Geteilten Deutschland*, 42.

³⁰ Münch, ed., *Dokumente des Geteilten Deutschland*, XLVI-XLIX. For other examples

Polish sources viewed this matter differently; according to the standard Polish argumentation, the Potsdam Agreement did indeed establish the final Polish Western frontier. In his essay "The Legal Foundations of the Odra-Nyssa Frontier," Alfons Klafkowski contended "the Potsdam Agreement applied the term 'former German lands' to the territory transferred to Poland and separated this region from the Soviet occupation zone in Germany."³¹ Thus, referring to the territories as "former" indicated, according to Polish perceptions, that the Allies intended the new border to be permanent. Secondly, the Polish argument involved dispelling the initial Allied misconception that the Soviet Zone included the Eastern territories, which were merely temporarily under Polish administration. Indeed Polish authors argued that the Potsdam Accords allowed for the return to Poland of ancient Polish territories, territories that the Teutonic Knights had stolen. According to this argument the area was traditionally Polish and thus simply returning to the rightful owner.³²

see Kraus, *The Status under International Law of the Eastern Territories of Germany*, 21, or von Wilpert, *The Oder Neisse Problem*, 66. A younger generation of German historians disagreed. For a counter example see Hermann Graml, "Strukturen und Motive alliierter Besatzungspolitik in Deutschland" Benz, ed., *Deutschland unter alliierter Besatzung 1945-1949/55*, 25. Graml contended the Potsdam resolutions did not "permit any doubt" that the permanent border between Germany and Poland had been established. Christoph Klessmann understood the decision to expel Germans as a means of physically establishing the border between Germany and Poland, a border which would be difficult later to undo, Christoph Klessmann, *Die doppelte Staatsgründung: Deutsche Geschichte, 1945-1955* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982) 32-33.

³¹ Alfons Klafkowski, "The Legal Foundations of the Odra-Nyssa Frontier," *Polish Western Territories*, trans. Wanda Libicka (Poznan: Institut Zachodni, 1959), 78.

³² Mieczyslaw Tomala, *Deutschland--von Polen gesehen: Zu den deutsch-polnischen Beziehungen, 1945-1990*, trans. Meinolf Bickmann and Karin Tomala (Marburg: Schüren Verlag, 2000), 37. Klafkowski also made this argument, "The Legal Foundations of the Odra-Nyssa Frontier," 79.

The dissolution of Prussia

In his book, *In Europe's Name: Germany and the Divided Continent*, Timothy Garton Ash described the Allies' desire to "punish" and "dismember" Germany, and especially Prussia. Indeed in discussing Allied perceptions, Ash identified Prussia as "the imagined heart of darkness."³³ Likewise Churchill contended that "the root of all evil lay in Prussia, in the Prussian Army and General Staff."³⁴ To be sure the Allies frequently focused on Prussia during the postwar proceedings.

On 25 February 1947 in the building of the Prussian Supreme Court (Kammergericht) in Berlin-Schöneberg the Allied Control Council for Germany issued Law Number 46, which called for the dissolution of the entire Prussian state on the grounds that it had been a breeding ground for German militarism.³⁵ Signatories included

³³ Timothy Garton Ash, *In Europe's Name: Germany and the Divided Continent* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 221.

³⁴ Churchill, *The Second World War: Closing the Ring*, 400-401. Already at the Teheran Conference in 1943, Churchill suggested "Prussia should be dealt with more sternly than the other parts of the Reich," 360.

³⁵ The laws issued by the Allied Control Council focused on repealing Nazi laws (#1), dissolving the Nazi organizations (#2), termination and prohibition of military instruction (militärischen Ausbildung) (#8), confiscation and control of the assets of I.G. Farben (#9), punishment of persons guilty of committing crimes against the peace and humanity (#10), dissolution of the Wehrmacht (#34), lastly # 46: the dissolution of Prussia, Herbert Michaelis and Ernst Schräpler, eds., *Ursachen und Folgen: Vom deutschen Zusammenbruch 1918 und 1945 bis zur staatlichen Neuordnung Deutschlands in der Gegenwart. Eine Urkunden- und Dokumentensammlung zur Zeitgeschichte. Dreiundzwanzigster Band. Das Dritte Reich: Der militärische Zusammenbruch und das Ende des Dritten Reiches* (Berlin: Dokumenten-Verlag Dr. Herbert Wendler & Co.), xvii-xviii. Not mentioned in the above book, Number 18, the "Wohnungsgesetz" (housing law), entailed the creation of offices to regulate housing and assure

the military governors Pierre Koenig, Général d'Armée; Vasili Sokolovsky, Marshal of the Soviet Union; Lucius D. Clay, Lieutenant General for Joseph T. McNarney; General Brian Herbert Robertson, Lieutenant General for Sholto Douglas Marshal of the Royal Air Force.³⁶ With this act the Allied Control Council declared that: "The Prussian State which from early days has been a bearer of militarism and reaction in Germany has de facto ceased to exist." The act of dissolving Prussia was thought to ensure "peace and security of peoples" and to contribute to the reconstruction of Germany in accordance with democratic principles. The Allied Control Council dissolved not only the Prussian state, but also its government and agencies. In addition, the formerly Prussian territories currently under the jurisdiction of the Control Council were either to become "member states" (Länder) or be absorbed into other "Länder." (It must be noted that the states within "Old Prussia" were placed under Polish administration, or in the case of Northern East Prussia, ceded to the Soviet Union. The remaining states, which had been part of Hohenzollern Prussia, were to be renamed, reorganized, and/or absorbed into nearby German states, as according to Number 46.) The article containing this statement was open to revision: "The provisions of this Article are subject to such revision and other provisions as may be agreed upon by the Allied Control Authority, or as may be laid down in the future Constitution of Germany."³⁷

accommodations for all registered persons, see Karl Christian Führer, "Wohnungen," in *Deutschland unter alliierter Besatzung, 1945-1949/55*, Benz, ed., 207.

³⁶ For more on what each signatory hoped to achieve through a dissolution of Prussia, see Gunther Mai, *Die Alliierte Kontrollrat in Deutschland, 1945-1948: Alliierte Einheit-deutsche Teilung?* (München: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1995), 415-435.

³⁷ Kontrollratsgesetz Nr. 46 betreffend die Auflösung Preussens vom 25. Februar 1947: Abolition of the State of Prussia, cited in English in full in Münch, ed., *Dokumente des*

In *The End of Prussia*, Gordon Craig suggested that the dissolution of Prussia was the burial for a suicide victim.³⁸ Craig contended that the Allied Control Council "admitted rather lamely" that Prussia no longer existed and thus 25 February 1947 could not be considered "the end of Prussia."³⁹ Why, then, did the Allied Control Council bother issuing Law Number 46? What did it mean for the parties involved?

For the Allies Prussia was an easy target: it could be dissolved whereas Germany reasonably could not. Prussia would become a convenient scapegoat for all the damage Germany had caused in the twentieth century.⁴⁰ The Allies could feel certain that after amputating Prussia, a closely-monitored Germany would be democratic and peace in Western Europe would be preserved. The Germans could ostensibly look at Prussia and blame it for all that had gone wrong, thereby potentially minimizing their own guilt. Prussia had caused the problems of the twentieth century, and now that it was gone, Germany had been symbolically declawed.

In *Fragen an Preussen: Zur Geschichte eines aufgehobenen Staates*, Rudolf von Thadden suggested that the Allies wanted to hold Prussia responsible for all of Germany's "aberrations" (Verirrungen) and thus saw its dissolution as the antidote to German aggression. Von Thadden suggested that the German public expressed only surprise that

Geteilten Deutschland, 54-55.

³⁸ Prussia's suicide, according to Craig occurred in 1933. Gordon Craig, *The End of Prussia* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), 91.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁴⁰ Brendan Simms, discussed the dismemberment of Prussia and the erroneous Allied perception of a link between Prussia and National Socialism. See, "Prussia, Prussianism and National Socialism, 1933-47," *Modern Prussian History, 1830-1947*, ed. Philip G. Dwyer (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2001), 266-273.

the Allies would pronounce such a meaningless "death sentence": "according to the political consciousness of many people, Prussia had long since died."⁴¹ Von Thadden's proof for the sentiments felt by the public was a quote from *Die Welt* from March 1947: Number 46 was "simply the legal confirmation, the death itself already took place earlier."⁴²

Gilbert Gornig agreed and asked if a resolution made by the Control Council could simply extinguish a political entity that had been in existence for hundreds of years. He suggested that Paul von Hindenburg, Kurt von Schleicher and Franz von Papen signaled Prussia's decline, a decline that Hitler completed. Gornig asked if perhaps the Allies wanted to destroy a tradition rather than a state (Staatsmacht).⁴³ Thus, what is the significance of Number 46, the official dissolution of Prussia?

For some West Germans the significance of Number 46 could be demonstrated by the prominence of the law in document collections. In his book of documents Münch

⁴¹ Rudolf von Thadden, *Fragen an Preussen: Zur Geschichte eines aufgehobenen Staates* (München: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1981), 22-23. Marion Gräfin Dönhoff likewise argued that the death of Prussia took place much earlier than 1947, and perhaps as early as 1871, Dönhoff, "Der frühe Tod des alten Preussen" *Die Zeit* (April 2001). See also, "Ein Kreuz auf Preussens Grab: Zum deutsch-polnischen Vertrag über die Oder-Neisse Grenze," *Die Zeit*, 20.II.1970, cited in Alice Schwarzer, *Marion Dönhoff: Ein widerständiges Leben*. (München: Droemersch Verlagsgesellschaft Th. Knaur Nachf., 1996), 319-321.

⁴² *Die Welt*, 'Preussens Ende,' 8 March 1947, cited in Rudolf von Thadden, *Fragen an Preussen: Zur Geschichte eines aufgehobenen Staates* (München: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1981), 161, n. 18.

⁴³ Gilbert Gornig, "Der Untergang Preussens unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Kontrollratsgesetzes Nr. 46 betreffend die Auflösung Preussens vom 25. Februar 1947", *Schriftenreihe des Preusseninstituts* Heft 7 (Remscheid: Der Vorstand des Preusseninstituts Institut zur Förderung der preussischen Staatsauffassung sowie des deutschen Geschichts- und Kulturbewusstseins e.V., 1998), 7, 42-43.

cited the 1945 document that created the Allied Control Council and also cited two of the many laws it issued. He cited Law Number 1 in full (this law concerned repealing Nazi legislation). Significantly the only other law Münch cited was Number 46, concerning the dissolution of Prussia, which he likewise cited in full. Indeed the editors of several key works discussing Germany's legal situation in the postwar period placed emphasis on the Allied dissolution of Prussia.⁴⁴

West Germans debated the subject of Prussia's termination in numerous books, essays, and speeches; the Polish reaction to Number 46 was more uniform. In Poland a more limited number of books mentioned the *German* history of their new/recovered territories at all or mentioned the actual official act dissolving Prussia as a political and geographical entity. What would they have debated? The Polish reaction was one of complete satisfaction and vindication. This feeling was demonstrated in *Polish Western Territories*, one of the few such works to be translated into English. One essay in the book, "The Legal Foundations of the Odra-Nyssa Frontier" by Alfons Klafkowski, demonstrated this apparent feeling of relief and vindication: "[. . .] Act Number 46 abolishing Prussia is a legal instrument by means of which the question of the Prussian State was closed finally, both legally and in actual fact."⁴⁵ Klafkowski also stressed that

⁴⁴ Michaelis and Schräpler, eds., *Ursachen und Folgen*, 372; Münch, ed., *Dokumente des Geteilten Deutschland*, 54-55. Note *Die Fischer Chronik Deutschland 1949-1999* also listed only 6 such laws from the Allied Control Council and number 46 is among them, also signifying the relative importance for Germans of this law. Wolf-Rüdiger Bauman, *Die Fischer Chronik Deutschland 1949-1999: Ereignisse, Personen, Daten* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1999), 15.

⁴⁵ Klafkowski, "The Legal Foundations of the Odra-Nyssa Frontier," 84. For a discussion of the legal arguments made at the time, by Klafkowski as well as other Polish authors, see Tomala, *Deutschland--von Polen gesehen*, 56.

"the same act emphasizes that the Prussian State has ceased to exist so that peace and security of nations could be maintained."⁴⁶ Again, from the Polish standpoint, what was there to debate? Thus the Poles perceived Number 46 to be symbolic but moreover significant.

It may be that the 1947 dissolution of Prussia was mostly symbolic, merely burying an entity already suffering from extensive putrefaction. Was Number 46 thus insignificant? On the contrary, the Allied decision to dissolve Prussia served tremendous symbolic purposes for both the Allies and the Poles and also provided Germans with the means to lessen Germany's guilt. After all, according to the Allies, Prussia--with its Pickelhauben, corpse-like slavish obedience (Kadavergehorsam), and saber rattling (Säbelrasseln)--or more specifically the Prussian spirit, forced Germany to declare war: therefore, following this interpretation, without Prussia there would certainly have been no World Wars and also no Hitler, thus no Holocaust.⁴⁷

In his essay "Das Ende Preussens," Golo Mann expressed the speciousness of such arguments; of course a Bavarian-born German might prefer to see World War One as a Prussian war, but he would never make such an argument because the enthusiasm for the war was as great on Odeonsplatz as in Wilhelmsstrasse.⁴⁸ Mann suggested that formal dissolution of the already terminated Prussia in 1947 was absurd, stating "To destroy

⁴⁶ Klafkowski, "The Legal Foundations of the Odra-Nyssa Frontier," 83.

⁴⁷ Gornig, "Der Untergang Preussens," 40.

⁴⁸ Golo Mann, "Das Ende Preussens," in *Moderne Preussische Geschichte 1648-1947. Eine Anthologie*, eds. Otto Busch and Wolfgang Neugebauer, Veröffentlichungen der Historischen Kommission zu Berlin, vol. 52/1 Forschungen zur Preussischen Geschichte. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1981), 252.

Prussia once again--it was the kick that the victorious asses [Esel] gave to the long-dead Lion. They believed they had killed him, but that was a mistake. They believed that Nazism had its roots in Prussianism. At most that belief was one-tenth correct and at least nine-tenths false."⁴⁹

Regardless of when Prussia as a political and geographical term "ended," the traces of Prussia lived on culturally. The echoes of Prussia were heard in both the postwar Germanies, and of course in the united Germany.⁵⁰ Even in Poland, Prussian architecture, traditions, and certain forms of artistic expression still exist and have melded with the Polish traditions, making it difficult for many Poles even to be aware of the traces of Prussia that remain. Which group has been most active in the preservation, persistence, and re-production of Prussia as a cultural entity? The expellees and refugees--especially the women--from East Prussia, West Prussia, and Pomerania have sought to preserve what they perceived to be their cultural heritage and allow that aspect of Prussia to persist long after the disappearance of Prussia from the map.

⁴⁹ Mann, "Das Ende Preussens," 260-261.

⁵⁰ Gornig discussed the influence of Prussian military traditions on both the Volksarmee of the GDR and the Bundeswehr of the Federal Republic. He also named universities, businesses, and sport clubs that have the names of Prussian kings, the word "preussisch" or "Borussia" etc., in the title. He also listed the traditional Prussian characteristics that are still valued in present-day Germany. Gornig, "Der Untergang Preussens," 44-45. Von Thadden also discussed the wave of interest in Prussia in the late 1970s and early 1980s in *Fragen an Preussen*, 145-158. Likewise Dönhoff emphasized the Prussian ideals that are still valued today in her article "Der frühe Tod des alten Preussen" *Die Zeit* (April 2001). Recently a new wave of interest in Prussia and the expellees was inaugurated with the "Prussian Year" in 2001.

Allied Control Council and the zones of occupation

Nazi Germany's unconditional surrender became official on 8 May 1945. Indeed the future of postwar Germany had already been decided at the Yalta conference in February: the Allies divided Germany into occupation zones over which the Americans, British, Soviets, and eventually also the French, respectively, would have control. Through the policy of division and occupation, the Allied powers sought to enforce the unconditional surrender and also crush any resistance that might emerge. The administration of each zone would be coordinated by a commission, headquartered in Berlin, and consisting of the military governors of the four Allied powers.⁵¹ The assumption of authority in Germany by the representatives of the Allied powers became official through the Berlin Declaration, issued 5 June 1945.⁵²

According to the Potsdam Agreement from 2 August 1945 this Allied Control Commission was responsible for the complete disarmament of Germany as well as implementing demilitarization, denazification, re-education, democratization, decartelization, and the equitable payment of reparations from "appropriate German external assets."⁵³ The Allies intended for the commission to treat Germany as one unit

⁵¹ From the Yalta Erklärung, 11 February 1945, Münch, ed., *Dokumente des Geteilten Deutschland*, 7-8.

⁵² From the Berliner Deklaration in Anbetracht der Niederlage Deutschlands und der Übernahme der obersten Regierungsgewalt hinsichtlich Deutschlands, Münch, ed., *Dokumente des Geteilten Deutschland*, 19-20.

⁵³ From the Potsdamer Abkommen, section IV, von Münch, ed., *Dokumente des Geteilten Deutschland*, 39. The creation and responsibilities of the control commission were confirmed in Proclamation No. 1 Establishing the Control Council, von Münch, ed., *Dokumente des Geteilten Deutschland*, 51-52. For further discussion of occupation

with standardized zonal policies. Gunther Mai contended the Allies themselves were divided over whether to destroy or rebuild Germany; this division plagued the commission, symbolized the ideological division in the Cold War period, and also the inability of the Allies to follow a unified policy concerning the defeated Germany.⁵⁴

Also according to the Potsdam Agreement the transfer of German populations from East Central Europe should occur in an "orderly and humane manner."

Correspondingly the Allied Control Council had an additional responsibility as a result of the population transfers: the Control Council should examine the problem and consider the equitable distribution of these "transferred" Germans throughout the four zones of occupation. The Agreement expressed the concern that "the influx of a large number of Germans into Germany would increase the burden already resting on the occupying authorities."⁵⁵

Indeed the occupation authorities took on a formidable task in postwar Germany. In his book *In the Wake of War: The Reconstruction of German Cities after World War II*, Jeffry Diefendorf described the destruction of German cities, citing such phrases as an "age of rubble, life amidst the rubble, rubble literature, rubble mountains" to depict the

policies and the 4 "D"s, see, Manfred Görtemaker, *Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: Von der Gründung bis zur Gegenwart* (München: C.H. Beck Verlag, 1999), 25.

⁵⁴ See especially "Der Kontrollrat: eine europäische Lösung für die Deutschlandfrage?" Mai, *Die Alliierte Kontrollrat in Deutschland, 1945-1948*, 488-500. See also Gunther Mai, "Alliiertes Kontrollrat," in *Deutschland unter alliierter Besatzung 1945-1949/55*, ed. Benz, 229-234.

⁵⁵ From the Potsdamer Abkommen, section XIII, Münch, ed., *Dokumente des Geteilten Deutschland*, 42-43.

way Germans viewed the postwar urban scene.⁵⁶ Due to the large numbers of evacuees and refugees moving about the cities and countryside--thus making it difficult to determine the number of residents of a given area--civilian casualty figures resulting from the strategic bombing vary widely. Diefendorf provided a reasonable range, which indicated that due to air raids between 400,000 and 600,000 civilians died, and between 650,000 and 850,000 sustained injuries.

In cities with a population exceeding 100,000, bombs destroyed an average of fifty percent of "built-up areas." The downtown areas of some cities were up to eighty-five percent destroyed. Diefendorf estimated that in the area that would become the Federal Republic twenty-two percent of housing was unsalvageable and twenty-three percent sustained some damage.⁵⁷ Karl Christian Führer cited samples of the contradictory figures reported by various authorities and suggested a "careful estimate" that between 2.6 and 3 million dwellings were completely destroyed.⁵⁸ The deficiency of

⁵⁶ Jeffrey Diefendorf, *In the Wake of War: The Reconstruction of German Cities after World War II* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 13. In a section titled "Leben in den Trümmern," Görtemaker also discussed the rubble and suggested that the Western zones contained 13.7 million households but only 8.2 million dwellings, many of which sustained war damages. Görtemaker, *Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, 29.

⁵⁷ Diefendorf, *In the Wake of War*, 11, 108. Diefendorf provided additional figures, such as that 2.5 million housing units were unsalvageable, 1.5 million were heavily damaged, *In the Wake of War*, 123-124.

⁵⁸ Führer stated the percentage of destroyed housing amounted to between 17 and 19 percent, thus the majority of housing survived the war. Führer also reminded readers that cities were largely destroyed and lay in ruins, yet Germany consisted not only of cities. Führer, "Wohnungen," in *Deutschland unter alliierter Besatzung, 1945-1949/55*, ed. Benz, 206. Discrepancies in the numbers likely resulted from different definitions of "Germany," in other words do the percentages refer to the territory of the 1939 Germany, 1945 Germany, or what would become the Federal Republic.

housing in West Germany was further exacerbated by the incoming expellees and also the refugees from the Soviet Zone; in all nearly five million apartments were needed in the Western zones.⁵⁹ On the basis of 1947 documents Philipp Ther suggested that the housing situation was more extreme in the SBZ, where more than 1 million dwellings were lacking.⁶⁰

Both literally and figuratively massive portions of Germany lay in ruins and rubble. Millions of Germans lost their apartments and houses in bombing raids; the entire political and social apparatus had to be replaced; many families had been torn apart; the denazification process would necessarily have to penetrate many layers of society; displaced persons from East Central and Eastern Europe--many of whom either survived the Nazi concentration camps or were fleeing from the Soviets--trekked around; and furthermore millions of German expellees and refugees were pouring across the borders from Germany's former Eastern territories and other parts of Eastern Europe. In order to carry out the precepts of the Potsdam Agreement a semblance of order had to be established. But how?

⁵⁹ Schulz suggested that determining exact figures for the deficit would "hardly be possible" Günther Schulz, *Wiederaufbau in Deutschland: Die Wohnungsbaupolitik in den Westzonen und der Bundesrepublik von 1945 bis 1957* (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1994), 39.

⁶⁰ Philipp Ther, "Vertriebenenpolitik in der SBZ/DDR und in Polen, 1945 bis 1950," in *Geglückte Integration? Spezifika und Vergleichbarkeiten der Vertriebenen-Eingliederung in der SBZ-DDR*, eds. Dierk Hoffmann, and Michael Schwartz (München: R. Oldenbourg, 1999), 147.

Zones of occupation and Vertriebenen- or Umsiedlerpolitik: West and East

Eyewitnesses of the immediate postwar period painted a generally bleak portrait of the German urban scene. The shortage of housing was so serious that many incoming expellees and refugees spent years living in camps, huts, and even horse stalls. The eyewitness Heinrich Niebes described Magdeburg in June 1945 and observed expellees outnumbering indigenes and the generally unhealthy situation in the city. According to his letter, the commander of Magdeburg-East blocked Niebes' attempts to return to Düsseldorf; in like fashion all DPs (displaced persons) and refugees were also held in the city until the administration had official directives concerning where to send them next. Niebes stated that Magdeburg-East officials could provide neither bread nor potatoes, much less meat and butter for the population. In addition to lacking food, many people lacked sufficient clothing and were often wearing all they possessed: worn and dirty garments and shoes beyond any possible state of repair. Other eyewitness reports confirmed the severity of destruction in the cities, as well as malnutrition, rampant diseases, and the general chaos as people from many parts of Europe flooded into Germany seeking safety.⁶¹ Because the surviving private housing was limited and already long occupied by the city's residents, the housing for the fluctuating population

⁶¹ Görtemaker described the caloric intake among city residents and cited earlier estimates stating that a working German needed 3,000 calories per day; Germans in the postwar period consumed averages of between 700 and 1,300 calories, depending on where they lived. Germans were thus severely underweight and susceptible to diseases. See, *Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, 29. John E. Farquharson described the low caloric intake in Bizonia and suggested that although there was rampant malnutrition, there was no mass starvation. *The Western Allies and the Politics of Food: Agrarian Management in Postwar Germany* (Warwickshire and Dover, New Hampshire: Berg Publishers Ltd, 1985), 236-237.

consisted of mass accommodations (Massenquartiere).⁶² Indeed the presence of millions of refugees and eventually expellees and resettlers exacerbated already dire living conditions, especially in the British and Soviet Zones. The occupation authorities often faced challenges for which wartime planning had not prepared them.

Above all the occupation authorities sought to denazify the population, put an end to any form of resistance, and curb the confusion amidst the rubble that had been Germany. Thus the Allied Control Commission urged the occupation authorities of the different zones to remove Nazi officials and bureaucrats from positions of power, to re-educate and democratize the population, to settle the displaced persons, evacuees, refugees and eventually also expellees in whatever housing was available, and to monitor political associations and forbid any Nazi or nationalist groups, as well as any groups considered subversive. The Allied authorities in the different zones interpreted and carried out the decrees to varying degrees and with diverse approaches. In general the authorities sought Germans least tainted by Nazism to form committees, commissions, and administrative divisions on the local, regional, and state level in order to carry out the tasks set forth by the Allied Control Commission.

In March 1946 the Allied Control Commission issued act Number 18, the "Wohnungsgesetz" (housing law), which required the creation of communal housing departments that assisted homeless registered Germans in finding accommodations. A

⁶² Letter from Heinrich Niebes, Düsseldorf (presently Berlin) to Ottomar Geschke, Berlin, 25 June 1945, Bundesarchiv Berlin (BA-B), NY 4182: 1160. Heinrich Niebes later served as a KPD deputy in the first Bundestag, from September 1949 through September 1953. Ottomar Geschke served as deputy to the chairman of the city council (Stadtverordnetenenvorsteher) in East Berlin during the Soviet occupation period.

committee consisting of both indigenes and refugee representatives was to provide assistance in this matter. Number 18 directed the housing departments to confiscate underused space in existing housing and redistribute the underused rooms or apartments to homeless Germans in need of shelter. Other than urging the housing departments to confiscate zealously the living space (Wohnraum) of Nazi functionaries and war criminals, the occupation authorities allowed the German officials a degree of autonomy to run the housing departments.⁶³ Thus in some areas displaced Germans found helpful officials who sought for them the necessary housing, whereas in other areas they found no assistance whatsoever. The requisitioning of buildings by the occupation authorities further complicated the housing situation in the cities.⁶⁴

As was the case with the housing departments, the military occupation authorities primarily left Germans in charge of the administration of displaced German affairs. The few relevant decrees issued by the occupation authorities concerned the distribution of expellees and also the formation of expellee political organizations. The authorities tried

⁶³ Karl Christian Führer, *Mieter, Hausbesitzer, Staat und Wohnungsmarkt: Wohnungsmangel und Wohnungszwangswirtschaft in Deutschland, 1914-1960*. Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte Beihefte (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1995), 350-362.

⁶⁴ The variations will be discussed later, but Führer contended that in small communities often the mayor would serve as the communal housing authority. It is also important to note that Führer argued that this creation of a housing department with the power to confiscate underused living space was nothing new and had been practiced during the war for the billeting of soldiers. Führer, "Wohnungen," in *Deutschland unter alliierter Besatzung, 1945-1949/55*, Benz, ed., 207. Also during the last months of the war, Nazi officials confiscated parlors and underused rooms for the evacuated or incoming refugees. See, for example, Eva Krutein, *Eva's War: A True Story of Survival*. (Albuquerque, New Mexico: Amador Publishers, 1990), 84. Krutein arrived in Kiel and a Nazi part functionary told her in which house she would find accommodations. Krutein indicated if indigenes refused to give up a room, the police would threaten them.

to steer refugee treks and also transports of expellees and resettlers to particular areas of Germany where the population density and degree of destruction were lowest. In addition, the authorities in all zones prohibited the displaced Germans to establish political or special interest organizations; instead, they urged expellees and resettlers to become politically involved in preexisting or mainstream groups and thereby advance their integration into their new societies.⁶⁵ If the displaced Germans were starving and homeless, and if organizations existed which permitted them distinct public gatherings and a political voice through spokespersons, the Allies feared they would develop into a dissident subculture and become a subversive element in the postwar German society. In order to hinder such behavior, both the Allied occupation officials and especially the later German officials promoted an image of the displaced Germans as welcome additions to their respective societies.

⁶⁵ Karsten Krieger, "Parteien," Benz, ed. *Deutschland unter alliierter Besatzung 1945-1949/55*, 150.

CHAPTER 3

THE OFFICIAL IMAGE OF EXPELLEES: VERTRIEBENENPOLITIK IN THE BRITISH ZONE OF OCCUPATION AND FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY

In every zone and later in both Germanies, officials developed policies to cope with the presence of millions of displaced Germans from the East, policies that reflected their respective political orientation and found expression in public transcripts. These public transcripts expressed the governments' official images of the expellees or resettlers. Thus, these transcripts articulated the appropriate terminology to use to describe the displaced Germans, the official parameters of integration, the existing financial support provided, the role they should play both in the cultural scene and in society, and the official reaction to policies pursued by the government of the opposing zone/state. To a lesser extent in the British Zone and especially in the Federal Republic, public transcripts contended that the Eastern Germans arrived with disadvantages, attained significant assistance, and eventually generally built up productive new lives in their postwar societies.

While British officials expressed only limited concern with what they judged to be a German problem, in the Federal Republic German officials considered the expellee

question to be central in their rebuilding of the West German state. Indeed in some instances officials even attempted to use the expellees and resettlers as weapons in their war for political validation. The refugees and expellees could serve as anchors holding "Middle" and Eastern Germany in place, they could play an important role in the West German work force, and they could help to mold the West German collective memory. Emphasizing the brutality of the Soviets, the cruelty of the expulsion, and the deplorable conditions in the "other" Germany enabled the Federal Republic to justify its position in the Cold War and negate the very existence of the "so-called GDR." The expellees were thus encouraged and promoted in their efforts to remember what was lost and to communicate the trauma they endured.

The British Zone of Occupation/Federal Republic of Germany

In *A Strange Enemy People: Germans under the British*, Patricia Meehan described an informational booklet issued to incoming British occupation authorities in order to help prepare them for living in the occupied zone. In addition to discussing the Germans' love for sausage and music, "You are Going into Germany" also warned the British about the appearance of German cities, citing as an example the city of Duisburg; the booklet apparently pointed out that whereas over the course of eleven months, the Germans released 7,500 tons of bombs on London, the Allies dropped 10,000 tons over one weekend on the city of Duisburg.¹ Indeed Duisburg and many cities in the Ruhr

¹ Patricia Meehan, *A Strange Enemy People: Germans under the British* (London and Chester Springs: Peter Owen Publishers, 2001), 135.

district sustained severe levels of destruction; Allied bombs destroyed 64.8 percent of housing in Duisburg.² The incoming occupation authorities were ill-prepared for the state of affairs in the British Zone: the cities were largely piles of rubble, many indigenes lost their homes, displaced persons trekked in, and refugees and expellees--especially from East Prussia, West Prussia and Pomerania--arrived daily by any means possible. In the face of these conditions the authorities were instructed to restore order, denazify and democratize.

In their zone of occupation the British used their colonial model of indirect rule, "Regieren-Lassen," whereby the local, regional, and state (Länder) administrations served as an extension of the British occupation authorities. They placed Germans whom they felt were politically uncompromised in positions of power within the administration.³ Germans who had been closely associated with Nazi organizations or had been functionaries often ended up on the "automatic-arrest list"; by the end of 1946 British officials arrested and interned roughly 68,500 Germans.⁴

The British authorities also issued a ban on fraternization. On the one hand, this ban helped give the British a good reputation as decent and helpful occupation

² Führer, "Wohnungen," in *Deutschland unter alliierter Besatzung, 1945-1949/55*, ed. Wolfgang Benz (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1999), 206.

³ Kurt Jürgensen, "Britische Besatzungspolitik," in *Deutschland unter alliierter Besatzung, 1945-1949/55*, ed. Benz, 49. For more on indirect rule, see, "Government by Indirect Control," *British Zone Review*, Vol. 1, Nr. 20 (June 22, 1946), 1.

⁴ Christoph Klessmann, *Die doppelte Staatsgründung: Deutsche Geschichte 1945-1955* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982), 87. Ullrich Schneider, "Nach dem Sieg: Besatzungspolitik und Militärregierung 1945," in *Die britische Deutschland- und Besatzungspolitik, 1945-1949*, eine Veröffentlichung des Deutschen Historischen Instituts London, eds. Josef Foschepoth und Rolf Steininger (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1985), 59. Schneider also discussed the principles of "indirect-rule."

authorities.⁵ However, according to Ullrich Schneider the occupation authorities did not intend their "non-fraternization" decree as a means of protecting Germans from British soldiers, but rather to indicate to the defeated population that they were "responsible for both National Socialism and the war, as well as to indicate to them what the rest of the world thought of the Germans."⁶ Although "Non-fraternization" was official policy, many refugees reported examples of helpful British soldiers.⁷

These policies resulted in a basic segregation of society; in contrast to the majority of Germans, the British authorities enjoyed sufficient housing, special privileges, and substantial supplies of food. The British occupation forces requisitioned housing, buildings, and furniture for administrative and accommodation purposes. This requisitioning exacerbated the already drastic shortage of housing and often strained relations between the occupied and occupiers. Even in small communities houses were requisitioned for both the authorities as well as Displaced Persons (DPs).⁸ Patricia Meehan cited an example of houses requisitioned and standing empty many months later.

⁵ Jürgensen, "Britische Besatzungspolitik," *Deutschland unter alliierter Besatzung, 1945-1949/55*, ed. Benz, 52.

⁶ Schneider, "Nach dem Sieg," 57-58.

⁷ Krutein reported British soldiers helped her relocate to where her husband was, *Eva's War*, 99-107.

⁸ For example by December 1946 in Bad Bramstedt, in Schleswig-Holstein, 200 indigenes were forced out of their homes due to requisitioning; the mayor feared the situation would worsen as even more expellees arrived. Mayor Carl Freudenthal, Bad Bramstedt to Herr Landrat, Bad Segeberg, December 20, 1946, Landesarchiv Schleswig-Holstein (LA-SH), Abt. 320 Segeburg, Kreis Segeburg, 177

Whatever the reasons for the requisitioned yet empty houses, such circumstances did not improve relations between the occupation authorities and the Germans.⁹

The housing situation in the British Zone was further exacerbated by the presence of millions of displaced Eastern Germans who sought shelter for themselves and their families in a wartorn Germany. Those Germans who fled prior to the capitulation frequently encountered Nazi functionaries who generally welcomed the incoming Germans, arranged for accommodations in private houses, and used police force if the owners of those houses rejected their new lodgers.¹⁰ The initial refugees who arrived in the autumn months of 1944 even reported that the local population welcomed them with gifts. The incidents of voluntary hospitality grew less frequent as the number of incoming Germans reached levels not even the officials could have anticipated. To some extent during the last months of the war and even more so during the summer months of 1945 the refugees and expellees generally arrived in much worse physical and emotional condition, with far fewer possessions, and in much larger numbers: when they came in small numbers and were neat and tidy, the local population largely welcomed the refugees; however, when thousands of expellees arrived daily by ship, train, and on foot, and they were frequently dirty, hungry, and sick, the indigenes were often overwhelmed and hostile.

Refugees and expellees who illegally entered cities in the British Zone sought relatives or friends in the area, or if they had none, sought any kind of shelter. Often they

⁹ Meehan, *A Strange Enemy People*, 138-139.

¹⁰ See for example, Krutein, *Eva's War*, 84.

rented some small room in a private house. In rural areas the expellees frequently sought shelter on farms and often performed work in exchange for their lodging.

The refugees and expellees who came into the British Zone or Federal Republic legally often ended up in camps while officials processed them, checked them for diseases and sometimes deloused them, and located relatives or accommodations. This process, especially the location of housing, could take several weeks or even longer. While waiting, the refugees and expellees sometimes lived in overcrowded and unsanitary camps. Often these camps were previously Nazi military camps, or camps for POWs, or concentration camps for political prisoners, and sometimes they were former holding stations for victims of Nazi racial policies. Indeed, by 29 October 1946 the number of refugees, expellees, and transferred Germans in the British Zone altogether exceeded three million.¹¹ Indeed such population transfers continued through the late 1940s and brought in even more displaced Germans.

At the Potsdam conference, the Allies agreed to "orderly transfers" of the Germans remaining East of the Oder-Neisse-Border; during autumn 1945 the Allied Control Council and also representatives of Britain and Poland further debated the transfers. At a meeting held in Berlin on 5 January 1946 the British agreed to the transfer of an additional 1,500,000 Germans from Poland into the British Zone and the Poles agreed to specific limitations placed on the size and organization of the transports.

¹¹ Joseph Schechtman, *Postwar Population Transfers in Europe: 1945-1955* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1962), 207. See also Tabelle 1 B, Gerhard Reichling, *Die deutschen Vertriebenen in Zahlen, Teil II: 40 Jahre Eingliederung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Bonn: Kulturstiftung der deutschen Vertriebenen, 1989), 32.

On 20 February 1946 the British launched "Operation Swallow," as it was called, and the first transports of the remaining Germans left Poland. Elizabeth Wiskemann suggested the choice of name for the operation was unfortunate because those Germans being transported perceived this relocation as temporary; just as swallows return when conditions have improved, they too will go home.¹² These transfers would primarily take place over land, using the rail system, and would allow for the removal of between 1,000 and 3,000 persons per day, per route, (the rate varying with the different land routes.) In addition, a daily sea transport to Lübeck arranged to transfer around 1,000 persons per day. The conditions of the transports were to be highly regulated and the Germans were permitted to bring as much luggage as they could carry and up to 500 Reichsmark (RM). According to the agreement between the British and the Poles, only Germans not requiring hospitalization were to be transported and families were not to be divided. These Germans transferred to the British Zone primarily came from East Prussia, Pomerania, and Silesia. Between February and the end of December 1946 over 1,600,000 Germans were transferred out of the former territories and into the British Zone. Many of these Germans were brought to Schleswig-Holstein, the state within the

¹² Elisabeth Wiskemann, *Germany's Eastern Neighbors: Problems Relating to the Oder-Neisse Line and the Czech Frontier Regions* (London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1956) 115-116.

Western zones which was already most overloaded with refugees and expellees.¹³

By early 1947 Operation Swallow was winding down and the additional expellees who came in, entered the zone illegally.¹⁴

In late 1949 the British authorities pursued an additional transfer plan, but this time in conjunction with the German Red Cross. The British inaugurated Operation Link not only in accordance with the Potsdam accords, but also in order to reunite families separated by the creation of the Oder-Neisse-Border and the ensuing flight and expulsions. During 1950 and 1951, 44,000 people were transferred in accordance with the reuniting of families (Familienzusammenführung) policy; however, not all of the people placed on the transports by Polish authorities conformed to the policy established through Operation Link. Some of the people transferred were not those Germans claimed by relatives already in the West, but rather elderly and/or sick Germans.¹⁵ Also among those persons transferred out were thousands of Masurians, non-Polish Slavic people who lived in Southern East Prussia, had converted to Lutheranism centuries earlier, and voted overwhelmingly during the post-World War I plebiscites to keep the area in which they

¹³ According to the Resettlement Plan drafted by the Allied Control Commission on 21 November 1945, 1.5 million Germans were to be transferred out into the British Zone, Umsiedlungsplan des Kontrollrates, page 10. Bundesarchiv Berlin (BA-B), DQ 2, 3401, Bl. 71. See also Schechtman, *Postwar Population Transfers in Europe: 1945-1955*, 204-205.

¹⁴ Schechtman, *Postwar Population Transfers in Europe: 1945-1955*, 308.

¹⁵ Theodor Schieder, *Die Vertreibung der Deutschen Bevölkerung aus den Gebieten östlich der Oder-Neisse. Dokumentation der Vertreibung der Deutschen aus Ost-Mitteleuropa*, vol. I/I (n.p: Bundesministerium für Vertriebene), 154-155 E. Schechtman, *Postwar Population Transfers in Europe: 1945-1955*, 210.

lived German.¹⁶ Andreas Kossert suggested that the Masurians--who sometimes labeled themselves "Polish Prussians"--were treated as Germans by the Poles in the post-World War II period and often sought to leave in order to escape this discrimination.¹⁷ In the later 1950s the policy of Familienzusammenführung was renewed and around 200,000 additional people (both Germans and Masurians) were transferred to both the GDR and Federal Republic.¹⁸

Even prior to Operations Swallow and Link the number of expellees in the British Zone overwhelmed authorities. In November 1945, in response to the enormous numbers of incoming Germans, the British Control Commission for Germany ordered the creation of refugee committees on all administrative levels. The committees and various offices created in late 1945 and 1946 sought equitably to distribute refugees and expellees across the British Zone and to provide the homeless Germans accommodation and sustenance.

¹⁶ Alfred F. Majewicz, Tomasz Wicherkiewicz, "Minority Rights Abuse in Communist Poland and Inherited Issues" ACTA SLAVICA IAPONICA Volume 16 Hokkaido University: Journal of Slavic Research Center, (1998), 54-74. Prewar population figures for Masurians vary. According to the national census from 16 June 1925, roughly 65,000 people lived in East Prussia who claimed Masurisch as their "mother tongue." Statistische Übersicht, Die nationale Zusammensetzung der Bevölkerung in den deutschen Ostgebieten, Tabelle 4, Die deutschen Reichsangehörigen mit deutscher und einer anderen Muttersprache, Volkszählungsergebnisse vom 16 Juni 1925, Bundesarchiv Koblenz (BA-K) B 136/6717, Band 2

¹⁷ Andreas Kossert, *Preussen, Deutsche oder Polen? Die Masuren im Spannungsfeld des ethnischen Nationalismus, 1870-1956* (Wiesbaden: Harrosowitz Verlag, 2001), 27, 316, 331. See also, Richard Blanke, *Polish-Speaking Germans? Language and National Identity among the Masurians since 1871* (Köln, Weimar, Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 2001). Blanke described the Polish government's reaction to the so-called "autochtons," or people whom the government sought to claim as Poles. Common forms of discrimination against the Masurians included confiscating their homes and property, forcing them to adopt Polish names, and forbidding them to speak German or possess anything demonstrating the existence of the German language (pp. 285-286, 288, 290).

¹⁸ Schechtman, *Postwar Population Transfers in Europe: 1945-1955*, 210.

Independent refugee committees and authorities emerged in the Zone in late 1946 and 1947 and maintained the British policy on housing and integrating the refugees into the economic scene. However, the lack of an overarching uniform allied zonal policy slowed down and sometimes impeded integration and distribution of expellees. The expellee population in some areas within the different zones exceeded that of the indigenous population and thus hindered integration and a return to a semblance of normality within postwar Germany.¹⁹

The Potsdam Agreement called for general democratization within the zones; one of the interpretations of democratization took the form of a Bodenreform (land reform) urging the breaking down of large estates and a redistribution of the land, thus allowing smaller farmers their own plots and also expellee farmers the possibility to establish farms in the zones.²⁰ The implementation of land reform measures varied in the zones and thus affected the realization of this aspect of democratization.

In particular, delays and debates impaired the Bodenreform in the British Zone. Günther Trittelt suggested on the one hand there were some delays on the part of the British authorities because they were hoping for an "all-encompassing Allied

¹⁹ Rolf Messerschmidt described the formation of these committees and administrations in greater detail, and contended that the degree of their success cannot be assessed because they have not been adequately studied. Messerschmidt, "Die Flüchtlingsfrage als Verwaltungsproblem im Nachkriegsdeutschland," in *Vertriebene in Deutschland: Interdisziplinäre Ergebnisse und Forschungsperspektiven*, eds. Dierk Hoffmann, Marita Kraus and Michael Schwartz (München: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2000), 176-180.

²⁰ Günther J. Trittelt, *Die Bodenreform in der Britischen Zone, 1945-1949*, Schriftenreihe der Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte, Nummer 51 (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1975), 170, 12-13.

agreement."²¹ On the other hand, the British authorities expressed concern about land expropriation; they feared such an action would alienate members of the leadership class and harm levels of local food production.²² Trittel argued that after four years of occupation, there was indeed land reform legislation (Bodenreformgesetzgebung) but no actual Bodenreform. Trittel suggested that the authorities argued so extensively about questions of compensation and expropriation that the reform basically fizzled.²³ In addition Trittel mentioned that the British Zone actually did not contain many large estates that would have been subject to the Bodenreform.²⁴ The Bodenreform generally entailed the breaking up of all agricultural holdings in excess of 100 hectares; if that policy had been part of the reform carried out in the British Zone, Trittel estimated that 150,000 refugees could have been settled with new plots of land. In the end, through the Bodenreform in the British Zone 30,000 hectares were resettled.²⁵ The Bodenreform in the different zones served as an early--and not always successful--form of an equalization of the burdens of the war.

As part of the democratization of Germany the British allowed for the founding of political parties in their zone starting on 15 September 1945. Nevertheless some parties

²¹ Ibid., 168.

²² Günther J. Trittel, "Das Scheitern der Bodenreform im 'Schatten des Hungers'," in *Die britische Deutschland- und Besatzungspolitik, 1945-1949*, eds., Foschepoth and Steininger, 155.

²³ Trittel, "Bodenreform," in *Deutschland unter alliierter Besatzung, 1945-1949/55*, ed. Benz, 107.

²⁴ Trittel, *Die Bodenreform in der Britischen Zone, 1945-1949*, 169.

²⁵ Trittel, "Das Scheitern der Bodenreform im 'Schatten des Hungers'," 170, n. 75. (Note: one hectare is 2.47 acres)

or organizations remained prohibited; in particular, political parties or organizations that were perceived to threaten democratization due to nationalist, Nazi or revanchist tendencies were prohibited in every zone. In February 1946 in Lippstadt, a "Gemeinschaft deutscher Ostflüchtlinge" (Community of German East-Refugees) for the province of Westphalia was created, but on 18 March 1946 British authorities in Westphalia prohibited it. In Hamburg on 18 May of the same year British authorities forbade the "Arbeitsgemeinschaft deutscher Flüchtlinge" (Work-community of German refugees) as well as in general the creation of refugee associations. Gradually all across the British Zone "Interessengemeinschaften der Ostvertriebenen" (expellee interest groups) emerged. Both the British and German authorities objected to such groups and encouraged expellees to join existing mainstream associations. In May 1946 the British Control Commission forbid entirely the formation of expellee associations whose purposes extended into the political realm and were thereby perceived to hinder integration of expellees into the general population.²⁶ The authorities sought to prevent the expellees from developing an individualized identity or forming a dissident subculture.

In 1948 the British authorities began to allow the formation of non-political associations and advisory committees for refugee issues. By June 1948 the authorities even began to allow "refugee associations" (Flüchtlingsverbände), but only groups "of a

²⁶ Everhard Holtmann discussed in detail the expellee groups that emerged as well as the Allied efforts to hinder them. Everhard Holtmann, "Politische Interessenvertretung von Vertriebenen: Handlungsmuster, Organisationsvarianten und Folgen für das politische System der Bundesrepublik," in *Vertriebene in Deutschland: Interdisziplinäre Ergebnisse und Forschungsperspektiven*, eds., Hoffmann et al., 190-192.

cultural and welfare-oriented sort" (kultureller und wohlfahrtsmässiger Art).²⁷ The responsibility to monitor the refugee associations was given to the provincial governments (Landesregierungen), which could authorize the operation of such associations. Gradually during late 1947, 1948, and 1949 groups began to emerge, such as the Bund der Danziger, Lübeck (1947), the Pomersche Landsmannschaft in Hamburg (2 August 1948), the Landsmannschaft Ostpreussen (October 1948), and the Landsmannschaft Westpreussen in Lübeck (April 1949). In 1948 and 1949 previously existing local and regional expellee associations combined to form broader organizations such as the Zentralverband der vertriebenen Deutschen (Central Association of Expelled Germans), and the Gesamtvertretung der Ostvertriebenen (General Delegation of the East-expellees) in Bad Godesberg, both of which were under the direction of Hans Lukaschek.

These new and larger expellee associations no longer buried their political intentions; the authorities indeed no longer required them to do so. (To be sure, Everhard Holtmann contended refugee-politicians had been active to some degree even in the "non-political" associations from the beginning.)²⁸ Gradually by summer 1949 the authorities reconsidered their position concerning expellee groups: For example on 15 August 1949 the Social minister of North Rhine Westphalia published a decree allowing expellee organizations. Thus in the western zones the trend led from permitting only

²⁷ *Chronik 1945-1982*, Bund der Vertriebenen Landesverband Nordrhein-Westfalen e.V., (Düsseldorf, 1992), 5.

²⁸ Holtmann, "Politische Interessenvertretung von Vertriebenen," in *Vertriebene in Deutschland: Interdisziplinäre Ergebnisse und Forschungsperspektiven*, eds. Hoffmann et al., 190.

advisory committees, to allowing "non-political" expellee associations, and finally to tolerating expellee groups of whatever variety. In the Federal Republic the expellees would even achieve their own governmental ministry and political party.

On 20 September 1949 the first federal cabinet was sworn in, a cabinet which included a "Bundesministerium für Angelegenheiten der Vertriebenen" (Federal Ministry for Expellee Affairs), led by Hans Lukaschek (who served in this post from 20 September 1949 until 6 October 1953.) This new ministry was created to represent the interests of the refugees, expellees, and "war wounded" (Kriegsbeschädigte) and help them to find accommodations and employment, establish themselves in their new communities, and attain remuneration for losses sustained during the war."²⁹ As social conditions improved, gradually the ministry shifted its focus and sought not only to integrate the expellees into West German society, but also to integrate the culture and traditions of the former Eastern territories into West German culture, thereby retaining ties to the lost territories and asserting the right to the eventual restoration of Germany's 1937 boundaries.

Terminology and integration as a concept

In the immediate postwar period Germans used many different terms to describe the flight or expulsion and those people who experienced the events. Some terminology that fell out of favor in the Western Zones included "Zwangsaussiedlung" (forced

²⁹ Vorbemerkungen (written in Koblenz, Aug 1987, by Dr. Kreipkamp), Bestandskatalog, B150, Bundesministerium für Vertriebene, Flüchtlinge, und Kriegsgeschädigte (BMVt), 1-2. (BA-K)

resettlement) and "Bevölkerungstransfer" (population transfer); some popular postwar expressions included Flucht (flight), Vertreibung (expulsion), Ausweisung (extradition), Aussiedlung (settled-out), Umsiedlung (resettlement), Austreibung (driven out), and Zuwanderung (immigration).³⁰ According to a 1946 article from the *British Zone Review*, "expellee" was the official term to use for the Germans arriving through Operation Swallow.³¹ German officials also eventually authorized the use of the word "expulsion" and thereby clarified the West German position on the event.

The Bundesvertriebenengesetz (Federal Expellee Law) of 1953 established the acceptable terminology for the people who experienced the Flucht (flight) or Vertreibung (expulsion), calling them Flüchtlinge (refugee), Vertriebene (expellee) and Heimatvertriebene (person expelled from the Heimat). What did the adoption of the word "Vertriebene" indicate about the West German attitude toward the situation? In one document concerning the creation of the Federal Expellee Law, the author contended: "The word 'expellee' contains the statement that someone was induced under duress to give up his residence." The same document also explained the reason for a distinction between "Vertriebene" (expellee) and "Heimatvertriebene" (person expelled from his or her Heimat). "The Heimatvertriebenen attach great importance to the expression in the law of their special relationship to the lost Heimat."³² Both the involuntary nature of the

³⁰ For a discussion of some of these terms, see Hans Lemberg, "Mehr als eine Völkerwanderung, eine Einführung," introduction to K. Erik Franzen, *Die Vertriebenen: Hitlers letzte Opfer* (München: Propyläen Verlag, 2001), 17.

³¹ "1,500,000 more Germans for the Zone: How Operation 'Swallow' is working," *British Zone Review*, Vol. 1, Nr. 15 (April 13, 1946), 12. [S.R.]

³² Begründung zum Entwurf des Gesetzes über Angelegenheiten der Vertriebenen und Flüchtlinge (Bundesvertriebenengesetz) (nd) (presumably around 1951), pp. 2-3, BA-K,

expulsion as well as the special relationship expellees retained to their Heimat formed the cornerstones of West German expellee policies in the 1950s and early 1960s.

Drafts of the Federal Expellee Law appeared already in the early 1950s on the desks of officials in the Ministry for Expellees. The officials debated the wording and held many internal meetings and conferences discussing terms and definitions. The preamble explained that "in order to create uniform and effective conditions for the integration of the expellees and refugees in the new surroundings" the Bundestag, with the consent of the Bundesrat, passed the new law, but the following concern was addressed up front in the first sentence: "the inalienable right of the Heimatvertriebenen to return to the Heimat and to regain the possessions left behind there" was not altered by their integration.³³

In the decades following the war, large numbers of Germans were displaced from their homes and Heimat in the Eastern territories and also "Middle" Germany. Some Germans left for political reasons, many of them fled from enemy soldiers at the end of the war, some Germans faced expulsion, and some of them were transferred back into the newly reduced Germany from internment camps either in Poland or in the Soviet Union. How ought the federal state to regard these myriad and diverse displaced Germans? What was the proper terminology to use when discussing them as a group? Considering the differences in their circumstances, should they be grouped together?

B150, 3397, Heft 2

³³ Fassung 1.11.1952, Entwurf eines Gesetzes über die Angelegenheiten der Vertriebenen und Flüchtlingen (Bundesvertriebenengesetz), 1951, p. 1. BA-K, B150, 3397, Heft 1.

The Federal Expellee Law addressed these concerns and contained and explained federally approved categories and terminology. According to this law, a "Vertriebener" (expellee) was a "national German or ethnic German" whose place of residence was located in the Eastern territories or in areas outside of the 1937 borders of Germany, and who lost this residence in connection with the Second World War due to the experience of expulsion, especially through extradition or flight.³⁴ Those expellees who had been residents of the former Eastern territories belonged more specifically to the group of "Heimatvertriebener" (person expelled from the Heimat). The status of expellee was also inheritable: children of the expellees, even if they were born in West Germany after 1945, were also considered to be expellees. According to this law, the term "Flüchtlinge" (refugee) should apply only to Germans who fled from the SBZ/GDR.³⁵ The government also issued identity cards, which differentiated between them: Heimatvertriebene received identity card "A," other expellees got "B," and the refugees obtained the "C" identity cards.³⁶ Distinctions between these categories were sometimes messy; the recipient of an "A" identity card may also have experienced flight from the SBZ. Helge

³⁴ The law included as expellees the Germans who after 30 January 1933 left the above-named territories and established their residence outside of the Germany due to being "threatened with or experiencing Nazi use of force due" to political or religious beliefs, race, or their world view (Weltanschauung), p. 2. Fassung 1.11.1952, Entwurf eines Gesetzes über die Angelegenheiten der Vertriebenen und Flüchtlingen (Bundesvertriebenengesetz), Vom 1951, BA-K, B150, 3397, Heft 1

³⁵ Volker Ackermann described this process and the categorization and experiences of refugees in *Der "echte" Flüchtling: Deutsche Vertriebene und Flüchtlinge aus der DDR, 1945-1961*. Studien zur historischen Migrationsforschung, ed. Klaus Bade, vol. 1. (Osnabrück: Universitätsverlag Rasch, 1995.)

³⁶ Fassung 1.11.1952, Entwurf eines Gesetzes über die Angelegenheiten der Vertriebenen und Flüchtlingen (Bundesvertriebenengesetz), Vom 1951, p. 1-2, 3, 5, 10. BA-K, B150, 3397, Heft 1.

Heidemeyer suggested that nearly one-third of the refugees from the GDR originally came from the Eastern territories, arrived after the flight or expulsion in the SBZ, and then fled again to the West prior to 1961.³⁷

As expellees and refugees, such Germans had particular rights and were entitled to forms of governmental assistance. These privileges would terminate when the person in question was "integrated to a reasonable degree into the economic and social life in accordance with his earlier economic and social conditions."³⁸

In November 1953 at the fifty-fifth session of the Bundesrat, ministerial representatives discussed the future goals and plans of the Federal Ministry for Expellees. Deputy and member of the Committee for Refugee Issues and Federal Expellee Minister Theodor Oberländer expressed the ministry's plan for expellee integration and discussed the parameters of integration at this meeting. His ministry supported "*Eingliederung auf Zeit*" (fixed-term integration, that is until the return to the Heimat) and emphasized the danger of encouraging an "*Einschmelzung*" (melting down) of the expellees within indigene society.³⁹ The latter would have entailed the renunciation of the Eastern territories, which would weaken the governmental position on German reunification according to the 1937 borders.

³⁷ Helge Heidemeyer, "Vertriebene als Sowjetzonenflüchtlinge," in *Vertriebene in Deutschland: Interdisziplinäre Ergebnisse und Forschungsperspektiven*, eds. Dierk Hoffmann, Marita Kraus and Michael Schwartz (München: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2000), 239.

³⁸ Fassung 1.11.1952, Entwurf eines Gesetzes über die Angelegenheiten der Vertriebenen und Flüchtlingen (Bundesvertriebenengesetz), Vom 1951, p. 8, BA-K, B150, 3397, Heft 1

³⁹ "Gedanken über die zukünftige Arbeit des BMVt," Dr. Katzenberger, Oberregierungsrat, Bundesrat, Niederschrift über die 55. Sitzung des Ausschusses für

According to representatives of the Federal Ministry of Expellees, the displaced Germans also contributed to West German society. A report from 1955 summarized German history from 1935 through 1955, with an emphasis on the Eastern territories and the expellees and their role in postwar society. The report suggested that the expellees and their children were healthier than the indigenes due to the "inhuman" "selection process" (Auslese), which took place through the expulsion and surrounding circumstances. According to the report, expellee children also ranked higher in terms of intelligence than the indigene children, in part because they had to work harder in order to advance. Thus, through large numbers of expellee children as well as marriage with indigenes, expellees were expected to provide society with an "infusion of new blood" (Blutaufrischung). Therefore, through integration the expellees could make significant contributions to West German society.⁴⁰ It must be noted that the language used in this and sometimes also in other reports strongly echoed Nazi bureaucratic discourse and even racial policies.

What did integration entail? In an internal memorandum the Federal Ministry of Expellees differentiated three types of integration: economic, sociological, and cultural integration. "Economic integration entails the individual achieving appropriate involvement on the national product in accordance with his performance." In order to be considered economically integrated, the expellee had to be in a position to make use of his skills and have job security and the same chance for job mobility as indigenes. The

Flüchtlingsfragen, 12 November 1953, Bonn, p. 2, BA-K, B150, 2360 (emphasis in original)

⁴⁰ Dr. Vetter, Dr. Rinke, BMVt, "Vor 10 Jahren," Bonn, 4 May 1955, p. 10, BA-K, B150, 2746, Heft 1

expellee family ought to have the same living standards and income-level as their indigene neighbors and be able to provide their children with a suitable education. According to the report, sociological integration was more significant for the expellees and involved creating the pre-conditions in which the expellees could attain in their "new environment a suitable position and settle down in the new community." According to this memorandum, in 1956 half of the expellees were already integrated, forty percent were on the way to achieving integration, and ten percent had no prospect of ever finding the road to integration.⁴¹

Indeed integration difficulties plagued certain groups within the expellee population. In 1965 a Hessische Rundfunk director interested in making a documentary about expellees sent a list of 15 questions about expellee integration to the Federal Ministry for Expellees. The questions dealt with statistics concerning employment, marriages, political involvement, governmental support, etc. The director asked about the present existence of camps and the reply was that there were still in June 1965, 621 transit accommodations and 1,029 housing camps for elderly expellees, with altogether

⁴¹ Memorandum zur Eingliederung der Vertriebenen, Der BMVt, Bonn, 30. April 1956, p. 1, 3, 21. BA-K, B150, 2746, Heft 1. The intention here is to discuss integration as it was understood at the time. Many historians have debated the term. Marita Krauss questioned whether there was a homogeneous society into which the expellees could have experienced integration at all. See, Krauss, "Das 'Wir' und das 'Ihr'. Ausgrenzung, Abgrenzung, Identitätsstiftung bei Einheimischen und Flüchtlingen nach 1945," in *Vertriebene in Deutschland: Interdisziplinäre Ergebnisse und Forschungsperspektiven*, eds. Dierk Hoffmann, Marita Kraus and Michael Schwartz (München: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2000), 27-30.

23,701 expellee residents and 34,465 elderly expellee residents respectively. The numbers were attributed in part to the incoming Aussiedler. Such statistics confirmed that for some expellees, integration was not feasible⁴²

During the Federal Ministry for Expellees' last year its officials extolled the successes of federal expellee policies in addition to praising the economic integration of the displaced Germans. However, social integration was incomplete, particularly in terms of the "intellectual and cultural sphere."⁴³ In a report issued to the president of the Bundestag, Federal Minister Kai-Uwe von Hassel contended: "every real integration involves a mental process--influenced also by psychological and emotional factors--that economic assistance advances and eases but cannot complete."⁴⁴

The last Federal Minister for Expellees, Heinrich Windelen, held a speech in March 1969 during which he discussed the continuing problems faced by expellees and refugees. He stated, "As long as the words expellee [Vertriebene] and refugee [Flüchtlinge] belong to the daily vocabulary of people in Germany and in the world, there will be unsolved problems for the persons affected." Indeed, Windelen called for the removal of these words from the German consciousness: "It must be the responsibility of the policy, gradually to allow these terms--behind which so much disaster and hard fate hide--to disappear." Windelen's statement welcoming the disappearance of the words

⁴² Internal report from Herr Kratzer, an das Referat I B3 im Hause, Bonn, 10 December 1965, BA-K, B150, 3339

⁴³ BMVt, Pflege und Erhaltung des ostdeutschen Beitrags zur deutschen Kultur Bericht, 6 December 1968, p. 2, BA-K, B106, 21877

⁴⁴ von Hassel, BMVt, Bericht (nur für Dienstgebrauch), Bonn, 23 October 1968, to Herr Präsident des Deutschen Bundestages, p. 22. BA-K, B106, 21877

"expellee" and "refugee" as a contribution to the ultimate integration of the displaced Germans ironically mirrored statements made in the SBZ already in the mid 1940s.⁴⁵

Indeed for a majority of expellees conditions improved dramatically in the mid 1950s; they gradually attained appropriate housing, furniture, clothing, jobs, and often a "Zuhause" (home), if not a "Zweite Heimat" (second Heimat). Although expellee political organizations existed already in the late 1940s, once the expellees obtained housing and employment, more of them were inclined to political participation and the number and size of such groups swelled. Indeed through political participation they hoped not only to receive financial assistance and compensation for losses related to the war, but some of the expellees sought also to regain something else they had lost due to the war, for some of them something of even greater value: the Heimat.

Lastenausgleich and other forms of official assistance

Expellees and refugees lost not only their Heimat, homes, and jobs, but they also lost bank and savings accounts, farmland, businesses, stocks, and also valuable assets and personal possessions. Many of the evacuees and refugees who managed to arrive in the West without encountering Russian and Polish soldiers or authorities, arrived with whatever possessions they could carry, pull, or transport in wagons. Often their departure was hasty and many valuable items, especially the non-transportable, were left behind. The refugees who encountered enemy soldiers were often searched and their watches,

⁴⁵ Bundesminister Heinrich Windelen, Rede im Haus des Deutschen Ostens, Düsseldorf, am 25.3.1969, Pressemitteilung des Bundesministers für Vertriebene, Flüchtlinge und Kriegsgeschädigte, Bonn, 25 March 1969, pp. 1-2. BA-K, B106, 27234.

jewelry, money, expensive clothing or other personal possessions were seized. The expellees were sometimes allowed twenty minutes and other times twenty-four hours to pack up what they could carry and vacate their houses and then towns. Sometimes limitations were placed on the amount of money they could carry or weight restrictions were placed on the possessions they took with them. Often the greater the regularity with which the expellees encountered Russian or Polish soldiers or administrators, the fewer valuable items they managed to bring with them into the postwar Germanies. Due to the atrocities committed by Nazi soldiers as they drove East, the Russian and Polish soldiers or administrators perceived such appropriation of Germans' possessions as a justified form of war compensation or reparations. The refugees and expellees understood that Germany lost the war and thus had to pay for it, but they did not believe that they alone should pay what they perceived to be the majority of the bill.

Administrators and politicians of the Federal Republic likewise generally agreed that certain portions of the population sustained greater losses and many people would not be in a position to start over without some kind of assistance. Indeed both the occupation authorities and German administrations in the Western zones and later West Germany feared that desperate expellees would radicalize and perhaps embrace Communism. Thus the governments followed several related policies designed to help the expellees monetarily and equalize the financial burden of the war, or Lastenausgleich.

In the postwar period assistance was generally available on the regional or local level: for example in Lower Saxony in 1947 loans were issued to assist expellees in building and sometimes furnishing their new residences.⁴⁶ In 1950 loans were issued to

⁴⁶ Dienstliche Mitteilungen der Nieders. Staatskommissars für Flüchtlingswesen an die

expellees for building, for establishing businesses or to local enterprises whose employees would consist of at least a 51 percent expellee workforce.⁴⁷ Some expellees received social welfare and other forms of assistance; church-related and also foreign charitable organizations also played a significant role. Generally some degree of assistance was given to families with children in school. In North-Rhine Westphalia the parents of school-age children received 20 Marks per month for each child. The parents of expellee college students received more money in assistance.⁴⁸

On 8 August 1949 the "Gesetz zur Milderung dringender sozialer Notstände" (Law to Ease the Urgent Social Crises) (also called Soforthilfe or Immediate Assistance), entered into effect. Many expellees had been reluctant to accept welfare, and this Soforthilfe often amounted to roughly the same level of assistance without the degradation of being a welfare handout (a basic sum of 70 Marks. It must be noted that many expellees had been self-sufficient middle-class citizens unaccustomed to needing state support.) The purpose of this policy was to help the expellees through the most serious period of crisis and assist them to establish themselves as productive and

Flüchtlingsämter im Lande Niedersachsen, Nr. 4, Hannover, 21 November 1947, p. 2. Niedersächsische Staatsarchiv Osnabrück (NS-O), Rep 430, Dez 304/Akz 1565/Nr. 1

⁴⁷ Dienstliche Mitteilungen des Niedersächsischen Ministers für Vertriebene., Flüchtlinge und Kriegsgeschädigte an die Flüchtlingsämter des Landes Niedersachsen, Nr. 23, Hannover 1950, p. 1. NS-O, Rep 430, Dez 304/Akz 1565/Nr. 1.

⁴⁸ Many letters debated how much and how the funds should be distributed. Nordrhein-westfälisches Hauptstaatsarchiv (NRWHSA), NW 67, 59

democratic members of postwar German society. For many expellees the most serious period of crisis occurred already in the mid 1940s, a time in which little assistance was available.⁴⁹

The greatest help on the federal level, the Lastenausgleich (equalization of burdens) Law, officially came into effect in August 1952 and gradually brought about financial assistance and recompensation, as well as building loans, for expellees and also Fliegergeschädigten (those who sustained air-raid damages). In concrete terms the Lastenausgleich reimbursed percentages of the value of lost houses, businesses and property, savings accounts, and household goods.⁵⁰ The value assessed was based on the ratable value from tax records from the 1930s, thus the replacement cost did not factor into the equation. In general the greater one's net worth, the lower the percentage of the compensation received through the Lastenausgleich. In terms of replacement costs, an expellee who lost a farm valued at RM 30,000 according to 1930s tax records, would receive Deutsche Mark (DM) 15,000 through the Lastenausgleich--despite the fact that the cost of a farm of the same size in the mid-1950s would jump to around DM 300,000. Thus land-owning and formerly prosperous expellees received compensation for their losses that in no way equaled their actual losses. The Lastenausgleich policy set limits on

⁴⁹ For a discussion of the emergence of the "Sofortmassnahmen" and the development of the Lastenausgleich, see, Armin Spitaler, "Probleme mit der Aufbringungsseite des Lastenausgleichs," in *Die Vertriebenen in Westdeutschland: Ihre Eingliederung und Ihr Einfluss auf Gesellschaft, Wirtschaft, Politik und Geistesleben*, vol. 2, eds. Eugen Lemberg and Friedrich Edding (Kiel: Ferdinand Hirt, 1959), 399-407.

⁵⁰ Dr. Kautzor and Dr. Ho., Bundesministerium für Vertriebene, 8 February 1951, to Friedrich von Wilpert, 1-6. BA-K, B150, 3293.

rates of compensation and also what losses could qualify: expellees received nothing for reduction in income or loss of stocks and personal items. Poor Eastern Germans had few possessions qualifying for payment.⁵¹

In a report originally titled "Ist der Lastenausgleich annehmbar?" (Is the Lastenausgleich acceptable?) and then renamed "Tatsachen zum Lastenausgleich" (Facts about the Lastenausgleich), Friedrich von Wilpert critiqued the Equalization of Burdens policy and suggested that it did not help the expellees to the extent many indigenes assumed: "the expellees, even in the most favorable cases, receive compensation for a relatively small portion of the actual suffered losses, payments which can extend over a period of thirty years." Von Wilpert suggested that expellees thus considered the assistance too little too late and hardly considered the policy an actual equalization of burdens at all.⁵²

Many indigenes responded to the Lastenausgleich with resentment and animosity; they felt they were paying too much by way of taxes in order to facilitate the funds necessary for the Lastenausgleich. According to a popular perception, the expellees enjoyed too many advantages. Inquiries conducted by the Federal Ministry for Expellees indicated that many indigenes paid nothing towards the Lastenausgleich funds, and even those who did pay, gave up a minimal amount in comparison to what many expellees lost.⁵³

⁵¹ Gerhard Ziemer, *Deutscher Exodus: Vertreibung und Eingliederung von 15 Millionen Ostdeutschen* (Stuttgart: Seewald Verlag, 1973), 166.

⁵² Report written by Friedrich v. Wilpert, "Tatsachen zum Lastenausgleich," Bonn, 30 April 1952, 1-3. BA-K, B150, 3293.

⁵³ Dr. Kautzor and Dr. Ho., Bundesministerium für Vertriebene, 8 February 1951, to

In an article in *Die Zeit* from 13 April 1979 Gerd Bucerius expressed the frustration felt by the three million indigenes nation-wide whose income and net worth had qualified them for paying into the Lastenausgleich fund. Bucerius expressed his frustration at paying 2,600 DM a year into the fund merely because his properties and stocks as assessed on 30 June 1948 exceeded a certain value. That the properties sustained light damages in the air raids and were not in a saleable state did not figure into the calculations. In the first decade, making the payments into the Lastenausgleich fund proved difficult for Bucerius, as it certainly was for many indigenes in this difficult time period. According to the article, many indigenes firmly believed the expellees exaggerated the value of what they left behind; some of those Germans paying into the fund made cynical statements such as: "In the cold Heimat they were all rich." Among other positions Bucerius held, he was the expert for the CDU/CSU coalition for questions concerning the Lastenausgleich in the Bundestag. In addition to expressing sympathy and understanding for the other three million indigenes paying into the fund, Bucerius wanted to dispel this notion that the expellees had lied and cheated. Bucerius admitted that some expellees exaggerated the value of what they owned, but contended that the Lastenausgleich offices checked on claims and compiled as many official records as possible to verify or disprove assertions of value. Bucerius thus confirmed that some indigenes indeed paid a great deal into the fund, but indicated that expellees lost even more. "The expellees were not only efficient, but also honest."⁵⁴

Friedrich von Wilpert, 1-6. BA-K, B150, 3293.

⁵⁴ Gerd Bucerius, "Rechnung für Hitlers Krieg: Lastenausgleich--die grösste Vermögensabgabe der Geschichte," *Die Zeit*, 13 April 1979, as excerpted in Klessmann, *Die doppelte Staatsgründung: Deutsche Geschichte, 1945-1955*, 493-495.

Despite the colossal sum the government spent through the Lastenausgleich (over a billion DM by 1979) and also the public perception that the refugees and expellees enjoyed enormous advantages while the indigenes suffered, many expellees received only low rate loans, very little, or absolutely nothing through the Lastenausgleich, and did not regard it as a true equalization of burdens. They often reported that they alone built up their lives and new existence; no one helped them. Indeed for many expellees what they experienced and that which they lost was not replaceable and could not be compensated through a governmental program.

Federal support for expellee culture and identity

The government perceived the economic integration of the expellees in West Germany to be directly linked to helping expellees to find accommodations and employment, as well as provide some form of compensation for their losses in order better to equalize the burdens of the war. According to the government, however, the integration of the expellees would not take place in the economic realm alone; the expellees also participated as cultural players in the postwar scene and their history and traditions constituted an inherent part of German culture that ought not to be forgotten. Thus, for example, the government encouraged and subsidized the founding of expellee associations and Landsmannschaften, the erection of museums and monuments remembering Eastern German culture and the experience of the flight or expulsion, and the preservation of the lost territories and their cultural contributions in books, documentary films, and displays and publications of photographs. Just as the expellees

were to find a home in West Germany, West Germans were to know and embrace the Eastern German Heimat; this mutual integration was essential to the West German plans for reunification in the 1950s and 1960s. The government expressed both their official policy and the widespread public support through the use of what James Scott termed public transcripts.

The role of the government in supporting expellee culture and identity received official formulation in the so-called Kulturparagraph (section 96) of the Bundesvertriebenengesetz (Cultural Paragraph of the Federal Expellee Law) issued in May 1953.⁵⁵ Representatives of the Federal Ministry for Expellees played an essential role in the formulation of this law and debated the wording and later execution extensively. For example, in one internal telephone conversation just prior to the composition of the law, a Ministerialrat (head of a section within a ministry department) stated the duty of the federal government and the Länder (states), a duty which involved the preservation of "East German cultural inheritance" and was to lead to the preservation of this inheritance in an "organic development within the new symbiosis" (Lebensgemeinschaft). According to the representative, of particular importance was the education of German youth in the history, geography and the culture of the expulsion-

⁵⁵ Auszug aus dem Bundesgesetzblatt Teil 1 vom 20.8.1957 Nr. 47, S. 1213, Zweites Gesetz zur Änderung und Ergänzung des Bundesvertriebenengesetzes (a. ÄndrBVFG) vom 27.7.1957, § 96, BA-K, B106, 21877. See also, Karl Heinz Gehrman, "Kulturpflege und Kulturpolitik," in *Die Vertriebenen in Westdeutschland*, vol. 3, eds. Lemberg and Edding, 183-187.

territories (Vertreibungsgebiete).⁵⁶ The culture and traditions of the Eastern territories were to be preserved in the memories of not only the expellees but also the West German indigenes.⁵⁷

In addition to the general preservation of Eastern German culture, history, and geography both in the schools and in society, the representatives of the Federal Ministry for Expellees felt another major task was involved in their Kulturarbeit (cultural activities). At a conference in Bonn in November 1953 representatives of both the Ministry for Expellees as well as other governmental offices discussed the parameters of Kulturarbeit. "The preparation for the return and the resettlement [Wiederbesiedlung] of the German East was accepted as the new point of view for planning purposes. This preparation was seen as an inherent principle of the Kulturarbeit in terms of the expellee and refugee activities and the most urgent demands of the expellee associations." The Federal Expellee Minister, Theodor Oberländer summed up this perspective: "Promote the inclusion, prevent the fusion" (Die Eingliederung fördern, die Verschmelzung verhindern).⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Draft, Dr. Schrodok, Remarks concerning Kulturparagraph 96, in connection with the demands made by Ministerialrat Dr. Bode on the telephone on 4 May 1953, pp. 1-2. BA-K, B150, 3397, Heft 1.

⁵⁷ Report concerning Besprechung der Kulturerferenten der Landesflüchtlingsverwaltungen mit dem Kulturreferat des BVMs unter zeitweiser Leitung von Herrn Bundesminister Prof. Dr. Dr. Oberländer, im übrigen unter Leitung des Vertreters des Landes Nordrhein Westfalen, am 2. und 3. 11. 1953 im Bundesvertriebenenministerium in Bonn, Düsseldorf, den 5. Nov 1953, pp. 2-3. BA-K, B150, 3397, Heft 1.

⁵⁸ Dr. Schrodok, Arbeitsbericht über die Sitzung des kulturellen Unterausschusses des Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Länderflüchtlingsverwaltungen zur Beratung und Durchführung des § 96 (Kulturparagraph) des Bundesvertriebenengesetzes am 2./3. November 1953 im Bundesministerium für Vertriebenen, Bonn, den 20. Dezember 1953, p. 32. See also,

The Cultural Paragraph of the Federal Expellee Law thus called for governments on the local, regional and federal level to work for the preservation of Eastern German culture because it was an inherent and important part of "all-German" (gesamtdeutsche) culture. What "cultural possessions" (Kulturgut) ought to be preserved? Both the visible and invisible forms of cultural possessions were to be preserved. Whereas the visible cultural possessions could be "collected, analyzed and passed on," the invisible cultural goods consisted of "human faculties and values, the uniqueness of the people and society of the expulsion territories [Vertreibungsgebiete], the atmosphere in which they lived and created, and their traditions." The preservation of the latter could potentially interfere in the integration of the expellees and thus was perceived to be the "most difficult part of the Kulturarbeit."⁵⁹

Although such activities were permitted from early on, federal financial support in any significant amount for cultural activities of the expellees first materialized in the latter half of the 1950s. In the late 1950s and through the 1960s the government generously supported expellee activities (and the CDU thus enjoyed generally widespread support from the ranks of the expellees.) The Federal Ministry for Expellees issued

BA-K, B150, 3397, Heft 1, Report concerning Besprechung der Kulturrerferenten der Länderflüchtlingsverwaltungen mit dem Kulturreferat des BVMS unter zeitweiser Leitung von Herrn Bundesminister Prof. Dr. Dr. Oberländer, im übrigen unter Leitung des Vertreters des Landes Nordrhein Westfalen, am 2. und 3. 11. 1953 im Bundesvertriebenenministerium in Bonn, Düsseldorf, den 5. Nov 1953, 5, n. BA-K, B150, 3397, Heft 1.

⁵⁹ Report concerning Besprechung der Kulturrerferenten der Länderflüchtlingsverwaltungen mit dem Kulturreferat des Bundesvertriebenenministerium unter zeitweiser Leitung von Herrn Bundesminister Prof. Dr. Dr. Oberländer, im übrigen unter Leitung des Vertreters des Landes NRW, am 2. und 3. 11. 1953 im Bundesvertriebenenministerium in Bonn, Düsseldorf, den 5. Nov 1953. BA-K, B150, 3397, Heft 1.

annual reports concerning their financial support for expellee activities and the importance of these groups; the ministry thereby expressed continued need for such support. One such report from 1960 from Federal Minister for Expellees, Dr. Nahm, emphasized that the "main motive of section 96 of the Federal Expellee and Refugee Law" was the "realization that East- and Middle-German cultural possessions form an insoluble part of the German cultural achievement." (During the Cold War, "Eastern Germany" generally referred to the Eastern territories, whereas "Middle" Germany meant the GDR). Dr. Nahm suggested that "every effort to preserve the cultural inheritance of the expulsion territories is a protection of the existence of all-German cultural goods and traditions and thereby a contribution to the realization of the stated demand made in the preamble of the Basic Law: 'the entire German people, in free self-determination to attain the unity and freedom of Germany'."⁶⁰ A similar memorandum from 1966 emphasized that the "intellectual and cultural trends of the different expulsion territories are to be summarized and portrayed as a visible German contribution to the cultural identity of all Germany."⁶¹

The preservation of the culture of the former Eastern territories was thus linked with the integration of the expellees; these were two activities the federal government and

⁶⁰ Bundesministerium für Vertriebenen (Dr. Nahm), Bericht der Bundesregierung über die von ihr in den Rechnungsjahren 1957, 1958 und 1959 getroffenen Massnahmen gemäss § 96 Bundesvertriebenengesetz, 30 August 1960, sent to Herr Präsident des Deutschen Bundestages, pp. 1-2. BA-K. B106, 21877.

⁶¹ Memorandum, "Zur Gründung einer Stiftung zur Pflege deutscher Kultur im mitteleuropäische Osten und zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Erforschung der mit der gesellschaftlichen und wirtschaftlichen Eingliederung der Vertriebenen und Flüchtlingen zusammenhängenden Fragen," 1 September 1966, Bonn, p. 2. BA-K, B106, 21877.

especially the Federal Ministry for Expellees found central to their policies concerning expellees. Because they desired reunification of all three Germanies (West, "Middle," and Eastern), many politicians encouraged the refugees and expellees to accept integration of themselves into West German society, while actively working to integrate the indigenes into Eastern and "Middle"-German culture. Many West German politicians generally perceived "Middle Germany" to be under Soviet occupation, while "Eastern" Germany was under Polish administration. Since many politicians desired Germany, according to its 1937 borders, to be reinstated, Eastern and Middle German culture must not be forgotten. In the 1950s and first years of the 1960s officials expressed these views through public transcripts, according to which a desire for reunification based on the 1937 borders was wide-spread and also--at least officially--held by many government representatives, including the chancellor.⁶²

From Adenauer's promise to Ostpolitik

In July 1950, through the Warsaw Declaration and the Görlitz Agreement the German Democratic Republic recognized the Oder-Neisse-Line as the official boundary separating Germany and Poland.⁶³ This declaration of the inviolability of the border broke with the wording of the Potsdam Agreement, which stated that the border decision

⁶² For a discussion of "Identity Theory," or the theory that defined the extent to which the Federal Republic was identical with "Germany" with its 1937 borders, see Dieter Blumenwitz, *What is Germany? Exploring Germany's status after World War II* (Bonn: Kulturstiftung der deutschen Vertriebenen, 1989), 32-35.

⁶³ The texts of all related documents are contained in Münch, ed., *Dokumente des Geteilten Deutschland*, 496-499.

could only be altered through a peace settlement. This border agreement between the GDR and Poland generated international attention; especially in the Federal Republic many--but not all--Germans were appalled. In a letter to the Allied High Commissioner John McCloy, Chancellor Konrad Adenauer stated his opinion concerning the border settlement: "The government of the Federal Republic of Germany regards the above-named agreement over the determination of the national border between Germany and Poland as illegal and invalid."⁶⁴ In accordance with West German public transcripts--at least through the mid-1960s--the federal Government officially still considered as part of "Germany" all areas contained within the traditional 1937 borders; thus the territories East of the Oder-Neisse-Line were merely under Polish administration, as expressed in the Potsdam Agreement.⁶⁵

Indeed Adenauer and many other politicians stated their refusal to recognize the Oder-Neisse-Line in speeches, reports, and publications throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s. Before the Bundestag in October 1953, Adenauer expressed his position in a speech, which was later printed in a brochure: "In accordance with numerous statements of the Bundestag and federal government, the German people [Volk] will never accept the so-called Oder-Neisse-Border." Nevertheless Adenauer emphasized "emphatically" that he would not support the use of force to solve the problems associated with the Oder-

⁶⁴ Konrad Adenauer, Bonn, 24 August 1950, to John J. McCloy, Allied High Commissioner, p. 2. BA-K, B136, 6716.

⁶⁵ See, for example, *Deutschland Heute* (np: Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung, 1954), 15-16.

Neisse-Line, problems that he felt could only be solved using friendly means.⁶⁶ Many expellees perceived such statements from Adenauer and other politicians to be a promise that the Heimat was not lost forever.

In 1952 and 1953 Adenauer attempted to compose a plan whereby the former territories currently under "Polish administration" would be open to Germans as well as Poles and a "free" Poland would emerge, an Eastern state with Western culture. This idea of a joint German-Polish condominium involved either the Germans and Poles ruling jointly over the territory or administration taking place through the United Nations. At the time Adenauer reportedly firmly believed "for us the land on the other side of the Oder-Neisse-Line belongs to Germany" and hoped to achieve a solution which would be feasible as well as acceptable not only to the expellees but also to the international community.⁶⁷

Neither the Poles nor the expellees responded positively to this proposal. The Polish Press reacted to his condominium idea with general condemnation. In an article titled "Challenging Statements from the Führer from Bonn" a Polish journalist called Adenauer "the main protector of all German fascists" and compared the condominium plan to the Nazi "Generalgouvernement."⁶⁸ Correspondingly, the Landsmannschaften as

⁶⁶ Broschüre: Regierungserklärung vom 20. Oktober 1953 Abgegeben von Bundeskanzler Dr. Adenauer vor dem Deutschen Bundestag, Herausgeber: Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung BA-K, B150, 1439, Heft 2, p. 32.

⁶⁷ Adenauer made this statement on 6 October 1951, Adenauer, *Teegespräche 1950-1954*, ed. Hanns Jürgen Küsters (Berlin: Siedler Verlag, 1984), 696, n. 11.

⁶⁸ "Herausfordende Erklärungen des Führers aus Bonn," *Zycie Warszawy* (10 September 1953), in Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung, "Zum Problem eines deutsch-polnischen Kondominiums," Bonn, 31 October 1953, 2, BA-K B136, 6716. Many such opinions from Polish presses are contained in this report.

representatives for the expellees also completely rejected Adenauer's idea. The expellee newspaper *Das Ostpreussenblatt* reported: "The viewpoint of the LM [Landsmannschaft] Ostpreussen is clear. We reject every solution that ignores our rights of self-determination." Representatives of the Landsmannschaft Ostpreussen rejected the idea as treasonous.⁶⁹ Alfred Gille, their spokesman, expressed the "disturbing effect" provoked in many expellees by the new direction of foreign policy towards the Eastern neighbors. Gille contended this new direction "contradicted everything that until now has come out of the mouth of the federal chancellor concerning this subject."⁷⁰ Thus Adenauer's efforts to find the middle ground failed and for some Germans it became clearer that no such compromise would satisfy both groups.

In the late 1950s and through the 1960s those expellees who still hoped to regain the Eastern territories feared a recognition of the Oder-Neisse-Line was forthcoming. After a 1959 meeting between Allied High Commissioner John McCloy and Adenauer, some Germans were concerned that the chancellor had agreed to the potential border. In answer to a telegram mentioning written information about the allegations, Adenauer answered: "The information you have received is from beginning to end completely fictitious. I did not speak about it at all with Mr. McCloy."⁷¹

⁶⁹ "Das wäre Landesverrat," *Generalanzeiger für Bonn* vom 21. Sept. 1953, BA-K, B 106, 27369

⁷⁰ Verband der Landsmannschaften Information, Bonn, September 21 and 28, 1953, cited in Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung, "Zum Problem eines deutsch-polnischen Kondominiums," Bonn, October 31, 1953, 10, BA-K, B136, 6716. Many such opinions are contained in this report.

⁷¹ Letter from Konrad Adenauer, Rhöndorf/Rhein, 5 August 1959, BA-K, B 136, 6717, Band 2.

In July 1960 Adenauer delivered an address at the annual meeting of the Landsmannschaft Ostpreussen in Düsseldorf, an address in which he once again contended: "The decision about the German Eastern territories can only be concluded through a peace treaty involving an all-German government. Until this treaty is concluded, no one is authorized to make a decision about this part of Germany." Adenauer also called the annexation of the territories and the expulsion "grave injuries to international law." He ended his speech calling for loyalty to peace, freedom and Germany's allies, suggesting "then there will once again be world peace and freedom and with them will also come to you your beautiful land East Prussia."⁷²

Yet, general support for the retrieval of the Eastern territories was indeed gradually declining. All across the Federal Republic in 1961 Landsmannschaften erected posters condemning the division of Germany into three parts; the posters stated: "Divided into three? Never!" (Dreigeteilt? Niemals!) and were placed prominently in public places and streets in cities and districts. Not only the Landsmannschaften supported this poster campaign, but also some of the Länder financially assisted in the production of the posters and some city administrations assisted in the displaying of the posters. In a district in Schleswig-Holstein a vandal destroyed the posters by carving swastikas into them and making the message indecipherable.⁷³ This vandalism was not

⁷² "Drohungen schrecken uns nicht: Die freien Völker sind stärker als die sklavisch regierten--Beseitigung des Misstrauens, kontrollierte Abrüstung, Selbstbestimmung--der Bundeskanzler sprach zu den Ostpreussen," *Bulletin der Presse- und Informationsamtes der Bundesregierung* Nr. 126, Bonn, 12 July 1960, pp. 1257-1258.

⁷³ Letter from R. Paul, Landsmannschaft Pommern Kreis Eutin, Eutin, den 5.7.61, to the Pommersche Landsmannschaft, Landesgruppe Schleswig-Holstein, Kiel, LA-SH, Abt. 761, 23493

widespread in Schleswig-Holstein; generally expellees as well as indigenes reacted positively to the message on the posters. In part because of such vandalism, at a conference in Berlin in 1962 representatives of the different Länder and also federal government discussed the campaign; they too reacted generally in a positive fashion to the message. The representative for the Ministry for the All-German Question even commented "the Oder-Neisse territories continue to be German" and expressed that the ministry had no reservations against the Poster-campaign.⁷⁴ Nevertheless examples of vandalism and public reaction against the retrieval of the territories occurred with increasing frequency.

Despite the emerging shift in public opinion, the 1965 federal parliamentary elections indicated that the CDU still valued the expellee vote. One of the CDU campaign posters emphasized their official perception that the reunification of "Germany" entailed the 1937 borders. The poster stated, "It concerns Germany" and displayed signposts indicating the distance to both "Middle" and Eastern German cities such as Königsberg, Danzig, Leipzig, and Breslau. That the CDU selected the German spellings for the Eastern cities and included cities in East Prussia and Silesia indicated that the voters should elect CDU representatives if they sought to retrieve the former territories. Apparently the value of the expellee vote overrode the fact that by this time most CDU politicians likely regarded reunification according to 1937 borders as unlikely.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Auszug aus der Niederschrift über die Sitzung der Ständigen Konferenz der Innenminister der Bundesländer am 15./16. February 1962 in Berlin, LA-SH, Abt. 761, 23493

⁷⁵ Reiner Diederich and Richard Grübling, *Stark für die Freiheit: Die Bundesrepublik im*
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Later that year, in October 1965, the Protestant Church issued the EKD Ostdenkschrift (Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland, Protestant Church of Germany East-Memorandum), thereby expressing their views concerning the relationship between Germany and Poland and their mutual border. The authors of the memorandum expressed regret that the wounds from World War II had not yet begun to heal and they called for reconciliation: "As long as this situation of a still outstanding reconciliation exists, a center of unrest is built up, because without a solution for the German question, all efforts to bring about political detente in Middle Europe and a peaceful order between peoples must remain unsuccessful."⁷⁶ At the same time, the authors considered remarkable the lack of nationalist radicalization from the ranks of the expellees, a radicalization they felt was not to be merely dismissed considering the loss of the Eastern territories and also the expulsion of the population. Ultimately, however, the Ostdenkschrift asked the German people to shift their focus from restoration of the 1937 borders to reconciliation with their Eastern neighbor. "In this situation, the Western allies of the Federal Republic of Germany expect this one contribution to detente, a contribution only possible if the government can reckon with finding in the German people understanding and acceptance of a move in the spirit of reconciliation with our Eastern neighbors."⁷⁷

Plakat (Hamburg: Rasch und Röhring, 1989), 62.

⁷⁶ "Die Lage der Vertriebenen und das Verhältnis des deutschen Volkes zu seinen östlichen Nachbarn: Eine evangelische Denkschrift," *Grüner Dienst* (Nr. 35/65), Evangelischer Pressedienst, Zentralredaktion, BA-K, B136, 6719, 3. (Hereafter referred to as EKD Ostdenkschrift)

⁷⁷ EKD Ostdenkschrift, 29-30.

The reaction to the Ostdenkschrift was mixed. Erich Mende as Federal Minister for the All-German question wrote to Chancellor Ludwig Erhard expressing criticism and attaching a memorandum from his ministry concerning the errors in the Ostdenkschrift and the problems in the argumentation.⁷⁸ The document took issue with many of the facts presented in the Ostdenkschrift (particularly concerning present Polish use of the former German territories) and in summary concluded that the government should avoid taking a stand on the statements contained in the memorandum. That said, the ministry welcomed the debate brought about by the Ostdenkschrift as "useful and important."⁷⁹ The government had actually already issued a brief statement concerning the official position on the Ostdenkschrift on 24 November 1965. This statement expressed the government's approval of "a public discussion with objective and humane considerations" and emphasized and confirmed the governmental position towards the recognition of the Oder-Neisse-Line: until a freely elected all-German government accepted other borders, Germany still legally existed according to its 1937 borders.⁸⁰

In February 1966 the Allensbacher Institut für Demoskopie (Allensbach Institute for Opinion Research) published the results of their opinion poll concerning the Ostdenkschrift. When asked if they had heard of the memorandum, just over half of the

⁷⁸ Erich Mende, der Bundesminister für Gesamtdeutsche Fragen, Bonn, 26 January 1966, to Ludwig Erhard, Bundeskanzler, Bonn, BA-K, B136, 6719.

⁷⁹ Internal report concerning "Denkschrift der Kammer für öffentliche Verantwortung der EKD 'Die Lage der Vertriebenen und das Verhältnis des deutschen Volkes zu seinem östlichen Nachbarn,'" Bonn, 17 December 1965, BA-K, B136, 67, p. 19.

⁸⁰ "Stellungnahme der Bundesregierung zur öffentlichen Diskussion über die EKD-Denkschrift vom 24. November 1965." Archiv der Gegenwart vom 25.11.1965, s. 12185, Boris Meissner, ed., *Die deutsche Ostpolitik: Kontinuität und Wandel* (Köln: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik Berend von Nottbeck, 1970), 117.

people questioned said yes (54 percent). Of those persons who had already heard of the Ostdenkschrift, 37 percent welcomed it, 29 percent did not, and 34 percent was undecided. Among expellees (including both those who had and had not heard of the document), 28 percent welcomed it and 24 percent did not, 48 percent was undecided. The value of this particular study is lessened by the large percentage of those questioned who apparently had no knowledge of the memorandum. Nevertheless, that 37 percent of those persons already familiar with it and 28 percent of expellees welcomed this publication, indicated a willingness to discuss the issue of Germany's relationship with Poland. In addition, although the Ostdenkschrift did not outright demand the recognition of the Oder-Neisse-Border, it did implicitly recommend it. Thus, a significant portion of the population that was aware of the Ostdenkschrift welcomed it, and the document thereby played a role in bringing the issue of the Oder-Neisse-Line into the public's attention.⁸¹

In the mid-1960s gradually more general support for the recognition of the Oder-Neisse-Line became prevalent; even the federal president expressed his belief concerning the recognition of the border. On the evening before his seventy-second birthday in October 1966 President Heinrich Lübke invited 60 guests to the Villa Hammerschmidt. During the course of the evening he expressed his opinion concerning the Oder-Neisse-Line and stated, much to everyone's surprise, that "within the foreseeable future the Federal Republic could hardly avoid acknowledging the Oder-Neisse-Border."⁸² This

⁸¹ "Die Denkschrift der EKD: Die Stimmung im Bundesgebiet," Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach am Bodensee, 7 February 1966, BA-K, pp. 1-3. B136, 6719.

⁸² "Lübke: Anerkennung unumgänglich, Überraschende Äusserung des Präsidenten zur Oder-Neisse Grenze," Frankfurter Rundschau (22 October 1966), Presse- und

statement deeply "troubled and dismayed" many expellees. Representatives of the Bund der Vertriebenen expressed concern over the conflicting messages sent out by the government. On the one hand the West German government issued the so-called Friedensnote (Peace Note) on 25 March 1966, which was delivered to one hundred other governments. This note stated that "under international law Germany remains in existence according to the borders from 1937, until a freely elected all-German government recognizes other borders." On the other hand, the Federal President openly proclaimed that the Federal Republic would recognize the Oder-Neisse-Border in the foreseeable future.⁸³

Not all representatives of the government agreed with Lübke, or at least they expressed other opinions to the public. For example the then Vice-Chancellor and Foreign Minister Erich Mende issued a contradictory statement in Kassel also in the second half of October 1966; Mende contended that under international law, the Federal Republic could and would neither recognize the Soviet Zone nor the Oder-Neisse-Border.⁸⁴

Some politicians and governmental representatives recognized how unfeasible a revision of the Oder-Neisse-Line would be, but at the same time were loath to lose

Informationsamt der Bundesregierung, BA-K, B136, 6718

⁸³ Deutscher Ostdienst: Informationen des Bundes der Vertriebenen Nr. 16, Bonn October 24, 1966, BA-K, B136, 6718. For the full text of the Note der Bundesrepublik zur deutschen Friedenspolitik vom 25. März 1966, see Münch, ed., *Dokumente des Geteilten Deutschland*, 515-520.

⁸⁴ "Lübke: Oder-Neisse Linie kann bedeutungslos werden" *Die Welt* Nr. 248, 24 October 1966, BA-K, B136, 6718

expellee voters.⁸⁵ Such politicians would publicly deny that they sought to "relinquish" the lost territories, while at the same time they would no longer promise expellees would retrieve the Eastern lands. Chancellor Georg Kiesinger held an address at the III. Kongress Ostdeutscher Landesvertretungen (Third Congress for Eastern German National Delegates) on 29 April 1967 in Bonn. Due to the trends in foreign policy and statements from Lübke and other politicians, Kiesinger's task was certainly unenviable. In his speech, Kiesinger acknowledged the understandable anxiety concerning the new Ostpolitik and promised: "in our Ostpolitik nothing will occur behind the backs of the expellees." He assured his listeners that the government was not interested in relinquishing anything and stated further that things can not stay the way they are now, but they will also "certainly never again be as they once were;" what things will be like "lies hidden in the secret of the future." Indeed, for his listeners likely one of the most significant sentences of his speech concerned the future: "We want to save as much as possible for Germany."⁸⁶

In October 1967 the Allensbach Institut für Demoskopie conducted an opinion poll concerning coming to terms with the Oder-Neisse-Line. The group had conducted such surveys concerning the border question since 1951; a comparison of the shift in results from 1951 to 1967 revealed a significant transition in public attitude towards the

⁸⁵ Philipp Ther also discussed the emphasis on expellee voters. See, Ther, *Deutsche und polnische Vertriebene. Gesellschaft und Vertriebenenpolitik in der SBZ-DDR und in Polen, 1945-1956* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 344.

⁸⁶ Ansprache von Bundeskanzler Kiesinger auf dem III. Kongress Ostdeutscher Landesvertretungen am Sonnabend, dem 29. April 1967, in Bonn, BA-K, B136, 6788, pp. 2, 4. The success of this speech was confirmed by Friedrich von Wilpert, see his letter, Bad Godesberg, 2 May 1967 to Herrn Min. Dirgt. Dr. Schirmer, Leiter der Abteilung V, Bundespresseamt, BA-K, B136, 6788.

border with Poland. In 1951 eighty percent of those Germans questioned could not accept the Oder-Neisse-Line as the new border. In 1959 that number dropped to sixty-seven percent. In 1962 only half of those Germans questioned could not accept the potential border. The result of the opinion poll in 1967 indicated that only forty-three percent of those polled rejected the Oder-Neisse-Line. (Among expellees, in 1967 fifty-six percent replied that they could not accept the border.) The Germans more likely to support the recognition of the Oder-Neisse-Line included SPD voters, college graduates, Germans between the ages of 16 and 29, and Southern Germans. Less likely to support the border were NPD voters, Northern Germans, West Berliners, Germans between the ages of 45 and 59, CDU/CSU voters, and Germans with lower levels of education.⁸⁷

In October 1969 Willy Brandt became chancellor and completed the dramatic transition in terms of governmental perspectives on Ostpolitik, the Oder-Neisse-Line, and the expellees, a transition that had already begun under Kiesinger. Brandt also carried out governmental restructuring: among other changes in the cabinet structure, Brandt dissolved the Federal Ministry for Expellees and passed on that ministry's authorities to the Federal Ministry of the Interior.⁸⁸ In addition, through the Moscow and Warsaw

⁸⁷ Allensbacher Institut für Demoskopie, "Anerkennung der Oder-Neisse Grenze," Presse und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung, Bonn, 7 November 1967, 1-4, BA-K, B136, 6720.

⁸⁸ The last Bundesminister for Expellees already discussed a restructuring of the cabinet in the *Neuen Westfälischen Zeitung* on 22 February 1969. He stated that a cabinet with 20 members often made proper decision-making difficult. And since the "compensation" for the expellees etc., will be complete in a few years, he could foresee a dissolution of the ministry. He suggested a secretary or secretary of state within the Ministry of the Interior could take over his responsibilities. In addition, he commented that it seemed unreasonable to have a ministry for mail and yet not a ministry for expellee issues; expellees might feel their problems were no longer recognized by a government that would dissolve their ministry. "Bundesminister Heinrich Windelen zu Fragen der

Treaties, Brandt supported a renunciation of the use of force and tacitly--if not officially-- recognized the Oder-Neisse-Line as Poland's Western border. These principles reflected Brandt's position on foreign policy, a position he had expressed already while he was vice-chancellor and foreign minister under Kiesinger. He sought a "realistic policy of detente" and "rapprochement and reconciliation with our Eastern neighbors."⁸⁹ In some striking ways, the federal government under Brandt had matched policies already carried out by the SBZ/GDR years or even decades earlier, policies which the West German government under Adenauer had harshly criticized.

Critiques of the SBZ/DDR and Umsiedlerpolitik

Even at the most fundamental level the Federal Republic expressed fervent critique of the "Soviet Zone" or "so-called GDR," and for years refused to recognize "Middle" Germany as anything but an occupied territory under the influence of a system grounded in a "dogmatic and almost institutionalized ideology."⁹⁰ Indeed West German

Kabinettsreform," *Neuen Westfälischen Zeitung*, 22 February 1969, Pressemitteilung des Bundesministers für Vertriebene, Flüchtlinge und Kriegsgeschädigte, Bonn, 25 February 1969, pp. 1-2. BA-K, B106, 27234.

⁸⁹ "Mitteilung für die Presse: Beim Kongress Ostdeutscher Landesvertretungen in Bad-Godesberg führte der Vorsitzende der SPD, Vizekanzler Willy Brandt, folgende aus:" Pressemitteilungen und Informationen, 2 May 1967, Nr. 175/67, p. 1. BA-K, B136, 6788.

⁹⁰ Dieter Storbeck, *Soziale Strukturen in Mitteldeutschland: Eine sozialistische Bevölkerungsanalyse im gesamtdeutschen Vergleich* Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft in Mitteldeutschland. Herausgegeben vom Forschungsbeirat für Fragen der Wiedervereinigung Deutschlands beim Bundesminister für gesamtdeutsche Fragen, vol. 4 (Berlin: Dunker & Humblot, 1964), Vorwort. For a discussion of the two Germanies as rivals and the influence this rivalry had on West German political developments, see, Eric

maps published in the 1950s and 1960s still referred to the area as the Soviet Occupied Zone.⁹¹ According to the view of many West Germans, this "dogmatic" system in the "Ostzone" correspondingly shaped the mindset of its citizens: "The people of the Soviet Zone were prescribed a particular ideological-political attitude."⁹² The West German government rejected the friendly relationship between the GDR and the Soviet Union and understood this relationship to be equivalent to that between a puppet and a puppet-master. The Federal Republic also criticized the GDR's acceptance of the Oder-Neisse-Border and their treatment of the expellee problem. To be sure, the resemblance between later West German policies and that which the federal government so harshly criticized in the 1950s and early 1960s was an irony later discerned by some expellees.⁹³

Already during the first year of occupation, the officials in the Soviet Zone officially sanctioned the terms "Umsiedler" (resettler) and eventually "Neubürger" (new citizen) as the expressions to use when describing the displaced Germans within their zone. SBZ/GDR officials proscribed the classifications "refugee," "expellee," and

D. Weitz, "The Ever-Present Other: Communism in the Making of West Germany," in *The Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany, 1949-1968*, ed. Hanna Schissler (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), 219-220.

⁹¹ See for example, *Deutschland Heute* (np: Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung, 1954), 13.

⁹² Peter-Heinz Seraphim, *Die Heimatvertriebenen in der Sowjetzone*. Schriften des Vereins für Sozialpolitik, Gesellschaft für Wirtschafts- und Sozialwissenschaften. Neue Folge, vol. 7/1 (Berlin: Verlag von Duncker & Humblot, 1954), 170

⁹³ Dr. Czaja (Bund der Vertriebenen) compared the Ostpolitik in 1970 with the East German Görlitzer Agreement of 1950. Vermerk, Betr.: Vertriebene und die Ostpolitik der Bundesregierung; hier: Notizen über das Informationsgespräch der Herrn BM Genscher, StS Duckwitz und StS Bahr mit 6 Präsidialmitgliedern des Bundes der Vertriebenen und dessen Generalsekretär Schwarzer im Fraktionszimmer der FDP im Bundeshaus in Bonn am 3. Juni 1970, p. 1. BA-K, B106, 22476.

especially "Heimatvertriebene" because of their inflammatory and revanchist connotations. Representing a common West German perception, Dieter Storbeck suggested that SBZ/GDR "official organs of state apprehensively avoided" the term "Heimatvertriebene" and that "the political connection between the SBZ and the expellee's countries of origin within the Eastern Bloc compelled *suppression of every memory of the Heimat and the expulsion.*"⁹⁴ This East German policy of suppression completely contrasted with West German expellee policies through at least the mid-1960s.

According to the authorities in the SBZ/GDR the full integration of the resettlers took place already around 1950. The West German officials viewed this statement with utmost derision; an official from the Federal Ministry for All-German Affairs suggested the integration had taken place "in a dictatorial way" and that the persistently low standard of living--especially for expellees--remained a serious problem.⁹⁵ In terms of economic integration, the SBZ publicized their Bodenreform as proof of successful and democratic resettler assistance. West German authors such as Storbeck and Peter-Heinz Seraphim commented on the implementation of the Bodenreform; Storbeck cited Walter Ulbricht on the actual numbers of displaced Germans helped through this measure (the reform created around 86,000 new farmer positions for expellees, thus--including family members--roughly 350,000 expellees benefited from the reform),⁹⁶ and Seraphim

⁹⁴ Storbeck, *Soziale Strukturen in Mitteldeutschland*, 219. (emphasis in original)

⁹⁵ Hans Liebrich, "The Expellees in the Soviet Zone," *After Ten Years: A European Problem--still no solution*. English translation, ed. Werner Middelman (Frankfurt am Main: Wirtschaftsdienst Verlag und Druckerei G.m.b.H., 1957).

⁹⁶ Storbeck, *Soziale Strukturen in Mitteldeutschland*, 222.

discussed the actual reasons for executing the Bodenreform, stating: "The so-called Bodenreform was first and foremost a political measure and not intended as a social welfare policy for expellees."⁹⁷ The SBZ/GDR government also issued various types of loans to assist in furnishing apartments or purchasing tools or farm equipment. The Western critique suggested these were policies drafted but infrequently carried out. Seraphim called the earlier social welfare measures "hardly more than a gesture," and contended: "The actual effects of the announced welfare measures on the expellees" were minimal.⁹⁸

Conversely the West German view of social integration in the SBZ/GDR suggested the displaced Germans were in fact successfully socially integrated; Storbeck explained that the successful social integration occurred under duress and as a result of the fact that "the connection to the Heimat associations and with them the maintenance of nostalgic [heimatlicher] customs and traditions were halted. As a result the expellees in the SBZ--excluding initial private meetings--were more strongly compelled to conformity than their compatriots in West Germany."⁹⁹

According to Seraphim, "assimilation" was the foremost goal of "refugee policies" in the Soviet Zone. Furthermore he reminded readers of another factor which expedited social integration: Assimilation in the GDR "undoubtedly also involves an adjustment [Angleichung] of the social position of the expellees to that of the established

⁹⁷ Seraphim, *Die Heimatvertriebenen in der Sowjetzone*, 179.

⁹⁸ Storbeck, *Soziale Strukturen in Mitteldeutschland*, 220. Seraphim, *Die Heimatvertriebenen in der Sowjetzone*, 34, 42.

⁹⁹ Storbeck, *Soziale Strukturen in Mitteldeutschland*, 221.

residents. The substantial lowering of the general standard of living was a significant factor; it follows that assimilation of the refugees and the leveling down of the general living standard are closely related."¹⁰⁰ Thus, according to the West German perception, general social impoverishment in the SBZ/GDR enabled successful "resettler" assimilation.

West German writers such as Seraphim and Storbeck regarded an assimilation on such terms as a questionable achievement. Seraphim further argued that expellee integration in the SBZ/GDR remained an unfinished task: "There remains in the Soviet Zone, although it is officially denied and concealed, an expellee problem, a problem which will not be eliminated through the negation of the terms "refugee," "resettler," "new citizen" and "Heimatvertriebener."¹⁰¹

In comparison with the official West German condemnation of expellee policies in the Soviet Zone, the formal reaction to the GDR's Warsaw Declaration and Görlitz Agreement (the recognition of the Oder-Neisse-Line as inviolable) was one of indignation. At the sixty-eighth session of the Bundestag on 13 June 1950 all parliamentary parties and groups (excluding the Communists), with the consent of the federal government and Bundesrat, condemned the recognition of the Oder-Neisse-Border. In a statement made by the acting parliamentary president Dr. Paul Löbe, the Bundestag declared: "The collaboration on the marking of the Oder-Neisse-Line as the

¹⁰⁰ Seraphim, *Die Heimatvertriebenen in der Sowjetzone*, 33.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 181

allegedly 'inviolable' Eastern border of Germany, which the so-called provisional government of the GDR was willing to do, is proof of the humiliating submission of this authority with regard to a foreign power."¹⁰²

The official statement concerning the Warsaw Declaration issued by the federal government on 8 June 1950 also firmly refused to accept the recognition of the Oder-Neisse-Line as the permanent border between Germany and Poland, as expressed in the document. Furthermore, "[t]he so-called government of the Soviet Zone had no right to speak for the German people. All its agreements and arrangements are null and void." The decision concerning the Eastern territories could only be made through a peace settlement concluded by a unified Germany (Gesamtdeutschland). The statement of rejection continued: "The German federal government as spokesperson for the entire German people will never come to terms with the removal of these purely German territories--such a removal contradicts all principles of law and humanity. The federal government will advocate a just solution to this question at future peace negotiations between a truly democratic Poland and a democratic and united Germany."¹⁰³

¹⁰² Nr. 83, Erklärung des Deutschen Bundestages in seiner Sitzung am 13. Juni 1950. Zu Beginn der 68. Sitzung des Deutschen Bundestages am 13. Juni 1950 gab Alterspräsident Löbe, p. 62 (Sitzungsbericht des Deutschen Bundestages, s. 2457 ff.), *Dokumentation "Oder-Neisse-Linie" Urkundentexte und zusätzliche Erklärung zur Frage der deutschen Ostgebiete* von Potsdamer Abkommen, 2. August 1945 bis April 1959. 2. verbesserte und erweiterte Auflage. Arbeitsgruppe für Dokumentation "Deutsche Ostfragen" in der Ostabteilung des Auswärtigen Amts. BA-K B136, 6717, Band 2

¹⁰³ Nr. 82, Die Erklärung der Deutschen Bundesregierung zu dem Warschauer Abkommen am 8. Juni 1950, page 62, (Deutsche-Presse Agentur, 9 Juni 1950) *Dokumentation "Oder-Neisse-Linie" Urkundentexte und zusätzliche Erklärung zur Frage der deutschen Ostgebiete* von Postdamer Abkommen, 2. August 1945 bis April 1959. Arbeitsgruppe für Dokumentation "Deutsche Ostfragen" in der Ostabteilung des Auswärtigen Amts. BA-K B136, 6717, Band 2

In 1970 through his Moscow and Warsaw Treaties Chancellor Brandt implemented in legal form his goals of detente, rapprochement, and reconciliation, and in so doing dramatically altered the governmental position on the Oder-Neisse-Line and expellee integration. According to the opening statements of the Warsaw Treaty, the signatories hoped to build the foundation for a "peaceful co-existence," "peace and security in Europe," and "invulnerability of borders and respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of all states in Europe." Article 1 applied the statement concerning "invulnerability of borders" to the relationship between Germany and Poland, and specified that they would respect each other's territorial integrity and inviolability of existing borders. In addition, the treaty stated that both Germany and Poland would neither now nor in the future make territorial claims against one another. Hence the Eastern territories were no longer merely under Polish administration, rather Poland's sovereignty extended also to the former German states now part of Northern and Western Poland, including what had been Southern East Prussia, West Prussia, and Pomerania.¹⁰⁴

Thus, not only did Brandt's government dissolve the Federal Ministry for Expellees, but it also ended the promise made to expellees, that "the German federal government as spokesperson for the entire German people will never come to terms with the removal of these purely German territories."¹⁰⁵ The earlier negotiations from 1950

¹⁰⁴ Vertrag zwischen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und der Volksrepublik Polen über die Grundlagen der Normalisierung ihrer gegenseitigen Beziehungen vom 7. Dezember 1970 ("Warschauer Vertrag"), Bulletin des Presse- und Informationsamtes der Bundesregierung vom 8. Dezember 1970, Nr. 171, S. 1815, Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, Vertragsarchiv, <http://www.dhm.de/lemo/html/DasGeteilteDeutschland/KontinuitaetUndWandel/NeueOstpolitik/dieVertraegeVonMoskauUndWarschauBody.html>

¹⁰⁵ "Die Deutsche Bundesregierung als Sprecherin," Nr. 82, Die Erklärung der Deutschen

between the GDR and Poland (the Warsaw Declaration and Görlitz Agreement), and Brandt's negotiations from 1970 (the Warsaw Treaty), shared striking similarities and intentions. That two decades earlier the Federal Republic reacted with indignation to a diplomatic move they would make under Brandt is just one of the ironies of a comparative examination of official images of expellees in both postwar Germanies.

CHAPTER 4

THE OFFICIAL IMAGE OF RESETTLERS: UMSIEDLERPOLITIK IN THE SOVIET ZONE OF OCCUPATION AND GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

In the Soviet Zone/German Democratic Republic (SBZ/GDR) the official image of the displaced Germans and the formulation of an official policy towards resettlers emerged earlier than in the British Zone/Federal Republic. Using James Scott's terminology, the SBZ officials already had begun in the immediate postwar period to express their resettler-policy through the use of public transcripts. These transcripts articulated the acceptable terminology to use to describe the displaced Germans, the official assessment of integration, the financial support proposed and/or provided, the role the Eastern Germans should play in society, and the official GDR reaction to expellee-policies pursued by the government of the Federal Republic. In some instances, the resettlers also played a significant role as weapons in the GDR's war for political validation. Overall SBZ/GDR public transcripts contended that the Eastern Germans arrived in the Soviet Zone with serious disadvantages, but because they attained significant financial assistance they generally built up productive new lives in their socialist society.

Unlike in the Federal Republic, officials in the SBZ/GDR made no effort to capitalize on the trauma of the flight, expulsion, or the rapes for the purposes of generating collective memory. On the contrary, the traumatic aspects of the displaced Germans' experiences were to be mostly silenced--especially if Soviet soldiers or Poles were implicated in the events. Thus, the resettlers were to become part of the collective in the SBZ/GDR but they were not to contribute to the collective memory of its citizens.

The Soviet Zone of Occupation/The German Democratic Republic

In the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 8 May 1945 was officially regarded as the "Tag der Befreiung" or day of liberation. The *Deutsche Demokratische Republik Handbuch* celebrated this day, stating it brought an end to the "darkest chapter in German history, the twelve-year long barbarous dictatorship of the fascist German imperialists."¹ In early May in Berlin Soviet soldiers celebrated their victory with excessive drinking, seizure of whatever private property they coveted, extensive destruction, and widespread rape. The above-mentioned handbook neglected to portray this latter element of the Soviet liberation of Germany; indeed the general policy in the SBZ/GDR involved boundless praise for the Red Army as the heroic liberators of Germany.

As a reaction to Nazi atrocities committed during their Russian campaign, many Red Army soldiers perceived the destruction of German cities, material goods, and lives

¹ *Deutsche Demokratische Republik Handbuch*, Jubilaeumsausgabe 1984 (Leipzig: VEB Bibliographisches Institut, 1984), 180.

to be a form of "sacred vengeance."² Jewish Soviet journalist and author Ilya Ehrenburg published the following statement in a newspaper article during the war: "Hitler and his followers have brought about an eclipse of the century. We hate the Germans for the vile and brutal murder of our children, but we also hate them because we are obliged to kill them, because out of the whole treasury of words in man's possession we have been left with only one: 'Kill!' We hate the Germans for despoiling life."³ Indeed, according to one of his articles from the *Red Star* from October 1944 Ehrenburg felt that "the best Germans are dead Germans."⁴

In April 1945 Ehrenburg was censured for his hate propaganda and was no longer allowed to write on Germany or witness the taking of Berlin.⁵ One expression of this

² Ilya Ehrenburg, *The War: 1941-1945, Volume 5 of Men, Years--Life*, trans. Tatiana Shebunina (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1964), 164.

³ Ehrenburg, *The War*, 34. Ehrenburg contended that he never published statements calling for the annihilation or extermination of the German people, rather Goebbels' propaganda manufactured such statements, attributing them to Ehrenburg. (*The War*, 31, 32, 177) Some statements were indeed contrived; however, Ehrenburg certainly made vitriolic remarks about "the German." Joshua Rubenstein cited an article in which Ehrenburg stated "There is nothing jollier for us than German corpses." See, *Tangled Loyalties: The Life and Times of Ilya Ehrenburg* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), 192. Nikolai Tolstoy referred to Ehrenburg as the "Soviet Streicher." Tolstoy, *Stalin's Secret War* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1981), 267.

⁴ The exact quote from his October 1944, article titled "Ten Millions" read: "They [the "young forces of Europe"] do not puzzle their heads about what is to be done with the Germans, whether to teach them the rudiments of morality or feed them on oatmeal porridge. No. This young Europe has long known that the best Germans are dead Germans." Ilya Ehrenburg, "We Come as Judges," (London: Soviet War News, 1945), 31

⁵ Alexander Werth, *Russia at War: 1941-1945*, (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1964), 966-968. Rubenstein suggested Stalin was interested in pursuing a new type of strategy with Germany and possibly had personal problems with Ehrenburg due to his popularity. See, Rubenstein, *Tangled Loyalties*, 219, 222-223.

censure came in an article from 14 April 1945 from *Pravda*, by G.F. Aleksandrov, head of the Central Committee Propaganda Department. Aleksandrov criticized Ehrenburg for encouraging the extermination of the Germans and quoted Stalin's order from 23 February 1942: "Historical experience shows that Hitlers come and go, the German people, the German state, remain."⁶

Indeed the destruction and rape perpetrated by the Soviet soldiers--likely influenced at least to some degree by Ehrenburg's writings--had gone too far. One article from the *Red Star* from 9 February 1945 stated: "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth' is an old saying. But it must not be taken literally. If the Germans marauded, and publicly raped our women, it does not mean that we must do the same."⁷ The *Red Star* had indeed been the newspaper in which Ehrenburg published and was the main army newspaper and popular both among soldiers and civilians.⁸ That the *Red Star* published an article reminding readers not to follow precepts of "an eye for an eye" indicated that the violence had in fact exceeded acceptable limits.

⁶ *Pravda* 14 April 1945, cited in Norman Naimark, *The Russians in Germany: A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945-1949* (Cambridge and London: The Bellknapp Press of Harvard University Press, 1995), 76. Naimark suggested Aleksandrov "apparently" spoke for the Communist Party and for Stalin on the matter of Ehrenburg.

⁷ *Red Star* editorial, 9 February 1945, in Alexander Werth, *Russia at War: 1941-1945* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1964), 966.

⁸ Ilya Ehrenburg and Konstantin Simonov, *In One Newspaper: A Chronicle of Unforgettable Years*, trans. Anatol Kagan, (New York: Sphinx Press, Inc., 1985), xiv. For further evidence of Ehrenburg's influence on Soviet soldiers, see Helke Sander and Barbara Johr, *BeFreier und Befreite: Krieg, Vergewaltigungen, Kinder* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1995), 124-125.

Although every zone likely had incidences of rape, fraternizers, and every shade in between, rape in the Soviet Zone reached mass proportions.⁹ Despite the fact that exact statistics concerning the numbers of German women raped are not available, some authors cite the statistician Gerhard Reichling who stated that at least 110,000 Berlin women experienced rape. (Moreover, according to his statistics, Soviet soldiers raped altogether two million German women in the Eastern territories, Soviet Zone, and Berlin.)¹⁰ In her article "A Question of Silence," Atina Grossmann questioned these statistics and critiqued some of the existing discussions of rape--especially Helke Sander's film and book *BeFreier und Befreite*--for attempting "to integrate German women into the international transhistorical sisterhood of victims of male violence." Grossmann discussed the baggage weighing down historians who wish to handle this

⁹ For a discussion of fraternization and the German reaction in the US Zone, see Elizabeth Heineman, "The Hour of the Woman: Memories of Germany's 'Crisis Years' and West German National Identity," *The American Historical Review*, vol. 101, Nr. 2, (April 1996), 381-388. For a discussion of the shades in between fraternization and rape, see also Annemarie Tröger, "Between Rape and Prostitution: Survival Strategies and Possibilities of Liberation of Berlin Women in 1945-48," in *Women in Culture and Politics: A Century of Change*, ed. Judith Friedlander, et al. (Bloomington, Indiana University Press: 1986). For a discussion of rape by the Western Allied soldiers, see, Sander and Jöhr, *BeFreier und Befreite*, 61.

¹⁰ Reichling's figures were discussed and cited in Sander and Jöhr, *BeFreier und Befreite*, 58-59. Sander contended that these estimations were low. The prevalence of "Russenkinder" or "Russian children" was also discussed; Reichling suggested there were nearly 300,000. However, especially in Berlin, unwanted pregnancies resulting from rape were often terminated by abortion. Sander and Jöhr, *BeFreier und Befreite*, 58, 36, 17.

subject of the rape of German women at the end of World War II and urged the use of caution when evaluating the German self-perception of victimization and the language of the rape narratives.¹¹

In *The Russians in Germany*, Norman Naimark also discussed the incidences and causes of, as well as the reactions to, rape in the Soviet Zone and in the Eastern territories. He suggested the Soviet soldiers raped due to the effects of alcohol, as well as due to their desire for revenge--against not only the German women, but also the men, who were emasculated by the dishonoring of the women.¹² Correspondingly, in his work on the arrival of the Red Army in Berlin, Erich Kuby emphasized the Soviet soldiers' belief that they were permitted to do as they wished with German women, not only because they were the victors, rather also out of a desire for revenge.¹³

In an interview on 5 June one Russian officer explained to the American journalist Alexander Werth the behavior of the Soviet soldiers by linking it to a hard-fought victory against an enemy people, and stated "in the first flush of victory our

¹¹ Atina Grossmann, "A Question of Silence: The Rape of German Women by Soviet Occupation Soldiers," in *Women and War in the Twentieth Century: Enlisted with or without Consent*, ed., Nicole Ann Dombrowski (New York and London: Garland publishing, Inc., 1999), 162-178, here 165-166.

¹² Naimark, *The Russians in Germany*, 113-114. Naimark also mentions rare cases of rape of boys and men, Naimark, *The Russians in Germany*, 107

¹³ Erich Kuby, *Die Russen in Berlin, 1945* (München, Bern, Wien: Scherz, 1965), 313-314.

fellows no doubt derived a certain satisfaction from making it hot for those Herrenvolk women. However, that stage is over [. . .] Our main worry," he grinned, "is the awful spread of clap among our troops."¹⁴

Widespread rape of German women not only occurred in Berlin and not only during the first few days of Allied victory; the female residents of many cities and villages all across the Soviet Zone faced similar circumstances during the first few years of occupation. In some areas, for instance Mecklenburg's port towns, incidences of rape were particularly frequent, while in other areas, such as Magdeburg, the local Russian commandant dealt severely with such offenders. Evidence suggests that for some segments of the German population, rape became such a routine experience that even children would "play rape" or play "woman come" in imitation of an event they apparently witnessed with regularity. ("Frau Komm" was the statement most frequently made by a Soviet soldier before he sexually assaulted a German woman.)¹⁵

The incidences of rape and violence occurred not only on city streets and in private houses, but also in the camps for displaced Germans and returning POWs. For example, at 11 pm on 22 May 1946 a Russian officer and Russian soldier appeared in the quarantine camp Gronenfelde, near Frankfurt on the Oder, in an intoxicated state. Camp officials attempted to hold them back, but the Russians went from "barrack to barrack, breaking individual windows and causing great anxiety, especially among the women and

¹⁴ Lieutenant General (later Marshal) V.D. Sokolovskii, interview by Alexander Werth, 5 June 1945, in Werth, *Russia at War*, 986.

¹⁵ See, for example, Sander and Johr, *BeFreier und Befreite*, 16. Surminski's partly autobiographical literary account also described the "Frau Komm" game. Arno Surminski, *Johehnen: oder Wie lange fährt man von Ostpreussen nach Deutschland*, (Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1997), 272.

children." Several hours later the soldier left the camp, but the officer remained and "proceeded to one of the civilian barracks and descended upon a woman, whom he took, without using violence. The woman was to receive a loaf of bread in exchange." Afterwards the officer and woman left the camp to obtain the promised bread. The camp authorities reported the incident to the Soviet officials and asked for an investigation, but according to the report, no investigation took place.¹⁶ This incident, described in an official report, was not an isolated case. Many such circumstances transpired--a great number were never reported--and often violence and drunkenness played a role.

Unlike the British, the Soviet authorities issued no actual ban on fraternization; however, in 1947 and 1948 Red Army troops were confined to particular military barracks in specific areas, and in some cities and villages occupation officials lived in separate apartment houses or districts. Soviet authorities evacuated the Germans living in the area and established more or less distinct Russian settlements. This discouragement of contact between Soviet authorities and the German population gradually developed into regulations against cohabitation or unofficial contact. Nevertheless Naimark contended that occurrences of rape continued through 1949 and likely afterwards. He also described both romantic and platonic relationships between German civilians and Russian soldiers, officers, and occupation authorities.¹⁷ Such relationships were not only complex because of the roles of occupier and occupied, rather also due to outsiders'

¹⁶ Director Wichert of the Quarantänelager Frankfurt/O.-Gronenfelde, Gronenfelde, den 24. Mai 1946, todas Sozialamt zu Händen von Herrn Bartsch, pp. 1-2, Stadtarchiv Frankfurt an der Oder (StA FfO) BA II. Rat der Stadt Frankfurt (Oder) 1945-1952, 852, Bl. 13.

¹⁷ Naimark, *The Russians in Germany*, 78-97.

reactions. Herr G.W. described a widowed destitute woman with four children who sought to enter into such a relationship for purposes of survival and described also the scorn other neighbors had for her.¹⁸ The lack of a fraternization policy, in addition to the enormous number of occupation personnel, likely contributed to the widespread incidences of rape and help to explain why these events were more common in the Soviet Zone than in other parts of occupied Germany.¹⁹

Already on 9 June 1945 the Soviet occupying power issued an order creating the Soviet Military Administration (SMAD) in order better to control the conditions of capitulation, to administrate the Soviet Occupied Zone, and to implement Allied goals as decreed during the peace settlements. Following the message of the Yalta and later Potsdam Accords, the SMAD implemented far-reaching political, economic, intellectual and cultural reorganization, seeking to demilitarize, denazify, and democratize German society according to the Soviet world-view. The Soviet interpretation of these goals involved depriving affluent industrialists of their wealth and power, the expropriation of large and/or Nazi-owned estates and properties, implementing reparations on an

¹⁸ Herr G.W., interview by author, tape recording, Berlin, 8 April 1999

¹⁹ Whereas the occupation personnel in the US zone numbered around 12,000, and the British had a workforce of about 25,000 in their zone, the Soviets had at least 60,000 such personnel. Christoph Klessmann, *Die doppelte Staatsgründung: Deutsche Geschichte, 1945-1955* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982), 68. Naimark suggested a higher figure of over 70,000. Naimark, *The Russians in Germany*, 26. In *Reconstruction in Post-war Germany* it was suggested that there were nearly 26,000 occupational forces (civilian and military) in the British Zone in 1947. Ian D. Turner, ed. *Reconstruction in Post-war Germany: British Occupation Policy and the Western Zones, 1945-1955* (Oxford, New York, Munich: Berg Publishers, 1989), 362.

enormous scale, and establishing peace and friendship with the Eastern neighbors.²⁰

Through the SMAD the Soviet occupation authorities attempted to exert control over every aspect of life in their zone.

In order to implement democratization the Soviet authorities called for the creation of anti-fascist political parties already on 10 June. This action contrasted with the plans of the other occupation powers that wanted to maintain a political quarantine over Germany. The first party to be created was the Communist Party (KPD), with such prominent re-founding members as Wilhelm Pieck and Walter Ulbricht, both of whom had been leading members of the KPD in exile in Moscow. As the other occupying powers in their own zones later decreed, the Soviet authorities retained the privilege to deny a party's right to exist and encouraged only parties which demonstrated democratic as well as anti-nationalist and anti-fascist tendencies. The KPD received substantial support from the Soviet authorities, and their later invention, the Socialist Unity Party (SED) (the melding of the KPD with the SPD in April 1946) was commonly referred to as the "Russian party."²¹

The SMAD ordered the creation of administrations on the state and provincial level, as well as a network of provincial commandant headquarters and administrative offices; the latter bore a resemblance to German-style organizational structure but were

²⁰ For a description of the types of items requisitioned both spontaneously and in a more organized fashion, see Elke Scherstjanoi, "Sowjetische Besatzungspolitik," in *Deutschland unter alliierter Besatzung 1945-1949/55*, ed. Wolfgang Benz, (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1999), 79-80. The Soviets took everything from personal possessions such as jewelry and furniture to docks and factories, which they dismantled and sent back to Russia. Through summer 1945, the Russian estimate of the value of those items taken was 300 million dollars.

²¹ Scherstjanoi, "Sowjetische Besatzungspolitik," in *Deutschland unter alliierter*

controlled through directives from the SMAD. In July, in order to operate in their zone more effectively, the Soviet authorities erected a system of central administrations (Zentralverwaltungen), which were dominated by the KPD and later SED, and provincial and local administration in which the Soviet authorities largely controlled and worked in conjunction with exile-Communists as well as politically-acceptable local personnel, including later "antifascist" POWs, "retrained" in the camps in the Soviet Union.²² Ulbricht, Pieck, and other members of the KPD and later SED worked to place their cadre within the German administration. German officials in the provincial governments worked closely with the Soviet authorities, executed their orders and had to be sure the Soviet occupation authorities agreed before they carried out major new initiatives.²³

In autumn 1946 the SMAD allowed local, regional, and provincial elections, which the SED dominated; however, parties critical of SED and SBZ policies such as the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) got more support than authorities expected. In January the newly elected provincial assemblies (Landtag) elected officials and adopted constitutions. These representatives often ignored the directives of the Zentralverwaltungen. This disregarding of central directives caused problems in terms of jurisdiction issues and lack of communication; thus, the Soviet authorities sometimes interceded and settled internal and external disputes.²⁴ Indeed the Soviet authorities intervened regularly, even in innocuous matters, and this

Besatzung, 1945-1949/55, ed. Benz, 85-87

²² Naimark, *The Russians in Germany*, 43.

²³ For a discussion of administrative difficulties, see Naimark, *The Russians in Germany*, 44-48.

²⁴ Jochen Laufer, "Zentralverwaltungen (SBZ)," in *Deutschland unter alliierter*

inability to let the Germans run their administrations without interference caused additional problems: Since they were generally unwilling to allow the Germans to manage their own affairs, the German officials spent a great deal of time trying to work in conjunction with Soviet authorities.²⁵ Another major problem--endemic to bureaucracies regardless of the ideological system--developed also within the myriad layers of the local, district, provincial, and even central administrations in the Soviet Zone: What one official decrees might not be carried out as intended by those persons responsible in lower echelon. For example, despite the rigid decrees concerning denazification, some former Nazi officials ended up in positions in local government in certain areas.

Not only officers and party officials felt the effects of denazification, rather many persons with some connection to the Nazi government or organizations often lost possessions, homes, and jobs. For example, by the end of 1946, in the Soviet Zone 31,603 teachers faced dismissal (out of a total 72,334 teachers). Many Germans with no actual Nazi-past but who were considered by authorities to possess politically unacceptable views also faced dismissal through these policies. By 1949 two-thirds of the former teachers were removed from their positions.²⁶

Already in October 1945 the SBZ authorities planned for their replacement by appointing the Neulehrer (new teachers), generally men and women between the ages of

Besatzung 1945-1949/55, ed. Benz, 325-326.

²⁵ For a description of the "Besatzungsdiktator," see, Jan Foitzik, "Sowjetische Militäradministration (SMAD)," in *Deutschland unter alliierter Besatzung 1945-1949/55*, ed. Benz, 302-307.

²⁶ Karl-Heinz Füssl, "Bildung und Erziehung," in *Deutschland unter alliierter Besatzung, 1945-1949/55*, ed. Benz, 103.

25 and 35, who were regarded to be politically suitable for the job of teaching the zone's youth. Most of the new teachers had no pedagogical training, and some only had minimal education, but they were politically acceptable and that was regarded to be a more important qualification. The candidates for the new teacher positions would attend six-month training courses, which often included primarily political preparation for their new jobs; by 1948/49 one-third of these new teachers were SED members. In the postwar period such new teachers also served important roles in local social work; they not only taught the children, they also counseled them. For example, Herr G.W., who became a new teacher after his release from a Soviet POW camp, mentioned counseling female students who had been raped as part of his duties.²⁷

The Soviet authorities interpreted democratization and decartelization to mean the breaking up not only of large industries but also large estates. In August the central committee of the KPD issued instructions to district party authorities calling for the expropriation of large estates, especially properties owned by Nazis, and the redistribution of the land to small farmers, agricultural workers and displaced Germans.²⁸ Starting on 3 September, Bodenreform (land reform) measures were introduced in Saxony-Anhalt and gradually spread throughout the month of September into other provinces in the SBZ. Under the motto "Junkerland in Bauernhand" or Junker soil into

²⁷ Herr G.W., interview by author, tape recording, Berlin, 8 April 1999.

²⁸ Naimark indicated that often land expropriation had less to do with politics and more to do with the size of the estate, see, Naimark, *The Russians in Germany*, 156.

Farmers' hands, estates exceeding 100 hectares were broken up and the land was redistributed to small farmers and also many displaced Germans whose farms remained East of the Oder-Neisse-Line.²⁹

In order to deal with the large numbers of displaced Germans coming into the zone, Marshal G.K. Zhukov, chief of the SMAD, issued an order calling for the construction of a special central committee--on 15 September the "Zentralverwaltung für Flüchtlingswesen und Heimkehrer" (Central Committee for Refugees and Home-comers, or returning POWs) was announced in Berlin.³⁰ Within about two weeks the new committee released a memorandum stating the immediate measures to be undertaken. The first item on the list was the creation of an administrative apparatus, as according to Zhukov's order. The second issue concerned the next tasks, foremost among which was altering the name of the Zentralverwaltung to reflect the preferred terminology.³¹ Thus, the Zentralverwaltung für deutsche Umsiedler (Central Administration for German Resettlers, ZVU) was now the official title.

²⁹ Over 8,000 farmers and over 4,000 business owners experienced a sort of expulsion from the Soviet Zone as a result of the confiscation of their property during the Bodenreform. Joachim von Kruse, ed. *Weissbuch über die "Demokratische Bodenreform" in der Sowjetischen Besatzungszone Deutschlands: Dokumente und Berichte* (München/Stamsried: Verlag Ernst Vögel, 1988), 7.

³⁰ Zentralverwaltung für Flüchtlingswesen u. Heimkehrer, Berlin, September 15, 1945, to den Magistrat der Stadt Berlin, Bundesarchiv Berlin (BA-B) DO 75253 (filmsig.), Nr 92-99, 10, Band 1-10. See also, Michael Schwartz, "'Umsiedler' in der Zusammenbruchgesellschaft: Soziale und politische Dimensionen des Vertriebenenproblems in der frühen SBZ," in *Erobert oder Befreit? Deutschland im internationalen Kräftefeld und die Sowjetische Besatzungszone (1945/46)*, ed. Hartmut Mehringer, et al., Schriftenreihe der Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte Sondernummer (München: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1999), 236-237.

³¹ ZVU, Berlin, Rundschreiben Nr. 1 (2.10.45), An die Unterabteilung der Zentralverwaltung für deutsche Umsiedler und an die Landes- und

The other immediate tasks to be tackled by the ZVU included the erection of camps with the proper medical staff, children's homes, and a general immobilization of the resettlers already in the SBZ. In addition, the ZVU planned to register and issue identity cards to all resettlers, and urge the creation of resettler committees in all municipalities in order to help the resettlers with integration and help other local authorities with implementing the Bodenreform. The need to supply resettlers with food and clothing was also a paramount concern, specifically mentioned was the need to provide children with clothing and shoes. The central authorities recommended that the communal committees mobilize the local population to donate old clothing and footwear and suggested also that sewing facilities should be erected near the camps so that damaged clothing could be repaired.³² This memorandum also included an attachment that discussed an additional task of the local committees, namely they "must immediately engage in their work of politically motivating the entire population for the reception of the resettlers. The resettlers should already feel they are welcome through the official greeting from the chairman or mayor of the community and thereby already forget many tribulations and difficulties that they experienced on the transports. The entire local population should be present at the welcoming and express their willingness to stand by

Provinzialverwaltungen und an die Landräte und Bürgermeister der kreisfreien Städte und Gemeinden, (Note: This Rundschreiben is also located in NY 4182, 1160), p. 2, emphasis in orig. BA-B, DO 75253 (filmsig.), Nr 92-99, 10, Band 1-10.

³² Rundschreiben Nr. 1 (2.10.45), pps. 3-6, BA-B, DO 75253 (filmsig.), Nr 92-99, 10, Band 1-10.

the resettlers with moral and practical support and help them to find a new Heimat." The ZVU then suggested a reconstruction and job program that would also help the resettlers adjust in their new homes.³³

Thus in the SBZ early on officials drafted plans and policies for dealing with the resettler problem and attempted to establish a network of committees on all levels to carry out these policies. Again, however, the problems endemic in bureaucracies plagued the administration of the SBZ; in one area resettlers were welcomed and helped, while in another they were verbally attacked. Some officials did their jobs, and others had priorities not in line with the central authorities. Indeed the director of the ZVU, Josef Schlaffer, who issued the above-cited memorandum, was fired due to reports that he did nothing: "Schlaffer does nothing. We have given him every opportunity, rooms, machines, etc., but on site nothing happens. If we ask him, he makes a big speech, reports what has been accomplished, how many camps are already finished, etc. If I send a captain to verify, there is nothing there: the camps are not finished, the reception is not arranged, etc."³⁴ Michael Schwartz suggested that Schlaffer's dismissal likely had more to do with his tendency to act independently of the SMAD.³⁵

³³ Anlage, Rundschreiben Nr. 1 (2.10.45), p. 1, BA-B, DO 75253 (filmsig.), Nr 92-99, 10, Band 1-10.

³⁴ Aktennotiz/Brief, 24.10.45, BA-B, NY 4182, 1160. In a report from November confirming Schlaffer's dismissal, the Zentralverwaltung was again called Zentralverwaltung für Flüchtlingswesen, see, Bericht, 27.11.45, Betr: Leitung der ZVF, BA-B, NY 4182, 1186.

³⁵ Michael Schwartz, "Besatzer und Vertriebene--Beobachtungen zur Rolle der SMA in der "Umsiedler"-Politik der SBZ," in *50 Jahre Flucht und Vertreibung: Gemeinsamkeiten und Unterschiede bei der Aufnahme und Integration der Vertriebenen in die Gesellschaften der Westzonen-Bundesrepublik und der SBZ-DDR*, ed. Manfred Wille (Magdeburg: Block, 1997), 195.

The later President of the ZVU, Rudolf Engel, described the catastrophic conditions of the earlier administration: "Mid November [1945] almost the entire management of the Zentralverwaltung, a management that was not only incompetent, rather also corrupt, was removed from power." In summer 1945 Engel was in France and heard the news of the Potsdam Accords and the enormous population transfers on the radio. He stated in a later report: "At that time, I felt sorry for the man who was supposed to solve this problem." After the dismissal of almost the entire management of the ZVU, Engel was named President--indeed he became the man who was supposed to solve the increasingly more overwhelming resettler problem.³⁶

The daily arrival of more and more resettlers in the SBZ exacerbated the conditions in the zone.³⁷ According to a report from the Allied Control Commission from November 1945, an additional 3.5 million Germans would be displaced from Poland and two million of them would be transported to the Soviet Zone (another 750,000 Sudeten Germans were also to be brought to the SBZ.)³⁸ Transports took place basically without interruption from the end of the war, and thousands arrived daily in often overcrowded bombed-out cities and transit camps. In May 1946 the Soviet Zone authorities and the Polish government signed an official agreement concerning the

³⁶ Meine Tätigkeit von Oktober 1945 bis Ende 1950 unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der kulturpolitischen Frage, Rudi Engel, p. 1. BA-B, Sgy 30, 1821/1

³⁷ For my discussion of the Soviet Zone and GDR, I concentrated on the three provinces or states with the largest percentage of resettlers when compared to the indigene population: Brandenburg (21.9 percent), Mecklenburg (46.2 percent), and Saxony-Anhalt (21.6 percent in the Provinz Sachsen). These figures reflect conditions in May 1946. See, Ein Jahr Zentralverwaltung für Deutsche Umsiedler, 28. September 1946, BA-B, DQ 2, 3401, Bl. 72.

³⁸ Umsiedlungsplan des Kontrollrates, p. 10. BA-B, DQ 2, 3401, Bl. 71

transfer of the remaining German population. Similar to Operation Swallow, the agreement also stipulated the transports must follow certain guidelines.³⁹ Also similar to the British experience with Operation Swallow, the conditions of the transports frequently contrasted with those stated in the agreement. Thousands of Germans and Masurians continued arriving from Poland in the SBZ through the 1950s through the policy of reuniting of families (Familienzusammenführung).

Indeed, given the overwhelming numbers of arriving displaced Germans, finding shelter in the SBZ proved often as challenging as in the British Zone (BBZ). The refugees who arrived in the area prior to the end of the war correspondingly benefited from Nazi housing policies, often brought with them considerable personal belongings, arrived in generally healthy conditions, and also in smaller numbers. The Nazi officials frequently sent them to a particular address and obliged the occupant, with police force if necessary, to house the refugee or refugee family in question in a room determined to be underused. In the postwar period, conversely, thousands of displaced Germans arrived daily, most frequently on transports, and often with few possessions and in poor health; lice infestation was not uncommon, and sometimes resettlers arrived with contagious diseases, such as scabies, tuberculosis, malaria, and gastroenteritis that they contracted during the transport or due to the unhealthy conditions in the work or internment camps in the former territories or in the Soviet Union. Thus, similarly to the experiences of expellees in the British Zone, resettlers frequently did not receive the officially planned warm welcome from the entire community or the promised assistance in finding a new Heimat.

³⁹ Schechtman, *Postwar Population Transfers in Europe: 1945-1955*, 206.

Those resettlers who entered illegally, or in other words were not part of an official transport but rather arrived by their own means and never registered with authorities, faced the same difficulties here as in the BBZ. Many areas in the Soviet Zone faced a dire shortage of housing. Since their non-registered status meant that authorities would likely not help them, often these resettlers sought relatives with whom to find housing or rented a room in a private household, often paying rent through their labor. The latter type of agreement was most common on farms, where the resettler would exchange hard labor for often inadequate quarters. These resettlers often enjoyed none of the benefits made available to their registered compatriots and were often not officially considered "resettlers."⁴⁰

The resettlers who reached the SBZ through official transports generally arrived in a transit or quarantine camp, where they were registered, deloused, and received vaccinations. Conditions in the camps varied, but they were generally not comfortable. While waiting to be assigned more permanent accommodations, the resettlers worked within the camp apparatus or in the surrounding area, and after fulfilling their work duties, they often heard lectures on life outside the camp, occupational and retraining possibilities, as well as SED addresses concerning democracy, socialism, and friendly relations with the Soviet Union and Poland. Indeed officials intended the camps to be comfortable welcoming and re-education stations.

⁴⁰ See, for example, Runderlass Nr. 1 (VII/2), Provinzialverwaltung Mark Brandenburg, Amt für deutsche Umsiedler, Potsdam, den 10. Jan 1946, An alle Herrn Oberbürgermeister und Landräte der Provinz Mark Brandenburg, nachrichtlich an die Herren Oberlandräte wie vor. p. 1, StA FfO BA II. Rat der Stadt Frankfurt (Oder) 1945-1952, 852, Bl. 22.

Often resettlers spent up to a week in the transit or quarantine camps. After that period they would be sent either to district camps or long-term camps. Those resettlers who were not deemed "work-shy" (arbeitsscheu), politically unacceptable or simply too old or too sick or infirm to work, spent around two weeks in the district camps. During that period the resettlers would be prepared for their incorporation into society. Following that, for many resettlers jobs and accommodations were eventually found outside the camp structure and they were sent to a particular city or town that needed their skills or labor and perhaps also had some sort of building in which the resettlers could live.⁴¹ If, on the other hand, resettlers had relatives in some part of the zone, efforts were made to send them to that area.

SBZ/GDR officials boasted about the quick dissolution of their resettler camps and published many reports criticizing the Western zones for the continued existence of their camps. How were the living conditions for resettlers after being discharged and allocated housing? The Westkommission from 1950, largely a group concerned with critiquing Western policies and praising the successes in the SBZ/GDR, contended: "In the GDR the Germans evacuated through the consequences of war have long since been integrated; through the Bodenreform they obtained land, through engagement in the workforce they have been able to build up a new existence and through exemplary governmental relief measures they have been assisted."⁴² To be sure, a distinction must

⁴¹ Runderlass Nr. 1 (VII/2), Provinzialverwaltung Mark Brandenburg, Amt für deutsche Umsiedler, Potsdam, den 10. Jan 1946, An alle Herrn Oberbürgermeister und Landräte der Provinz Mark Brandenburg, nachrichtlich an die Herren Oberlandräte wie vor. p. 3, StA FfO BA II. Rat der Stadt Frankfurt (Oder) 1945-1952, 852, Bl. 23

⁴² Westkommission, Thesen -- Entwurf (Umsiedler-- Kommission)., 9.10.50, p. 2. BA-B, NY 4062/122.

be made between intentions and realities. The policies supported by many officials in the SBZ/GDR would possibly have fulfilled these objectives if there had not been harsh postwar conditions, a dire lack of resources, many hostile indigenes, as well as some antagonistic resettlers, and bureaucratic dissonance on numerous levels of the administration.

In November 1948 the central office of the SED decided that the continuation of the assimilation process of the resettlers in the SBZ required a shift in policy. "The continued existence of a separate central resettler administration and separate resettler offices in the states and districts, through their emphasis on separate resettler interests, would result in a hindrance of the melding process [Verschmelzungsprozess]." This resolution called for all branches of the administration to be active and encourage resettlers to become involved in the "strengthening of democratic development in the SBZ;" it was felt that thereby assimilation could be advanced. This new policy involved the dissolving of most resettler administrative agencies (only those offices needed for the processing of arriving resettlers from future transports stayed open and with limited operations.) The activities of the former resettler offices were transferred to the Ministry of the Interior or other pre-existing committees. The goal of this shift in policy was to indicate to resettlers that they as citizens with equal rights belonged within the general population of the new democratic Germany.⁴³ In line with this new shift, the proper official terminology for resettlers also underwent transitions: for example, from

⁴³ Beschluss des Zentralsekretariats, Berlin, den 11.11.1948, Bl. 11, p. 1, Landeshauptarchiv Magdeburg (LHA-M), Rep. K 3 MdI, Nr. 6564. Some offices closed earlier, for example in Schwerin, the resettler department closed on August, 13, 1948. Protokoll über die Auflösung der Umsiedlerabteilung, 4. Sept. 1948, p. 1. Landeshauptarchiv Schwerin (LHA-S), KT/RdK Schwerin/49, Bl. 1

"resettler" (Umsiedler) to "Germans evacuated through the consequences of war" (Durch Kriegsfolgen ausgesiedelte Deutsche).⁴⁴ In addition sometimes terms such as "former resettlers" or "new citizens" were used. Gradually there was no longer official terminology at all for the displaced Germans; starting in the early or mid-1950s they were not to be distinguished from normal GDR citizens.

Terminology and integration as a concept

During the first months following the "liberation," displaced Germans from the former Eastern territories flooded into the Soviet Zone; initially local authorities and residents neither knew what to do with them nor what to call them. "Flüchtlinge" (refugee) was a popular name used in connection with the displaced Germans, but many other terms appeared in newspapers, letters, and even official reports; some of the names used included: "Ausgewiesene" (extraditee), "Vertriebene" (expellee), "Ausländer" (foreigner),⁴⁵ "Rückwanderer" (repatriate), "Ostdeutsche" (East Germans),⁴⁶ and "Umsiedler" (resettler). For example, the "Progress report of the Housing Department" of Frankfurt on the Oder from 11 July 1945 suggested that although housing was

⁴⁴ Westkommission, Bericht über die Tagung der Umsiedler Kommission am 30.9. und 1.10 im Nationalrat, 2.10.1950, p. 5. BA-B, NY 4062/122.

⁴⁵ A citizen of Danzig was registered in Leipzig with the chief of police as a foreigner on 5.8.1946 and received a Identity card for Foreigners (Kennkarte für Ausländer). Under nationality, it indeed read "Free City of Danzig until clarification." See, Betr.: "Freie Stadt Danzig-- Aktionskomitee," Bonn, den 29. Sept 1966. BA-K, B106, 22477.

⁴⁶ For the use of the term: "Ostdeutsche," see, Vfg., "Rechenschaftsbericht für Monat Mai 1945." StA FfO BA II. Rat der Stadt Frankfurt (Oder) 1945-1952, 638, Bl. 96

available in the area, the flood of "persons expelled from East of the Oder by the Poles" (östlich der Oder von den Polen Vertriebenen) caused serious concern. The same report suggested the flood had subsided somewhat by July and the "treks of repatriates" (Rückwanderer) were mostly directed to the districts of Neuruppin and Prenzlau. The report indicated confusion concerning the permanence of their residence in the SBZ.⁴⁷

Even in official circles the use of multiple terms continued, as evidenced by the creation on 15 September 1945 of the "Zentralverwaltung für Flüchtlingswesen und Heimkehrer" (Central Committee for Refugees and Home-comers, or returning POWs) in Berlin.⁴⁸ Within about two weeks the name of the Zentralverwaltung was changed with the declaration of the official terminology: "It is to be noted that from now on in our language [Sprachgebrauch] only the term *Resettlers* [Umsiedlern] is to be used. The names refugee [Flüchtlinge] or extraditee [Ausgewiesene] are *no longer* to be utilized."⁴⁹ Despite the now clear official policy, questionnaires issued in early 1946 to districts in Brandenburg by the Zentralverwaltung for Labor and Welfare, sector Mother and Child, still used the word "Flüchtlinge" in questions that referred to the displaced Germans. The "Questionnaire for the care of Refugees" came back with corrections; some of the

⁴⁷ "Tätigkeitsbericht des Wohnungsamtes," 11.7.1945. StA FfO BA II. Rat der Stadt Frankfurt (Oder) 1945-1952, 638, Bl. 95.

⁴⁸ Letter from the Zentralverwaltung für Flüchtlingswesen u. Heimkehrer, Berlin, September 15, 1945, to An den Magistrat der Stadt Berlin, BA-B, DO 75253 (filmsig.), Nr 92-99, 10, Band 1-10.

⁴⁹ ZVU, Berlin, Rundschreiben Nr. 1 (2.10.45), An die Unterabteilung der Zentralverwaltung für deutsche Umsiedler und an die Landes- und Provinzialverwaltungen und an die Landräte und Bürgermeister der kreisfreien Städte und Gemeinden, p. 2, emphasis in orig. BA-B, DO 75253 (filmsig.), Nr 92-99, 10, Band 1-10.

officials filling out the forms for their particular district crossed out the word "Flüchtlinge" in the questions and typed "Umsiedler" over it; thus following the official policy towards terminology.⁵⁰

Michael Tschesnow, the Vice President of the ZVU, stated his opinion of the official policy in his 1946 article "Mit Herz und Kopf" (With Heart and Head). "Resettler, refugee, extraditee--call them what we wish, they were all victims of Hitler's War. No, we cannot call them what we wish, because every name has a meaning." According to the article, an extraditee (Ausgewiesener) meant someone "cast out" due to their own fault; Tschesnow contended that the resettlers bore no greater responsibility for the war than the indigenes and therefore should not be so labeled. These displaced Germans were also not "refugees," because refugees were allowed to return. "The resettler must stay here. As pronounced by the resolutions of the Potsdam Conference. He and his children and his children's children." And because the resettler was staying, according to the report, he must become a useful and productive member of his new society and find a new Heimat here. "To lose a Heimat is painful and bitter. To have no new one is a disastrous fate [Verhängnis]." Thus, "resettler" was the preferred word, but a word that carried with it responsibilities for both the resettlers as well as the indigenes. Both groups must "do everything possible in order for the resettler right away to stop

⁵⁰ Answers from Brandenburg districts from January 1946, Fragebogen I über die Flüchtlingsbetreuung in der sowjetischen Okkupationszone, Zentralverwaltung für Arbeit und Sozialfürsorge in der sowjetischen Okkupationszone Deutschlands, Abschn.: Mutter und Kind, BA-B, DQ 2, 3400, Bl. 14, 44.

being and feeling like a resettler."⁵¹ Thus, the official policy towards terminology reflected the means for and understanding of integration in the Soviet Zone.

The terminology debate continued as a result of a new name introduced in Thuringia and also adopted in Saxony: new citizen (Neubürger). Newspaper articles in February 1948 used this term and in some areas "new citizen" was introduced as the official new name for resettlers. The *Neue Zeitung* of Berlin from 6 February 1948 referred to resettlers both with their old name and with the expression "Neubürger." The article titled "Den Heimatlosen Heim und Heimat geben" (Give the Heimat-less a Home and Heimat) announced a revision of bureaucratic procedures in Brandenburg: "In order to achieve equal rights for old- and new citizens" local resettler committees would become more active and follow the motto: "Away with bureaucratic formalism (Büroformalismus), hurry up individualized care!"⁵² Another article from the *Kurier* from March 1948 "Umsiedler heissen jetzt Neubürger" (Resettlers are now called New Citizens) described a weeklong advertising campaign (Werbewoche) called "Volk und Heimat" (People and Heimat) in Schwerin. The program included collecting items to donate to needy resettlers and public demonstrations. The article stated that "The fundamental goal of the Werbewoche was the removal of the name 'resettler' from the popular usage and instead to replace it with the term new citizen."⁵³ However, the name

⁵¹ "Mit Herz und Kopf," Michael Tschesnow, Vizepräsident der ZVU, Ein Jahr Zentralverwaltung für deutsche Umsiedler, 28. September 1946, pp. 3-4, BA-B, DQ 2, 3401, Bl. 64-65

⁵² *Neue Zeitung* Berlin, D. Ausgabe, 6 Feb. 1948, "Den Heimatlosen Heim und Heimat geben" BA-B DQ2, 3399.

⁵³ "Umsiedler heissen jetzt Neubürger," *Kurier*, Nr. 58, 9.III.48, BA-B DQ2, 3399.

"new citizen" also had its critics. Indeed the press service of the ZVU called for the disappearance of the term, stating, "The earlier the term old- and new citizen disappear, the better it will be for our democratic development."⁵⁴

On 24 February 1948 the president of the ZVU, Rudolf Engel, presented a paper on the problems of the resettler at the session of the Labor Committee of the Deutsche Frauenbund (DFD) (German Women's Federation) for Labor and Welfare and the Economy. In his paper, Engel questioned the continuing validity of the word "resettler" and contended that since these people had become a "component" of the population, the word was now obsolete. He mentioned the Thuringian term "new citizen" that he felt more accurately reflected the current progression of integration. "The new citizen should have the feeling that he is a fully adequate citizen of this country. However[,] this term [Neubürger], although last year it was progressive, is today [already] outdated. These people simply belong to us and are a component of our population." According to Engel, the whole population thus shared their problems. He recommended drafting an economic plan including resettlers/new citizens as a category, the introduction of loans, assistance in finding employment, the creation of additional children's homes, apprenticeships and training for resettler youth, as well as nurseries in order to provide assistance for resettler mothers; these measures would help promote full integration of the resettlers/new citizens.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ "Das Sprachrohr [mouthpiece] für Umsiedler," Pressedienst der ZVU, Nr. 9, Berlin, 6.2.48, p. 2. BA-B, DQ 2, 3363

⁵⁵ Referentenmaterial Nr. 6, "Das Problem der Umsiedler" Referat, gehalten von Herrn Präsident Engel auf der Sitzung der Arbeitskommissionen des DFD für Arbeit und Sozialfürsorge und für Volkswirtschaft am 24. Februar 1948, pp. 1-7. BA-B NY 4074, 146

The debate continued and in October 1948 the Verwaltung des Innern, Hauptabteilung für Umsiedler (Administration of the Interior, Main Department for Resettlers) issued official definitions for the terms in question. "Resettlers are the people whose Heimort [Heimat place] lies outside the present German borders and from which they, as Germans, had to leave as determined by international resolutions, or to which they could not return according to these resolutions." Further, the term "refugee" was declared not to be applicable for the Soviet Zone. Moreover POWs whose "Heimort" lay outside of the current borders of Germany were to be referred to--in bureaucratic double-speak--as "Heimatloser Heimkehrer" (roughly Heimat-less Home-comers). Additionally, references were made to the recent term "new citizen." According to the report, "The Administration of the Interior, Main Department for Resettlers rejects the term new citizen, because with the incorporation of the resettler his full equality with the old-established inhabitants should be realized, and it is the function of the fusion to eliminate every differentiation between old and new citizen [. . .]."⁵⁶ Given the SBZ/GDR integration policy, it was perhaps to be expected that the term "new citizen" was almost immediately declared outdated.

In 1950 after a lengthy discussion, the Westkommission declared an acceptable term to replace all other names for the displaced Germans, a designation to be used in "future official party documents." The commission agreed upon the term: "Germans

⁵⁶ Begriffsbestimmung für a) Evakuiertes, b) Umsiedler, der Verwaltung des Innern, Hauptabt. für Umsiedler, Berlin, den 28.10.1948, BA-B, DQ 2, 3370, Bl. 91. For the discussion of "Heimatlose Heimkehrer," see, SED Landesvorstand Sachsen, Abt. Verwaltung und Kommunalpolitik, -Justiz-, (nd) An die Deutsche Wirtschaftskommissionen Hauptabt. Arbeit und Sozialfürsorge, Berlin, BA-B, DQ 2, 3370, Bl. 90.

evacuated through the consequences of war" (Durch Kriegsfolgen ausgesiedelte Deutsche). The report suggested that this term was "scientifically accurate," would be understood by West Germans (who had misunderstood "resettler"), and would help to fight against the revisionist hate campaign and the use of the reactionary term "Heimatvertriebener."⁵⁷ The policy of integration of resettlers/new citizens/Germans evacuated through the consequences of war involved to a large extent the belief that melding was possible--in part through the disappearance of separate designations in the vocabulary--and indeed preferable.

In September 1950 authorities in the GDR issued a "Gesetz über die weitere Verbesserung der Lage der ehemaligen Umsiedler" (Law concerning the further improvement of the conditions of the former Resettlers). The preamble of this law stated: "In the GDR a great deal was already achieved in terms of improving the material conditions of the resettlers. Many resettlers have obtained land through the Bodenreform and received help in the equipping of their small farms. A large portion of the former resettlers work in all branches of the national economy and state apparatus." A report from July 1951 quoted and reflected on this preamble and assessed the governmental assistance provided for resettlers that enabled them to "settle down in the new Heimat." According to the report, the 4,312,000 resettlers who called the GDR "home" (Heimstatt), were "hardly distinguishable" from the "ordinary population" and were equally active and enthusiastic in building up the new democratic Germany and

⁵⁷ Westkommission, Bericht über die Tagung der Umsiedler Kommission am 30.9. und 1.10 im Nationalrat, 2.10.1950, p. 1-2. BA-B, NY 4062/122. Westkommission, Thesen - Entwurf (Umsiedler -- Kommission)., 9.10.50, p. 5. BA-B, NY 4062/122.

participating in its administrative and party apparatus.⁵⁸ What assistance did this law provide? Was it effective in further eliminating distinctions between the resettlers and the indigenes? Did the policy on the fusion of resettlers within the existing society--and indeed the intended erasure of them as a separate category--have the effect officials intended? Did the financial assistance provided by the SBZ and GDR address the needs of the resettlers?

Assistance for resettlers

Already in the first months following the end of the war both the Russian and German officials in the Soviet Zone recognized the need to assist the large numbers of impoverished resettlers financially. Many displaced Germans coming into the SBZ received small sums of money upon arrival or registration; this practice of giving one-time financial assistance--in the early period sometimes called "New Refugee Support" (Neuflüchtling Unterstützung)⁵⁹--increased in frequency in the later 1940s and the sums varied from RM 50 to 100. However, the primary official endeavor to ease financially the problems of the resettlers was through the Bodenreform or land reform program, a program reflecting the democratization and even denazification policies expressed through the peace accords and promoted by the Allied occupation powers in each zone;

⁵⁸ Paul Zumpe, "Die Lage der Umsiedler in der DDR," 7.7.1951, p. 1, BA-B, DQ 2, 3775.

⁵⁹ Some resettlers were involved in swindling activities, for instance going to multiple resettler camps or agencies trying to get the one-time support, food, or accommodations, See for example documents from 1946-1947 from Berlin and Magdeburg, LHA-M, Rep.K3, Ministerium des Innern, Nr. 6566, Bl. 32, 40.

indeed in comparison with the other zones, the Bodenreform would be more vigorously and successfully carried out in the SBZ. However, not all resettlers could be helped through land reform measures. Thus throughout the later 1940s officials introduced various one-time payments for elderly and infirm resettlers, sometimes tried to introduce rent controls,⁶⁰ developed loans for impoverished resettlers and new farmers (Neubauern), supported rallies for collecting donations, developed a plan for helping resettler school-age children, and finally issued in the early 1950s a law and series of addenda intending further to improve conditions for resettlers through an additional series of loans.

Unlike in the Western zones, no comprehensive attempt was made in the SBZ/GDR to account for or in some way reimburse lost property or wealth; officials recognized the loss of the Heimat as a serious problem and sought--in part through financial assistance--to help resettlers find a new Heimat in their postwar communities. Reimbursing and preserving the Heimat was not the issue, rather replacing the Heimat and eliminating the distinctiveness of the displaced Germans were some of the central goals in resettler policies in the SBZ/GDR.

In summer 1945 the Provincial Administration of Brandenburg issued a recommendation concerning "Flüchtlingsunterbringung durch Agrarreform" (Refugee Accommodation through Agrarian Reform). The report described the scene in the Soviet Zone in mid-1945: "Those who today again and again see refugee processions

⁶⁰ See for example the lists contained in this file, lists which demonstrate that resettlers on average paid higher rents than indigenes. These materials suggested an adjustment in order to bring about equality. The materials came from 1949-1952. LHA-M, Rep. K13 KV Wernigerode, Nr. 205.

[Flüchtlingszüge] pulling in every direction on the streets of our cities and across the country roads of the province have certainly already considered where these people might find accommodation. Within the refugee himself the longing is naturally tremendously great, finally to be at his destination and again to enter the ranks of the productive workers and constructors [Schaffenden und Aufbauenden]. The aimed-for agrarian reform would be the rescuer for 6 million people."⁶¹ The plan for land reform included not only eliminating the large estate owners and politically unacceptable people from the scene, in addition, officials believed they would provide a means for the melding of the resettlers with the existing population and help the displaced Germans find a Heimat in the SBZ.

The Bodenreform came into effect in early September in Saxony-Anhalt and spread throughout the other provinces of the SBZ. According to this policy, estates exceeding 100 hectares were broken up and the land was redistributed to prospective farmers of politically acceptable backgrounds and also many displaced Germans. A report from the president of the ZVU from 1948 stated that altogether the Bodenreform created 450,000 farms for "new farmers," 85,000 of these farms were given to displaced German families, with altogether around 400,000 family members. "The Bodenreform played an important role in terms of accommodating and settling [Sesshaftmachung] the resettlers."⁶²

⁶¹ Vorschlag der Provinzialverwaltung Brandenburg, "Flüchtlingsunterbringung durch Agrarreform," (nd, likely Summer 1945) BA-B, DQ 2, 3391, Bl. 385.

⁶² Rudolf Engel, Präsident der ZVU, "Das Problem der Umsiedler," der Sitzung der Arbeitskommissionen des DFD für Arbeit und Sozialfürsorge und für Volkswirtschaft am 24. Februar 1948. BA-B, NY 4074, 146.

Indeed the SBZ/GDR authorities perceived the Bodenreform to function as a sort of Lastenausgleich, or equalization of burdens. In fact, a letter from 1949 from a resettler from Saxony-Anhalt raised the issue of "equalization of burdens and further concerns of the new citizens." The author wrote: "In the name of the new citizens (extraditees), I ask the estimable government of the state of Saxony-Anhalt for concrete information concerning whether the intention exists, and to what extent, these afflicted by such a fate, these affected most seriously by postwar sorrows, will be compensated." The letter writer had heard rumors of planning for a Lastenausgleich in the West and also mentioned that he had heard about forms circulating in Thuringia which allowed resettlers to catalogue "possessions or property at that time, in other words in the Heimat" (seinerzeitigen Vermögens).⁶³ The official from the Deutsche Wirtschaftskommission who answered the letter wrote that a Lastenausgleich had been discussed between different administrations within the SBZ. The official explained that the issue was complicated by that fact that the resettlers were not the only group sustaining serious losses due to the war. Further, he contended "The expropriation of the war criminals, the distribution of the land of the former Junker to new farmers [. . .] is already to be regarded as a not inconsiderable share of the necessary equalization of burdens

⁶³ Reports from SBZ officials often contain variations in the numbers of farms created through the Bodenreform. The actual numbers of new farmers fluctuated due to some giving up on farming and returning their land to the officials. These numbers come from a paper, "Das Problem der Umsiedler" presented by Mr. President Engel auf der Sitzung der Arbeitskommissionen des DFD für Arbeit und Sozialfürsorge und für Volkswirtschaft am 24. Februar 1948. BA-B, NY 4074, 146.

[Lastenausgleich]." The letter closed with a request to cooperate with future organizations and officials in improving the standard of living in the SBZ.⁶⁴

Thus land reform measures in the Soviet Zone affected over 400,000 resettlers-- those new farmers who participated directly and their family members. In comparison with the paltry efforts towards land reform in the British Zone, the Bodenreform in the SBZ was a tremendous achievement; however, it would be inaccurate to conclude that all resettlers who wanted land attained it or that all new farmers were successful. Indeed in many cases requests for land were denied because there simply was not enough to distribute. A West Prussian refugee woman wrote a letter on 28 October 1945 requesting land, a request that was declined. The woman explained that she had possessed a farm and restaurant on about 40 Morgen (roughly translated, acres) of land, which she lost when she fled. Because her husband was in a POW camp and had not yet returned, she was raising her two school-age children alone. She and her children lived with relatives in Magdeburg in one room, which had been damaged in a bombing raid; she thus desired to move out and preferably onto 50 to 100 Morgen of land on which she could again farm.⁶⁵ The reply she received stated "there is no settler position [Siedlerstelle] available in district Calbe," and recommended that she apply elsewhere. Many such letters can be found in the files.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Deutsche Wirtschaftskommission, Berlin, 18.3.49, to Herrn Egon Retter, Aue/ Zeitz, BA-B, DQ 2, 3391, Bl. 115.

⁶⁵ Frau G.W., Magdeburg, 28.X.1945, to Herrn Landrat, Calbe, LHA-M, Rep. K13 KV Schönebeck, Nr. 242, Bl. 316. This file contains many letters from people seeking land through the Bodenreform. It appears as though every one was turned down due to a lack of free land.

⁶⁶ I.V. Gez. Becker, 6. Nov 1945, Frau G.W., LHA-M, Rep. K13 KV Schönebeck, Nr.

In addition, many resettlers who succeeded in obtaining land, lacked the proper equipment, livestock, buildings, and housing; therefore, many new farmers had difficulties meeting the official quotas for output. Many reports described the inadequate facilities and accommodation on such farms. One such report from 1948 from the agricultural department of Brandenburg's executive committee of the SED (Landesvorstandes der SED) concerning the settler development (Siedlungsaufbau) in Götz near Gross-Kreutz (a so-called "Mustersiedlung," or model settlement) expressed concern about the instability of new farmer buildings. In March 1948 the department visited the area and inspected the 17 buildings in the development, and proclaimed what they saw to be a "catastrophe." Although constructed in 1947 the finished buildings were all in some stage of falling apart. Many of the walls were distorted or had already collapsed; some buildings had started falling apart before construction was completed. The officials spoke to the foreman, architect, and mayor, and discovered that they had used "as a replacement for lime [Ersatzkalk] mud-lime [Schlammkalk] from the sugar factory mixed with some cement additive [. . . .] In a few months, the lime would have eaten away the cement additive. One could dismantle the entire building with a hammer or some other tool." In addition, fully inadequate bricks had been used that were not only too small, but also improperly fired due to a lack of coal and were wet; these bricks cost three times as much as proper bricks would have cost "earlier." The other construction materials used were also fully inadequate; the resulting buildings were dangerously

unstable. "These houses on the present foundation walls represent--with out exaggeration--murder [. . .] A cow alone could cause the whole house to collapse if she knocks into the walls."⁶⁷

Why were such substitutes used in the construction of buildings in a "model settlement"? Proper materials had not been rationed out because of a general shortage. The Brandenburgische Landbau-Gesellschaft [Brandenburg Agricultural Construction Society] explained that they had to use the ersatz materials; in some areas these building materials performed well, it all depended on the weather conditions during construction. "We were fully aware of the risks, we took the view that either the risks be accepted or nothing at all could be built." They took all responsibility for the additional repair costs.⁶⁸

A similar visit to the village Diepensee in Brandenburg in 1949 resulted in a less dramatic report; the conditions were not as catastrophic but still far from acceptable. The report described the buildings converted into houses and the cramped quarters for both people and the farm animals. The report's author replied that "in view of the incomparably worse living conditions in the remains of the cities" no one voiced complaints too loudly. However, not only did new farmers have difficulties with

⁶⁷ Abt. Landwirtschaft, Bericht über den Siedlungsaufbau in Götz bei Gross-Kreutz (March 1948), Brandenburgisches Landeshauptarchiv (BrLHA), Rep 206, Wirtschaftsministerium, 2745, Götz bei Gross Kreutz, 1947-1948.

⁶⁸ Brandenburgische Landbau-Gesellschaft MBH, Staatlicher Siedlungsbauträger, Hauptverwaltung, Potsdam, den 17. März 1948, An die Landesregierung Brandenburg, Minister des Innern, Abt. Landes- und Kommunalverwaltung, Ref. Oberste Bauleitung 209, p. 2, BrLHA, Rep 206, Wirtschaftsministerium, 2745, Götz bei Gross Kreutz, 1947-1948.

building construction, as this report indicated, rather the animals were generally underfed and undernourished and some had tuberculosis. On the other hand general mood in Diepensee was positive, confident, and cooperative.⁶⁹

By 1951 nearly 5,000 new farmers found conditions on Bodenreform farms so frustrating that they gave up the land (around 45,000 hectares altogether) and sought other forms of employment. The report stating these figures suggested that new farmers who gave up had insufficient inventory, but also lacked proper help and advice.⁷⁰ Even given the assistance provided through carrying out order 209 (financial assistance for building programs on small farms), many farmers simply could not meet their quotas. New farmers' frustrations increased as collectivization gradually occurred over the course of the later 1950s. Nevertheless, the official perspective contended that as a democratic reform measure the Bodenreform was thoroughly successful and resulted in a complete social restructuring of farmer communities.⁷¹

In October 1946 the SMAD issued Order 304 concerning destitute resettlers. Those resettlers who were both unable to work and impoverished were eligible to receive a one time payment of RM 300 for each adult and RM 100 per child. Reports indicate that by July 1947, eligible resettlers received in total RM 250 million.⁷² Not all eligible

⁶⁹ Fritz Brauer, MdL, Kleinmachnow/Kreis Teltow, 28. Februar 1949, An den Landtag der Landes Brandenburg, Potsdam, pp. 1-2, BrLHA, Rep 206, Wirtschaftsministerium, 2717, Ortsplanung im Krs. Teltow, 1948-1949.

⁷⁰ Kurt Vieweg, "Zur Lage in der Landwirtschaft," 17.1.1951, BA-B, DY 19, 91

⁷¹ Kurt Vieweg, "Die Veränderungen der Klassenverhältnisse im Dorf und unsere Bündnispolitik," BA-B, DY 19, 91

⁷² Charts concerning "Umsiedlerunterstützungen" (Befehl 304 v. 15.10.46), 30.7.48, BA-B, NY 4074, 146. Apparently some resettlers received the money who were not actually eligible. See, for example, Betr.: Unterstützung an Umsiedler-Befehl Nr. 304-, Der

resettlers were aware of Order 304 and thus never applied or applied too late. A sixty-nine year old Pomeranian woman, neither able to work nor possessing any means to support her existence, found out about Order 304 from a newspaper article from September 1949. Her letter described her torn clothing and undergarments and asked for the assistance available through Order 304. She was informed that the payments had already been brought to an end and no further payments would be made.⁷³

The SBZ/GDR officials emphasized local indigene assistance for the resettlers and promoted generosity, while penalizing those deemed guilty of unsocial behavior. Particularly in 1948 and 1949 Umsiedlerwoche, or resettler weeks, were held in different states in the SBZ, especially in Saxony-Anhalt and Brandenburg. These events not only involved collecting items to be donated to the resettlers in the community, rather a major effort was made during such weeks to welcome the resettlers--as citizens with equal rights--to their new Heimat. One example of a resettler week took place in late February 1948 in Saxony-Anhalt under the main principle: "Saxony-Anhalt, the new Heimat." According to a report, thousands of events took place in towns and cities across Saxony-Anhalt during this week, many of which included resettlers and indigenes as participants and sought to improve relations and understanding between the two groups. In addition

Präsident usw, Berlin, Oktober 1947, An die fünf Landesregierungen -Finanz- und Arbeitsministerien, BA-B, DQ2, 3391, Bl. 55.

⁷³ Frau B.V., Sieversdorf, über Neustadt-Dosse, d. 13.11.1949, to the Deutsche Wirtschaftskommission der sowjetischen Besatzungszone, BA-B, DQ2, 3391, Bl. 175; Ministerium für Arbeit und Gesundheitswesen, 3. Dez. 1949, to Frau B.V., BA-B, DQ 2, 3391, Bl. 174. By 1949 over 350 million Marks had been paid out to 1.9 Million resettlers, see, "Die wichtigste menschliche Aufgabe," Landes-Zeitung, Organ der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands für Mecklenburg, Stralsund-Rügen, Nr. 223, 4. Jahrgang, Donnerstag den 22. September 1949, BA-B, DQ 2, 3391, Bl. 176

the resettler week promoted improvements in living conditions and resulted in the re-accommodation of many resettlers who had been living in deplorable housing. Tens of thousands of pieces of furniture, clothing, and household goods were donated for the resettlers and large quantities of food and fuel, and also some garden-size plots of land were collected. Elderly and infirm resettlers also received financial assistance from the Volkssolidarität, or People's Solidarity, a charitable group. A report about the resettler week indicated, however, that despite the generosity of donations and the massive quantities of donated goods, the needs of the resettler community were not met. For example, 463,287 pairs of shoes were reported to be needed, and 9,629 shoes were donated, thus 2.09 percent of the need for shoes was met. Despite this disparity, the resettler weeks were regarded to have been generally successful by officials and by the population; as one report accurately described, the resettler week helped to mobilize the indigenes for the resettler problem.⁷⁴

Despite all the efforts of the officials to improve conditions through land reform, loans, resettler weeks, etc., in 1950 a report indicated that some resettlers were still heavily disadvantaged. The author quoted from a letter received from a 56 year-old resettler woman, who stated that even after five years, she still could not find work reflecting her training and skills. In addition, she explained "I have no shoes, no household appliances, no duvet. All the clothing brought [with her from the Heimat] is ragged and one has to be ashamed to go out in public. Where should the enthusiasm for one's work come from? In the newspapers one reads, and in the political meetings one

⁷⁴ Bericht über die Durchführung der Umsiedlerwoche im Lande Sachsen-Anhalt in der Zeit vom 22. bis 29. Februar 1948, Landesregierung Sachsen Minister für Arbeit und Sozialpolitik, Halle/Saale, den 30. Juni 1948, pp. 1-6, BA-B, DQ 2, 3391, Bl. 195-197.

hears, that in West Germany the resettler problem is consciously kept current. Here in the GDR one does perhaps unintentionally too little for the resettler. [. . .] With such a tedious [stumpfsinnigen] life, it is appropriate to end it all. Instead of getting better, it is always only worse." The report suggested this was not an isolated case.⁷⁵

On 8 September 1950 the GDR issued the "Gesetz über die weitere Verbesserung der Lage der ehemaligen Umsiedler in der DDR" (Law concerning the further improvement of the conditions of the former Resettlers). The preamble explained that already a great deal had been accomplished for the resettlers, but further improvements could be made in terms of the living conditions and economic state of needy resettlers. This law provided loans for purchasing basic household goods, for construction and for businesses. In addition, the law arranged for the sale of milk cows at reasonable prices for the "neediest" new farmers, described the machine-loaning stations (Maschinenausleihstationen) to help with farm equipment, arranged for subsidies for education for older resettler students (those who, due to circumstances of the expulsion and internment, were much older than their classmates), created boarding schools and granted assistance for resettler children in apprenticeships, and established education grants for resettler students, etc. The emphasis throughout this law was on assistance for the neediest of resettlers only.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Rennemann, Hpt.-Referent, Amt für Information, Der Regierung der DDR, Berlin, 16. Feb. 1950, An das Ministerium für Arbeit und Gesundheitswesen, Abt. Sozialfürsorge, BA-B, DQ 2, 3391, Bl. 162

⁷⁶ "Gesetz über die weitere Verbesserung der Lage der ehemaligen Umsiedler in der DDR, vom 8. September 1950," BA-B, DO 1, 34.0/ 33260.

After the publication of this law, GDR officials received many letters from thankful resettlers, expressing their gratitude that they really had a government that worked for the people. Many resettlers conveyed interest in the loans, but could not apply for them because they knew they would not be able to pay them back at the specified rates. One case mentioned in a report involved a sixty-three year old woman with a 65 Mark pension who applied for a 700 Mark loan in order to purchase basic household goods. With her pension she could not have afforded to pay back the loan in the time allotted.⁷⁷ Indeed reportedly some resettlers replied bitterly: "We have lost everything, we do not see why we should have to pay back the loan!"⁷⁸ Officials discussed this matter and suggestions were made for another one-time payment to destitute resettlers. However, such a one-time payment would only be possible, according to a report from the Social Welfare Department, if production increased.⁷⁹

Thus, SBZ/GDR policies and intentions *would have--if* carried out according to plan--improved conditions for impoverished resettlers dramatically. Indeed reflecting on a comparison of conditions in the SBZ and BBZ, the Soviet and East German authorities were arguably initially more active on behalf of resettlers than their counterparts to the West. Of course, certain conditions played a significant role: generally the destitute

⁷⁷ "Umsiedler zur Frage der Rückzahlung ihrer Kredite," Inform-Mitteilung, Amt für Information, Informationskontrolle, 30.10.50, BA-B, DQ 2, 3391, Bl. 4

⁷⁸ Der Rat des Kreises Neustrelitz--Innere Verwaltung- Bevölkerungspolitik, Neustrelitz, den 9.2.1952, An die Landesregierung Mecklenburg, MdI, HA. Staatliche Verwaltung - Bevölkerungspolitik, Schwerin, LHA-S, MdI; 6.11-11 (Ministerium des Innern 1945-1952), 2630.

⁷⁹ I.A. Zumpe, Abt. Sozialfürsorge, 30.11.1950, An den Gemeinderat zu St. Egidien i. Sa., Kreis Glauchau, BA-B, DQ 2, 3391, Bl. 60

received some help, but the potentially productive resettlers who became politically active in the appropriate groups likely received as much help as was fiscally possible. It must also be noted that many measures were hindered by reparations policies of the Soviet Union, which exacerbated the general shortage of many necessary supplies.

A key problem in discussing either resettler or expellee financial policies in the SBZ/GDR or BBZ/Federal Republic respectively, involves the contrast between government intention and reality. Many displaced Germans knew nothing about assistance programs (or applied too late), some potential applicants proudly refused what they regarded to be welfare (even if needed), some expellees and resettlers got caught up in Büroformalismus (bureaucratic formalism) (especially in the SBZ/GDR), and lastly some displaced Germans were confronted by prejudices on the local level from administrators.

One of the key differences between such assistance policies in the SBZ/GDR and the BBZ/Federal Republic involved the official perception of the group in question. In West Germany, the expellees were financially helped partly as a reflection of what they needed, but largely as a reflection of what they--temporarily--had lost. In the SBZ/GDR the destitute were helped because they would otherwise be unhappy and prone to politically unacceptable behavior: their old Heimat was gone and all distinctions between them and the local population were to be erased.

Governmental hindrance of resettler culture and identity

Authorities in the Soviet Zone carefully watched over the political attitudes and activities of resettlers; often as early as the arrival of their transports in the transit camps resettlers were already under observation. One report from the Deutsche Verwaltung des Innern (German Administration of the Interior) discussed a group of 2,000 East Prussians who arrived on 20 October 1948. The report suggested that many of the resettlers were "fascists and people with undemocratic views." Among the group were "political agents and provocateurs" who tried to provoke unrest and urge the resettlers to continue to the Western zones. The report called for careful control of the transports and examination of the political past of some of the resettlers.⁸⁰ Authorities often monitored incoming resettlers, as many other reports indicated, because they frequently suspected the resettlers of having politically subversive attitudes and the corresponding behavior.

In addition to watching transports of resettlers for subversive behavior, the SBZ authorities forbid the creation of any groups which appeared to have primarily resettler membership, regardless of the stated intent of the group. One letter from the Ministry of the Interior from 1947 explained that the occupation authorities would most assuredly oppose the creation of resettler associations and that such groups would hinder resettler integration: "All governmental offices and publicly-active organizations endeavor to

⁸⁰ Berlin, den 27. Oktober 1948, DVdI--Abt. K., Ref. K. 5/C3. MfS Zentralarchiv Allg. S, 659/67, Bl. 71

achieve the melding [Verschmelzung] of the resettlers with the core population into a whole as quickly as possible. In this process separate associations and organizations could only have a disruptive effect."⁸¹

In January 1950 the Chief of the Head Department of the Volkspolizei (People's Police) issued a more detailed statement concerning the official reason to forbid any such resettler activity to the regional authorities. Referring to statements issued by the GDR government and especially Foreign Secretary Georg Dertinger, the report stated that the Eastern border with Poland was recognized as a border serving as a guarantee of peace (Friedensgrenze). "Thus it is to be concluded that all malicious and suspected attacks against the German-Polish peace border in words, print or pictures, as well as through the formation of anti-democratic organizations, which serve warmongering and the provocation of new hate against the Polish people, are crimes that breach Article 6 of the GDR's Constitution."⁸² The statement reminded readers that the constitution declared all citizens to be equal and thus the resettlers did not form a separate group within GDR society; therefore why should they form their own organizations? The Volkspolizei

⁸¹ Letter from Ministerium des Innern, nr.6564, 18. Dezember 1947, to CDU, Landesverband Sachsen-Anhalt. LHA-M, Rep. K 3 Mdl, Nr. 6564, Bl. 187.

⁸² Article 6 called for cooperation, friendship and peace with the Soviet Union and other socialist states, and declared militaristic and revanchist behavior to be criminal acts. See, Ingo von Münch, ed., *Dokumente des Geteilten Deutschland: Quellentexte zur Rechtslage des Deutschen Reiches, der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik* (Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 1968), 527.

Chief explained that any breach of Article 6 necessitated police intervention; further he stated that the majority of resettlers active in illegal groups were paid or "bribed agents of the Anglo-American monopoly capital."⁸³

A report from later that year demonstrated the kind of police action required in defense of Article 6: "It has been determined, that resettler organizations have declared 6 August 1950 to be 'Tag der Heimat' [Day of the Heimat]. It is to be assumed that on this day various related events will take place under other guises. The Volkspolizei offices are instructed to carry out intensified inspections of events and assemblies on the day named."⁸⁴ Indeed any meeting suspected of having primarily resettler attendance was closely monitored.

SBZ/GDR officials regarded separate organizations for the resettlers as threats, not only to the peace with Poland, but also to their harmonious socialist society. In addition to resettler groups or public gatherings, any intentional outward indication of resettler identity was illegal.⁸⁵ SBZ officials also informed radio stations neither to play Heimat songs (Heimatlieder) from the former Eastern territories, nor to play songs with the same melodies and other lyrics.⁸⁶ In addition, the mail entering the GDR was

⁸³ Betr.: Umsiedlerorganisationen, Leiter der Hauptabteilung VP (Lust) Volkspol.-Inspekteur, Berlin, 13. Januar 1950, An alle Landesbehörden der Volkspolizei, Abteilung VP 3, BA-B, DO 1/11/886

⁸⁴ Leiter der Hauptabteilung VA (Lust), Chefinspekteur der Volkspolizei, HV Deutsche Volkspolizei-- Hauptabt. VA, Berlin, 21. Juli 1950, die LBdVP Mecklenburg, Sachsen, Sa-Anhalt u. Thüringen. BA-B, DO 1/11/886

⁸⁵ See, for instance several reports from 1955 about resettlers wearing East Prussian badges contained in BA-B, DO 1/11/886.

⁸⁶ Johannes Hoffmann, et al., "Flüchtlinge und Vertriebene im Spannungsfeld der SBZ-Nachkriegspolitik," in *Sie hatten alles verloren: Flüchtlinge und Vertriebene in der sowjetische Besatzungszone Deutschlands*, ed. Manfred Wille, et al., Studien der

examined for any West German literature; police officers particularly sought out and questioned individuals who received expellee literature from whatever Western source. GDR officials were also especially suspicious of church groups that might serve as cover-up organizations offering political venues for resettlers. Resettlers were constantly under suspicion of seeking a revision of the Oder-Neisse-Border and intending to go back to their old Heimat. Although officials in the SBZ/GDR rarely discussed the failures of integration, those who did sometimes suggested that the resettlers themselves were in large part to blame for social tensions.

Indeed, the problems with resettler integration into society were in part, according to official sources, brought on by the resettlers themselves. One report suggested that the problematic tendencies among the resettlers stemmed from the "material and psychological" uprooting they experienced as a result of their resettlement. The report contended that the uprootedness "produces a negative attitude towards life. He [the resettler] is in his actions and thinking focused on the past, in a certain sense impractical, inhibited and despondent." The official report reminded readers that one had to consider the fact that often resettlers had previously lived in comfort and security and now, under totally different and uncertain circumstances, had to start over from the beginning. "To make matters worse, the old established population often feels that they [the resettlers] as new arrivals are intruders [Eindringliche] and are therefore not always willing to make the resettlers' struggle for existence easier. Very strong reactionary political influences are released through this situation." The report connected these reactionary influences to

Forschungsstelle Ostmitteleuropa an der Universität Dortmund, Band 13 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1993), 17.

the "underground propaganda," that "leads the resettler again and again to believe that a return to the Heimat is not all too far off." The report stated that political parties and associations should work with the resettlers and help them to feel comfortable with the new democracy and help to solve the resettler problem.⁸⁷

SBZ/GDR officials called not only on parties, associations, and governmental agencies to help the resettlers find a new Heimat; officials also implored indigenes to help the resettlers in every way possible. The displaced Germans were given a task they could only complete if the local population helped them to feel welcome: "Not backwards, rather look ahead and build a strong existence, that is the great problem of the resettler, the problem that they with the full support of our people must solve."⁸⁸ Looking backwards to the old Heimat would only lead to further difficulties with integration; resettlers were encouraged to replace that Heimat with the new one in the SBZ/GDR.

Indeed, officials in the SBZ/GDR promoted an image of society reflecting unanimity and harmony, thus, as expressed in the sanctioned discourse or public transcripts, there was no room for resettlers to behave in a distinct or an unauthorized manner. Gatherings of resettlers, regardless of their stated purpose, appeared to officials to indicate a challenge to SBZ/GDR policies. The additional fear that resettlers would form a dissident subculture, express shared hidden transcripts and thereby attain a voice, a voice that would find support from Western sources, deepened SBZ/GDR officials' trepidation. The government even forbid the expression of dissonant views through

⁸⁷ "Das Umsiedlerproblem" Deutsche Verwaltung für Arbeit und Sozialfürsorge, Berlin, 6. Januar 1948, p. 6-7. BA-B, DQ 2, 3370, Bl. 168-169

⁸⁸ "Umsiedler schaffen sich eine neue Heimat," "Büchlein" (Finsterwalde, Brandenburg, nd, probably 1947), p. 2, BA-B, Sgy 2, V D.F.XX, 33

cultural activities. Encouraging the fusion of resettlers with the existing population and forbidding public gatherings or expression of their distinctiveness was a means of hindering the development of a dissident subculture and maintaining the domination of the existing mainstream political culture. If resettlers publicly voiced their hope for a revision of the Oder-Neisse-Line and a return to the Heimat, the appearance of unanimity in SBZ/GDR society would be shattered and the public transcripts would be shown to be fraudulent.

The Oder-Neisse Border as Peace-Border

Rather than determine the permanent shared border between Germany and Poland, the Potsdam Accords called for Polish administration of the former German Eastern territories up to the Oder-Neisse-Line, and massive population transfers of all Germans living East of the provisional border. Prior to this conference, confusion reigned in a Germany literally filled with tons of rubble and millions of homeless and displaced Europeans. During late summer 1945 following the Accords, officials in the zones recognized the need to settle and accommodate--at least temporarily--the displaced Germans from the East. Eventually the two Germanies which emerged in 1949 would officially recognize this border as legitimate and inviolable. The Federal Republic condemned this decision when it was made by the GDR government and then they concluded a similar agreement with Poland twenty years later. Indeed German officials in the SBZ/GDR initially also struggled with the acceptance of the Oder-Neisse-Line as the new border between Germany and Poland.

During the initial weeks after the end of the war, administrative chaos and widespread confusion dominated the German scene. After his release from Bad Kreuznach, officials informed a young man named Rudolf Bühring that he would escort transports of displaced Germans back to Stettin, where he had lived before the war. Bühring described train cars with the "Heimat-destinations" (Heimatziele) marked in chalk on each car: "Königsberg, Stettin, Breslau, Nausalz etc. It was not yet being said that the Eastern territories no longer belong to Germany. One has to note that 17 July 1945 was the last day of the transport trains, appropriately the day on which the conference in Potsdam began." Bühring described a ten-day long trip, during which many small children died and he as escort served in a difficult capacity. After Bühring returned to the SBZ the mayor of Haldensleben assigned him to be "acting director of the resettler and quarantine camp" and he was issued a yellow resettler identity card. In the camp, it was his duty to register arrival and departure of resettlers as well as lead the camp's boys school.

Officials assigned a major function to the camp personnel, namely political advising of the residents. In his account, Bühring noted the increased difficulty of this aspect of his work after the "Western powers' hate campaign against Poland intensified and naturally affected the resettlers. James P. Byrnes, the American Secretary of State, openly declared his rejection of the Potsdam Accords in Stuttgart [on 6 September 1946]. Today one can perhaps not at all grasp how strongly this affected the people who sometimes sit on their suitcases and wait to return again to the 'old Heimat.'"⁸⁹

Indeed even the SED party officials initially rejected the Oder-Neisse-Line as a permanent border between Germany and Poland. In speeches in September 1946,

⁸⁹ Accounts from Rudolf Bühring, pp. 31-33, 56, BA-B, Sgy 30, 1845/1.

Wilhelm Pieck described the situation: "The question of the Eastern Border [Ostgrenze] is a great misfortune for our people but determined for the present through the resolutions from Potsdam. Our people must also in this issue first regain trust and then place demands."⁹⁰ Pieck, who came from Guben, a city divided by the new border, likely had personal difficulties accepting the line as a permanent demarcation between Germany and Poland.

Other SED party officials and prominent members likewise reacted to what was perceived at the time to be the "temporary" border. Max Fechner, at the time the SED's top candidate for Berlin, followed the current party line in his reaction to the Byrnes speech: "As to the German Eastern border I would like to declare that the SED will counter any reduction in the size of the German territories. The Eastern border is only provisional and can first be conclusively decided at a peace conference with the collaboration of all the great victorious states."⁹¹ Meanwhile the Soviet Union had taken a firm stand in support of the Oder-Neisse-Line, and this glaring disparity between the SED position and the Soviet view would not endure long.

To be sure it must be noted that the resettlers, even early on, were instructed to find a "new Heimat" in the SBZ. Unless the old Heimat was in fact permanently gone,

⁹⁰ Quelle: *Neue Zeitung*, Berlin, 20. Sept. 1946, cited in Arbeitsgruppe für Dokumentation "Deutsche Ostfragen" in der Ostabteilung des Auswärtigen Amts, *Dokumentation "Oder-Neisse-Linie" Urkundentexte und zusätzliche Erklärung zur Frage der deutschen Ostgebiete von Potsdamer Abkommen* (2. August 1945 bis April 1959), 2. verbesserte und erweiterte Auflage. Nr. 266, p. 154, Bundesarchiv Koblenz (BA-K), B 136, 6717, Band 2.

⁹¹ Quelle: Erklärung der SED im *Neuen Deutschland* vom 19. Sept. 1946, cited in Arbeitsgruppe für Dokumentation "Deutsche Ostfragen" in der Ostabteilung des Auswärtigen Amts, *Dokumentation "Oder-Neisse-Linie"* Nr. 268, p. 154, BA-K, B 136, 6717, Band 2.

why would officials have consistently spoken of the replacement of the old Heimat with the new? The report from September 1946 discussing the accomplishments and also continuing tasks of the ZVU spoke of helping the resettlers to find a new Heimat as part of its main task. The Vice President of the ZVU stated: "To lose a Heimat is painful and bitter. To have no new one is a disastrous fate."⁹² Moreover, resettlers wrote letters in the 1940s to various officials asking for confirmation of rumors they would go home or asking when they might be able to do so. One such letter was answered by the office of the Sekretariat des ZK der KPD (Central Committee of the KPD) on 18 March 1946. "There should be no possibility for you again to return to Stettin. Even if one hears that the Poles are leaving Stettin, that is only a fully groundless rumor. Stettin is under Polish administration and nothing will change this fact. A permit for you to move to Stettin is thus not possible."⁹³ If officials truly believed the border was temporary, why would there have been "no possibility [. . .] again to return to Stettin"? Why would a new Heimat even be necessary?

Although in 1947 some SBZ officials began to express dissent, officially in the SBZ the Oder-Neisse-Border had not yet been recognized. In March at a press conference in Stuttgart, Otto Grotewohl stated, "The SED regrets every change of borders. She [SED] will reject the Oder-Neisse-Line just as any border change in the

⁹² "Mit Herz und Kopf," Michael Tschesnow, Vizepräsident der ZVU, Ein Jahr Zentralverwaltung für deutsche Umsiedler, 28. September 1946, pp. 3-4, BA-B, DQ 2, 3401, Bl. 64-65

⁹³ Sekretariat des ZK der KPD, 18. März 1946, (an) W.B., Wentschau Krs. Lübeburg üb. Dahlenburg, BA-B, RY 1, I2/5, 45 a und b (a: A-M; b: N-Z)

West."⁹⁴ Bühring described a resettler assembly in Haldensleben also in 1947 where he was the only "party comrade" with a clear answer to questions concerning the border, questions such as: "Will we return to the old Heimat or not?" Bühring contended, "I was probably the only party member in this year 1947 who very clearly and unambiguously said: 'You won't return, your Heimat is here in District Haldensleben.' There was almost an uproar. Somebody appeared next to me on the stage, showed what he had on his body, and said that the 'new Heimat' certainly could not look like this."⁹⁵

By 1948 Bühring was no longer one of the only officials to state in public that the territorial changes were permanent. A ZVU press release from January 1948 entitled "Einige Worte zum Nachdenken" (A Few Words to Think About) explained: "There can no longer be a return to the former homeland [Heimatländer], this fact will also not be altered by the circulating chain letters or appeals to withstand. It is madness to believe that a new war can undo the resettlement."⁹⁶ Indeed in February of that year, President Engel of the ZVU publicly stated: "The borders in the East are very painful for us, but they are a necessity for the safe-guarding of peace."⁹⁷ Likewise in an official 1949 brochure, the Oder-Neisse-Border was recognized and promoted as a "peace-border"

⁹⁴ Quelle: Wochenspiegel Nr. 17/1952, Erklärung O. Grotewohls auf eine Pressekonferenz in Stuttgart am 12. März 1947, cited in Arbeitsgruppe für Dokumentation "Deutsche Ostfragen" in der Ostabteilung des Auswärtigen Amts, *Dokumentation "Oder-Neisse-Linie"* Nr. 271, p., 156, BA-K, B 136, 6717, Band 2.

⁹⁵ Accounts from Rudolf Bühring, p. 123, BA-B, Sgy 30, 1845/1.

⁹⁶ Fischbach, "Einige Worte zum Nachdenken," Pressedienst für ZVU, Nr. 4, Berlin 16. Jan. 1948, p. 2. BA-B, DQ 2, 3363

⁹⁷ Referentenmaterial Nr. 6, "Das Problem der Umsiedler," Referat, gehalten von Herrn Präsident Engel auf der Sitzung der Arbeitskommissionen des DFD für Arbeit und Sozialfürsorge und für Volkswirtschaft am 24. Februar 1948, p. 4. BA-B NY 4074, 146

(Friedensgrenze). Also in this brochure, Pieck voiced the argument that the border was already to have been considered permanent with the unanimous Allied decision at Potsdam to remove the German population from the Eastern territories.⁹⁸

The official shift in position concerning the Oder-Neisse-Line extended also to placing blame for the loss of the territories and the anguish of the resettlers, as well as defusing the political danger of a persistent desire to return to the old Heimat. At a resettler assembly in Berlin in August 1949 Pieck presented a paper in which he described the cause of the loss of the Eastern Heimat. "From the anguish brought upon the German community [Volk] by the Hitler-war, the people probably most seriously affected are the people who due to the Hitler-war lost their Heimat.[. . .] It is only understandable that they are most unhappy about it and filled with the hope, that they will indeed again return to their old Heimat. This unhappiness and this hope are used against the resettlers as part of a massive deception by politicians who work for the western occupation powers and want to take advantage of the resettlers for reactionary plans and even for a new war." Pieck explained that indeed the SED understood the situation of the resettlers and mourned with them for the loss of their Heimat; however, unlike the West German politicians who focused on the pain of the resettlers and sought to abuse it for warmongering means, the GDR officials sought to help them look forward and gain a new and comfortable Heimat.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Nr. 275, Äusserung von W. Ulbricht in der Broschüre "Jenseits von Oder und Neisse" and Nr. 276, Erklärung W. Piecks nach seiner Rückkehr aus Warschau auf einer Pressekonferenz am 9. Sept 1949, Quelle: Jenseits von Oder und Neisse, SED-Sachsen 1949. p. 156, cited in Arbeitsgruppe für Dokumentation "Deutsche Ostfragen" in der Ostabteilung des Auswärtigen Amts, *Dokumentation "Oder-Neisse-Linie"* Nr. 271, p., 156, BA-K, B 136, 6717, Band 2.

In 1950 through the Warsaw Declaration (6 June) and the Görlitz Agreement (6 July) the GDR and Poland "recognized the prescribed and existing border" as the "inviolable peace- and friendship-border that does not divide rather unites both people."¹⁰⁰ An article titled "Niemand kann uns mehr entzweien: Historische Akt der deutsch-polnischen Freundschaft/Abkommen über die gemeinsame Friedensgrenze feierlich unterzeichnet" (No one can any longer set us at odds: Historical act of German-Polish Friendship/Agreement over the common peace-border ceremonially signed) described the reportedly jubilant reception of the agreement in the border town Görlitz/Zgorzelec. Grotewohl spoke before crowds and declared, "Whoever tries to stir up hatred towards this agreement, engages in warmongering. Whoever works for the fulfillment of this agreement, works for peace and for international friendship. In that way the agreement concerning the Oder-Neisse-Border is heavy blow against all war-firebrands [Kriegsbrandstifter] because this border is a frontier serving to guarantee peace [Friedensgrenze]."¹⁰¹ Indeed this shift within official policy, from opposing to celebrating the Oder-Neisse-Border, was thereby completed. This shift reflected also a stronger division between the policies of the new German states.

⁹⁹ Pieck, Referat auf der öffentlichen Versammlung der Umsiedler am 12. August 1949 in Berlin im Zirkus Barlay, pp. 1-5. BA-B, NY 4036, 440

¹⁰⁰ For both the Warsaw Declaration and the Görlitz Agreement see, Münch, ed., *Dokumente des Geteilten Deutschland*, 496-499.

¹⁰¹ "Niemand kann uns mehr entzweien: Historische Akt der deutsch-polnischen Freundschaft/ Abkommen über die gemeinsame Friedensgrenze feierlich unterzeichnet." *Bauern Echo: Organ der Demokratischen Bauernpartei Deutschlands*, Nr. 150/ 3. Jahrgang, Sonnabend, 8. Juli 1950, Verlagsort Berlin, BrLHA, Rep 208, Ministerium für Land- und Forstwirtschaft, 245, Beschwerden der Neubauern, 1951-1952, Bl. 114

In recognition of the "Month of German-Polish Friendship" in April 1952 the GDR's official position on the West German government was made even more clear through the following statement: "The fixing of the Oder-Neisse-Border was an important step in the development of German-Polish friendship and with it the safeguarding of peace in Europe. It is thus a national responsibility, to defend this peace-border and to do everything possible to crush the chauvinistic warmongering of the monopoly lords [Monopolherren] and militarists, Adenauer and Schumacher in West Germany. Whoever violates the Oder-Neisse-Peace-Border wants war."¹⁰² Indeed securing peace in Europe meant being willing to go to war with West Germany. The GDR warned resettlers not to play a role in the future plans of the "American capitalists and the accomplices in Bonn" (Bonners Helfershelfer) to bring about a Third World War.¹⁰³

Critiques of the Federal Republic and Vertriebenenpolitik

Even at the most fundamental level, SBZ/GDR officials expressed fervent critique of the Western Zones and later Federal Republic. The general perception was that West Germany was under the control of American imperialists and run by their German

¹⁰² Aus einem Aufruf des Nationalrates der Nationalen Front und der Deutsch-Polnische Gesellschaft für Frieden und gute Nachbarschaft zum "Monat der deutsch-polnischen Freundschaft", April 1952, Quelle: Tägliche Rundschau, 1. April 1952, cited in Arbeitsgruppe für Dokumentation "Deutsche Ostfragen" in der Ostabteilung des Auswärtigen Amts, *Dokumentation "Oder-Neisse-Linie"* Nr. 278, p. 158, BA-K, B 136, 6717, Band 2.

¹⁰³ Westkommission, Thesen -- Entwurf (Umsiedler -- Kommission)., 9.10.50, p. 1. BA-B, NY 4062/122.

accomplices; according to the SBZ/GDR perspective the overall goal of this unsavory team of politicians was to engulf Europe in another World War. SED officials suggested the expellees were the pawns and indeed cannon fodder for the warmongering West German government. According to SBZ/GDR officials this perceived exploitation of the displaced Germans helped to explain the persistence of the miserable living conditions in Western Germany.

SBZ/GDR newspapers often printed or reprinted reports describing the camps, joblessness, and social tensions in West German cities. These articles became numerous around 1948, likely reflecting not only increasing tensions between the Eastern and Western Zones, but also the official SBZ perspective that their own resettlers were already integrated and comfortable.

One of the July 1948 issues of the East Berlin newspaper, the *Tägliche Rundschau* described the conditions in a transit camp in Lower Saxony in the BBZ as "misery unfit for humans" (Menschenunwürdiges Elend) and compared the camp director (Lagerkommissar) to someone from a Nazi concentration camp. The ceilings leaked, almost every room had large puddles, the floorboards were rotting, everything smelled moldy, and wind whistled through the defective walls; between twelve and eighteen people were crammed into hole-like accommodations. And many of the inhabitants, especially the 150 children living there, suffered from diseases, such as tuberculosis and whooping cough. The report suggested that refugees in the British Zone were regarded as "second class citizens, rabble and free game." According to this article, the camp director, the Social Democrat Dr. Hanke, and the other administrators regularly stole food from the expellees' rations with which they then partied with rich farmers and later

returned drunk to the camp, waking and scaring sick children. Despite this behavior, Dr. Hanke and his administrators daily made such remarks as: "Damned Prussian refugee-rabble, you all just want to eat greedily" (Verfluchtes preussisches Flüchtlingspack, fressen wollt ihr bloss).¹⁰⁴

One of the occupants of the camp had a brother in the Soviet Zone who obtained through the Bodenreform a farm and a new farmhouse in District Salzwedel. The woman complained that her brother's livestock occupied healthier accommodations than did the inhabitants of the camp where she lived. "It will not take much longer,' she said, 'then our misery will come to an end. In the new farm there is still room for me and both my children. The brother already submitted an application for a settlement permit to the mayor there.'"¹⁰⁵

A later article from 1950 from the same newspaper titled "Umsiedler vertrauen der Regierung" (Resettlers trust the Government) described the conditions of a resettler woman and her son in an "isolated village" in Western Germany. She could neither find acceptable housing nor a job in her profession, her son was unable to continue in school, and they felt like "troublesome intruders that one would like to get rid of as soon as possible." Through the intervention of relatives the woman and her son were able to move to the "Eastern Zone," where she quickly found an acceptable apartment, employment, and her son could continue in school. More importantly--she felt as though

¹⁰⁴ "Menschenunwürdiges Elend in Bizonen: Flüchtlinge hausen in verkommenen Quartieren -- Ein Lagerkommissar wie aus einem Nazi-KZ," 22. Juli 1948, *Tägliche Rundschau* (Berlin), BA-B, DQ 2, 3389

¹⁰⁵ "Menschenunwürdiges Elend in Bizonen: Flüchtlinge hausen in verkommenen Quartieren -- Ein Lagerkommissar wie aus einem Nazi-KZ," 22. Juli 1948, *Tägliche Rundschau*, Berlin, BA-B, DQ 2, 3389.

she were a "fully adequate citizen of the GDR" and declared that she had "found a new Heimat here."¹⁰⁶ Examples of displaced Germans who sought permission to transfer into the SBZ/GDR represented small victories in the war for political validation.¹⁰⁷

Whereas the Bodenreform was politically regarded as successful in the Soviet Zone, SBZ/GDR officials often ridiculed the feeble implementation of similar land reform measures in the Western Zones, especially the BBZ. In his 1948 article "Wollen die Umsiedler vorwärts oder zurück?" (Do resettlers want to move forward or go back?), Georg Chwalczyk contended, "Instead of dividing up Junkerland and distributing the land to resettler-farmers, to the land-poor and landless, instead of getting the economy going with one's own efforts and letting the hundred thousand accustomed-to-working hands of the resettlers participate in the rebuilding of a really democratic economy, one allows the resettlers in the Western Zones to drag out a miserable existence as unwilling tolerated 'guests' and delivers sermons to them."

SBZ/GDR officials also denounced the terminology used to describe displaced Germans in the Western Zones/Federal Republic. For example, in his 1948 article Chwalczyk also criticized the practice, popular in the Western Zones, of calling the displaced Germans "refugees" and suggested this tendency demonstrated an unwillingness to conceive of real integration. "In the effort to get rid of the unwelcome 'guests,' one attempts to convince the resettlers that they are not at all resettlers, rather 'refugees' and that there is only one rescue for them, namely the return to the old Heimat."

¹⁰⁶ "Umsiedler vertrauen der Regierung," *Tägliche Rundschau*, v. 21.10.1950, BrLHA, Rep 347 FDGB Landesvorstand, Ideologische Abteilung, Nr, 149.

¹⁰⁷ Much larger numbers of resettlers who arrived in the SBZ/GDR fled further West, often without permission, due to their inability to accept political conditions there.

The article further stated that the displaced German's love for the Heimat was abused by politicians in the Western Zones for the purposes of aggressive policies that "serve not German, but foreign interests."¹⁰⁸ To be sure SBZ/GDR officials reacted to terms such as "expellee" or "Heimatvertriebene," terms which they viewed to be exceedingly reactionary and confrontational, with even greater contempt and considered them further proof of insidious political machinations.

A 1949 report from the Deutsche Wirtschaftskommission (German Economic Commission) expanded on the claim that West German authorities abused the displaced Germans for reactionary political purposes. "In West Germany the resettlers fight for their lives. Governments and authorities, parties and resettler organizations fight a mutual guerilla war to the disadvantage of the resettlers." According to the report, officials in West Germany were neither interested in integrating the displaced Germans, nor in properly accommodating them. This last claim was supported by contemporaneous figures from Schleswig-Holstein concerning the "170,000 people living in conditions unfit for human beings." Reflecting on this figure and the situation in general, the author of the report asserted that in four years hardly anything at all had been achieved to help the displaced Germans in any part of the Western zones. "That explains why the resettlers in West Germany find themselves to be constantly in a state of dissatisfaction and unrest. This unrest is used by political parties and organizations in Western Germany for the purposes of shameful warmongering. Because they want to mobilize the resettlers as marching columns [Marschkolonnen] against the Eastern Zone,

¹⁰⁸ Georg Chwalczyk, "Wollen die Umsiedler vorwärts oder zurück?" *Freie Presse*, Zwickau, 21. März, 1948. BA-B, DQ 2, 3399.

against the People's Democracies and against the Soviet Union, they prevent the settling-down [Sesshaftmachung] of the resettler. That is why they fight against the Oder-Neisse-Border, that is why they promise the resettlers the return to their former Heimat, that is why they want to use the resettlers once again for military purposes."¹⁰⁹

In his speech before the Eighth Conference of the German Volksrat [People's Council] in July 1948 Wilhelm Pieck compared President Truman's European policies to the Monroe Doctrine and spoke of an "Europe for Americans!" (Europa den Amerikanern!), suggesting that such a policy on the part of the American imperialists also entailed support for a separate "Western state in Germany." Indeed, according to Pieck, West German politicians misled the German people through lies and slander and "sacrificed them to American imperialism." Pieck suggested that especially the expellees were the victims of the deplorable policies followed by the West German politicians, a fact which he referred to as a "scandalous example their [the politicians] mass deception." Pieck described the governmental policy towards expellees--they were treated as strangers (Ortsfremde), denied equal rights, and any resistance or outrage over their treatment was controlled through "the assertion that the Oder-Neisse-Border would be lifted and they would be able to return to their Heimat." Pieck called this a "shameless deception without parallel." Pieck criticized CDU politicians for exploiting the expellees

¹⁰⁹ Report from the Deutsche Wirtschaftskommission (likely titled "Umsiedler Fragen," 1949), pp. 7-8. BA-B, NY 4062, 80.

for purposes of election propaganda. In view of the fact that the Oder-Neisse-Border could only be altered through war, Pieck considered West German policies to be not only irresponsible but also highly irrational.¹¹⁰

Further, a report from 1950 praising GDR efforts as exemplified in the "Gesetz über die weitere Verbesserung der Lage der ehemaligen Umsiedler in der DDR" (Law concerning the further improvement of the conditions of the former Resettlers), described in comparison the inadequate efforts of the "Division-Parliament" (Bonner Spalterparlament) to ameliorate conditions for the displaced Germans. "All petitions for improvement in the situation of resettlers are discussed again and again and without reaching a conclusion [totgeredet] by professional members of parliament, drawn out[,] or buried with the help of their popular tricks of referral to lower parliamentary committees. The resettlers are kept in misery there in order to be able to misuse them as compliant tools of war-preparation-policies [Kriegsvorbereitungspolitik] and later as cannon-fodder for Anglo-American imperialism."¹¹¹

The *White Book on the American and British Policy in West Germany and the Revival of German Imperialism*, a translation into English of a 1951 German manuscript, transmitted these accusations to a broader (even international) audience. According to this book, the "German monopolists" sought to realize their "predatory aims" through "a civil war of Germans against Germans." The aims of the German imperialists, however,

¹¹⁰ W. Pieck, Ausführung auf der 8. Tagung des Deutschen Volksrates am 22. Juli 1949 über die Schaffung der Nationalen Front, pp. 2-4. BA-B, NY 4036, 440.

¹¹¹ Referenten-Material zum, Gesetz über die weitere Verbesserung der Lage der ehemaligen Umsiedler in der DDR (1950), Nationalrat der Nationalen Front des demokratische Deutschland--Büro des Präsidiums, pp. 1-3. BA-B, NY 4074, 146.

would not thereby be sated. "The existence of the resettlers thus forms an important excuse for the expansionist aims of German imperialism. If the resettlers did not exist they would have to be invented." According to the *White Book*, the American imperialists and their German allies needed the "plight of the resettlers" in order to achieve their expansionist aims.¹¹² Indeed a GDR report from 1952 assessing conditions for farmers claimed that Adenauer's government and American politicians announced to West German farmers--just as Hitler and Goebbels had once done--that they must "Work and produce, so that the armed forces can march better."¹¹³

To be sure, the verbal protests against the West German expellee policies sometimes also took tangible form. The 1960 "Day of the Heimat" (Tag der Heimat) in West Berlin captured world-wide attention, evidently due to a GDR campaign against revanchism. A report from the Bund der Vertriebenen (Federation of Expellees) described the cause for the massive amounts of media attention: "The reason for it was evidently the campaign led by Soviet Zone officials against the expellees, [whom they] alleged to be 'revanchists'[.] and the blockade measures [Sperrmassnahmen] enacted on traffic within Berlin."¹¹⁴ Apparently the efforts of the GDR officials to demonstrate against this expellee event only brought it more media attention.

¹¹² National Council of the National Front of Democratic Germany, *White Book on the American and British Policy in West Germany and the Revival of German Imperialism*, (nd, np), 51-53.

¹¹³ Kurt Vieweg, Die Veranlagung für tierische Erzeugnisse im Jahre 1952, p. 5, BA-B, DY 19, 104.

¹¹⁴ "Der 'Tag der Heimat 1960' im Spiegel der öffentlichen Meinung: Analytische Bemerkungen über das Echo in Presse und Rundfunk," Bericht, BdV, Berliner Büro, Berlin-Charlottenburg, 6.10.60, BA-K, B 106, 27584.

Indeed the opposing policies towards the displaced Germans often served as fundamental weapons in the war for political validation between the two Germanies; in fact the resettlers and expellees were frequently on the front lines of the combat zone whether they sought such a key position or not. The GDR government condemned the pre-Brandt West German view that since the former territories were not lost, the expellees would return to the Heimat, and the Germanness of this Eastern Heimat was to be preserved because reunification of all three Germanies (West, Middle and East) would one day be achieved. Thus, the West German understanding of integration--which encouraged the expellees to embrace their uniqueness and honor their traditions through associations and Landsmannschaften--was anathema to the GDR world view because it threatened the political integrity of Poland and thus peace and stability in Central Europe. The GDR would, however, lose the war for political validation and after its collapse the majority of resettlers would accept the term "expellee" in order to receive special funds from the Lastenausgleich in 1992; in addition, monuments in memory of the expulsion would crop up in most major cities in the new federal states, and some former resettlers-turned-expellees would form Landsmannschaften--a minority of whom would even call for a return to the Heimat.

CHAPTER 5

SELF-IMAGES OF THE DISPLACED GERMANS: FLIGHT, EXPULSION, AND RESETTLEMENT EXPERIENCES

As the Allied victory became a foregone conclusion, it was primarily the German women, children, and the elderly on the Eastern front who witnessed the arrival of enemy soldiers as they imposed German defeat, often according to the harshest of terms. The Soviet soldiers reached the Southeastern tip of East Prussia already by October 1944 and over the course of the winter swept through the rest of East Prussia, Pomerania, and West Prussia, cutting off the Eastern territories from the rest of Germany. Organized and timely evacuations--before the arrival of the enemy soldiers--took place rarely; more frequently, Germans fled in horse-drawn treks, on board trains and trucks, across the ice, via ship, on foot, with bicycles, or even by plane. Many fleeing Germans used a combination of the different means of departure and sought above all to avoid contact with representatives of the Red Army. Often Soviet soldiers captured fleeing Germans, and forced them to return to their homes, where they would experience a range of behavior from victorious Soviet troops or Polish occupation forces. With short notice the Eastern Germans who had been sent back to their homes would later face expulsion, an expulsion occurring often under harsh conditions and taking place generally after

extended periods of internment and sometimes forced labor under Polish or Soviet administration. Especially in February 1945, as a reflection of Stalin's understanding of reparations, thousands of Eastern Germans captured by Soviet soldiers faced deportation to sometimes remote parts of the Soviet Union, where they performed forced labor until they got too sick to continue, died, or were eventually released often years later and sent West.

Under West German law, all Germans from the former Eastern territories who lost their Heimat in connection with the war were legally regarded as "expellees"; indeed for legal purposes it was reasonable and perhaps necessary to establish a monolithic category. Yet many historians and other authors writing about refugees and expellees in postwar Germany likewise refer to the Germans displaced from the area East of the Oder-Neisse-Line with one term and as one unified group, thereby ignoring often significant experiential differences. To be sure, expellee historian Theodor Schieder urged readers to refer to all Eastern Germans--who were denied their right to return and had their "Heimatrecht" (right to the Heimat) taken from them--as expellees and to consider the flight to be a part of the entire expulsion process as an historical event.¹ Despite his insistence on the use of the word "expellee," Schieder indeed distinguished between those who fled and those who faced expulsion. Scholars who discuss the flight or expulsion at any length generally do differentiate between these two categories, but rarely do other distinctions enter into the discussion, and rarely do any such distinctions

¹ Theodor Schieder, *Die Vertreibung der Deutschen Bevölkerung aus den Gebieten östlich der Oder-Neisse. Dokumentation der Vertreibung der Deutschen aus Ost-Mitteleuropa*, vol I/I (n.p: Bundesministerium für Vertriebene), 24 E.

affect the portrayal of postwar integration experiences.² Simplifications of this nature may serve a purpose; since every experience is unique, it is indeed impossible to discuss with exacting detail all variations of events experienced by a large group. However, certain aspects of their background and departure determined how displaced Germans perceived themselves and their experiences.

Certainly the method of departure and the experiences surrounding it played a significant role in determining the speed and ease of integration of the Eastern Germans in their postwar societies. Those Germans who fled often arrived in better health and under more acceptable circumstances than Germans who faced expulsion after internment under Polish or Soviet administration or working in labor camps in the Soviet Union. In addition, the individual background of the displaced Germans influenced the ease of integration into their postwar societies. Their class background, for example, often determined how willing they were to ask for welfare or other forms of assistance. Their level of education and work experience often affected their flexibility on the job market in their later societies. The type of community they entered influenced their comfort-level and experiences with the indigenes: small communities were sometimes insular, Catholic townspeople often resented the presence of Protestant newcomers, and vice-versa. Additionally, age played an important role: the older displaced Germans,

² Philipp Ther discussed the reasons for using the term "expulsion" (Vertreibung). He contended that the persons involved referred to themselves as "expellees" and Western scholars have consistently used them term. Ther's definition of expulsion is reasonable, but argumentation that suggests that the displaced Germans referred to themselves as expellees is not well-founded. Most Eastern Germans actually referred to themselves as "refugees." Ther, *Deutsche und polnische Vertriebene. Gesellschaft und Vertriebenenpolitik in der SBZ-DDR und in Polen, 1945-1956* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 99-100.

especially those already of retirement age, often never fully accepted the loss of the old Heimat. In addition, the departure experiences, the background of the displaced Germans, and their interaction with the indigenes in their new community often affected their level of homesickness or longing for the Heimat. Thus, the uniqueness of the different departure experiences and the influence of their diverse backgrounds played important roles in their integration into their postwar societies--perhaps surprisingly--often a more important role than in which of the two Germanies they experienced integration.

In addition to influencing expellees' later integration, the method of departure and experiences associated with it also affected the persistence of the memory of the event. In several of his works on memory Daniel Schacter discussed the extent of mental scarring often associated with emotional and traumatic experiences.³ Displaced Germans certainly experienced and witnessed many personally traumatic events: a forced population transfer, leaving behind everything familiar, abandoning most possessions, losing employment, etc. It must also be noted that many Germans either literally lost loved ones or even witnessed their deaths; for example, many thousands of children lost one or both parents. The degree of trauma experienced by the displaced Germans during the flight, expulsion, or internment considerably influenced their later integration in postwar societies.

³ Daniel L Schacter, *Searching for Memory: The Brain, the Mind and the Past* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), 201-205; Schacter, *The Seven Sins of Memory: How the Mind Forgets and Remembers* (Boston, New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2001), 174.

In addition, the type and extent of interaction with enemy soldiers represented a significant factor often determining the intensity of the trauma experienced during the flight, expulsion or internment. Soviet soldiers sought to avenge the atrocities committed in their country following the German invasion in 1941; at least initially they were encouraged to act as they wished with the Germans they encountered. There are many reliable accounts of Soviet brutality against women and children in the Eastern territories; the interaction of German civilians with Soviet soldiers in the East Prussian village Nemmersdorf served as one of the most infamous examples. Many Germans who had access to newspapers and radio broadcasts were aware that the Soviets were pressing in on East Prussia, and many Germans saw newsreel footage or heard reports of the atrocities, which occurred in villages such as Nemmersdorf. The Nazis used these reports in order to try to awaken the will to resist and fight the enemy; often the Eastern Germans who heard the horror stories began planning their flight so as to avoid such a fate.

Since almost all the German men were in uniform, in prisoner of war camps, in the Volkssturm, or already deceased, the German women, the elderly, and children faced the arrival of the Russian soldiers and tried to orchestrate their flight to the West. The active roles that women and children had to take during their departure often contrasted with traditional tasks for their gender and age categories, and many of the women and children from the Eastern territories necessarily continued to maintain these roles after their arrival within the borders of the new Germanies. Indeed not only during the initial phase of reconstructing their lives, but also as things normalized, women continued to

play strong roles in maintaining traditions and identities from their former Heimat. The central role of women and children during the flight certainly influenced their post-flight prominence culturally and socially in the decades following.

Germans who did not make it out in time, who did not realize the impending danger, or who refused to flee, had to stay strong enough to survive a number of possible fates: occupation of their cities by Russian or Polish authorities, expulsion, deportation to internment camps where they worked as forced laborers, only to be "repatriated" in the late 1940s. Many of these Eastern Germans, especially those people who did not have a network of family and friends already established in the new postwar Germanies, faced harsh and primitive conditions in refugee camps inside the new German borders. Indeed once they arrived in Germany these women and children confronted additional challenges as unwilling immigrants in their own country.

Evacuating and fleeing to the West

In October 1944, in an effort to encircle the German Army Group North, the Soviets invaded the far Northeastern part of the German Reich. The Red Army captured the Memel District and parts of East Prussia. By late October and early November, the German army temporarily recaptured many of these areas but failed in forcing the Soviets to withdraw entirely from Eastern German soil.

With the Soviets advancing, local government and/or Nazi Party officials began issuing evacuation orders for the Germans living in the Memel District and Northeastern East Prussia, but for many areas the orders came only after the Red Army had already

arrived. In addition, sometimes retreating German soldiers tried to organize evacuations of the civilian population. These arranged evacuations often called for Germans to travel by train over land and by ship over sea. Nazi officials created a system of housing authorities and reception districts (Aufnahmekreise) in Pomerania, Saxony, and Thuringia and tried to ensure that the arriving evacuees would not sleep on the streets; however, the housing authorities and districts in these areas could not accommodate the masses of evacuees arriving and gradually many evacuated Germans were sent to other parts of Germany to find accommodation.⁴ Indeed not only official evacuees sought housing, rather, due to their fear of any interaction with enemy soldiers, many Germans fled before evacuation orders had been issued. Thus the area was dominated by confusion: some Germans were evacuated, others fled, some stayed, and many Germans, regardless of the action they took, were captured by the Soviet troops. By the beginning of the Soviet offensives in January 1945, Theodor Schieder estimated that about 500,000 East Prussians had been evacuated or had fled.⁵

By the end of January the Soviets captured a large part of Eastern and Southern East Prussia and its residents found flight or evacuation over land nearly impossible, even railway traffic from East Prussia heading West ceased by the end of the month. Some Germans tried to flee East Prussia by crossing iced-over bays which formed the natural coastline; they crossed the frozen Frisches Haff to the Nehrung and from there traveled to

⁴ See also, Rainer Schulze, "The German Refugees and Expellees from the East and the Creation of a Western German Identity after World War II," in *Redrawing Nations: Ethnic Cleansing in East-Central Europe, 1944-1948*, eds. Philipp Ther and Ana Siljak (Lanham, Boulder, New York, Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, INC., 2001), 307-325, here 310.

⁵ Schieder, *Die Vertreibung der Deutschen Bevölkerung*, Band I/I, 16 E

Danzig and on to Pomerania. Crossing the frozen bays proved to be a treacherous means of escape, and many of the fleeing East Prussians died as the ice caved in under the weight of the wagons or even just as individuals attempted to cross. In addition, the Soviets often bombed the ice as German civilians were fleeing, causing many wagons to sink and people to drown in the icy waters. By the end of February the ice began to thaw and crossing the frozen bays was also no longer a viable escape route.

Some well-informed East Prussian families suspected what might happen if they remained at home and therefore in January arranged escape treks with relatives, friends and neighbors that often consisted of many wagons, carts and carriages and often involved a combination of land travel and crossing frozen harbors. One such trek of three families began in Northeastern East Prussia on 21 January and consisted of thirteen carts, two coaches, one tractor and trailer, forty-eight horses, seven foals, and two cows. They experienced harsh traveling conditions which slowed their progress; snow storms were frequent, temperatures sunk sometimes to minus 15 degrees Celsius, some of the refugees sustained wounds, sometimes an axle broke, sometimes it was necessary to leave behind equipment or luggage, and often it was difficult to find accommodations or food once supplies ran low. The trek reached the East Prussian coast by the end of January and crossed along the edge of the frozen Nehrung; during this part of the journey the refugees saw the bodies of frozen children on the ice. The flight plans drafted before their departure constantly had to be altered as they received updates concerning the fighting

and the successes of the Soviet offensives. The entire trip from the Northeastern part of East Prussia to Vorpommern and then Brandenburg, altogether about 1,200 kilometers, took until the end of February.⁶

As other escape routes became increasingly difficult, many fleeing Germans, with the assistance of the German Navy as well as the Merchant Marine, attempted to cross the Baltic Sea in over-crowded ships which were sometimes sunk by aerial bombing, torpedoes, or mines, causing the deaths of many thousands of refugees. For example, when the Soviets torpedoed the Wilhelm Gustloff at the end of January it was carrying 5,100 Germans, and the Goya was transporting 6,500 persons when it was sunk in April.⁷ Some refugees and evacuees also died enroute although their ships were not sunk by the Soviets; the steamer Wadai carried mostly women and children out of Königsberg in January and it was discovered that during the transport many of the passengers had frozen to death. In all about 800 ships of various sizes participated in this action, as ordered by Admiral Dönitz; exact figures of how many evacuees were thereby brought to safety are difficult to assess, but over one million Germans were transported to the West from harbors such as Königsberg, Pillau, and Danzig (this figure included not only refugees but also soldiers, especially wounded soldiers). Indeed their successes far outweighed

⁶ "Tagebuch über den Treck" (composed in 1945 by one of the men leading the trek, given to the author by Frau B.K., the daughter of one of the men from the trek), 2-5, 11.

⁷ One report suggested 20,000 Germans died as a result of the sinking of ships during the evacuations. Apparently that was not even one percent of the total number of Germans saved. Ulrich Thilo, Kapitän a.D., Köln, "Rollbahn Ostsee: Der Einsatz der Kriegs- und Handelsmarine bei der Rettung aus dem Osten" (np, nd, likely 1965), 1. Landesarchiv Schleswig-Holstein (LA-SH), Abt. 605, Nr. 7260.

their failures, and the actions taken by many individual seamen to save refugees have often received praise.⁸ The first evacuee ship left Pillau on 25 January.

After a failed flight attempt using sleds in January 1945 from Osterode, East Prussia, and later an evacuation to Pomerania on freight trains, Frau K.L.'s family found themselves encircled by the Red Army with the sea route the only means of escape. Following their arrival in Neufahrwasser near Danzig the family immediately had to evacuate the train station, which was under aerial attack, and journey to the harbor. As they waited to board they were informed that all luggage had to be left behind and that Frau K.L.'s father would be forced to serve in the Volkssturm in the defense of Danzig (although he was actually deemed unfit for service). Her mother got down on her knees and begged officials, explaining that her son had been killed in action, her son-in-law-- Frau K.L.'s husband--was in a POW camp in the Soviet Union, must they now take the father away, too, and thus tear the family further apart? The mother refused to leave without her husband and told her daughters to go without her. Frau K.L. and her sister reluctantly boarded the ship and were quickly informed by a naval officer who witnessed the situation that the parents would be brought with the next boat. The particular boat with which the two sisters traveled was actually not a passenger ship, rather a transporter and it carried throngs of people, including some actors from Königsberg, and also some cows and horses (the latter of which were eventually thrown over board because the journey lasted over a week and supplies were insufficient.) The transporter stopped at

⁸ Ibid., 2-3. LA-SH, Abt. 605, Nr. 7260.

Hela, where they spent several days, during which time they heard that Danzig had fallen to the Soviets. Frau K.L. and her sister feared their parents would never make it out.⁹

Mothers with large families frequently had difficulty obtaining a place on one of the boats, as evidenced by the West Prussian, Herr G.K., who was with his mother at the Kolberg harbor waiting for a ship. Every time one docked, the masses of people crowded onto the pier and shoved their way on board. Herr G.K.'s mother had difficulty getting her six children to the front of the crowd in time and had to wait for the next ship. Finally she spoke directly to the captain of one ship and expressed her frustration. Herr G.K., fifteen years old at the time, reported that the captain replied: "All right, as far as I'm concerned, come on up, we will sink anyway."¹⁰ The ship arrived in Swinemünde and from there they took the train further West.

After the January offensives, some officials, such as gauleiter Erich Koch of Königsberg, still refused to order evacuations, other officials ordered them too late or had not developed viable evacuation plans. The Soviets moved more swiftly and with greater success than Nazi officials anticipated and the massive numbers of civilians now directly in the line of war overwhelmed authorities. The streets, train stations, and harbors were congested with throngs of refugees.

Many refugees attempted to flee with the trains, but as Herr G.K. and his family experienced, the trains frequently traveled slowly. Initially Herr G.K.'s family tried to flee in January from Dirschau in West Prussia with a horse-drawn cart, which, when they drove uphill, had to be pushed from behind in order to relieve the horses of undue strain.

⁹ Frau K.L., interview by author, tape recording, Schwerin, 21 June 1999.

¹⁰ Herr G.K., interview by IMIS, transcript, Osnabrück, 23-24.

Power failures meant there was no electricity, hence no radios, and newspapers were also unavailable. Herr G.K. reported that one therefore listened to often unreliable rumors in order to try to determine where the Soviets were and what routes to take.¹¹ According to one such rumor, the Russians had already captured Dirschau and Herr G.K.'s family would never make it to safety in their slow-moving horse-drawn cart. Thus the family decided to take the freight train to Kolberg; however, traveling by train to Kolberg, with often 4-hour stops for no apparent reason, slowed down their flight considerably; covering the short distance to Kolberg took eight days.

When they finally arrived, officials from the Nazi welfare organization, Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt, met the refugees at the train station with milk for the children, tea, food, and medical care. The family waited four weeks in Kolberg before they found a way out. In Kolberg there was also no electricity and Herr G.K. went to a city square to hear a broadcast of the latest news concerning the front. Many thousands of people stood around listening as the reporter stated that the Russians had broken through to Köslin. Herr G.K. described the lamentations of the thousands present as they all considered what would likely happen next. Herr G.K. ran back home to tell his mother: "Mutti, all the people are crying that here and there the Russians have broken through." The family packed and journeyed to the overcrowded train station where they

¹¹ Lev Kopelev discussed the planting of men, he called them "Commissars of panic," who were instructed to act as though they were "German soldiers who had lost contact with their units" and convey false rumors in order to awaken fear and spread confusion in German communities, by announcing: "The Russians have broken through!" These "Commissars" were men who were involved in the anti-fascist schools set up by the Soviets for the re-education of Germans, especially German POWs. See. Lev Kopelev, *To Be Preserved Forever*, trans. and ed. Anthony Austin (Philadelphia and New York: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1977), 35.

waited for an extended period of time, only to be told later that the city was encircled and no further trains could get out. Herr G.K. and his family experienced the paralyzing fear of being trapped by the Soviets in Kolberg.¹²

After a failed attempt to make it out of encircled East Prussia with a refugee trek in January, Frau H.B., a young woman from Ermland, contemplated crossing over the frozen Frisches Haff. Stories of refugees breaking through the ice to their deaths and reports of low-flying aircraft bombing both the ice as well as columns of refugees on the streets lessened her enthusiasm for such escape attempts. In a conversation with an officer she expressed her fears about fleeing. Referring to the Russians as "Ivans," he replied, "You must try, because falling into Ivan's hands would be much worse." During this conversation, Frau H.B. remembered the airfield in nearby Heiligenbeil and afterwards sought the proper official from whom she could obtain written permission to fly out. In order to convince him to issue the permission, she lied and stated that she was six-months pregnant. With the paper in hand she set off for the airfield. Neither the weather conditions, nor the overcrowded and shaky airplane made for a comfortable flight and during the entire trip Frau H.B. fought nausea. Passengers expressed fears about landing and finding that the Russians had meanwhile already advanced ahead of them. The pilot lost orientation, the lighting failed, and no one on board knew where they were. Frau H.B. heard the pilot talking to the co-pilot about the situation. He said, "The fuel must actually be all used up [. . .] I will fly lower, then we won't fall so hard." She began praying to God to forgive her for being so afraid of crossing the frozen Frisches Haff and for lying about being pregnant in order to get a place on the plane. The

¹² Herr G.K., interview by IMIS, transcript, Osnabrück, 20-22.

plane eventually crashed in a swamp near the Oder River. The Red Cross arrived on the scene and assisted the 31 passengers; some luggage was lost, but the oily-water of the marsh softened their crash. After getting out of the crashed plane, Frau H.B. heard someone state: "Listen to the hum! Behind us is the war."¹³ It must be noted that Frau H.B.'s experiences were not typical: not many refugees escaped on airplanes; however, this flight report demonstrated the desperation of the refugees, some of whom would attempt almost any possible means of escape.

As the Soviets encircled and conquered more and more territory, the situation worsened. Some East Prussians who were evacuated or fled and ended up in Pomerania or West Prussia encountered Soviet soldiers yet again as those areas came under attack. Many refugees had fled to whatever coastal town they could reach in order to try to get passage on a ship, but after the Soviets bombed the harbor or captured the city, the Germans remaining behind were stuck. Despite already being encircled by the Red Army by the end of January and despite heavy air raids, East Prussian cities such as Königsberg and Pillau held out through early April and late April respectively.

By the end of March in addition to almost all of East Prussia, the Red Army had also conquered most of West Prussia and Pomerania. By 10 March roads leading West were blocked and escape was only possible by sea from port towns such as Kolberg (captured on 18 March) and Danzig (taken on 27 March). By the end of the war about 5 million Eastern Germans had fled to the West, in other words roughly half of the

¹³ Frau H.B., "Flucht aus Ostpreussen: Die Erlebnisse einer jungen Frau, 1945-1949" (Osnabrück, 1994), 5-17. (typed memoirs given to the author)

Germans from the Eastern territories who would make it to the West had already fled before the end of the war. (This figure also included the Silesian population).¹⁴

Given the circumstances, why would so many Germans have stayed? Some Germans remained in the Eastern territories due to the inclement weather conditions; the first three months of 1945 found East Prussia not only under siege from the Soviets but also a severely cold winter, and many Germans rejected the idea of flight under such circumstances. Some Germans waited for the official evacuation orders. Frau M.R. explained: "One was not allowed to start out before [obtaining] permission from the Party to flee. Unauthorized action was punishable by death."¹⁵ Other Germans saw the endless columns of refugees and overcrowded trains and harbors and stayed behind. Some Germans refused to leave their ancestral homes. Some Germans tried to flee or were even already packed and ready to flee when Soviets captured their area and forced them back home.

After the armistice, many evacuees and refugees sought to return home as soon as possible and many did, or tried, only to face expulsion in the postwar period; thus some Germans from the eastern territories experienced both the flight and the expulsion.¹⁶ In the first weeks and months following the war there was general confusion about the future of the territories and their inhabitants, confusion that was first cleared up by the

¹⁴ Schieder, *Die Vertreibung der Deutschen Bevölkerung*, Band I/I, 20, 23 E

¹⁵ Frau M.R., "Integration der Bevölkerung der Ostgebiete im Westen," 1. (autobiographical report given to author)

¹⁶ Hans Lemberg, "Mehr als eine Völkerwanderung, eine Einführung," introduction of K. Erik Franzen, *Die Vertriebenen: Hitlers letzte Opfer* (München: Propyläen Verlag, 2001), 19.

Potsdam Accords. Many displaced Germans thought the Polish or Soviet occupation authorities would be more mild than the conquering Soviet soldiers had been. Especially in the Soviet Zone occupation authorities encouraged refugees and evacuees to return home. Between mid May and the end of June, 300,000 to 400,000 refugees and evacuees residing in the Soviet Zone returned home East of the Oder-Neisse-Line. For example, around 200,000 East Prussians returned to their homes in the early summer months of 1945.¹⁷

German civilians' interactions with Soviet soldiers

Not all Eastern Germans who planned or even tried to flee were able to do so; due to the fact that they did not anticipate the speed with which the Soviets would arrive, many Germans were literally taken by surprise. In Königsberg and in some other areas, many Germans witnessed the arrival of the Red Army because local government or party officials had refused to allow the population to flee. In addition, many Germans who set out with treks were over-taken by the Soviets before they could reach safety. These refugees often suffered the same fate as their compatriots who chose not to flee.

Eventually in one form or another they were expelled from the Eastern territories.

The arrival of enemy soldiers in the Eastern territories, as witnessed both by those Germans who stayed and by those who were captured while attempting to flee, brought with it Soviet expressions of "sacred vengeance." Executions, particularly of those Germans suspected of being Nazis or class enemies, were not uncommon, but far more

¹⁷ Schieder, *Die Vertreibung der Deutschen Bevölkerung*, Band I/I, 78 E

common was the Soviet soldiers' raping of the women and girls.¹⁸ Indeed in *The Russians in Germany*, Norman Naimark stated that "The reports of women subjected to gang rapes and ghastly nightly rapes are far too numerous to be considered isolated incidents."¹⁹

To be sure Alexander Solzhenitsyn and Lev Kopelev, two famous Russian writers and Soviet officers, witnessed the events in East Prussia as they performed in a military capacity and in their writings provided some of the most astonishing accounts. Before his arrest in February, Solzhenitsyn served as an officer during the January offensives and participated in the Soviet assault on many East Prussian cities; he composed mentally his reflections on these events in poem form while serving his forced labor sentence. The epic poem "Prussian Nights" contained references to excessive drinking, mass destruction, and uncontrolled acquisition. In his poem, Solzhenitsyn also referred to rape, as evidenced in the following excerpt:

Zweiundzwanzig, Höringstrasse.
It's not been burned, just looted, rifled.
A moaning, by the walls half muffled:
The mother's wounded, still alive.
The little daughter's on the mattress,
Dead. How many have been on it?
A platoon, a company perhaps?
A girl's been turned into a woman,
A woman's been turned into a corpse.

¹⁸ Frau A.A. reported that she and her little sister were raped by Soviet soldiers in Northern East Prussia. Her sister apparently still today must fully inspect a room before she can go to sleep there, checking under the bed and in all closets (Schränke). Frau A.A., interview by author, tape recording, Lohne, Lower Saxony, 19 April 1999.

¹⁹ Norman Naimark, *The Russians in Germany: A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945-1949* (Cambridge and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1995), 72.

It's all come down to simple phrases:
Do not forget! Do not forgive!
Blood for blood! A tooth for a tooth!²⁰

And in *The Gulag Archipelago* Solzhenitsyn further described the soldiers' treatment of enemy women: "all of us knew very well that if the girls were German they could be raped and then shot. This was almost a combat distinction."²¹

Indeed another Soviet officer and author, Kopelev, also reported the excesses he witnessed as he entered East Prussia in the capacity of major in the Soviet Army's Political Department; his role was to provide proper political anti-fascist instruction for the conquered Germans. The first towns Kopelev saw were still burning from having had been set on fire by Soviet soldiers; when he asked why soldiers had participated in such destructiveness, one comrade said, "Who the hell knows?" Another soldier replied, "The word is: 'This is Germany. So smash, burn, have your revenge.'"²²

In his autobiographical account, *To be Preserved Forever*, Kopelev expressed disgust with the senseless destruction and felt that the Soviet Union was being deprived of its proper war plunder. Indeed many of the villages Kopelev and his comrades reached were in flames; in addition to witnessing widespread destructiveness and looting,

²⁰ Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *Prussian Nights: A Poem*, trans. Robert Conquest (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), 37, 39.

²¹ Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago, 1918-1956: An Experiment in Literary Investigation I-II*, trans. Thomas P. Whitney (New York, Evanston, San Francisco, London: Harper & Row Publishers, 1973), 21.

²² Kopelev, *To Be Preserved Forever*, 37-38

Kopelev's crew saw ample evidence of brutally raped and often dead women of every age group. In fact, the living civilians they encountered were often initially afraid of them and shocked at their displays of helpfulness.

Kopelev's expression of his apprehension about Soviet soldiers' excesses to one of his comrades started an argument in which Kopelev expressed his foremost concern:

"Another month or two and we'll link up with the English and the Americans. The Germans will start running from us to them. We'll be disgraced before the whole world. And never mind the disgrace--what about those soldiers who queue up by the scores for a German woman, who rape little girls, kill old women? They'll be going back to our own cities, our own women, our own girls. Thousands and thousands of potential criminals, and twice as dangerous, since they'll be coming back with the reputation of heroes."

Kopelev would later be expelled from the party, interrogated and finally arrested.

According to his memoirs, he was thrown out of the party for: "gross political errors, for showing pity for the Germans, for bourgeois humanism, and for harmful statements on questions of current policy." An additional charge added to the list at the insistence of one of his comrades was: "saving the Germans and their property."²³

Clearly not all Russians who witnessed events during the January offensives reacted as did Solzhenitsyn and Kopelev. Kopelev quoted a "booty captain" from the trophy squad who justified the behavior of the troops, referring to "Our sacred vengeance": "And what about what they [the Germans] did to us? Ehrenburg put it well: 'Tremble, cutthroat nation!'"²⁴ The journalist Ilya Ehrenburg was frequently associated

²³ Ibid., 57-58, 88.

²⁴ Ibid., 42. Joshua Rubenstein suggested that Kopelev had already written to Ehrenburg

with calling for a severe punishment of the German nation. In his memoirs Ehrenburg explained the actions of Soviet soldiers in East Prussia by referring to the submissive behavior of the conquered Germans. He wrote, "Later on a great deal was written in the West German press about the so-called 'Russian atrocities' in an attempt to explain the servile behavior of the population by their understandable terror. [. . .] There were, of course, cases of violence, of looting: in every army there are criminals, hooligans and drunkards, but our officers took measures against excesses. It is not in the brutality of our soldiers that the explanation of the civilian population's submissiveness must be sought, but in its own moral confusion." Indeed Ehrenburg contended that he had feared the Red Army soldiers would seek to exact revenge and insisted that he wrote dozens of articles speaking out against vengeance. According to Ehrenburg's memoirs, the Soviet soldiers did not act as brutally as the fascists had upon their invasion of Russia. For example, he stated that Soviet "Patrols protected the population."²⁵

The American journalist Alexander Werth also described the scene in East Prussia following the Soviet invasion in his book, *Russia at War: 1941-1945*. Red Army soldiers burned down many houses and sometimes entire villages, much to the later Polish occupation forces' dismay. Werth described a conversation with a Russian major who explained that "Our fellows were so sex-starved that they often raped old women of sixty, or seventy or even eighty--much to these grandmother's surprise, if not downright delight. But I admit it was a nasty business, and the record of the Kazakhs and other

in 1942 to ask him to "moderate his tone." *Tangled Loyalties: The Life and Times of Ilya Ehrenburg* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), 194.

²⁵ Ilya Ehrenburg, *The War: 1941-1945, Volume 5 of Men, Years--Life*, trans. Tatiana Shebunina (Cleveland and New York, The World Publishing Company, 1964), 169.

Asiatic troops was particularly bad." Werth also referred to the influence Ehrenburg had on soldiers' activities as they advanced through East Prussia and cited from some of his articles: "800 years ago the Poles and Lithuanians used to say: 'We shall torment them in heaven as they tormented us on earth'. . . Now our patrols stand outside the castles of the Teutonic Knights at Allenstein, Osterode, Marienburg. . ." This reference to the Polish and Lithuanian attitudes toward the Teutonic Knights during their reign over the area in the High Middle Ages indicated the lasting memory of a Slavic desire for revenge.²⁶

In their work on Königsberg, Eberhard Beckherrn and Alexej Dubatow expressed doubt that the writings of Ehrenburg necessarily formed the guiding principle influencing the Soviets to seek revenge on the Germans. Beckherrn and Dubatow emphasized instead the lack of discipline in the Red Army, the lack of authority on the part of the Soviet officers, and of course the large quantities of alcohol available to both soldiers and officers.²⁷ Further factors that likely influenced the Soviet soldiers to behave as they did include peer pressure and the desire to appear manly in front of one's comrades.

Unsurprisingly, Nazi sources describing the arrival of the Soviets in East Prussia contained propagandistic language and likely factual distortions. Indeed, the most frequently cited example of the interaction of the German civilians with enemy soldiers is the village of Nemmersdorf, in an area of East Prussia recaptured by the Germans shortly after the Soviet assault in late October. The Nazis cited the atrocities committed in this

²⁶ Alexander Werth, *Russia at War: 1941-1945* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1964), 964-965.

²⁷ Eberhard Beckherrn and Alexej Dubatow, *Die Königsberger Papiere: Schicksal einer deutschen Stadt. Neue Dokumente aus russischen Archiven* (München, Langen Müller, 1994), 43

East Prussian village in speeches, radio broadcasts, newspapers, and the *Wochenschau*, or weekly newsreel; they hoped to incite the population to unite and fight a "Total War" against the "Bolshevik Menace" that was raping German women and butchering German babies.

Nazi newspapers referred to the attacks as part of a methodical, state-supported action against the German population. According to such sources, the "Bolshevik beasts" plundered and destroyed everything, raped women and girls, shot children at close range, murdered old women and men. A report from the *Völkischer Beobachter* titled "Das Grauen von Nemmersdorf" (The Horror of Nemmersdorf) described Nemmersdorf after the "bloody rule of the Bolsheviks" as "a village of Death, a village of silence. No occupant of the city is to be seen. Those who could not flee from the murderers lie dead in the houses, on the roadside, in the fields or in the ravines of Angerapp."²⁸ The *Wochenschau* seen in theaters by many Germans, similarly showed footage of rows of brutally murdered children and women. Likewise the Nazi propaganda machine issued flyers calling for "Revenge for Nemmersdorf."²⁹ During the war many Germans heard of the atrocities committed in Nemmersdorf and such stories caused many Germans to fear any interaction with Soviet soldiers.

In expellee-literature Nemmersdorf has remained a symbol for what the Eastern Germans suffered during the Soviet offensives. For example, in his *Die Vertreibung der Deutschen Bevölkerung aus den Gebieten östlich der Oder-Neisse*, Theodor Schieder

²⁸ Kurt-Lothar Tank, "Das Grauen von Nemmersdorf," *Völkischer Beobachter*, 28 October 1944, cited in Bernhard Fisch, *Nemmersdorf, Oktober 1944: Was tatsächlich geschah* (Berlin: edition ost, 1997), 47-50.

²⁹ Fisch, *Nemmersdorf, Oktober 1944*, 19.

included among the documents contained in the volume a report from the Herr K.P. from Königsberg, a member of the Volkssturm, who witnessed the recapture of Nemmersdorf. He described the conditions of the corpses they discovered: some heads had been blown in half by close-range fire, even babies and old women had been murdered brutally, girls as young as eight years old and also a blind eighty-four year old woman had been raped and killed. Although the author of this report suggested that at least 72 people had been killed, another report stated that 62 persons had been killed.³⁰ In a more recent examination of sources concerning Nemmersdorf conducted by Bernhard Fisch, Fisch suggested that postwar authors neglected to question their Nazi sources; he concluded that only 23 to 30 persons died during the Soviet capture of Nemmersdorf.³¹ For expellees, the reality of how many died during the Soviet attack on Nemmersdorf (whether 62 or 23) mattered far less than its impact as a symbol; the stories and rumors roused many Eastern Germans to attempt flight rather than face the arrival of the Red Army and influenced some fleeing Germans to continue to the Western Zones rather than stay within Soviet Occupied Germany.

Due to the impact of these experiences on displaced Germans in the postwar period and during their integration, it is important to portray the grim reality of the horrific encounters between the civilian population and the arriving soldiers. However,

³⁰ Nr. 4, Erlebnisbericht des Volksturmmannes K.P. aus Königsberg i.Ostpr. Original, 14. Januar 1953, 7 Seiten, Teilabdruck, "Russische Greuelthaten in Nemmersdorf im Oktober 1944," in Schieder, *Die Vertreibung der Deutschen Bevölkerung*, vol. I/I, 7-8

³¹ Fisch, *Nemmersdorf, Oktober 1944*, 126. Dönhoff described the effect photos and reports about Nemmersdorf had on her and described her unwillingness to believe what she erroneously perceived at first to be propaganda. She also reported that 62 Germans died there. See, Marion Gräfin Dönhoff, *Namen die keiner mehr nennt: Ostpreussen--Menschen und Geschichte* (Düsseldorf, Köln: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1962), 16-17.

some authors have generalized from these portrayals and the result is a very black and white depiction of soldier-civilian interaction in the Eastern territories. Not surprisingly, the reality is more accurately painted with many shades of gray. Alongside the acts of extreme brutality occurred examples of friendliness, especially towards children, kindness, and even heroism.³²

Displaced Germans' accounts often contained a differentiated depiction of their encounters with the Soviets at the end of the war. Many refugees, expellees, and resettlers who came into contact with Soviet soldiers reported a range of experiences, some of which were appalling, other encounters were disturbing, but sometimes the interaction between Russians and Germans demonstrated that compassion was at times shown even for enemies. These experiences often influenced the speed and ease with which displaced Germans accepted and integrated into their post-expulsion societies.

After a failed flight attempt from their Northern East Prussian village, Frau E.H. and her family experienced Soviet occupation and administration of the area. Frau E.H. reported that the interned Germans had no rights, no shoes, no food, and that she and her mother even illegally crossed the Lithuanian border at one point in order to work and thus obtain food. According to Frau E.H. the fact that they had no rights meant that "everyone could do with us as they pleased." After the expulsion from Königsberg in 1948 she and her mother ended up in Dahme in Brandenburg. Frau E.H. remarked, "My wish back then was to wake up and not see the Russians anymore."³³

³² In Kaliningrad often Russian officers' families would adopt German orphans, give the Russian names and they would become Russian. See, for example, Beckherrn and Dubatow, *Die Königsberger Papiere*, 169.

³³ Frau E.H., interview by author, tape recording, Brandenburg, 19 March 1999.

Herr E.K., at the time a thirteen-year-old Pomeranian boy, described his experiences with Soviet soldiers in his aptly titled report "Grenzenloses Flüchtlingsleid--grenzenlose Lieblosigkeit" (Boundless Refugee-suffering--boundless unkindness.) After a failed flight attempt in February, Family K. spent the night in a room in a forestry worker's house with other refugees, including a young mother and her 14 day-old baby. Herr E.K. reported that Soviet soldiers stormed into the room around midnight. The "Mongols" wrenched the baby from the mother's arms, two soldiers undressed the woman and held her while a third soldier raped her. Herr E.K.'s mother, with him and his 15 month-old sister crawled out the window and hid in a bomb crater. He stated, "My mother was nearing despair and wanted to commit suicide. At my request she gave up. My sister, who cried a lot, received a handkerchief in her mouth from my mother so that the Russians would not discover us due to the crying."

The next morning as the K. family drove on, their wagon was hit by a grenade; many of the passengers sustained wounds, some serious, and within a matter of hours Herr E.K.'s mother, grandparents and brother died. Because the street was under heavy fire, they had to leave his mother and grandparents lying there and drive on. On 12 March Herr E.K.'s father divided the last piece of bread and then sent his son into a manor house in Polzin in Pomerania to beg for some food. "As I entered the first room, six or nine Volkssturm men lay there. The eyes had been gouged out, the bodies had been cut open and mutilated, the Volkssturm armbands lay over the naked and defiled corpses. I ran out of the house and screamed: 'I would sooner starve, but I will never again go into a house!'" Not long after this experience Herr E.K. saw his father shot dead by the guard of a prison gang they encountered near the village of Gersdorf. The other

refugees with Herr E.K. and his surviving siblings helped them to locate their aunt and the grandparents of their mother, with whom they later lived and were expelled as a group in late June 1946.³⁴

Frau U.B., a twenty-six year old West Prussian woman, was at home with her family when the first Soviet soldiers arrived in Neuteich. Most of the people in her area had already fled, but her father refused to leave. He had never joined "the Party," was not a Nazi and, according to his daughter, firmly believed that "The occupation time will not be pleasant, but it will pass." On 11 March the first Soviets arrived and Frau U.B.'s father immediately went out to greet them and wanted to offer them cigarettes. The Russians refused the cigarettes and one of them warned: "'We,' he said, 'good. But what's coming is bad.'"

Indeed the Soviet soldiers who arrived the next day treated the civilians they encountered as war spoils, immediately inspected for jewelry and valuables and took whatever they wanted. Soldiers raped Frau U.B.'s sister and intended to rape her as well. "The other came to me and I was just having my period and since I pleaded so and showed him what I have, he left." Her father was taken off to be questioned and she never saw him again. The remaining family members were marched by Soviet soldiers to Elbing, and eventually Insterburg where they spent two weeks in confinement. Eventually the women were loaded onto a train in Insterburg, 40 women per car, trains that would take them to labor camps in the Soviet Union.³⁵

³⁴ Herr E.K., "Grenzenloses Flüchtlingsleid--grenzenlose Lieblosigkeit," pp. 2-5. Bundesarchiv Koblenz (BA-K) B 106, 27837

³⁵ Frau U.B., interview by Ralf Possekkel, transcript, Dillingen, 19 May 1996, Deutsches Gedächtnisarchiv (DGA), 5-10.

The autobiographical report written by Frau E.G. described the range of experiences with Soviet soldiers from the perspective of a wife and mother living on a West Prussian farm. Frau E.G. described the fear and frustration she felt as the Soviet Army arrived in her village in West Prussia. Authorities urged the population to wait for official evacuation orders and Frau E.G. stated that they "sat there like a mouse in a trap waiting for the enemy." Frau E.G. described a banging on the door and the appearance of soldiers in their house. The soldiers' first action was to steal all watches, then, according to the report, they stormed throughout the other rooms and appropriated whatever they wished. "In one day the beasts transformed our clean house into a pigsty." The family G. and an East Prussian refugee family huddled into one room and listened to the Soviets as they came and went, threatened to shoot them, and searched for suspicious items. The Soviets established that Frau E.G. and her husband were the owners of the farm and declared them to be capitalists and stated that "capitalists must be eradicated." They suspected Herr G. of hiding German soldiers and being an accomplice to the murder of a Russian soldier and for that reason decided to kill the entire family by firing squad in the morning unless the situation were cleared up. However, the next morning the German army pushed the Soviets out and the family was spared. Frau E.G.'s report described also the kind Russian army cook, who had lived with them during this occupation of their house; he had always secretly given them food, and now upon departing he left behind for them a large pot filled with Schmalz (lard, used like butter). Frau E.G. stated that he could speak German well and was likely a Russian-German.

After the initial departure of the Soviet Army, Frau E.G. discovered what had happened to the other German families: many girls and women had been raped, some of

whom committed suicide afterwards, men and women were shot, general destruction and plundering occurred. But again, Frau E.G.'s report mentioned good-hearted Russians who stopped some families from attempted suicide using carbon monoxide gas. The Soviets discovered that the families had locked themselves in a closed up room with the source of the gas and they opened all the windows in order to save them.

The German Army only temporarily held back the Soviets, and even during the continued fighting, many enemy soldiers went through the village seeking women and girls. Frau E.G. described the results of the often brutal rapes: "Words of description are not sufficient, then many were so tortured that they died simply as a result of the rape, whether it was from fear, despair, injuries or later from the consequences of a venereal disease." Indeed, according to her account, many young girls died painful deaths due to venereal diseases, untreatable because there were neither doctors nor medications available.

Frau E.G. also described the arrest of her husband and one of her sons, along with many other men, women, and teenagers from the village, all of whom were then transported East; their planned final destination was likely a labor camp in some part of the Soviet Union. Many of the interned Germans would not survive the trip, including Frau E.G.'s husband and their son. After two years of living and working under Polish occupation, on 17 May 1947 Frau E.G. and her remaining children were expelled--or released--to the West. Towards the end of her report, she reflected on the behavior of the Russians and replied, "One never knows, whether the people who treated us so badly can alone be held responsible for their actions. They were raised that way through

Communism and falsely informed [falsch aufgeklärt] and provoked. They did not know of God or the Ten Commandments. They also had a good side, they were always nice to the children and sometimes even provided for them."³⁶

After an aborted flight in March 1945 the working class Pomeranian Family Z. returned to their village near Stolp, which was now under Soviet administration. The ten-year-old Herr H.Z. described his experiences with the Soviets soldiers in thoroughly positive terms and suggested that they "lived better in this time than ever in the years before." The local mansion was open for the first time to the villagers, they enjoyed get-togethers with the Soviets, get-togethers during which they all danced and sang their own local songs. Herr H.Z. reported that the Soldiers even fed the children chocolate. He compared this experience to his family's experience in wartime: "We always had enough to eat, a statement we could not have always said during the war." According to Herr H.Z, once the Poles established their administration conditions worsened considerably.³⁷ The contrast between the experiences of working class Germans and their middle- and upper class compatriots is striking.

Many refugees escaped into the West without significant contact with the Soviet Army, whose soldiers often sought to fulfill their desire for "sacred vengeance." Those Eastern Germans who, for whatever reason, stayed behind, experienced a range of

³⁶ Frau E.G., "Meine Erlebnisse in unserer Heimat in Neuendorf-Hoehle, Kreis Elbing, Westpreussen, zur Zeit der Besetzung durch die Russen und Polen," 7-11, 18, 28-29. (given to the author by Frau M.R.)

³⁷ Herr H.Z., interview by author, tape recording, Berlin, 9 June 1999. That Herr H.Z. worked later as a GDR professor, and at the time of the interview served in the PDS party executive, contributed to his motivation to express his positive experiences with the Soviets.

treatment at the hands of the Soviet soldiers. Most of these Germans also experienced either internment under Polish or Soviet administration or were transported to distant regions of the Soviet Union, where they worked in labor camps. By the time these Germans were expelled, or perhaps more accurately, released, many of them faced malnutrition, diseases, and often memories of living as a conquered people under foes determined to achieve revenge. These experiences and their state of health upon their release often influenced their postwar integration into their new societies. Some of these Eastern Germans sought to forget the often painful past, while others were haunted by nightmares and sometimes also a longing for the old Heimat.

Königsberg or "Kaliningrad"

By the end of January the Soviets had already surrounded Königsberg and until the capitulation on 9 April 1945 the city and its remaining inhabitants were under heavy assault. In addition to the fact that large parts of the city already lay in ruins from earlier British air raids, the Soviets continued the destruction by setting fire to buildings in many districts; alone the months of heavy fighting led to extended demolition of buildings and streets. As the front neared, in spite of gauleiter Erich Koch's order forbidding residents to evacuate or flee, some Germans indeed managed to escape. Certain groups, such as soldiers, officials, nurses and doctors, were required to stay, and thousands of other Germans either refused to leave or found themselves trapped with no escape possible.

In April 1945 the at least 137,000 Germans from various parts of the Eastern territories remaining in the Königsberg region experienced capitulation. Beckherrn and

Dubatow reflected on the symbolic significance of the destruction of Königsberg:

"Following the conquest of Königsberg, the Soviets acted as though they would eradicate here the root of Prussian evil. The Germans who fell into their hands were mercilessly punished, not only in the first week in the exhilaration of victory."³⁸ The doctor Hans Graf von Lehndorff's diary contained horrific accounts of the Soviet desire for revenge, including unconscious patients who had been raped multiple times, nurses assaulted and raped in the hospital, and enormous numbers of women and girls with painful venereal diseases and no supplies to treat them.³⁹

On 10 April the Soviets established a military administration in order better to control and administer the population of the defeated city. The civilian population consisted mostly of women, a great deal of children, some of whom were orphans, and the elderly.⁴⁰ Those Germans who were capable of work performed at first largely clean-up operations, clearing the streets of rubble, burying bodies and dead horses, filling in the trenches, etc. Later many Germans worked on collectivized farms in the Königsberg/Kaliningrad region. Beckherrn and Dubatow described the formation of a special class of German Communists, who were spared hard labor, and worked for the

³⁸ Beckherrn and Dubatow, *Die Königsberger Papiere*, 7, 17, 119. Gauleiter Erich Koch was not among them long; he escaped on a ship leaving Hela on 29 April, landed later in Flensburg and lived under a pseudonym until 1957, when he was discovered and delivered to Poland, where he was condemned to death; he died in a prison near Allenstein. See, Beckherrn and Dubatow, *Die Königsberger Papiere*, 33

³⁹ Lehndorff, *Ostpreussisches Tagebuch*, 76, 82, 109.

⁴⁰ Apparently survivors of Königsberg's Jewish community were treated no differently than the Germans. Beckherrn and Dubatow, *Die Königsberger Papiere*, 45-46.

Soviets instead in administrative positions--especially as guards of or and spies on other Germans. To be sure, the Soviet occupation authorities suspected most German citizens of being fascists, saboteurs, or secret agents.⁴¹

Following the Potsdam Conference, the fate of Königsberg had been officially decided. Königsberg and the surrounding area were permanently handed over to the Soviet Union; thus the language used in dealing with Königsberg differed from the official Allied statement concerning the rest of the Oder-Neisse territories, which were placed under Polish administration with a border to be determined at a later date by an international peace conference. Although Königsberg was Soviet property already in the summer 1945, the Soviet occupiers waited nearly a year and a half before they began calling the area "Kaliningrad."⁴²

Living conditions in Königsberg/Kaliningrad were harsh, even for the Soviet officials. A working German family received 400 grams of bread as income for the entire family for an often 12-hour work day. Not surprisingly many residents were thus malnourished and sick; contagious diseases spread not only due to the poor health of the residents but also due to the unsanitary conditions. Even official Soviet documents described the plagues of rats and lice and also cannibalism, which apparently emerged during the harsh winter of 1945/1946. The reports documented cases concerning the sale of human flesh on the black market as well as situations where mothers either killed one

⁴¹ Ibid., 73-74.

⁴² Ibid., 116.

of their children or took the flesh from a child who died of natural causes and fed it to their surviving children.⁴³ Indeed many accounts of postwar Königsberg/Kaliningrad reported starvation-related cannibalism.⁴⁴

For many Germans in Königsberg/Kaliningrad, conditions improved in later 1946 and 1947. Not only was more food available to those who performed hard labor, but also mail service resumed--to be sure, subject to censorship. In addition Germans increasingly had access to German language newspapers, radio broadcasts, "informative lectures" (aufklärende Vorträge), German clubs, libraries, etc. The content of the newspapers, broadcasts, and club agenda followed anti-fascist lines and served the purpose of political re-education. The newspaper "Neue Zeitung--Zeitung für die deutsche Bevölkerung des Kaliningrader Gebietes" [New Newspaper-- Newspaper for the German Population of the Kaliningrad District] contained articles condemning imperialism, promoting peace and democracy, and hard work. In addition, schools had opened already in autumn 1946, and the children were taught by politically-trained "new teachers."⁴⁵

In autumn 1947 the first organized transports of Germans left the Kaliningrad area. Often those Germans selected for the transport would have twenty-four hours

⁴³ Ibid., 128, 131-133.

⁴⁴ See, for example, Lehndorff, *Ostpreussisches Tagebuch*, 160; Gause, *Die Geschichte der Stadt Königsberg*, 174; Schieder, *Die Vertreibung der Deutschen Bevölkerung*, Band I/I, 90E; Volker Frobarth, "Die Politische Geschichte des Königsberger Gebietes nach 1945," Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel, Magisterarbeit, Kiel, 1992, 42.

⁴⁵ R. Strauss, "Umsiedler kamen aus Kaliningrad," Pressedienst der ZVU, Nr. 2 Berlin, 5. Jan. 48, pages 1-2, Bundesarchiv Berlin (BA-B), DQ 2, 3363. See also Beckherrn and Dubatow, *Die Königsberger Papiere*, 136-137, 159-160, 164-165

notice before their departure. Just over 100,000 Germans were expelled or deported out of the Kaliningrad area between 1947 and 1949. Beckherrn and Dubatow thus concluded that around 36,000 Germans died between Königsberg's capitulation and the end of the deportations.⁴⁶

Germans under Polish occupation

Already in February 1945 the Polish provisional government began erecting a civil administration within the captured areas East of the Oder-Neisse-Line, thereby celebrating the return of the "recovered territories" to their "rightful" owner, Poland.⁴⁷ After the Allies officially recognized Poland's right to set up administrations in the area, an eager process of polonization and thereby de-Germanization took place. By autumn 1945 the German names of cities, villages, and streets were changed, the Z_oty was introduced as the official currency, Polish was declared to be the official language, Polish mayors replaced Germans ones, a system of regional commandants was installed, and the Polish militia continued to assert control over the remaining German population. Polish expellees, from Poland's former Eastern

⁴⁶ Beckherrn and Dubatow, *Die Königsberger Papiere*, 221, 232. Schieder suggested a higher figure for the death toll in the area and mentioned various contagious diseases, even malaria, in his discussion. See, Schieder, *Die Vertreibung der Deutschen Bevölkerung*, vol. I/I, 91 E. Gause likewise suggested a higher death rate and discussed diseases such as malaria. He suggested there were 100,000 civilians in Königsberg in June 1945 and that only 25,000 were transported out. Gause, *Die Geschichte der Stadt Königsberg*, 172, 173, 177.

⁴⁷ Schieder, *Die Vertreibung der Deutschen Bevölkerung*, vol. I/I, 107 E-108 E.

territories that the Soviet Union claimed, gradually populated the so-called "recovered territories" over the course of 1945.⁴⁸

The Eastern Germans who remained were regarded by the government and the population as unwanted reminders of an unjust past. The general tendency in the formerly German territories was to treat all Germans as Nazis and to hold them all responsible for the suffering of the Polish people under Nazi domination. The Polish people felt they thereby had a right to take as a form of reparations whatever they wanted from the unwanted Germans, including valuables, clothing, food, property, apartments, houses, and furniture, and to mistreat the Germans who remained in the territories.

Tensions between the lingering Soviet forces and the Polish population and administration emerged due to the fact that the Soviets wanted to appropriate movable possessions and bring them back to the Soviet Union, while the Poles sought to claim often the same items as their own war reparations. Additional tensions emerged involving administration issues. For example, for purposes of expediency, the Soviets sometimes preferred to appoint German administrators; the Poles wanted to replace all German administrators with their own.⁴⁹ Reports also indicated that Soviets sometimes even protected German citizens from Polish aggression.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Ther, *Deutsche und polnische Vertriebene*.

⁴⁹ Claudia Kraft, "Einleitung, Wojewodschaft Allenstein," introduction to *Die Deutschen östlich von Oder und Neisse, 1945-1950: Dokumente aus polnischen Archiven*, eds. Włodzimierz Borodziej and Hans Lemberg, vol. I, *Zentrale Behörden, Wojewodschaft Allenstein* (Marburg: Verlag-Herder-Institut, 2000), 448-452.

⁵⁰ Norman Naimark described the Soviet reaction to Polish behavior. See, *Fires of Hatred: Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2001), 127.

In his autobiographical account, Hans Heinz Pollack described a situation which demonstrated the tension between the Soviet soldiers and the Poles. According to his description, on 25 March Red Army soldiers forced a group of captured German soldiers and civilians to form a procession and march East from Insterburg. The Russian soldiers forbid any communication or action other than forward-marching. Pollack reported that one of the Polish "avengers" struck an elderly German man who stumbled. A young Russian soldier came to investigate what had occurred and "swung his Kalashnikov [Russian assault rifle] and let it fall, but not on the German prisoner, but rather on the Pole" and called him a "Faschiesst!" A German POW helped the old man to his feet and the Russian soldier furtively gave them each a little tobacco, checking to make sure that none of his superiors witnessed him.⁵¹

Initially in some areas the Polish administration enforced strict policies on the German population. One such policy concerned forcing the Germans to wear an identifying armband. These armbands were white and sometimes marked with a "N" (Niemiec, the Polish word for German), or sometimes a swastika. Refusal to do so carried with it a prison sentence of up to one year and a fine of up to 100,000 Z_oty.⁵² A

⁵¹ Hans Heinz Pollack, *Verschleppt und Verschollen: Geschichte einer Deportation aus Ostpreussen* (Frankfurt am Main: R.G. Fischer Verlag, 1990), 16-17

⁵² Nr. 18 (ohne Datum, nach dem 11. April 1945) Entwurf der Verordnung des Generalbevollmächtigten für die Wiedergewonnenen Gebiete über die Kennzeichnung der in der Wiedergewonnenen Gebieten wohnenden Deutsche, in *Die Deutschen östlich von Oder und Neisse, 1945-1950*, ed. Borodziej, 117. The editors of this volume commented that this project was not known in the literature. What they mean by this is unclear; many interviews substantiate the existence of the arm bands. This policy was also described by Helga Hirsch in her description of camp Potulitz, see *Die Rache der Opfer: Deutsche in polnischen Lagern, 1944-1950* (Berlin: Rowohlt Verlag, 1998), 100. See also, Franzen, *Die Vertriebenen: Hitlers letzte Opfer*, 137-138

decree issued in November 1945 called for a halt to this policy of designations for Germans. It stated further that the "repatriation of Germans out of Poland" indeed would lead to a solution to the "German problem," but in their effort to do so they should not adopt "policies foreign to us that are reminiscent of the methods of the Hitler government."⁵³

The new Polish administration also issued decrees concerning fraternization, which they deemed to be a problem in part due to the rapid spread of venereal disease. The April 1945 statement contended that German women were usually considered to be the source of the infection. Further, "One cannot rule out that in certain cases of the infection of our soldiers and officers a deliberate criminal subversive activity comes into play in order to weaken the fighting power of our army." The report suggested that the major cause of the spread of disease was "drunkenness and sexual licentiousness" and called for soldiers to realize that "the maintenance of relationships with German women is inadmissible from the point of view of national dignity and to rape them is not only incorrectly understood revenge, rather at the same time a degrading action, unworthy of a Pole." On these grounds, the order suggested the proper treatment and punishment for infected members of the military.⁵⁴

Over the course of 1945 many of the remaining Germans who had not already been expelled by force during the summer months were placed in internment camps or

⁵³ Nr. 69 (22. November 1945), Runderlass des Politischen Departments des MAP in der Angelegenheit des Verbots der Kenntlichmachung der Deutschen durch Armbinden," in *Die Deutschen östlich von Oder und Neisse, 1945-1950*, ed. Borodziej, 197.

⁵⁴ Nr. 22 (27. April 1945) Befehl Nr. 0174-DH des Befehlshaber der 1. Armee über die Bekämpfung von Geschlechtskrankheiten, in *Ibid.*, 149-150

even prisons. In later 1945 in some areas those Germans who did not by a certain date report for "voluntary departure " were sent to camps.⁵⁵ There were also many cases of Germans suspected of war crimes, espionage or sabotage, such Germans were often sentenced to prison terms.

One report concerning the numbers of German and Polish residents in such facilities in autumn 1945 listed not only how many prisoners arrived and departed, but also indicated their crime. In the column under the heading "type of crime," the following activities appeared: "crimes in accordance with the Decree concerning National Protection, article 1 and 8," "espionage," "other crimes in accordance with the Decree concerning National Protection (sabotage, possessing weapons, cooperation with Germans, etc.)," "general (criminal) crimes," "fiscal crimes against military duties, misuse of office and others," "belonging to Hitlerist-fascist organizations," "Reichsdeutsche," "Volksdeutsche," "prisoner of war," and "administrative." This chart summarized occupants of prisons as well as camps, and may indicate the Polish perspective on the existence of Germans in their recovered territories: a criminal act and being German were both classified as "types of crimes."⁵⁶

Indeed statements made by Germans who experienced Polish occupation indicated tensions with the Polish population and administration. A letter sent in May 1946 to the SED executive committee in Berlin on behalf of Silesians sought to alert SBZ

⁵⁵ Claudia Kraft, "Einleitung, Wojewodschaft Allenstein," 456-457.

⁵⁶ Nr. 65 (Nach dem 1. November), Der Direktor des DWO MBP Oberst Dagobert Lancut an den Minister für Öffentliche Sicherheit, darin zahlenmässige Zusammenstellungen der Belegung von Gefängnissen und Lagern zum 1. Oktober und 1. November 1945, in *Die Deutschen östlich von Oder und Neisse, 1945-1950*, ed. Borodziej, 193-196. See also, Nr. 76, 204.

officials of the problems faced by Eastern Germans in the former territories under Polish administration. The letter included attachments, among them an article from a Swiss newspaper and a lengthy report. The article stated, "Beyond the Oder-Neisse-Line begins the land without security, the land without law, the land of Outlaw, the dead land. He who left the Polish Zone and landed in the Russian occupied territory breathes a sigh of relief. Behind him lie plundered cities, plague-ridden villages, concentration camps, deserted, uncultivated fields, corpse-covered streets, the highwaymen lie in wait and steal the last possessions of the fugitives."⁵⁷

The lengthy report also attached to this May 1946 letter generalized based on the experiences of Silesians, nevertheless the authors plainly stated that the descriptions represented general living conditions of the Germans under Polish administration. The declared purpose of this report--allegedly also translated into English, French and Russian--was to ask the Allied Control Commission to administer proper care to the Germans living in the Polish administrative territory "of the Soviet Zone." The authors described the situation: "There they are exposed to a terror and cruelties that defy description. These conditions are not compatible with the assurance of the Allies 'not to want to destroy the German people,' especially also [from] Marshal Stalin, 'to lead no war against the civilian population.'" The report then launched into a catalog of specifics. For example, Germans were forced by armed militia to evacuate their houses and take with them nothing of value in order to facilitate better plundering, after which the

⁵⁷ Anlage 3: *Die Schweizer Presse*, p. 13, in Bürgermeister a.D. Dr. Beyendorff, Geschäftsinhaber der Schmiedeberger Metallwerkfabriken, Paul Löbe, früher Präsident des Deutschen Reichstages, Berlin, 30. Mai 1946, An den Vorstand der SED, Berlin, BA-B, NY 4036, 743.

Germans lived in cramped and unclean barracks. In public, according to the authors, Germans had to wear white arm bands and upon demand give to Poles their shoes, coats, purses, or whatever other possessions were desired. The Germans were forced to perform unpaid labor for the Poles, only then did they have the right to purchase food ration cards (RM 2 per card). "Milk was refused even to small children ('the German pigs can die a miserable death')." High artificial inflation with the introduction of the Z_oty forced Germans to participate in the black market and pay ridiculous prices for basic provisions. In addition the authors suggested that German graves were desecrated and robbed. Additionally, Germans were physically abused in the streets and women and girls faced rape and infection with venereal disease. The report concluded that the Poles were not excused through statements such as "Your SS did not do it any differently;" such behavior had been deemed by the Allies to be criminal and was thus not excusable. The authors of this report wrote repeatedly to Wilhelm Pieck in order to try to arrange a meeting and discuss the problems Germans faced in Poland. Pieck's replies were delayed and he finally answered that he simply had no time for a meeting.⁵⁸

In a similar statement, presumably from 1947, Herr L.P. also described the Polish treatment of the Eastern Germans living in their midst, confirming much of what was declared in the earlier report. Further descriptions of mistreatment included: "one was not allowed to show oneself in public, would be spit at and hit with stones by the Polish

⁵⁸ Betrifft: Polnisches Verwaltungsgebiet, Bürgermeister a.D. Dr. Beyendorff, Geschäftsinhaber der Schmiedeberger Metallwerkfabriken, Paul Löbe, früher Präsident des Deutschen Reichstages, Berlin, 30. Mai 1946, An den Vorstand der SED, Berlin, pp. 1-3, BA-B, NY 4036, 743.

boys; showered with insults; you German pig, see to it that you cross the Oder." Such treatment, according to the report, even led to cases of suicide. In addition, "In particular cases young girls were raped and even threatened with death if they said anything about the maltreatment."⁵⁹

It must be noted that conditions for the Eastern Germans under Polish administration differed often dramatically in different locations and under different administrators and at different times.⁶⁰ Claudia Kraft suggested that a determination of the actual situation faced by the German population during the first months following the war was made more difficult due to the combination of the presence of Soviet forces in addition to Polish administrators and the tensions between them.⁶¹ An additional difficulty remained in place also in the years after 1945, namely the discrepancies between the official Polish sources and the reports written by the affected Germans. However, sufficient evidence exists to conclude that many Germans--many, but certainly not all--experienced what was described in these reports.

Many Germans, including those unfit for work, the elderly, children, orphans, and those who refused to depart voluntarily, ended up in internment camps, often the same facilities used under National Socialism to house the arrested Polish population. In

⁵⁹ Abschrift, L.P., "Die Behandlung Polens gegen die Deutschen" (nd, presumably 1947, presumably sent as an attachment from Berger, Kreiskommission für Neubürger, Der Kreisrat des Kreises Hildburghausen, 11.8.1947, to Ministerium des Innern, Amt für Neubürger, Weimar), BA-B, DQ 2, 3391, Bl. 344.

⁶⁰ See also, Rudolf von Thadden, "Die Gebiete östlich der Oder-Neisse in den Übergangsjahren 1945-1949--eine Vorstudie," in *Flüchtlinge und Vertriebene in der westdeutschen Nachkriegsgeschichte*, eds. Schulze, von der Brölie-Lewien, and Grebing, 117-125.

⁶¹ Kraft, "Einleitung, Wojewodschaft Allenstein," 449.

postwar Northern Poland there had been many small camps, but gradually the interned Eastern Germans were centralized in six main camps: Glaz, Milecin, Potulice, Gronowo, Jaworzno, and Sikawa.⁶²

After being questioned, searched, deloused and showered, the families were often divided and those incapable of work were often sent to a separate facility--this included the elderly and most children. The prisoners capable of working often performed agricultural labor, difficult and unpaid. Mothers capable of working had particular problems caring for their children due to the fact that they often had no contact with them. Some children were kept isolated in particular barracks for children, while others were also forced to work. Some mothers never again saw their children or ever knew what happened to them.

In *Die Rache der Opfer*, Helga Hirsch described conditions in the internment camp, Potulitz. Potulitz, located near Bromberg, became the main camp for Germans living in Northern Poland and generally housed between 20,000 and 30,000 persons. For example Hirsch reported the composition of camp inmates on 20 December 1947 as follows: 12,000 Volksdeutsche, 4,000 Reichsdeutsche, 2,000 Germans unfit for work, and 6,000 children. (Therefore altogether 24,000 persons resided in the camp at that time.) Many of the internees lived in the camp and worked on nearby farms or establishments in the area. The camp also housed Germans unfit for work, the old,

⁶² Many other camps existed for the purposes of housing Germans. For example, Lamsdorf, a camp that primarily housed Silesians, reportedly had particularly harsh conditions. See, W_ odzimierz Kalicki, "Durch ein Wunder wiedergefunden: Die Geschichte der Akten des Arbeitslagers in Lamsdorf," trans. Michael Matheja, in *Deutschland und seine Nachbarn: Forum für Kultur und Politik* Heft 10 (Bonn: Kulturstiftung der deutschen Vertriebenen, Oktober 1994), 49-56.

infirm, or children, who stayed in a separate section of the camp all the time. The working and living conditions were primitive and unsanitary. According to the author, both the Polish staff and the German Kapos abused inmates. Hirsch pointed out that one of the warders had been himself an inmate in the same camp under the Nazis, and now in his position of power abused Germans while at the same time reminding them regularly of the Poles who died under the Nazis.⁶³ Hirsch reported that those internees who agreed to deny their German heritage and stay in Poland were generally released earlier. Those internees who refused to do so sometimes had to wait until the camp was dissolved in 1949, at which point they would be released. Hirsch suggested that between 1945 and 1949, 3,139 Germans died, but contended that the figure may be higher. The officially provided reasons for death often included dystrophy, inanition, enteritis, or sometimes simply "incapable of living."⁶⁴

In August 1949 a Polish commission inspected several internment camps, among them Potulice/Potulitz. By this time there were only 1,332 residents of the camp. The living conditions were described as good: clean facilities, sufficient food, healthy workers. The workers received wages and from them paid for their accommodations, clothing, etc. The internees had the freedom to work outside the camp, and many families worked on nearby farms, the report concluded that proof of this freedom was that many of the interned laborers took advantage of the "lenient" atmosphere in the camp

⁶³ Solomon Morel was a further example of a former concentration camp inmate who later became part of the administration of a camp for mostly Silesians; in his case, he became the brutal commandant of Schwientochlowitz. Hirsch, *Die Rache der Opfer*, 153-154. See also John Sack, *An Eye for an Eye: The Untold Story of Jewish Revenge Against Germans in 1945* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), 100-110.

and fled to Germany. Internees could send and receive letters, a process slowed down by the fact that only one member of the camp personnel was qualified to censor German language mail. Internees had access to a library, piano, and German-language newspapers. The report indicated that a church service would likely be held in the camp before its dissolution later in 1949.⁶⁵ Thus, apparently, conditions improved dramatically by 1949, in part, no doubt, due to the lower occupancy rate.

The official Polish solution to the "German problem" was to ensure the removal of the Germans from the "recovered territories." Those Germans needed for the harvest or Germans with special skills were either encouraged not to leave immediately or sometimes forbidden to do so. On the other hand, Germans who were seen merely to be a drain on resources were pushed to leave as soon as possible. Following the Potsdam Conference, initially the Polish policy was to encourage--as they perceived it -- "voluntary departure"; after 1945 a policy shift to forced resettlement took place.⁶⁶

Herr L.P.'s 1947 report also described conditions during the expulsion or transport out of the Polish administrative area. The author experienced the departure inspection in Stolp, where he contended that Polish officials appropriated any remaining valuable items. During the three days they spent in the camp in Stolp the detainees received one small portion of goat-soup (Grützesuppe), and for the three day trip to the West, they received half a pound of bread, one spoonful of lard, one spoonful of sugar, and 10 grams of tinned meat. According to the report, Poles forbid Germans to try to obtain water. In

⁶⁴ Hirsch, *Die Rache der Opfer*, 117, 115, 134, 143-144, 124.

⁶⁵ Nr. 222, Kommissionsbericht über die Inspektion der Lager für Deutsche in Potulice/Potulitz, Leszno/Lissa-Grunowo und Jaworzno, 1949, 16. August, in *Die Deutschen östlich von Oder und Neisse 1945-1950*, ed. Borodziej, 399-404.

addition, the bathroom facilities were apparently in such shambles that people frequently fell in. "One could report more, but our words are not sufficient."⁶⁷

One woman whose group also arrived in the camp in Stolp described the same basic conditions. In Frau C.A.'s statement she expressed the anxiety many "resettlers" felt upon receiving the order at 3 a.m. on 1 August 1947 to pick up an extradition certificate from the community. According to this report, the Germans in her area had to pay 300 Zoty for the 25 kilometer trip to the camp in Stolp. She contended that since many of them had been forced to work without remuneration, they had no money to pay for the trip and had to try to barter the last valuable items they possessed. During the three days in the camp in Stolp they received warm food, but not enough, and the food rations for the trip were likewise insufficient (however, more than what L.P.'s report described, for example, according the Frau C.A. children received some dried milk.) During the trip from Stolp to Stargard, Frau C.A. described the travelers sitting in the open doorway of the train car and being hit with stones thrown by Polish boys. Frau C.A. remarked, "One sees again and again how hate will be stirred up."⁶⁸

Once such transports arrived in camps in the SBZ/GDR, the Eastern Germans would undergo medical examinations, registration, and receive food and often their one-time payment of 50 Marks. One such typical transport arrived on 10 August 1949 at the train station in Frankfurt on the Oder, and was then sent further to the camp Gronenfelde.

⁶⁶ Kraft, "Einleitung, Wojewodschaft Allenstein," 456-457.

⁶⁷ Abschrift, L.P., "Die Behandlung Polens gegen die Deutschen" [nd, presumably 1947, presumably sent as an attachment from Berger, Kreiskommission für Neubürger, Der Kreisrat des Kreises Hildburghausen, 11.8.1947, [An] Ministerium des Innern, Amt für Neubürger, Weimar], BA-B, DQ 2, 3391, Bl. 344

⁶⁸ Abschrift, Frau C.A., Transportbericht, Hildburghausen, den 10.8.1947, BA-B, DQ 2,

The report described the composition of the transport. The arriving Germans consisted of: 276 men, 834 women, and 422 children. Camp doctors described the health conditions of the arriving Germans as "good": only 6 had tuberculosis, 41 needed bandages, 17 required some other kind of treatment, 31 were unfit to work, 15 were already bedridden in Poland, and 2 more became bedridden during their transport. All of them had Polish identity cards. The resettlers were generally sent to the quarantine camp on the same day.⁶⁹

However, not all transports from the Polish occupied territory contained a majority of generally healthy resettlers. A transport of Germans from the internment camp "Portulize" (sic, Potulice or Potulitz) near Bromberg arrived in a resettler camp in Dessau in July 1947. The report stated: "This transport surpassed all transports in poverty and misery. Almost 90 percent of the women had cropped hair [. . .] These people had already been in the camp a long time and to judge by appearances they had been poorly treated." Even the Germans who had acted as guards in the camp had "indecently assaulted" their fellow Germans. Examples were given of a twenty-one year old Herr W.M., "who in the worst way indecently assaulted women. Beatings with a steel stick and club were on his daily agenda." According to the report he also assaulted pregnant women. Another guard, a Frau W.L., apparently also "in the worst way indecently assaulted women." Given their loss of authority outside of the camps, the former guards now found themselves in Dessau under attack from the resettlers

3391, Bl. 341

⁶⁹ Bericht über den Umsiedlertransport am 10.8.1949 aus Polen, Heimkehrerlager, Ff-O/Gronen, Ff-O/Gronen., den 11.8.1949, An die Landesregierung Brandenburg, Abt. Umsiedler/Heimk., Potsdam, Stadtarchiv Frankfurt (Oder) (StA FfO) BA II. Rat der Stadt Frankfurt (Oder) 1945-1952, 2, 856, Bl. 76.

themselves; the SBZ police had to place the former guards in an empty train car to isolate them from the angry resettlers. The guards were later imprisoned and charged with crimes against humanity.⁷⁰

Officials in the SBZ expressed frustrations with the conditions of the transports arriving in their Zone, particularly in the chaotic first weeks following capitulation during the period of "wild expulsions" and later that year during the period of forced evacuations. Herr H.G. returned from a POW camp to his home town of Eberswalde and was asked to participate with the police detachment in the implementation of a resettlement operation in the border city Küstrin-Neustadt. According to his account, the task was "to secure the resettler camp, receive the arriving transport trains and treks, to register the arrivers, provide short-term accommodation, to feed and load [them into trains] for further transport into the East Zone." Herr H.G. suggested that this operation was logistically sometimes nearly impossible. "No one could say exactly when a new transport would arrive, with how many people, whether during the day or at night. If the transport came at night, on the way from the train station it had to be safeguarded against bandits who crouched hidden in the rubble." Herr H.G. described the insufficient supply of food and the overcrowded quarters in the border camp. "The people had many problems and concerns. They wanted advice and help. There were sick people and deaths. We were always happy when a properly loaded transport crossed the Oder. In the time from 16 November through 6 December 1945 there were for example 10

⁷⁰ Betr.: Behandlung von Umsiedlern, 8.1.1948, An die ZVU, Landeshauptarchiv Magdeburg (LHA-M), Rep.K3, Ministerium des Innern, Nr. 6612, Beschwerden, 1946-1949, Bl. 43.

transports with around 25,000 people, overwhelmingly women and children." Herr H.G. thanked his comrades and the Soviet authorities, without whom the operation would not have been possible.⁷¹

In her book of the same name, the journalist Helga Hirsch described the "revenge of the victims," and suggested that the Polish government developed "a systematic policy" for the treatment of the remaining Germans as having been responsible for the crimes of National Socialism. It was the "revenge of the victims" against the "perpetrator people" (Tätervolk).⁷² The Polish administrative authorities sought systematically to repatriate the perceived perpetrators out of their "recovered territories" which would thereby lead to a solution of the "German problem." From initially enforcing a policy of "voluntary departure" to implementing "forced resettlement" the Polish authorities relieved Poland of the majority of the Eastern Germans by 1950.⁷³

Expelled to the West

There were several phases of the expulsions of the Eastern Germans. Historians often speak of "wild expulsions" that took place during the chaotic weeks prior to the Potsdam Conference as the soldiers encountered civilians, took revenge in various forms,

⁷¹ "Meine Arbeit in der Neuen Ordnungspolizei 1945/1946," Erlebnisberichte des Genossen H.G., geb. am 1.1.1914, über die Zeit seiner politischen Arbeit als Funktionär der Partei in Eberswalde in der Zeit von 1945 bis 1950, Brandenburgisches Landeshauptarchiv (BrLHA), Bez. Pdm, Rep. 530, SED-Bezirksleitung Pdm, Nr. 8767

⁷² Hirsch, *Die Rache der Opfer*, 11.

⁷³ Kraft, "Einleitung, Wojewodschaft Allenstein," 456-457.

informed Germans that they were to leave, and then literally drove them out. Following the Potsdam Conference came the so-called organized population transfers. Initially in removing Germans, the Polish authorities attempted to create the appearance of a voluntary departure, but by 1946 they more openly forced the Eastern Germans to depart. In reality there were many types of expulsions; the experience of expulsion differed based on geographic location, time period, social standing, actual or even perceived political background, family, soldier-status, luck, etc. The expulsion of Eastern Germans from Poland took place until around 1950 and was followed by the continued resettlement of Germans through policies related to reunification of families (Familienzusammenführung).

The Potsdam Accords stipulated that the transfer of the German population from Central Europe should occur in an "orderly and humane manner." Likewise the agreement between England and Poland established the procedures to be followed in the transport of Eastern Germans into the British Zone. According to the terms of Operation Swallow, Germans could take as much luggage as they could carry (including bedding, cooking utensils, and up to 500 RM.) The trains were to be staffed with Polish guards and supplied with two to three days of rations, plus some reserves. No one who was so sick that they needed hospitalization was to be transferred. Families were not to be broken up, hence one sick family member meant the whole family should stay. However, in practice, the Polish authorities often retained the Germans who were effective workers;

thus the least "valuable" Germans were the first to go.⁷⁴ Articles from April 1946 from the *British Zone Review* suggested that--despite agreements--the Poles shipped out primarily "old and sick women" and children.⁷⁵

To be sure an expulsion differed dramatically from the experience of a successful flight; indeed many Eastern Germans who fled to West Germany refused to label themselves "expellees" despite the official legal terminology in the Federal Republic. In her autobiographical account, the refugee Eva Krutein discussed with her husband the arrival of Eastern Germans who had been transferred out of the Polish administrative territory after the war. Her husband replied, "These people coming out of the East now are called expellees, in contrast to the refugees, like you, who left of their own volition. [. . .] The Poles are expelling all Germans from the territories they've taken over, and they're doing it in an inhuman way." Eva asked, "Why doesn't the Red Cross interfere?" Her husband responded, "They didn't do it during the Nazi time either."⁷⁶

The problems faced by Eastern Germans often did not end with the expulsion. The ZVU in the SBZ intercepted private correspondence from the resettler, Frau H.H, in which she illustrated some of the concerns faced by displaced Germans. In one of her letters to her aunt and uncle, Frau H.H. described her further transport from the camp in Wolfen to her assigned destination and her first experiences in the SBZ. She explained

⁷⁴ Schechtman, *Postwar Population Transfers in Europe: 1945-1955*, 205-206.

⁷⁵ "1,500,000 more Germans for the Zone: How Operation 'Swallow' is working," *British Zone Review*, Vol.1, Nr. 15 (April 13, 1946), 12; "Germans on the Way to New Homes: Most of them from E. Prussia are old and sick Women," *British Zone Review*, Vol. 1, Nr. 16 (27 April 1946), 15.

⁷⁶ Eva Krutein, *Eva's War: A True Story of Survival* (Albuquerque, New Mexico: Amador Publishers, 1990), 157-158.

that she was told one day in advance of her impending transport. The Eastern Germans who were to take part on this transport were divided up and provided with rations for the journey. The train arrived but they were told to wait outside on the tracks, where they ended up waiting over night in apparently unpleasantly cold temperatures. The train left the next day around noon, by 8 p.m. they had reached their destination, Klostermannsfelde. Although carts should have already been there to transport them to Hergisdorf, they had to wait on the street for three hours for their transportation. After two and a half additional hours they reached Hergisdorf and were taken to an inn, where they were told, "The house [Saal] is full." They ended up spending the night in a school where they slept on straw. The next morning notes were distributed designating where they would find further accommodation. Frau H.H. went with her two children to the designated address. "The doors were locked and the people were *very* unfriendly. They greeted us with the words 'We have no room for you.' Then I had a good cry and went with my children back to the school. It went exactly the same way for all the others. Now we are all sitting in the school and moping."

Frau H.H. was concerned with the food situation, and stated that even the indigenes suffered from a lack of certain essential items like potatoes. "Yes, we are *all very* disappointed."⁷⁷ In a second letter she described further her plight as a mother trying to feed her two children when food was difficult to obtain. "I am sorry for the children. Tante Berta, do you know what Manfred always says? Tante Berta always gave me [enough food] till my tummy was full and you[,] Mutti always only a little.

⁷⁷ Frau H.H., Hergisdorf, 29.8.1947, to Onkel Ernst und Tante Berta, Abschrift, LHA-M, Rep.K3, Ministerium des Innern, Nr. 6612, Bl. 37. (emphasis in original).

Tante Berta should cook again. When is Tante Berta coming?" Indeed many Eastern Germans expressed surprise and disappointment with conditions in postwar Germany. Frau H.H. added, "Yes, now we have the Germany that we of course imagined somewhat differently. All the same I don't want to go back. There are some who have decided to ride back to Elbing. All others who have some sort of connection with the English Zone or Mecklenburg are clearing out of here."⁷⁸

Indeed, as did Frau H.H., many expellees perceived their transport out of the Polish administrative territory as a form of liberation.⁷⁹ The surviving members of Frau M.S.'s family were allowed to leave their Pomeranian village in October 1945. She described this departure as a bitter liberation: "We could now leave the Heimat. As reluctantly as one leaves the Heimat, we had longed for this day, finally out of misery and despair to be permitted heavy-hearted to leave the Heimat." Because of the poor health of her mother and aunt, Frau M.S. had to dress and help them, and secure safe passage for her only remaining family members.⁸⁰

Frau E.G. expressed similar relief at her liberation, but expressed clear ties to her Heimat, ties which were not broken by the existence of a Polish administration. On 17 May 1947 after living and working under Polish occupation for two years, Frau E.G. and her remaining children were expelled, or released, to the West. Indeed she wrote, "Finally came the day on which we were extradited. [. . .] At that time we were happy

⁷⁸ Frau H.H., Hergisdorf, 15.9.1947, to Onkel Ernst und Tante Berta, Abschrift, LHA-M, Rep.K3, Ministerium des Innern, Nr. 6612, Bl. 36.

⁷⁹ Schieder, *Die Vertreibung der Deutschen Bevölkerung*, vol., I/I, 135 E.

⁸⁰ Frau M.S., interview by author, tape recording, Finowfurth, 19 March 1999.

to turn our back to the otherwise so beloved Heimat. We yearned for freedom and for all the loved ones who already lived in the West." She hoped also for a reunion with two of her sons and her husband, a reunion for which she never stopped hoping.⁸¹

To be sure, many Eastern Germans who had lived under Polish administration regarded the expulsion as a liberation. Many of them did not, however, regard the situation as permanent. The English newspaper *The Observer* printed a report on the conditions for arriving Germans transported as part of Operation Swallow. The author regarded it as strange, but suggested that many of the new arrivals considered themselves to be "temporary refugees" and not permanent emigrants.⁸²

Eastern German civilian internees and POWS

Some Eastern Germans who did not succeed in their attempts to flee, or some of them who remained regardless of the impending arrival of the enemy soldiers, were rounded up and transported East to work as laborers in internment camps in often remote areas of the Soviet Union. The Soviets rounded up the first Eastern Germans in January 1945 and by April, many tens of thousands of Germans had been deported thousands of kilometers East. Often these Eastern Germans performed hard, unpaid labor on collectivized farms, in mines, in factories, in quarries, in brickworks, in road- or rail construction, clearing rubble, digging ditches, etc. These internment camps were spread

⁸¹ Frau E.G., "Meine Erlebnisse in unserer Heimat in Neuendorf-Hoehle, Kreis Elbing, Westpreussen, zur Zeit der Besetzung durch die Russen und Polen," 28-29 (given to the author by Frau M.R.)

⁸² Informationsbulletin Nr. 347, BA-B, NY 4036, 743.

across the Soviet Union, but were concentrated in the Volga region, in the Caucasus, and in Siberia. Conditions in 1945 and early 1946 were generally abysmal in all camps, but by summer 1946 and 1947 conditions had improved tremendously, especially for hard workers.

In his introduction to *Die Vertriebenen: Hitlers letzte Opfer*, Hans Lemberg reminded readers that even the most notorious or disreputable camps were still not extermination camps. There may have been deplorable conditions, malnutrition, starvation, forced labor, rapes, executions, and rampant disease, but there was not a state-sponsored program of extermination.⁸³ It may have been unimportant to the Soviet administration whether the Germans brought to these camps survived or not, but the purpose in bringing them there was not to kill them and thereby eliminate the German people as a whole, rather to force them to perform hard, unpaid labor.

This act of deporting civilians to camps realized Stalin's desire for German forced laborers to assist in the rebuilding of the Soviet Union, a desire he expressed to the other Allies during the peace negotiations.⁸⁴ To be sure, Stalin used Germans for hard labor both in the Soviet Zone and also in his own country, and his definition of who reasonably constituted a prisoner was broad. Indeed not only Eastern German civilians from the former territories and many prisoners of war experienced the deportation to Soviet labor

⁸³ Hans Lemberg, "Mehr als eine Völkerwanderung, eine Einführung," introduction to, K. Erik Franzen, *Die Vertriebenen: Hitlers letzte Opfer* (München: Propyläen Verlag, 2001), 24.

⁸⁴ Churchill expressed apprehension concerning Stalin's demand for four million German males as a source of forced labor to rebuild Russia in a letter to Sir Alexander Cadogan, April 19, 1944, Appendix B, Book 2, Churchill, *The Second World War: Closing the Ring*, 706.

camps, rather ethnic Germans from East Central and Southeastern Europe, Germans from the Soviet Zone--especially the so-called "specialists," as well as some Western POWs⁸⁵ and some Poles mistaken for being German were also deported to the East to work for the reconstruction of the Soviet Union. A report from January 1948 even described a group of 1,400 nuns (Vincentians) deported from the SBZ to Stalino, where they had worked in a mine; many of them had apparently been raped there by drunken guards.⁸⁶ In his account Hans Heinz Pollack suggested that the Soviets viewed such deportations as just: the Germans should perform reparations. The Soviet perspective, as depicted by Pollack, argued that the Germans "should atone for the evil deeds committed under the German national emblem, for the devastation and violation of the USSR. They should atone also for the fact that they are Germans."⁸⁷

The full actualization of the deportation plan may have been hindered by the demographics of the territories first reached by the Soviet troops in January 1945. Because most able-bodied German men were serving as soldiers or had already died, the population left in the East Prussian towns and villages consisted primarily of women, children, and elderly people. Nevertheless the Soviet military officials had orders to deport certain numbers of Germans into the Soviet Union for purposes of forced labor.

⁸⁵ Ohlsen (Suchdienst Hamburg), "Die deutschen Deportierten in der UdSSR," (als Entwurf gefertigt: Hamburg, den 13. Juli 1954), (für den Band IV der UN-Dokumentationenunterlagen), p. 10-33, BA-K, B 150, 245, Bl. 161-184.

⁸⁶ Katholische International Presseagentur, "Ordensschwwestern in russischen Bergwerken: Erschütternder Bericht über das Schicksal Verschleppter aus der Ostzone," (5. Januar 1948), Abschrift aus der Zeitschrift *Im Ausland* vom 21. Februar 1948, p. 1-2. BA-K, B150, 245, Bl. 194-195.

⁸⁷ Pollack, *Verschleppt und Verschollen*, 10.

Indeed those Germans captured by Soviet authorities in East Prussia, West Prussia and Pomerania and deported to far-off camps in the Soviet Union reflected the above-described demographics: generally women and children, the elderly, boys and male teenagers who had been drafted into the Volkssturm, sometimes members of the local administration, and also occasionally families already on treks would be captured, questioned, and deported to far away parts of the Soviet Union.

Between late January and April 1945 in many areas in Eastern Germany the elements of the population who were fit to work were either required to register for deportation or captured and arrested. Men up to the age of 50 or 55, depending on the region, generally qualified as fit to work. Although men were the preferred workers, many tens of thousands of women also faced deportation (indeed women made up the majority of the interned Germans.) If the quota had not been filled, even the elderly and children were added to the group.⁸⁸

Excluding comparatively small numbers of politically-oriented arrests and deportations in 1946 and 1947,⁸⁹ this process of rounding up and deporting Germans to work as forced laborers lasted for only a short period; in April the arrests stopped. The exact explanation for the halt to arrests is not clear, some possible reasons included already having met the quotas for forced laborers, the arrival of POWs who could be used as workers, the high death rates during the transports, or the need for such laborers also in

⁸⁸Ohlsen (Suchdienst Hamburg), "Die deutschen Deportierten in der UdSSR," 6, 8. BAK, B 150, 245, Bl. 157, 159.

⁸⁹ For example in 1947 in Northern East Prussia, some German women were arrested on the grounds of "Soviet-hostile agitation" for singing German songs or other similar activities. These arrests apparently continued at least through the time of drafting of the report. See, *ibid.*, 12, Bl. 163.

Königsberg/Kaliningrad and Poland (where an independent policy of retention of productive workers and expulsion or detention of the elderly, sick and infirm had already developed by summer 1945).

Along with the civilian deportees, some captured soldiers also faced deportation to camps in the Soviet Union prior to the end of the war; after capitulation, the numbers of deported POWs increased significantly. In some instances labor camps housed both interned civilians as well as POWs (in separate quarters.)⁹⁰ In the report, "Die deutschen Deportierten in der UdSSR," (The German Deportees in the USSR) drafted by the Suchdienst in Hamburg, the author contended that a discussion of deportees to camps in the Soviet Union must include both the civilians as well as the captured soldiers who experienced the deportation; a division was difficult because they shared many experiences.⁹¹ Likewise in her published collection of reports from POWs, Eva Berthold included accounts by several Eastern German women.⁹² Moreover a 1948 report from Gronenfelde, the resettler-Heimkehrer camp near Frankfurt on the Oder, included a list of

⁹⁰ Albrecht Lehmann suggested that fortunately only 25,000 to 30,000 civilian women were in camps in the Soviet Union and that most of them were separate camps for women. He does not provide any additional information. *Gefangenschaft und Heimkehr: Deutsche Kriegsgefangene in der Sowjetunion* (München: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1986), 86. Indeed published memoirs and some archival materials mention female civilians and male soldiers imprisoned in camps together (with separate sleeping quarters).

⁹¹ Ohlsen (Suchdienst Hamburg), "Die deutschen Deportierten in der UdSSR," 2, BA-K, B 150, 245, Bl. 153. Kurt W. Böhme also addressed the mixed transports and the initial Soviet perspective that all interned Germans were "cheap sources of labor." *Die deutschen Kriegsgefangenen in sowjetischer Hand: Eine Bilanz*, volume 7, *Zur Geschichte der deutschen Kriegsgefangenen des Zweiten Weltkrieges*, ed. Erich Maschke (Bielefeld: Verlag Ernst und Werner Giesecke, 1966), 60.

⁹² See, for example the report from Lydia Probst or the statement from Ruth Eggert in Eva Berthold, *Kriegsgefangene im Osten: Bilder, Briefe, Berichte* (Königsstein/Ts.: Athenaum Verlag, 1981), 160-167.

the most common questions asked by the returning internees. One of the questions was: "Why must we civilian internees now be quarantined. For years we lived in a camp with the captured soldiers. Why now this contrast."⁹³ In addition to sharing experiences in the camps and often being on the same transports into and also out of the Soviet Union upon their release in the later 1940s or early 1950s, the civilian and soldier deportees often shared another significant event: the loss of the Heimat. Many of the POWs deported to Soviet camps were themselves Eastern Germans; in the SBZ such POWs were referred to as Heimatlose Heimkehrer (heimatless or homeless persons returning home); in the Western Zones they received the designation "B" Soldiers (B-Soldat). The experience of internment and the loss of the Heimat generally influenced the reintegration of both the POWs as well as the civilian deportees and thus formed another experiential similarity.

Exact numbers of how many German civilians experienced the deportation to labor camps in the Soviet Union do not exist and many sources supply only estimations.⁹⁴ Theodor Schieder suggested that 218,000 Germans from the eastern territories were deported and between 100,000 and 125,000 did not survive.⁹⁵ Schieder suggested that in the transit camp in Insterburg and the camp in Graudenz, many hundreds of Germans

⁹³ Statistischer Bericht für den Kalendermonat Oktober 1948, des Umsiedler-Heimkehrer-Lagers Gronenfelde, über die kulturelle und politische Betreuung, StA FfO BA II. Rat der Stadt Frankfurt (Oder) 1945-1952, 855, Bl. 248

⁹⁴ See, for example, the brief discussion by Claudia Kraft, "Einleitung, Wojewodschaft Allenstein," 446-447.

⁹⁵ These figures include 62,000 Silesians, thus according to Schieder, 156,000 East Prussians, East Pomeranians, West Prussians and East-Brandenburger were deported. *Die Vertreibung der Deutschen Bevölkerung*, vol. 1, 83 E.

died before even leaving formerly German soil. Additionally, during the difficult three to six week transport to the Soviet work camps, another ten percent of the deported died.⁹⁶

The report from the Suchdienst in Hamburg contended that 750,000 Germans altogether experienced the deportation to camps in the Soviet Union. According to this report, between February and April at least 223,000 civilians were deported to the Soviet Union, among them a minimum of 155,700 persons from East Prussia, West Prussia, Pomerania and East Brandenburg. Mortality rates exceeded 50 percent. According to the report, these figures represented the minimum and did not include, for instance, the civilians captured with POWs; many Germans by chance wearing Wehrmacht jackets or who were in the company of soldiers were treated as soldiers and many experienced the deportations of POWs to camps in the Soviet Union. The status of the Volkssturm remained unclear and often they would be deported as POWs as well.⁹⁷

The Heimatlose Heimkehrer or "B" Soldiers also generally did not appear in the figures for deported Eastern Germans mentioned above. This group of soldiers whose home-coming literally would be in a new and unfamiliar Heimat formed a significant component of POWs as a category. For example, the camp Gronenfelde near Frankfurt on the Oder served as a major reception point for Germans (both civilians and soldiers) returning from camps in the East. Examples of transports arriving in 1946 indicated the

⁹⁶ Ibid., 83 E-84 E. Heinz Nawratil basically agreed with these figures. See, *Die deutschen Nachkriegsverluste: unter Vertriebenen, Gefangenen und Verschleppten* (München, Berlin: Herbig, 1986), 51.

⁹⁷ Ohlsen (Suchdienst Hamburg), "Die deutschen Deportierten in der UdSSR," 4, 7, 10. BA-K, B 150, 245, Bl. 155, 158, 161.

size of the Heimatlose Heimkehrer component within the incoming group of POWs.⁹⁸ A typical example of one such transport, arriving on 31 July 1946 contained 55 persons designated for Berlin, 221 whose Heimat was in the SBZ, 84 persons whose destination was in the French Occupied Zone, 138 Germans designated for the American Zone, 250 persons who would be sent further to the BBZ, and finally 214 "Heimatlose Heimkehrer." Some transports contained overwhelming numbers of Eastern Germans. For example, the transport which arrived on 8 August 1946 contained 1,327 persons whose homes were in one of the four zones and Berlin, 55 Germans whose pre-war home had been in the present day Czechoslovakia (Sudeten Germans), and finally 805 heimatlose Heimkehrer from the former Eastern territories.⁹⁹ According to the general statistics for POWs regardless of "Heimat" from Heinz Nawratil, in all over 3 million German POWs landed in camps in the Soviet Union, 1,335,000 of them died.¹⁰⁰ Kurt W. Böhme suggested that exact figures cannot be determined and concluded that around 3,155,000 German POWs ended up in the Soviet Union, around 1,110,000 died.¹⁰¹ It must be noted, of course, that not all POWs from the former Eastern territories ended up in camps in the Soviet Union.

Already in 1945 many of the sick deportees, as well as the Polish deportees who had been deported because they had been mistakenly identified as Germans, were

⁹⁸ Judging by the wording of these arrival reports it appeared as though only POWs arrived on these transports. Other such reports appearing to include civilians as well as soldiers broke down the numbers into men, women, and children and did not list the various zones or destinations. See, for example, StA FfO BA II. Rat der Stadt Frankfurt (Oder) 1945-1952, 438, Bl. 60, 61, 62.

⁹⁹ StA FfO BA II. Rat der Stadt Frankfurt (Oder) 1945-1952, 438, Bl. 3, 12.

¹⁰⁰ Nawratil, *Die deutschen Nachkriegsverluste*, 36, 45.

¹⁰¹ Böhme, *Die deutschen Kriegsgefangenen in sowjetischer Hand: Eine Bilanz*, ix, 151.

released and sent to the Germanies or back to Poland respectively. Through 1947 additional infirm Germans as well as children and pregnant women were released. Between 1948 and 1950 the majority of the remaining able-bodied Germans were released. Some Germans had been granted Soviet citizenship and stayed. The Eastern Germans, both civilians and soldiers, as well as other POWs sentenced to penal institutions for various political crimes were generally retained beyond 1950.

In some camps the Eastern Germans worked and lived with prisoners of war, and when they were released they often traveled on the same transport to the SBZ/GDR or Western Zones/Federal Republic. As with the POWs, some internees were already released in autumn 1945, but the majority of deported Germans first saw the postwar Germanies in the late 1940s or early 1950s. A minority of Eastern German civilians and German soldiers first made it out on transports in 1953 or 1954; indeed many internees and POWs died in captivity or were never released.

The Experiences of civilian internees and POWs in camps in the Soviet Union

In the first months of 1945 during the Soviet assault on East Prussia, West Prussia, and Pomerania, the Red Army sought not only to express revenge, rather also to exact forms of compensation from the German nation. The drive for reparations took two forms: On the one hand the Soviets used systematic and controlled methods of appropriating goods for the purposes of rebuilding the Soviet State; on the other hand there were many cases of spontaneous and often unrestrained means of appropriation which expressed individual vengeance and a desire for personal restitution. These

measures affected not only private and public property, but also German citizens. The deportation of German citizens to perform hard labor for the rebuilding of the Soviet Union was a major aspect of their wartime objectives in early 1945. Some Eastern German civilians and soldiers were captured and then deported by Red Army soldiers. Other Germans were forced to register for the transport into the Soviet Union. And some Germans even had to sign papers, with threats of "special treatment" (Sonderbehandlung) if they refused, stating they voluntarily agreed to work in the labor camps for the rebuilding of the Soviet Union and would participate in re-education programs.¹⁰²

The Eastern Germans who were captured, or those who under duress registered for, or were even forced to volunteer for deportation and then hard labor in Soviet camps, were literally a motley group whom the Soviets collected together in transit camps between the end of January and April 1945. The experiences in the transit camps, in particular in the facilities in Insterburg and Graudenz, created a pattern for many Eastern Germans for the deportation and internment.

The time the German prisoners spent in the Insterburg or Graudenz transit camps was a time of waiting. No one knew what would happen to them next, where they would be sent, or what would be required of them. In these transit camps, men and women were separated; thus any communication was hindered. Many Eastern Germans wondered if other family members had also been caught. Not only the camp personnel often abused the captured Germans, but as was the case with Potulitz, sometimes fellow German prisoners accrued advantages by acting as overseers, or Kapos, and in so doing sometimes zealously abused the other internees. In his account, Hans Heinz Pollack

¹⁰² Pollack, *Verschleppt und Verschollen*, 41.

described examples of this abuse, especially from the Kapos. Pollack suggested that even in the camp in Insterburg certain prisoners already started acting as Kapo. Some of these Kapos were former forced laborers from Russia or Poland who were seeking revenge, some of these new overseers were Germans who sought better treatment, and some of them were of undeterminable origin.¹⁰³

Pollack was an ordinary soldier (Landser) from Tyrol in Hermsdorf, East Prussia, when he was captured by the Soviets in March 1945. Despite his POW status he and about twelve other captured soldiers were imprisoned with 2,000 German civilians in the transit camp in Insterburg. For Pollack this initial prison term lasted under two weeks, during which time the Soviets in charge questioned the Germans and tried to determine their political and social standing. Sometimes force was used to get prisoners to sign papers which stated they were in the SA, Hitler Youth, or in some other manner were affiliated with the Nazi hierarchy.

Pollack's group was eventually forced to march to the provisionally-assembled marshalling yard and was then loaded onto unheated cattle cars, in which temperatures during that time of year consistently tended to be under 0 degrees Celsius.¹⁰⁴ None of the passengers knew where the cattle cars would take them or how long the ride would last; many of them cried, or prayed, some of the prisoners repeatedly stated that they would certainly be able to go home once the war was over. In Pollack's wagon a few civilians anxiously questioned if there would even be a home for them in East Prussia once the war

¹⁰³ Ibid., 16-17

¹⁰⁴ Franzen, *Die Vertriebenen: Hitlers letzte Opfer*, 91.

was over. The train's sanitation and food were extremely poor and already during the transport some of the passengers contracted typhus or died from malnutrition.¹⁰⁵

Frau G.S., her father, and some of his employees fled in a trek with three wagons from Angerburg, East Prussia in January 1945. Soviet soldiers overwhelmed and plundered the wagons and assaulted the fleeing Germans. Frau G.S. later explained that "the Russians took great pains to achieve compensation from us Germans" and termed their interaction with German civilians a "hunt for Germans." Frau G.S., her father, and the other members of their trek succeeded in getting back on the road (with considerably fewer possession, one less wagon, and also fewer horses) but did not get far on the congested roads. At one point, while hiding in a barn, Frau G.S. was sexually assaulted by three Soviet soldiers and then brought to the transit camp in Insterburg as one of the Germans to be deported. "Where can I hang myself," she asked upon arrival in the Insterburg prison. During the transport women called out "Who is from Angerburg? Who is from Elbing? Who is from Ratenberg," etc., thereby constructing the first groups among the prisoners.

Frau G.S.'s group of deportees would arrive in a camp 2,000 kilometers away on the other side of the Ural Mountains, a former camp for ethnic Germans. Frau G.S. later described the Soviets' explanation for the arrest and internment of the German civilians: "You were in Germany, your task was to sabotage, but you did not sabotage, you worked. . . against us you worked." The just punishment was deportation to Siberian labor camps. Frau G.S. stated, "They made our lives hell. Really."¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Pollack, *Verschleppt und Verschollen*, 18-36.

¹⁰⁶ Frau G.S., interview by author, tape recording, Magdeburg, 19 May 1999.

Frau U.B.'s description of the camp at Insterburg focused on the primitive and crowded conditions in the facilities, where roughly forty women and girls lived in each room for a period of about two weeks. Eventually the women and girls--mostly in mother-daughter pairs--were loaded onto a train in Insterburg, with roughly 40 women per car. Frau U.B. reported that they received salty cheese as their meal in the train that evening and nothing to drink. They spent that night in the train waiting, not knowing what would happen or where they would go. Late that night the Soviets began wildly knocking on the roof and outside walls of the train car in effort to scare the women and, as Frau U.B. perceived the situation, to try to cause them to have a nervous breakdown. Finally after a lengthy transport, in June 1945, Frau U.B.'s group ended up in a camp in Medvezegorsk in Karelia, where she and her mother spent one and a half years in internment, performing "men's work."¹⁰⁷

During Königsberg's capitulation in April 1945 Herr G.R., a 14 year old East Prussian boy, and some of his family members and relatives were hiding in a cellar in Königsberg. Herr G.R. commented that although the announcement of capitulation likely saved many lives, for many Germans "the misery had only just begun." The Soviet soldiers removed Herr G.R. and his relatives from the cellar and they, along with other Germans in the area, were herded together and marched to nearby Cranz. When they reached Cranz, the Soviet Officials interrogated the captured Germans and in Herr G.R.'s case they repeatedly accused the 14 year old of being a soldier or "SS-man" in civilian clothes. Eventually Herr G.R. was separated from his family and transported to Georgenburg, a former stud farm near Insterburg, where all prisoners were categorized,

¹⁰⁷ Frau U.B., interview by Ralf Possekel, transcript, Dillingen, 19.05.1996, DGA, 8-11.

searched, and organized into groups, many of whom were then marched to the train station. Herr G.R. was reunited with one of his older brothers in Georgenburg and they both departed with a group loaded on to trains heading East. Unbeknown to them, the final destination of the deported Germans on this transport was Iurga, by Novosibirsk.¹⁰⁸

The report from the East Prussian man Herr E.O. described several prison experiences under different regimes. Herr E.O. served as an adjutant during World War II until he was imprisoned on 21 July 1944 due to "strong suspicion of participation in a crime against the state." Through Christmas 1944 Herr E.O. experienced many interrogations and was moved from one Nazi prison to another, a process that came to a halt with the Soviet advance into East Prussia, at which time he became part of Königsberg's final defense unit. After being wounded a fourth time, Herr E.O. was captured by the Soviets on 10 April and interned in a POW camp in Königsberg. After several weeks in transit camps, he and other captured soldiers spent 13 days on a train transport to Kazan on the Volga, and from there were boarded onto a steamer and taken to Elabuga, a POW camp in the foothills of the Ural mountains. On 9 November 1945 Herr E.O. was sentenced to life imprisonment in a penal colony on the grounds of "alleged ridicule of the Red Army and slander of the Soviet system." According to Herr E.O. there were neither witnesses nor was he given the opportunity to defend himself. "The alleged court-martial consisted of Germans bearing the Iron Cross, who had since

¹⁰⁸ Herr G.R., "1900 bis 1995: Alte Heimat-Neue Heimat. Lebenserinnerungen von G.R.," 4-8. (typed report given to the author). This information also reflects the interview the author conducted with Herr G.R. on 1 April 1999 in Osnabrück.

then defected to an antifascist association, the Nationalkomitee Freies Deutschland, [National Committee of a Free Germany] or pretended to have."¹⁰⁹

It must be noted that some German POWs suggested that camp conditions in the Soviet Union were adequate and certainly far superior to the conditions faced by Soviet POWs in Nazi Germany. Herr G.W., a 17 year old from Königsberg, served as a soldier defending East Prussia when he and a comrade allowed themselves to be captured in February 1945. "We had had enough," he explained. The Soviets sent the two young soldiers to a POW camp near Leningrad, where they cleared away debris from the war. He suggested that the treatment was humane and the lack of medicine and food reflected the general conditions, and not mistreatment of prisoners. Herr G.W. elaborated, "We didn't get fat from the experience." His age secured him an early release date; when he knocked on the door of his mother's new residence outside of Dresden she failed to recognize him due to his dramatically altered physical appearance.¹¹⁰

Following the days or weeks of fear and confusion in the transit camps, the Eastern Germans deported to the East often knew little about where they were going. The Eastern Germans and POWs often feared they would be sent to Siberia, indeed sometimes they were, and sometimes their camps were actually located in other parts of the Soviet Union and, despite the actual location, Germans perceived themselves to have been in Siberia. They were generally unfamiliar with the geography of the Soviet Union and knew only that Siberia was in the East and contained prisons. Albrecht Lehmann

¹⁰⁹ Herr E.O., report, Hamburg, 27 November 1964, p. 1-2. BA-K, B 106, 27837.

¹¹⁰ Herr G.W., interview by author, tape recording, Berlin, 8 April 1999. At the time of the interview Herr G.W. was a prominent member of PDS, and had served with Erich Honecker in the GDR's government.

described this tendency among POWs to refer to "Siberia" as a metaphor: "'Siberia' must be used here above all as a metaphor for the unfamiliar, [an] expanse perceived as threatening and the strangeness of the Russian country."¹¹¹

Their arrival in the Soviet Union was usually followed by an inspection of the deportees and a distribution of different groups to particular camps. During such an inspection where all prisoners were required to undress, Pollack reported that the Soviet soldiers "obstinately" stared at the German girls as they were forced to remove their clothing. After undressing, the Germans, many of whom were lice-infested, were permitted to get hot water and bathe, after which they were shaved from head to toe.

Pollack added that German men were also present as the girls and women were forced to undress while the Soviet personnel watched. He added, though, that among the German prisoners no one thought of desire or lustful thoughts. After the long train ride, during which the prisoners were lucky if they obtained a small portion of soup, Pollack suggested "what can still awake attraction is a piece of bread or a potato."¹¹² Albrecht Lehmann described the same phenomenon among the captured soldiers transported to POW camps: "The hunger does not permit any other thoughts. Food becomes the number one topic of all conversations."¹¹³

¹¹¹ Lehmann, *Gefangenschaft und Heimkehr*, 39. In early nineteenth-century Russia, "Siberia" likewise had forboding connotations and served as a metaphor for the hostile, cold, unknown, etc. See Mark Bassin, *Imperial Visions: Nationalist Imagination and Geographical Expansion in the Russian Far East, 1840-1865* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 60-61. I extend my thanks to Aaron Retish for the reference.

¹¹² Pollack, *Verschleppt und Verschollen*, 37

¹¹³ Lehmann, *Gefangenschaft und Heimkehr*, 61.

After the inspection the Eastern Germans were often transported by train to the camp where they would perform what ever type of forced labor for which they were deemed fit. Herr G.R.'s transport finally reached their destination in Iurga in Siberia, where "Russian civilians" were standing on the tracks calling out "Fritzi, Fritzi" to the internees as they got off the train. The group was then marched to the camp. Herr G.R. described the watchtowers surrounding the camp and stated, "Here we had our free lodging and our free board and work through joy [Arbeit durch Freude.]"¹¹⁴

The train cars in Pollack's transport stopped at the train station in Kanash, in the autonomous Chuvash Republic in the Volga region about 700 kilometers southeast of Moscow, and the male prisoners marched until they reached the special camp Kanash (Speziallager Kanasch). Guards forced the female prisoners to stay in the cattle cars and they were taken elsewhere. Pollack suggested that all prisoners were actually in need of hospitalization by this point and they no longer had the ability to comprehend time or distance. On the march to the camp the Germans passed by local Chuvash and he noted that the women looked on them with sympathy and tears and threw potatoes to them.¹¹⁵ When they reached the camp the internees saw a large prison yard, encircled with barbed wire and armed sentries. The Germans were counted, frisked and de-individualized; the guards confiscated all personal effects, including silverware, photos, and letters.

¹¹⁴ Herr G.R., "1900 bis 1995: Alte Heimat-Neue Heimat. Lebenserinnerungen von G.R." 8 (typed report given to the author).

¹¹⁵ Pollack mentioned many examples of Chuvash women and children trying to give the German prisoners food, and suggested that they had little to begin with. He also discussed the nurses trying to help and feed the internees even if it meant taking from their own meager rations. Pollack, *Verschleppt und Verschollen*, 52-53, 57, 121, 153.

Conditions in the camps were often primitive--especially in 1945 and early 1946. Initially Herr G.R.'s group had to sleep outdoors while the facilities for this new camp for Germans were built. Iurga was surrounded by different camps, including a Soviet penal camp, which the German prisoners could observe; they saw Russians working, guarded by dogs, and marching in step. On the basis of his descriptions, a comparison thus indicates that Soviet political prisoners likely faced more extreme hardships than interned Germans.¹¹⁶

Pollack's descriptions of camp conditions also focused on the primitive facilities and the insufficiency of food. Once per day the prisoners received a watery cabbage soup and a small piece of wet, bitter bread. The guards explained that the Germans were a source of reparation: only those prisoners who performed good work received food. Pollack reported cases of bread theft; in their hunger the prisoners had turned into starving animals dreaming of their favorite dishes and fighting each other over the small pieces of bread. Tensions between prisoners also arose as a result of educational differences; the educated prisoners were a minority and often faced ridicule and sometimes beatings.

The labor performed by internees in the camps across the Soviet Union differed by region and also strength of the workers involved. Initially Herr G.R., his brother, and the other prisoners had to dig trenches for laying cable. Herr G.R. was too weak for such hard labor and only pretended to do it while the guards were looking; his brother actually performed his work for him. The camp doctors determined that Herr G.R. was indeed not

¹¹⁶ Herr G.R., "1900 bis 1995: Alte Heimat-Neue Heimat. Lebenserinnerungen von G.R.," 8 (typed report given to the author).

fit for hard labor and he was thus permitted to perform light duties in the camp, such as carving clothes-pins. In June, the sick inmates of the camp were sent to harvest potatoes on a nearby collective farm (Kolchose); Herr G.R. reported that they frequently pocketed some of the harvest and got soap, which they could trade for food from the local population, whom he described as miserably destitute.¹¹⁷

Contagious diseases and diseases related to malnutrition were common in the often primitive conditions in the camps. After returning from the Kolchose, Herr G.R. became ill with dysentery. Not only was the food insufficient, but also consumable water was in short supply; the water available in the camp was contaminated and undrinkable. Herr G.R.'s state of health worsened and by autumn his legs were severely swollen--and eventually even his head swelled with fluid--due to hunger edema. In November 1945 Herr G.R. was released from the camp and transported with other sick Eastern Germans to the West. During the transport, his condition continued to degenerate; moreover he was aggravated by lice, which had become a problem for all the sick Germans. Herr G.R. stated: "we did not have lice, rather the lice had us." As they came through Posen, now Polish, they made contact with Germans who explained what had happened since their deportation: the expulsion, the Potsdam agreement, and the division of Germany into zones. When they finally arrived in the camp in Frankfurt on the Oder, Herr G.R., now 15 years old, had no idea where any relatives were nor whether any were still living.¹¹⁸

In June 1945 Pollack's dysentery was so bad that he was sent to a doctor and received treatment. The doctor, a Jewish Armenian woman, helped him, was kind to

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 8-9.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 9-11.

him, and arranged for him to be sent to a military hospital until he recovered. Pollack asked "How was it possible that she of all people, a Jewish woman, was so kind and humane to them. She of all people would have grounds to maltreat the Germans."¹¹⁹

Military hospitals, sometimes poorly staffed and nearly always poorly equipped, served as the last hope for recovery for sick patients who were not transported out on the first trains in autumn 1945. Pollack described his own recovery in the hospital and suggested the conditions were more favorable than in the work camps. Pregnant East Prussian women were also cared for in the hospital. According to Pollack, in the fall the babies arrived, babies who were the product of the mass-raping that occurred as the drunken soldiers of the Red Army arrived in and occupied East Prussia. Upon being born the babies were immediately taken away from the mothers and sent to a home. Pollack suggested that the mothers never had the opportunity to develop a bond with their babies.¹²⁰

Herr E.O. also spent time in a medical facility where he also received assistance from a Jewish doctor. In particular this Russian woman hindered his being transported as a result of his life sentence to a penal facility in Eastern Siberia in November 1945. He ended up in a camp in Samara, on the Volga, and through the help of another female Jewish doctor managed to board a hospital train car heading to Frankfurt on the Oder.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Pollack, *Verschleppt und Verschollen*, 112-114.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 124-125, 138.

¹²¹ Apparently interned Germans frequently encountered female Jewish doctors who helped them. An East Prussian veteran of World War I, Herr W.M., participated in the Volkssturm during the defense of Königsberg and upon being captured by the Soviets was transported to Gorki on the Volga to perform hard labor. Eventually Herr W.M. became ill with dysentery and was examined by a female Jewish doctor. She spoke

However, upon his arrival in the SBZ--without release papers--authorities determined that Herr E.O. had to spend the next two years in various prisons in the Soviet Zone.¹²²

Frau G.S., who had been working in the hospital in the camp in Siberia, defined the Soviet intentions towards interned Germans as twofold: Not only were they to participate in the reconstruction of the Soviet Union, rather they were also to undergo a "reeducation of their thinking." This second aspect of the Soviet plan was especially implemented after 1946. Many internees had access to German language newspapers from the "Nationalkomitee Freies Deutschland." This newspaper was printed in Moscow and glorified Stalin and the victorious Allies and promoted Communism. There was also pressure to attend antifascist-schools. Frau G.S. described a school in Cheliabinsk in the Ural as a four week retraining program designed to reeducate the internees in Marxist and Leninist thought.¹²³ Pollack suggested that those who attended such programs were often promised better rations and did so for other than ideological reasons. He contended that other prisoners often neither liked the antifascist people, whom they considered informants, nor did they like the German women who were the girlfriends of Russians and who through such actions attained more food.¹²⁴

German to him, and assured him: "I will get you through this, old man," and gave him extra sugar rations. As reported to the author during a telephone conversation with his son, Herr J.M. on 17 August 2002. Böhme also addressed the frequency of the presence of Jewish female doctors in the camps. See, Böhme, *Die deutschen Kriegsgefangenen in sowjetischer Hand: Eine Bilanz*, 242.

¹²² Herr E.O., report, Hamburg, 27 November 1964, p. 2-3. BA-K, B106, 27837.

¹²³ Frau G.S., interview by author, tape recording, Magdeburg, 19 May 1999.

¹²⁴ Pollack, *Verschleppt und Verschollen*, 9, 192-193, 200-201.

While living in the internment camp, Frau G.S. repeatedly told herself: "I want to go home [nach Hause], that was what I planned, no matter what. I want to go home." What did it mean to "go home" for the Eastern German women and men who had been interned in camps in the Soviet Union? Their Heimat was now under Polish or Soviet administration; Danzig was now Gdansk, Kolberg was Ko_obrzeg, Königsberg was Kaliningrad. The release of the remaining prisoners took place generally between 1947 and 1949. In September 1947 Pollack for example once again became very sick and instead of being treated he was released and marched off in the direction of his Heimat. After over four years Frau G.S.'s camp was dissolved and she was also released and found her mother near Magdeburg; she never saw her father again. In 1949 the majority of remaining survivors were released and many ended up in the Federal Republic. Whether they arrived in the SBZ/GDR or Western Zones/Federal Republic, the "Heimkehrer" experienced a new and often unfamiliar Germany and frequently experienced not only the loss of the Heimat, rather they also often suffered from problems associated with the physical and emotional strain of internment and forced labor in the Soviet camps.

Pollack suggested that this experience formed a part of the foundation of the postwar identity of the interned Germans. In the Federal Republic they sought out one another and sought to have contact and meet with one another. They arranged Heimkehrertreffen (roughly, home-comer meetings). According to Pollack, "the certainty, that there are others, who survived the same strains, stimulates and preserves the need to see one another again." Pollack asserted that the survivors felt a connection: "many exes [Ehemalige] from Kanash and Cheboksary, the majority of whom were

women, still today feel an attachment to one another."¹²⁵ This attachment went beyond the feeling of Heimat and sense of connection based on where one was born or grew up and extended to shared experiences. Interned Germans from the former Eastern territories often attended both Landsmannschaften meetings and also reunions for internees.

The "Hour of the Women" and children: The role of women during the flight

In *Die Stunde der Frauen*, in English translation *The Hour of the Women*, Christian Graf von Krockow recorded the experiences of his sister, Libussa, who fled from Rumbske, Pomerania in January 1946 after the Poles occupied her village. The story of Libussa exemplified some of the key tasks women performed in this experience of the departure of the Germans from the Eastern territories. Libussa's husband had actually died--unknown to her at the time--during the defense of Küstrin. Shortly thereafter Libussa gave birth to a girl in late March 1945 and as a new mother she had to care for her baby and also elderly parents during the harsh period at the end of the war. Her father was deeply shaken by the demise of the world he knew and all that was comfortable to him and served no useful role as the family tried to survive the Polish occupation of their Pomeranian village.

According to Krockow, Libussa later explained to the author her disdain for the sudden cowardice of the men: "These Prussians, these German men! So marvelously competent--you could conquer half the globe with them. Pride of office. . . mission. . .

¹²⁵ Ibid., 238-239.

duty . . . honor . . . victory! And then in defeat they were suddenly no good for anything, not even stealing spinach, and it was up to us women to make sure the children got fed."¹²⁶ Women such as Libussa had to find food and shelter for their families, and lead them--when they could--to safety within the new borders of the postwar Germanies.

As life for the Germans remaining in Pomerania became more circumscribed by the Polish occupation, Libussa decided to flee West in search of relatives and a new life for herself and her family. She fled alone with the intention of later returning to help her family follow her to a safer Germany. After locating relatives in the West, Libussa returned to Rumbske and gathered up the remaining family members and led them to safety and a new home. At the end of *Hour of the Women*, Libussa described how her relationship with her father had changed due to the family's experiences at the end of the war and during their departure from Pomerania. Her father wanted to return to the past; his identity had been challenged by the actions his daughter had taken as the new protector of the family. "For father, part of returning meant reestablishing the ancient division of labor: the man of the house vis-à-vis the womenfolk; the protector vis-à-vis the protected; the provident father vis-à-vis the dutiful daughter. Unfortunately, I could no longer play that role. Circumstances had changed all that."¹²⁷

Indeed the departure of the Germans from the Eastern territories marked the "Hour of the Women"--moreover, not only of the women, rather also the children.

¹²⁶ Christian Graf von Krockow, *Hour of the Women*, trans. Krishna Winston (New York, Harper Collins, 1991), 98, originally published as *Die Stunde der Frauen: Bericht aus Pommern 1944 bis 1947. Nach einer Erzählung von Libussa Fritz-Krockow* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1988), 123.

¹²⁷ Krockow, *Hour of the Women*, trans. Krishna Winston, 205-206, originally published as *Die Stunde der Frauen*, 249.

During the flight, during the period under Polish and Soviet administration, and during the expulsion, women and children--frequently in either the physical or emotional absence of their husbands and fathers--took on leadership roles traditionally assigned to adult men; however, these were roles which they would continue to hold also during the first years of the postwar Germanies.

For example, Herr H.Z.'s mother took on a leadership role in 1947 as the family was given only a few hours to evacuate their house and travel on foot to Stolp, where they would be boarded onto freight cars and brought over the Oder. The family consisted at that time of 11 year-old Herr H.Z., his 6 year-old sister, his frail grandparents, and his mother, who thus had to carry all the salvaged possessions and bring her family to safety. Herr H.Z. reported that although it was summer, his mother made them wear three layers of clothing in order to lessen the load to be carried. Apparently Germans "resettling" also lessened their load on route to Stolp, a route which was littered with possession no longer deemed important enough to carry by the exhausted families. Herr H.Z.'s family welcomed the opportunity to leave and thus escape the harsh living and working conditions under their new Polish landlords. In fact, when they were given the choice either to become Poles or get out, he, as well as most of the other Germans from his village, chose "resettlement."¹²⁸

In addition to their key roles during the flight, the period under Polish or Soviet administration, or the expulsion, women in the internment camps in the Soviet Union likewise represented a sustaining force for other German prisoners. In his account, Hans Heinz Pollack described the transport of Eastern Germans to labor camps in remote parts

¹²⁸ Herr H.Z., interview by author, tape recording, Berlin, 9 June 1999.

of the Soviet Union and also contended that women were the stronger sex and had made possible the survival of the men. At one station the cattle car procession halted and the Soviets allowed for food to be distributed. The door to Pollack's wagon was partially open and through that crack they suddenly they heard singing, German voices singing. Pollack reported that the German women who were assigned to collect and distribute the rations began singing old well-known folk songs (Volksweisen) in order to cheer up themselves as well as the male prisoners. Additionally, although females outnumbered male internees, Pollack noted that the piles of corpses always contained far more males than females. In his discussion of camp life in Cheboksary, Pollack again asserted that women made survival possible. Women worked in the kitchens and would hoard food and then spread it among the prisoners whom they loved.¹²⁹ Thus, even under such circumstances, one could suggest that Germans experienced an "Hour of the Women."

Many refugees, expellees, and resettlers arrived in the West and had to start over with nothing--also without their adult male family members. If the male members of the families even returned from internment or POW camps, many of them were physically and sometimes emotionally crippled. Hence, rather than speaking of the "Hour of the Women," it is perhaps more accurate to discuss the "Years of the Women and Children."

Children's experiences during the flight, expulsion, or internment differed dramatically. Some young children found the flight to be exciting--all the fire, new faces and places.¹³⁰ In the confusion and commotion during the treks or in the harbors on the Baltic Sea waiting for a ship, children at times got separated from their mothers, and

¹²⁹ Pollack, *Verschleppt und Verschollen*, 9, 49, 192-193, 200-201.

¹³⁰ Frau H.P., interview by author, August 1997, Leipzig.

sometimes never found them again. The very young children who were separated from their families sometimes did not know their last names and thus could not later search for their parents through the various missing-person organizations.¹³¹ Some orphaned Eastern German children, the so-called *Wolfskinder* (Wolfs' children) in Northern East Prussia lived for a period of time alone in the forest or performed forced labor on Soviet collective farms and were often later taken in by Lithuanian families.¹³² Many more children lost one parent, most often their father, and frequently witnessed--whether their mothers tried to protect them or not--the harsh reality of the flight, expulsion or internment. Indeed, whether or not they were old enough fully to grasp what they saw, many displaced German children witnessed family members and neighbors being raped and/or killed.¹³³

Frau H.B., at the time a nine year old Pomeranian girl, was expelled with her mother and sister from their farm by the Polish militia in October 1945. She and her family had to pack quickly and could only take what they could carry. After putting on many layers of clothing, as her mother instructed, Frau H.B. grabbed her doll and was forced out by the armed Polish militia. As she left her house, a member of the Polish militia hit her with the butt of his rifle and indicated to her that the doll had to stay in the house, it was now Polish property. Frau H.B. knew that the doll belonged to her, and left the house crying. As she ran from the house she saw the neighbors shot by the Polish

¹³¹ Eva Krutein, *Eva's War: A True Story of Survival*. (Albuquerque, New Mexico: Amador Publishers, 1990), 186.

¹³² Herr H.W., interview by author, tape recording, Ziesar, Brandenburg, 20 March 1999.

¹³³ See the earlier cited example of Herr E.K., "Grenzenloses Flüchtlingsleid--grenzenlose Lieblosigkeit," pp. 2-5. BA-K, B 106, 27837

militia for refusing to leave. Frau H.B.'s mother's efforts to pull her away and shield her from witnessing the event failed. Frau H.B., her mother, and her younger sister, were transported to Stettin and from there went West on foot to Schönfeld, where her uncle lived.¹³⁴

Frau E.G.'s report described her reliance on her children during the period of internment on a West Prussian farm under the Poles. As she described a typhoid epidemic that hit the village in July and August 1945, she remarked, "Death took in a heavy harvest." Indeed she herself contracted the disease and lay feverish and hallucinating in bed. Her children gathered sorel, stinging nettle, and dandelion, and caught sparrows, and local women cooked for her and nursed her back to health. One of her children also buried the people who died from the typhoid outbreak in their orchard. Whether it was helping to nurse their mother back to health, harvesting potatoes, or burying the dead, Frau E.G. emphasized the hard work performed by her sons.¹³⁵

The fourteen year old Frau M.S. likewise had to hold her family together after her father was deported to Stalino and her remaining family members either died or suffered from illnesses. After the Poles arrived in their Pomeranian village, able-bodied Germans had to perform hard labor, including burying dead horses and corpses. Only those Germans who worked obtained rations, and Frau M.S. thus divided her rations with her aunt and her little sister, who were both too sick and feeble to work. The new Polish mayor of the village sought to help Germans by ordering an old horse to be slaughtered

¹³⁴ Frau H.B., interview by author, tape recording, Ziesar, Brandenburg, 18 March 1999.

¹³⁵ Frau E.G., "Meine Erlebnisse in unserer Heimat in Neuendorf-Höhe, Kreis Elbing, Westpreussen, zur Zeit der Besetzung durch die Russen und Polen," 18-19 (given to the author by Frau M.R.)

and distributing the meat to the German families. Despite such examples of compassion, living and working conditions were miserable. Frau M.S. explained, "We were like livestock. We had no clocks, no calendar, nothing. We only knew what time it was when the bells sounded [only twice a day]."¹³⁶

Another example of the experiences of children in the period of Polish administration entailed a group of young siblings living in barracks in Masuren from 1945 to 1950; the mother lived elsewhere as a forced laborer under the Poles and the father had been transported to an internment camp in the Soviet Union. During the five years in the barracks the children neither attended school nor performed hard labor. They spent their time playing and searching for food. The eldest of the children, now a pastor in Berlin, called this time in Masuren the "wild years." After their expulsion to West Germany, the children were teased in school about their German and had to work diligently to become equal to their peers.¹³⁷

German women and children of necessity continued to function in both traditional as well as non-traditional roles in the postwar period. Whether they cleared the rubble from German cities, took on jobs to pay the rent, participated in black market activities in order to obtain the necessary food for their children, tried to make ends meet in some unfamiliar city to which they and their children had been evacuated, or took part in

¹³⁶ Frau M.S., interview by author, tape recording, Finowfurth, 19 March 1999.

¹³⁷ Author's conversation with the pastor of the Lankwitz Kirche, Berlin, 15 November 2000.

relationships with occupation soldiers (sometimes in order to obtain better accommodations, food, or luxury items), many women--both expellees and indigenes--did what was necessary in order to survive.¹³⁸

The arriving Eastern German women often joined indigene women in taking on these unfamiliar roles in their new societies. It must also be noted that the arriving resettler women shared another experience with German women in the SBZ, namely the experience of rape.¹³⁹ Sources indicate that although incidences of rape were both more brutal and numerous as the Soviet soldiers arrived in the Eastern territories, such actions often did not cease as the victorious Red Army crossed the Oder and Neisse Rivers.

In the absence of their husbands women had to find accommodations, discover a means to pay for the basic costs of living, nurse often sick children, parents, or themselves back to health, deal with their departure experience and the loss of everything familiar, and often search for lost relatives. In their search for employment and a means to earn a living, many displaced German women had to reflect on whatever skills they had. The wives of farmers often tried to establish themselves in agriculture. Because officials in the SBZ carried out the Bodenreform more vigorously, some women stayed in the Soviet Zone and tried to attain a plot of land and become small farmers.

¹³⁸ Elizabeth Heineman discussed these various roles of women and how West German national identity benefited from the perception of the victim-status of women in her article, "The Hour of the Woman: Memories of Germany's 'Crisis Years' and West German National Identity," in *The American Historical Review* vol. 101, Nr. 2, (April 1996), especially 392-395.

¹³⁹ It would be wrong to assume there was no incidence of rape in the other zones or with the other soldiers, but the other Allied soldiers committed such acts with less frequency. The strict British policy of non-fraternization likely played a role in hindering rape in their zone.

In the postwar period children also found themselves performing unfamiliar and often difficult tasks, especially the displaced German children. Frau H.B., the nine year old Pomeranian girl whose doll was declared Polish property, ended up with her mother and younger sister in Schönfeld, where her uncle lived. Shortly after their arrival Frau H.B.'s mother contracted typhoid fever and, as the eldest daughter, Frau H.B. had to cook, clean, take care of her little sister, and work on the farm. After the mother was restored to health, she began working on the uncle's farm and Frau H.B. attended the local school. Shortly thereafter the little sister contracted tuberculosis and was sent to an old military hospital, a hospital with inadequate supplies and an infestation of mice, which the little girl feared terribly. Because the doctor said that if she did not drink a liter of milk every day she would not survive, Frau H.B. ran every morning before school across the fields to the hospital with a liter of milk for her sister, who indeed recovered.¹⁴⁰ Thus in the absence of adult men, children also often had to take on tasks unfamiliar to them or leave the sheltered nature of childhood behind with their dolls and with the countryside in which many of them liked to play.

However, the absence of the men was in some cases temporary: some of the POWs and male internees returned and sought out their remaining family members. As a result of missing-person agencies, family reunions took place with some frequency; however, such reunions were not always joyful. For example, in June 1948 the East Prussian Herr A.P. returned to his family, now living in Delitsch, after three and a half years in a Soviet POW camp. Because he was now 80 percent war disabled with pulmonary tuberculosis, Herr A.P. could not work, and because his wife "met another

¹⁴⁰ Frau H.B., interview by author, Ziesar, Brandenburg, 18 March 1999.

man" while he was in the POW camp, he could no longer live with his family, was forced to seek a divorce and rent a furnished room. He received a pension of 90 Marks, from which he now paid 40 Marks for child support, 20 Marks for rent, and the rest of his money went towards food, electricity, etc. He did not have enough left over even to purchase a coat, which he desperately needed. He applied for "severely disabled resettler aid," but his application was denied on the grounds that his problems arose only after his return. With frustration he wrote, "It is not my fault that I lost everything, and after being employed 21 years in Germany's service [Reichsdienst], today I have to beg for necessities." In reference to the limiting conditions for resettler aid, he suggested further that the Heimkehrer-resettlers did not deserve such torment and were "also good Germans."¹⁴¹ There was no answer or reply in the file.

Undoubtedly many men, returning home to their now more independent wives and families, experienced emotional estrangement even after the end of their physical absence. Thus, in addition to losing the Heimat, many displaced Germans also lost their families as they had known them prior to the end of the war, a loss that occurred often during their departure experiences, as well as sometimes as a result of the evolution of traditional gender relationships, which often enabled women and children to survive the flight, expulsion, and resettlement, as well as the postwar years.

¹⁴¹ Betr.: Beschwerde, A.P., Delitsch, 18 June 1949, An die Deutsche Wirtschaftskommission (Amt für Arbeit u. Sozialfürsorge), Berlin, BA-B, DQ 2, 3370, Bl. 32

CHAPTER 6

IMAGES OF THE DISPLACED GERMANS AS OUTSIDERS: HINDRANCE OF OR HELP FOR THE REFUGEES, EXPELLEES, AND RESETTLERS

The very existence of the displaced Germans in the zones of occupation was an immediate concern for the officials setting up the new Germanies. Contending with the arrival of millions of homeless, jobless, often malnourished and sometimes sick, Germans within the borders of the zones proved to be no easy task for the new officials. Because such Germans were potential sources of radicalism and unrest, initially the occupation forces forbid the formation of any expellee or resettler organizations and above all urged the German authorities to house and pacify them as soon as possible. Indeed officials had to deal not only with the fact that displaced Germans frequently refused to let go of the old Heimat, rather they also had to come to terms with many indigenes who refused to accept the presence of the displaced Germans in their homes and communities. However, not all indigenes rejected the presence of expellees or resettlers; examples of charity from both local Germans and organizations, as well as international groups, were numerous and validated the official policies promoted in the two Germanies.

To use James Scott's terminology, whether in the Federal Republic or in the Soviet Zone/German Democratic Republic (SBZ/GDR) the respective "public transcripts" sought to demonstrate that the displaced Germans were an integral and welcome part of the society.¹ In the case of the Western Zones and especially the later Federal Republic, the expellees as a unique group and their separate culture and traditions were to become an essential but distinct part of West German society and identity. In the SBZ/GDR, the resettlers were to meld into the existing population; all distinctions were to disappear. The full participation and cooperation of the local populations in both Germanies were essential to the success of their plans.

The postwar German zones were not in the position to take in millions of displaced Germans. Many cities were up to 85 percent destroyed and the local population had often been evacuated to the countryside. In rural areas, Eastern Germans were frequently housed initially in camps, barns, huts, old castles, schools or hospitals. The government of the Soviet Occupied Zone was able to limit the period of time that the resettlers stayed in camps by vigorously pursuing a policy of quartering the expellees in private households, a policy reflecting the Allied Control Commission's act Number 18, the "housing law" (Wohnungsgesetz).

Through the housing law, indigenes in the SBZ were frequently forced to give up one or more rooms in their private households to the incoming resettlers; it was not surprising that many Germans in the local population tried to refuse to give up rooms in

¹ James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), 2, n. 1, 52-53, 4, 55. For a detailed description of public as well as hidden transcripts, see chapter one.

often already crowded households. In one example of such a case in 1947 in Eggenstedt in Saxony-Anhalt, a local woman tried to demand rent from her resettler tenants and then upon non-payment tried to evict them; local officials stated they would send a new "refugee" family to her, this time a family with an "energetic man" who would give her a beating. The woman felt she had been treated this way because she was a member of the LDP, and not an antifascist (in other words, not a member of the SED).²

An important portion of Soviet zone post-war policy involved assisting the resettlers to find a new Heimat and become good citizens in the new Germany, thereby eliminating distinctions between the new citizens and members of the local populations. Many indigenes, however, resented and complicated this process by often refusing to accept the new citizens into their homes and socialist society; these expressions of rejection of the newcomers took the form of hidden transcripts. Indeed shared living quarters often lead to strained relations.

SBZ officials regarded the situation to be particularly critical and both at the local level and within the central administrative apparatus (Zentralverwaltungen) battled against overt unfriendliness among the indigenes; many reports indicated that they issued fines or even prison terms for behavior that hindered the integration of the resettlers into the population. The SBZ/GDR government sought to establish public transcripts which created the appearance of unanimity: society in the new Germany was made up of happy socialists who worked together to support the socialist cause. The existence of tensions between the indigenes and the resettlers contrasted with this image of society in the new

² Abschrift: Frau M.G., Eggenstedt, den 8.6.47, An die Liberal-Demokratische Partei, Landeshauptarchiv Magdeburg (LHA-M), Rep. K3, Ministerium des Innern, nr. 6564, Bl. 168

Germany. The government thus sought to remove the threat of insubordination--threats to the public transcripts--both among the indigenes and the resettler population.

In the SBZ/GDR the local population's treatment of the resettlers in their new environment often hindered their assimilation of the values and ideals of the new Germany. The indigenes' reaction to the arriving resettlers frequently created barriers to this process of "melding" (Verschmelzung) for which the government aimed. Additionally the resettlers' sense of cultural uniqueness added to their feeling of estrangement and their tendency towards group consciousness that frequently involved a longing for their old Heimat, and a rejection of the new one. The resettlers took part in the development of a dissident subculture and through shared hidden transcripts expressed implicit resistance against assimilation.

In the British Zone (BBZ) indigenes also often informed refugees and expellees both through their behavior as well as through verbal abuse that they were unwelcome. Indeed, a 1946 report from the *British Zone Review* indicated that the local population in one area in Schleswig-Holstein perceived the "influx" of refugees to be an "invasion."³ When officials carried out the Allied Control Commission's act Number 18, indigenes resisted the confiscation of rooms and resented their new tenants. It was not uncommon for indigenes actively to prevent the expellees from attaining a reasonable level of comfort in their new communities. In districts in Schleswig-Holstein, for example, some officials claimed housing problems were due to a lack of living space (Wohnraum). A letter sent in July 1947 suggested what was lacking in the Fehrenbötzel community was "good will and the courage of one's convictions, otherwise it would not happen that

³ "Refugee Problem," *British Zone Review*, Vol. 1, Nr. 11 (16 February 1946), 20.

indigenes who move into the area from neighboring villages get whole houses and single [alleinstehende] women get two rooms--because they have so much furniture--while refugees live like pigs!"⁴ Unlike in the Soviet Zone, officials in the BBZ did not have as thorough a system of reprimanding improper behavior and tended to deal more leniently with those indigenes who came to their attention. Whereas files in local, state, and federal archives in the new federal states contain many dozens of letters of complaints, the authorities in the British Zone apparently did not always file such letters. One cannot conclude that the frequent absence of such letters indicated the absence of the problem. Sufficient examples exist indicating that the problem was just as severe in the British Zone as in the SBZ. The major difference was that Western officials did not have the same penchant for excessive officialism and the administrative apparatus was not as complex and sometimes overlapping, as was often the case in the SBZ.

West Germany's official policy on expellees solidified several years later than had been the case in the Soviet Zone/GDR. With the formation of the government and administration in the Federal Republic--including of course the Federal Ministry of Expellees and the ensuing financial support and cultural promotion of the refugees and expellees--an official policy also emerged. As established by the Basic Law, Germany was to be understood in accordance with its 1937 borders. The role of the expellees in this official image of Germany was clear: they were to be helped to integrate into West German society, and at the same time they were to provide the Federal Republic with a

⁴ Auszugsweise Abschrift, Herr M.R., Fehrenbötzel, den 29.7.47, to Herrn Landrat Dr. Dr. Pagel, Kükels. Landesarchiv Schleswig-Holstein (LA-SH), Abt. 320 Segeberg, Kreis Segeberg, 177.

bond to the--temporarily lost--Eastern territories. Their existence served as a means of maintaining a connection with Eastern Germany and provided a justification for seeking a reunification of all three Germanies.

By the time this West German official policy emerged, the majority of displaced Germans were no longer experiencing severe problems with the local population. By the early 1950s many expellees had some kind of housing--even if inadequate--and also employment--even if not in their chosen field. Tensions remained as well as inequalities, but the government's official major concern in terms of expellee policies became preserving the connection to Middle and East Germany and maintaining public awareness of the culture and traditions of the other two Germanies. Thus the refugees and expellees were to be a comfortable but distinct component of West Germany society, with a significant role to play in the public transcripts: the appearance of unanimity of the desire to reunify the "three" Germanies.

Tensions, strained relations, and the construction of identity

Upon arrival the majority of the expellees and resettlers were welcome nowhere in the postwar German communities; they were often seen as social, cultural and sometimes even racial inferiors. Indeed, indigenes frequently referred to the Eastern Germans as Pollacks, Gypsies, the unwanted, riff-raff, and have-nothings (Pollacken, Zigeuner, Ungewollten, Packzeug, and Habenichtse).⁵ In one case in 1949 in Ilsenburg,

⁵ See also, Hans Georg Lehmann, "Oder-Neisse-Linie und Heimatverlust--Interdependenzen zwischen Flucht/Vertreibung und Revisionismus," in *Flüchtlinge und Vertriebene in der westdeutschen Nachkriegsgeschichte: Bilanzierung der Forschung*

in Saxony-Anhalt, Frau S.Z. reported that most of the locals in the village, called the resettlers "good-for-nothing vagabond," and the neighbors personally insulted her mother constantly, calling her "beast" and "scoundrel." Frau S.Z. replied, "Being so much in love with 'the good old days' these faithful followers of the Brown-shirted columns [,] these gentlemen still do not seem to have noticed that we refugees have become the victims of the Nazis and war mongers."⁶ The situation in Ilsenburg was complex and perhaps extreme, but such verbal attacks occurred with some frequency. Such examples occurred also in West Germany. In 1950, in the Cösfeld District in Northern North-Rhine Westphalia a local farmer called the expellees "thieves" and "Pollacks."⁷ The German they spoke, sometimes their traditions and clothing, made displaced Germans often distinct from the local population. And in some areas, particularly rural parts of Germany, insular communities did not welcome strangers.⁸

und Perspektiven für die künftige Forschungsarbeit, eds. Rainer Schulze, Doris von der Brelie-Lewien, and Helga Grebing (Hildesheim: Verlag August Lax, 1987), 114; and Arnd Bauerkämper, "Social Conflict and Social Transformation in the Intergration of Expellees in Rural Brandenburg, 1945-1952," in *Redrawing Nations: Ethnic Cleansing in East-Central Europe, 1944-1948*, trans. Jeremiah Riemer, eds. Philipp Ther and Ana Siljak (Lanham, Boulder, New York, Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, INC., 2001), 285-305.

⁶ S.Z., Ilsenburg, den 8.8.1949, to den Herrn Landespräsidenten Hiebsch, Halle/Saale Landesregierung, LHA-M, Rep. K13 KV Wernigerode, Nr. 204, Bl. 33. Local officials looked into the situation and found anti-Russian sentiment, which seemed to be their greatest concern. See, Aktenvermerk, Wernigerode, den 28.3.50, LHA-M, Rep. K13 KV Wernigerode, Nr. 204, Bl. 35

⁷ M.G., Darfeld, Hennewig 13, 20. Nov, 1950, to Herrn Oberstaatsanwalt, Münster, Nordrhein-westfälisches Landeshauptstaatsarchiv (NRWHS), NW 7, 122. Herr M.G. perceived being called "Pollack" to be a terrible insult and emphasized how proud expellees were to be German.

⁸ See also, Rainer Schulze, "The German Refugees and Expellees from the East and the Creation of a Western German Identity after World War II," in *Redrawing Nations*, eds.

One area in which particularly chauvinistic comments against the refugees and expellees were common was Southern Schleswig.⁹ According to Manfred Jessen-Klingenberg's article "'In allem widerstrebt uns dieses Volk'" (In every respect these people go against our grain), in this part of Northern Germany, a Danish-oriented Schleswig-independence movement felt the "refugees" threatened the "Nordic" character of their people and moreover represented the "most serious threat in hundreds of years of making our people Prussian."¹⁰ Furthermore, the group contended that since the separation of Southern Schleswig from Denmark in 1864, "in terms of biology" the people stayed the same; the arrival of over one million often dark-haired Eastern Germans with their broad cheekbones threatened this biological stability and homogeneity. In a 1946 brochure Tage Mortensen, a journalist from the Danish minority in Southern Schleswig, wrote, "Both with regard to race as well as culture and intellect the refugees are foreign in Southern Schleswig. The biggest group is formed by the East Prussians from a Slavic-Germanic blood mixture, whose mentality created the basis for the entire German policy of conquest from Frederick the Great to Hitler [. . .] These

Ther and Siljak, 311.

⁹ According to Heinrich Rogge, the arrival of the expellees interfered with the "Dänisierungsbestrebungen" (Danification-efforts) of the Danish minority in the area. See, Heinrich Rogge, "Vertreibung und Eingliederung im Spiegel des Rechts," in *Die Vertriebenen in Westdeutschland: Ihre Eingliederung und Ihr Einfluss auf Gesellschaft, Wirtschaft, Politik und Geistesleben*, Band 1, eds. Eugen Lemberg and Friedrich Edding (Kiel: Ferdinand Hirt, 1959), 202.

¹⁰ Manfred Jessen-Klingenberg, "'In allem widerstrebt uns dieses Volk:' Rassistische und fremdenfeindliche Urteile über die Heimatvertriebenen und Flüchtlinge in Schleswig-Holstein 1945-1946," in *Regionalgeschichte Heute: Das Flüchtlingsproblem in Schleswig-Holstein nach 1945*, ed. Karl Heinrich Pohl (Bielefeld: Verlag für Regionalgeschichte, 1997) 85-86.

people are by nature Nazis, as surely as Nazism is no creation of Hitler's, rather an unrestrained, passionate culmination of the aforementioned Prussian spirit."¹¹ Thus, according to such sources, refugees not only represented a racial and cultural threat, but rather posed a threat to peace, and--due to the enormity of their numbers and proximity--posed a threat to the Danish border as well.

Not only the Danish-oriented population in Schleswig perceived the expellees as an unwanted and culturally dangerous presence. The lawyer, regional historian, and Schleswig-Holstein patriot, Otto Kähler considered the expellees to be too Prussian and too numerous and thereby a threat to the people. In a letter from 18 October 1946 he wrote, "The refugees do not belong in our land. That we were to be rid of Prussia, but got *the* Prussians is a dreadful irony of world history. In every respect we dislike these people."¹² It must be remembered that especially in parts of Schleswig-Holstein and also Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, the ratio of displaced Germans to indigenes became very imbalanced and some villages consisted of more than fifty-percent expellees. Sometimes the local population felt as though *they* were being driven out of their homes by the throngs of refugees and expellees.¹³

¹¹ Tage Mortensen, *Flygtningene i Sydslesvig* (Kobenhavn 1946), 5, 9, 10-12, in Jessen-Klingenberg, "In allem widerstrebt uns dieses Volk," 89-91.

¹² Otto Kähler, 18. Oktober 1946, an Volquart Pauls, in Jessen-Klingenberg, "In allem widerstrebt uns dieses Volk," 94. I express my gratitude to Uwe Danker for informing me of the location of this quote. (emphasis in original)

¹³ See, for example, the report, "*The Observer* fordert Festsetzung der deutschen Ostgrenzen und Auswanderungsmöglichkeit für Vertriebene, Gefahren der Überbevölkerung der britischen Zone," Informationsbulletin Nr. 347 --Nicht zur Veröffentlichung, 12. Juni 1946, Bundesarchiv Berlin (BA-B), NY, 4036, 743. Arno Surminski's partly autobiographical account also described racist remarks and tension between the expellees and the indigenes in a village in Holstein. See, *Kudenow: oder An*

Most frequently tensions between the local population and the arriving Eastern Germans resulted from shared living quarters. These hostilities were often most severe during the first postwar years, when the housing shortage was acute and living conditions for residents all across Germany--especially in cities--were deplorable. Further friction occurred especially in the late 1940s as displaced Germans who experienced internment began to arrive. Germans who had been interned in Poland, in Kaliningrad, and in camps in the Soviet Union sometimes arrived literally wearing Russian clothing and were thus sometimes mistaken for Russians,¹⁴ the children had often missed years of schooling and consequently sometimes initially had problems performing with their age group. In some areas in the SBZ/GDR the local population was suspicious of such returning German prisoners and perceived them to be criminals.¹⁵ Often the displaced Germans were regarded as being too "Eastern," and even more frequently they were simply regarded as unwanted outsiders.

Verbal abuse of the displaced Germans came most frequently from landlords, but even local officials often regarded the arriving Germans as an unwanted burden. A 60-year old expellee and his wife lived in a cowshed on a farm in Felm in Schleswig-Holstein. The shed was infested with "vermin and rats," and because the landlord insisted that the door to the adjoining horse stall remain open at night, their shed was constantly wet. On 22 August 1945 when Herr S. went for the fourth time to the mayor

fremden Wassern weinen (Reinbeck bei Hamburg, Rowohlt Taschenbuch, 1995), 31.

¹⁴ Herr G.R., "1900 bis 1995: Alte Heimat-Neue Heimat. Lebenserinnerungen von G.R.," unpublished typed report, p. 13.

¹⁵ Frau G.S., interview by author, tape recording, Magdeburg, 19 May 1999.

to speak to him about the problem, the mayor commented, "Why did you come here then from the East?"¹⁶ In a letter of complaint from 1946, an indigene from Rabensteinfeld in Mecklenburg reported that the mayor made hateful comments to the resettlers, comments such as "Why are you rotten bunch still alive [. . .] Let your children just die, what does it matter to me?"¹⁷ When in 1949 in Warnow, Mecklenburg, the local mayor was notified that the town's "refugees" lived in deplorable conditions, he replied, "My pigs also do not live better."¹⁸ In 1946, the mayor of Brüsewitz in Mecklenburg was accused of demanding 10 Reichs Mark (RM) for rent from resettlers who were tenants in private households. According to a letter of complaint, the mayor pocketed the rent money, drank to excess, and enjoyed cursing at the resettlers.¹⁹ Many examples of overcharging expellees and resettlers for rent can be found in the files; particularly in the SBZ/GDR officials took measures to correct the often gross injustices.²⁰

¹⁶ Am 24.8.45 erscheint Herr S. wohnhaft in Felm bei Bäuerin Ww. (Witwe) K. und gibt nachstehendes zur Meldung, Felm, am 25.8.1945, to Militärpolizei Felm, LA-SH, Abt. 320.3, Kreis Eckernförde, 1867-1950, 1662.

¹⁷ Harry Berkefeld, Rabensteinfeld, b. Schwerin i/ Meckl, (probably late January) 1946, p. 3, Landeshauptarchiv Schwerin (LHA-S). KT/RdK Schwerin, 181.

¹⁸ "Meine Schweine wohnen auch nicht besser," in "Landes-Zeitung," Ausg. Wismar v. 8.12.49, LHA-S, Mdl, 1945-1952, 2624

¹⁹ Ein Flüchtling aus Brüsewitz. (no name or signature), Brüsewitz, den 28.6.1946, An die Landesverwaltung der Landeshauptstadt (sic), Schwerin, Eine Abschrift an den zuständigen Staatsanwalt Schwerin, LHA-S, Mdl, 1849-1945, 7631/1

²⁰ Betrifft: Umsiedlerfragen. Entwurf, Der Landrat des Landkreises Blankenburg-Harz -- Kreisumsiedlerstelle--, Blankenburg-Harz, den 19. Dez. 1945, An sämtliche Herren Bürgermeister des Kreises, LHA-M, Rep. K13 KV Blankenburg, Nr. 726, Bl. 183. See also the case against "Emma, der Habicht." The rent was lowered and she was forbidden to hire anyone to work on her farm. Betr.: Verhalten der Grossbäuerin E.H. in Karrenzin, Kreis Parchim, gegenüber Umsiedler, Der Rat des Kreises Parchim, Dez. Innere Verwaltung, Ref. Bevölkerungspolitik, Sachbearb: Franke, Parchim, den 16. Juni

Complaints regarding landlords were more common. Also in Mecklenburg one resettler woman had problems with her landlord who said to her: "Why don't you just hang yourself, at least then we would have one more bread stamp!"²¹ A report from 1947 described an indigene's reaction to the resettlers sent to live in his household: "You damned gang, what do you want here, why don't you go back to Russia. You Communist-pigs don't have any business here!"²² According to a newspaper article from 1949, one local farmer woman in Mecklenburg cursed at the resettlers she had to take in and remarked: "I would most prefer just to let you be hanged!"²³ Another newspaper article from March 1950 quoted a landlord who replied to his tenants when they complained about his large group of aggressive dogs who ran free, "If you do not like it, you can move out."²⁴ A very often-quoted and perhaps apocryphal remark from indigenes when resettlers came to town was: "Take the clothes from the line, the gypsies

1950, An die Landesregierung Mecklenburg, MdI, Abt. Bevölkerungspolitik, Schwerin, LHA-S, MdI, 1945-1952, 2624

²¹ Ortvereinigung des Christlich-Demokratischen Union, Der Vorstand [Stern, Duschek, Netschasek, Trenkler], Jatznick, den 12. April 1947, An die Landesverwaltung Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Ministerium für Verwaltung, Kommunal-Abteilung, Schwerin, p. 1. LHA-S, MdI, 1945-52, 2375, Bl. 3.

²² Abschrift, gez. Frommbold, (Cottbus, 11.10.49, über LV Brandenburg), BA-B, DQ 2, 3370, Bl. 11

²³ "Emma, der Habicht," In Abschrift aus der Zeitung "Neues Deutschland" Nr. 48 v. 25.2.50, LHA-S, MdI, 1945-1952, 2624

²⁴ "Unter der Lupe," *Volksstimme*, Land-Ausgabe, 17.3.50, LHA-M, Rep. K13 KV Wernigerode, Nr. 204, Bl. 124. The local officials came to the landlords defense in this case, suggested he was a good, progressive farmer, and called for a retraction of the statements made against him. Abschrift, Erklärung!, Der Gemeinderat gez. Heuer, Ströhbeck, den 17. 3.1950, LHA-M, Rep. K13 KV Wernigerode, Nr. 204, Bl. 125.

are coming!"²⁵ Frau M.S. reported that upon their arrival in the SBZ, her family encountered locked doors and heard indigenes remark bitterly: "Once again that riff-raff. Once again the Pollacks. Once again a pack of gypsies."²⁶

An informational report from 1950 cited many additional examples of the indigenes' unfriendly attitude toward resettlers. In Thuringia, a farmer attended a local citizens' meeting where the subject of distribution of excess furniture was raised. He replied: "I would prefer to chop up and burn my excess household items before I would give anything to the new comers." Many other farmers from rural areas around Weimar also treated the resettlers living with them in this fashion; they kept bathroom facilities or cellars locked, and some urged their children to make extensive noise and thereby disturb the resettlers living in their households. At a local meeting this same report suggested that one farmer stated: "In the same way that our farmhands have to obey us, the resettlers who live with us also have to do what we want them to do."²⁷ Not only farmers were accused of such behavior. In a 1949 article, "Ein Menschenfreund" (A Philanthropist) the newspaper *Neues Deutschland* reported that a pastor in Mecklenburg lived in a six-room house with his wife and had to give up two rooms to a resettler family. According to the article he made their lives hell. "Although there was a pump in

²⁵ For example see, Ausschnitt aus: Kurier, vom: 12.11.47, BA-B, DQ 2, 3389. Although the genuineness of this report was questioned, this comment was often reported in interviews. Thus, even if this exact comment was never made, displaced Germans perceived indigenes to have felt this way.

²⁶ Frau M.S., interview by author, tape recording, Finowfurth, 19 March 1999.

²⁷ Inform-Nr. 47/50, Amt für Information, HA Informationskontrolle, Berlin, den 3. April 1950, p. 4. BA-B, NY 4090, 561 (Umsiedlerprobleme)

the house," he demanded that the resettler family obtain their water from an outdoor pump on the grounds of a school 100 yards away. The author of the article asked how such unreasonable demands could come from a minister.²⁸

Frau A.A. was nine years old when she and her mother and sister were expelled from their village in Northern East Prussia and arrived in the "Golden West," in a Catholic village in Emsland in Lower Saxony. Their first residence was a room occupied by six people. When the mother asked local housing officials for more adequate housing they replied, "What do you want here anyway? We did not ask you to come here [. . .] You should have stayed where you belong." Frau A.A.'s family were Protestants and not welcome in the Catholic farming community. She reported that indigene parents forbid their children to play with the "refugees," displaced Germans were barred from certain types of employment, and mixed marriages were taboo (apparently such couples were not allowed to marry at the altar in local churches and the organs were not to be played during such ceremonies). Frau A.A. reported that they felt like an unwanted minority.²⁹

Herr H.Z. was 11 years old when his family "resettled" out of Pomerania and into a farming community in Saxony. After two weeks in a quarantine camp, Herr H.Z.'s family received the address of a farmer where they would find accommodations. The new landlord "made it very clear that" he opposed the billeting, and permitted it only

²⁸ E.T., Pritzler, "Ein Menschenfreund," *Neues Deutschland* vom 5.6.1949, LHA-S, Mdl, 1945-1952, 2688

²⁹ Frau A.A., interview by author, tape recording, Lohne, Lower Saxony, 19 April 1999.

because he had no choice. The farmer became friendlier when he realized that Herr H.Z.'s mother could work for him. It must be noted, however, that Herr H.Z. emphasized that not all indigenes in the village treated resettlers poorly.³⁰

School-aged displaced Germans also sometimes experienced tensions with the local children with whom they attended school. Frau H.B., the Pomeranian girl who was forbidden by the Polish militia to take her doll with her, described feeling like an outsider among the local kids. Every day, because her mother could provide her with nothing else, she brought potatoes to school for lunch. The local farmer children always brought sandwiches with thick slabs of ham and sausage. One of the local farmer's well-fed sons saw her lunch and replied to her, "That's what our pigs feed on." Frau H.B. described feeling "so ashamed" and went home, cried, and said "Never again will I take potatoes." She explained, "Yes, we were the strangers, we were always called 'the strangers.'"³¹

School-aged displaced Germans sometimes experienced other types of problems in school, problems that sometimes led to harassment. Expellee and resettler children who lived under Polish occupation, in Kaliningrad under Soviet occupation, or lived in labor camps in remote parts of the Soviet Union, during their internment often had no access to school and thus arrived in the West unprepared for the level of school that corresponded to their age. A 1951 report from the GDR's Ministry of the Interior described teenagers in Brandenburg who had completed to date as little as half a year of schooling and thus could not perform at the appropriate level.³² Often such children

³⁰ Herr H.Z., interview by author, tape recording, Berlin, 9 June 1999.

³¹ Frau H.B., interview by author, tape recording, Ziesar, Brandenburg, 18 March 1999.

³² Betr: Schulische Betreuung von Umsiedler-Kindern, MdI, Abt. Bevölkerungspolitik, 285

could not even speak German "properly." In North-Rhine Westphalia, for example, special classes at the primary school were provided for expellee kids where they could learn "good" or "proper" German as well as learn about their rights as citizens.³³

This deficiency in expellee or resettler kids' schooling and in their level of German sometimes triggered tensions with the local kids. Following what he called the "Wild years" in Masuren, one expellee boy ended up in a town near Hamburg. Because he could read German, but not write it, he began school at a lower level and with considerably younger students. The other students treated him as though he were a foreigner with limited knowledge of German, and they would point to objects and ask him what they were called in German. He passed their test and after rapidly making considerable progress, he was permitted to advance to a more appropriate grade.³⁴

That displaced Germans living on farms often performed hard labor in exchange for their accommodations was well-known throughout the zones. Often the relationship such expellees and resettlers had with their boss/landlord depended on their ability to perform to his expectations and sometimes also on his ability to exploit them as a source of labor. Some expellee farm workers even felt they represented the new "Ostarbeiter" (foreign workers from Eastern Europe). In the article, "Das Verhältnis zwischen Flüchtlingen und Einheimischen in den verschiedenen Dorftypen," (The Relationship between Refugees and Indigenes in the Different Types of Villages) the author examined three types of villages and suggested that whereas farming villages had the worst

25. Juli 1951 An das Ministerium für Volksbildung, Berlin, BA-B, DQ 1, 34.0, 33260

³³ See the documents contained in, NRWHSa NW 67, 1255

³⁴ Author's conversation with the pastor of the Lankwitz Kirche, Berlin, 15.11.2000.

environment for incoming expellees, the villages with mixed economies or the worker-villages allowed the expellee greater chances of meaningful and productive employment. However, in such villages, the successful expellee was often envied and according to the author, the sometimes excessive assistance given to healthy and fit expellees caused feelings of competition to grow to destructive levels.³⁵

Improvements in relations undoubtedly occurred in the early 1950s, but sources indicated that tensions still existed between landlords and their tenants. The 1953 survey "Was ist aus uns geworden?" (What has become of us?) asked readers of the newspaper, *Die Stimme--Für Heimat-Deutschland-Europa* (The Voice: for Heimat-Germany-Europe) to answer a series of questions, one of which dealt with the relationship between expellee tenants and their indigene landlords. Three-tenths of the respondents answered "good" to the question "How is your personal relationship to your indigene landlord?" One half of the respondents answered "middle," and two-tenths answered that the relationship was bad, or even "unbearable." Question five asked if tensions existed between indigenes and expellees in "your present place of residence." Over two thirds of the respondents answered yes; most of them lived in Schleswig-Holstein, Lower-Saxony, and Bavaria, in small communities in which the chances for employment were often poor. One respondent replied that in the beginning the local population supported him, but once he worked his way up and represented competition tensions emerged.³⁶ Such

³⁵ "Das Verhältnis zwischen Flüchtlingen und Einheimischen in den verschiedenen Dorftypen," Leo Arns, cand. rer.pol. and "Die Eingliederung der Flüchtlinge in die Wirtschaft," cand. rer.pol., in Friedrich Wilhelm Wittlich Kölner Universitäts-Zeitung, Sondernummer, Köln, 1 Januar 1948, p. 2-3, 13. BA-B, DQ 2, 3389.

³⁶ "Was ist aus uns geworden?" Ostdeutsche Zeitung: "*Die Stimme*" --Für Heimat-Deutschland-Europa, vom Oktober 1953, Nr. 41, Bundesarchiv Koblenz (BA-K), B 150,

unfriendly behavior on the part of the indigenes contributed to the origin and strengthening of a separate group identity among the displaced Germans in the SBZ/GDR and BBZ/Federal Republic.

The Press service of the Central Committee for Resettlers issued reports on the various concerns faced by resettlers and the resulting actions taken by officials to eliminate hostile behavior. Sometimes they told stories that supported the public transcripts advanced by the government that the indigenes were charitable and gracious toward the resettlers; however, there were also many cases of unfriendliness and the subsequent repercussions of indigene antagonism. One article titled "Presse wirksamer als Polizei" (Press is More Effective than Police) contended that indigenes had more fear of the representatives of the press than the police; thus newspaper reports were crucial to battling against unfriendly and "undemocratic" behavior.³⁷ The report from October 1947 concerned farmers who primarily refused to take in resettlers or in other ways demonstrated unsocial behavior. The people accused had to pay fines between RM 1000 and RM 3000 and also some had to serve several months in jail. A second report discussed an indigene woman who mistreated the refugees living with her. In this case, the refugees wanted to remove the defective lock in the door to their room and get it repaired. The indigene refused to allow them to do this and forced them to take the whole heavy door and carry it to the town where the locksmith worked.³⁸ One such

1439, Band 2, Heft 2.

³⁷ "Presse wirksamer als Polizei," Pressedienst der ZVU, Nr. 23, Berlin, 13.10.47, p. 2. BA-B, DQ 2, 3363

³⁸ "Vom Schnellrichter belehrt," "Sabotage oder Sadismus?" Pressedienst der ZVU, Nr. 25, Berlin, 22.10.47, p. 2. BA-B, DQ 2, 3363.

report from November 1947 cited a man from Saxony-Anhalt who refused to allow resettlers into his house. He stated: "No one can come here and say otherwise, here I determine what goes, and no one will be brought in here!" The man in question was issued a RM 200 fine or 30 days in jail. The person writing the report felt this was too light and would not prove to be an educational example. The man involved later declared himself ready to house resettlers in one of his rooms.³⁹ Another press report from December 1947 indicated that another man in a town called Döbern in Brandenburg refused to take in resettlers. After he was informed about the fines, he allowed a resettler man and his daughter to move into the attic, which he furnished with one bed. A lawyer reviewing the case issued the man a RM 1000 fine and a year in prison. This sentence was reduced, however, because the man involved had visual disabilities; his new sentence entailed a RM 300 fine and 30 days in prison.⁴⁰ The authorities issued another family from Neu-Tüzen a fine for RM 1800 and 60 days for their unfriendly behavior towards resettlers.⁴¹

Tension between indigenes and the displaced Germans extended beyond landlord-tenant relationships. Not only housing was in short supply, rather also food, and acquiring food proved to be another major source of tension. Frau H.H., the resettler woman who ended up in Hergisdorf and whose private letters to her aunt and uncle were

³⁹ "Schwächliche Erziehung," Pressedienst der ZVU, Nr. 35, Berlin, 27.11.47, p. 2, BA-B, DQ 2, 3363.

⁴⁰ "Die Dachkammer für Umsiedler," Pressedienst der ZVU, Nr. 37, Berlin 5.12.1947, p. 2, BA-B, DQ 2, 3363.

⁴¹ "Wer nicht hören will. . .," Pressedienst der ZVU, Nr. 23, Berlin 13.10.47, p. 1, BA-B, DQ 2, 3363.

intercepted, also expressed frustration with the indigenes' hoarding of food. Whereas the resettlers had nothing, she contended that everyone in the local population had not only their gardens, fruit, and potatoes, rather also their food ration cards. "A fellow with a big dog and binoculars lives in every potato field. Woe to the person who bends down for a potato."⁴²

Theft of course neither improved relations between the displaced Germans and the local populations in their new areas, nor enhanced the reputation of the Eastern Germans. Their reputation for thieving, filthiness, and laziness was in some instances based on reality.⁴³ That some expellees and resettlers tended towards despondency, melancholy, and aloofness caused further problems for social interaction. One of the ZVU press reports from October 1947 reminded readers that the indigenes were not always at fault for poor relations. "It was often determined that the participation of resettlers in political events, reconstruction and that sort of thing leaves much to be desired. Participation in all public events would without a doubt help to build a bridge between the resettlers and the indigenes."⁴⁴

Nevertheless, some indigenes simply had no sympathy for the losses sustained by the displaced Germans. The author of the 1948 article, "Gegenseitige Hilfe" (Mutual Help), reported that in some areas expellees who asked for clothing or apartments

⁴² Frau H.H., Hergisdorf, 15.9.1947, to Onkel Ernst und Tante Berta, Abschrift, LHA-M, Rep. K3, Ministerium des Innern, Nr. 6612, Bl. 36.

⁴³ See, for example, the report concerning the investigation of a complaint in 1947 in Schleswig-Holstein, Stadtverwaltung Bad Segeberg, Der Stadtdirektor, Bad Segeberg, dem 30. Januar 1947, to Herrn Landrat, Bad Segeberg, LA-SH, 320 Segeberg, 177.

⁴⁴ "Nicht immer sind die 'Einheimischen' Schuld," *Pressedienst der ZVU*, Nr. 26, Berlin 24.10.47, p. 2. BA-B, DQ 2, 3363.

sometimes received from frustrated indigenes answers such as, "We ourselves have lost so much," or "It is not our fault that you no longer have anything." He also reported one case in which indigenes sent expellees to remote pews during a church service. The author contended that indigene Germans who sustained damages or injuries through air raids or evacuation were much more willing to help the refugees and expellees.⁴⁵

It must also be noted that some of the expellee or resettler complaints investigated by officials proved to be exaggerations or even falsifications. Some displaced Germans made unreasonable demands on the indigene population. For example, Frau F. and her husband lived in barracks in Bünsdorf in Schleswig-Holstein and complained that the neighbors, from whom they were supposed to get water, were refusing them access. The local mayor inspected the situation and reported that Herr F. fought constantly, not only with the neighbors but also the other inhabitants of the barracks, and that he had even demanded of the neighbors that they deliver water to him.⁴⁶ Thus, the local officials viewed Herr F. merely to be an argumentative trouble-maker and judged his complaint to be invalid.

Some cases involved the displaced Germans' conviction that because the indigenes possessed considerably more than they did, they were obligated to share their possessions with the less fortunate. In 1947, Family K. from Swinemünde lived in Frau A.'s household in Wernigerode. Frau A. gave her tenants some household goods,

⁴⁵ "Gegenseitige Hilfe," von stud.rer.pol. Willi Wiedemann, Kölner Universitäts-Zeitung, Sondernummer, Köln, 1 Januar 1948, p. 6. BA-B, DQ2, 3389.

⁴⁶ Bürgermeister Schröder, Betreffs Karte vom 14.9.45 Sache des Flüchtlinge F., Bünsdorf, d. 19.9.45, An die Kreisverwaltung AZ 1B in Eckernförde, LA-SH, Abt. 320.3, Kreis Eckernförde, 1867-1950, 1662.

including bedding, a chair, trunks, and an earthenware pot, and lent them a cabinet. According to reports, Frau K. fought constantly with Frau A., in part over furniture, which Frau K. felt she and her family had a right to, because Frau A. had so much. The local refugee office investigated and discovered that Frau K. was quarrelsome and she and her family already lived in considerably better conditions than many resettlers; in addition, the officials discovered that Frau A. was Frau K.'s aunt. The solution to the problem was to force Family K. to move out.⁴⁷

Indigenes sometimes found the housing situation unbearable. The sixty-four year old indigene farmer woman, Frau E.F., lived in Klein Rönnau in Schleswig Holstein in her son's house. Two of the house's five rooms had been confiscated and given to refugee families. The remaining three rooms were divided between Frau E.F., her adult daughter, and two farm workers. The local housing commission decided to confiscate the adult daughter's room and give it to another refugee family. Frau E.F. wrote to the district resident officer, explained her situation, added that her son was probably in a POW camp in the Soviet Union and her other daughter died in the last weeks of the war, and pleaded for reconsideration of her circumstances. She felt the local farmers were jealous of the productivity of her farm and conspiring against her. This letter was dated 5 May 1947.⁴⁸ On 27 June the district resident officer examining the case wrote a report summarizing

⁴⁷ Der Rat des Kreises Wernigerode, Umsiedleramt, Wernigerode, den 27. Januar, 1948, An die Landesregierung Sachsen-Anhalt, Minister für Arbeit und Sozialpolitik, Umsiedlerabteilung, LHA-M, Rep. K3, Ministerium des Innern, Nr. 6568, Bl. 153-154.

⁴⁸ Frau E.F., Klein Rönnau, 5. Mai 1947, to Kreis Resident Officer, Bad Segeberg, LA-SH, Abt. 320 Segeberg, Kreis Segeberg, 177.

the problem, which in the mean time had been solved: the adult daughter was now in the hospital, and in her agitation concerning the housing commission, Frau E.F. committed suicide by hanging herself.⁴⁹

The displaced Germans were often seen as an imposition, a burden on society. And whether they individually experienced mistreatment or humiliation, they were all too aware of this public perception.⁵⁰ Conversely it must be noted that many resettlers and expellees reported positive interactions with the local population; there were many examples of compassion and charity. However, the societal rejection perceived by some displaced Germans frequently pervaded the consciousness of the group as a whole.

Roughly four million resettlers arrived in the Soviet Zone/GDR. The new government sought to integrate them, indeed absorb them, as quickly as possible. The officials wanted total social equality that would entail the indigenes accepting the resettlers within their communities and the resettlers adopting the values and ideals of the new Germany, thus embracing the new Germany as their new Heimat. The government tried to create the appearance of unanimity among the disparate groups through the use of public transcripts that presented a harmonious socialist society. Officials of the new Germany issued fines and sometimes prison terms to indigenes who did not comply with their policies. The most severe cases mentioned in the files involved the quartering of resettlers in private households: indeed shared living quarters often lead to strained

⁴⁹ Abschrift, Der Landrat, Bad Segeberg, den 27. Juni 1947, An 625 Kreis Resident Officer, Bad Segeberg. LA-SH, Abt. 320 Segeberg, Kreis Segeberg, 177.

⁵⁰ Herr P.G. explained that he experienced of course much worse under the Russians and the Poles during internment, but the humiliation he encountered as the indigenes called him and his family "refugee pack of gypsies" was something he could never forget. Herr P.G., interview by the author, tape recording, Brandenburg, 22 March 1999.

relations. One official in the resettler office in District Blankenburg-Harz, Saxony-Anhalt suggested a solution: "Every member of the local population who is demonstrably in the position to take in resettlers but resists doing so, must--if no other method helps--vacate his apartment in a period of half an hour with 30 kilograms of luggage and will then quartered with other residents as a resettler from the East." If it had been put into practice, this method would have been undoubtedly effective.⁵¹ Local officials and mayors were encouraged to get involved in these affairs and handle the resettlers "not as bothersome increase [in the population], rather as German brothers in trouble, who should be helped with all means."⁵² That many indigenes treated the arriving resettlers as burdensome and social, as well as even racial inferiors, created a setback for the government's policy of absorption and also contrasted with the official version of the new harmonious socialist Heimat.

In West Germany the government established a distinct policy towards expellees and followed a different agenda for their integration. The expellees were to be integrated, but their residence was initially officially perceived to be temporary. Unlike in the SBZ/GDR, expellees were not to meld with the existing population; however, neither was the existing population supposed to make the Eastern Germans feel unwanted or foreign. Both they and their traditions were to be socially and culturally embraced because their

⁵¹ Rundschreiben Nr. 96, Landratsamt des Landkreises Blankenburg-Harz, Kreisumsiedlerstelle, Blankenburg-Harz, den 16. Nov. 1946, An die Herren Bürgermeister und Gemeindevorsteher des Kreises, LHA-M, Rep. K13 KV Blankenburg, Nr. 726, Bl. 65.

⁵² Betrifft: Umsiedlerfragen. Entwurf, Der Landrat des Landkreises Blankenburg-Harz -- Kreisumsiedlerstelle--, Blankenburg-Harz, den 19. Dez. 1945, An sämtliche Herren Bürgermeister des Kreises, LHA-M, Rep. K13 KV Blankenburg, Nr. 726, Bl. 183.

residence as well as the disunity of Germany were perceived only to be temporary. And in a reunified Germany, the Eastern territories, as well as its residents, would play a significant role. That many indigenes often treated the arriving expellees as social and sometimes even racial inferiors created a setback for the government's policy of embracing the other Germanies and also contrasted with the official version of the pervasive desire for a reunified all-German Heimat.

Charity, compassion, and Zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl

Under the heading "Modernes Märchen," (Modern fairytale) a 1947 press report from the Central Committee for Resettlers (ZVU) described the way indigenes ought to behave towards their resettler tenants:

There once was a house in a medium-sized city in Mecklenburg and in this house there was a proper household [of several families]. They bickered very rarely and then only very briefly. As this household heard that they should take in a resettler family, they went wild. With joy! And then as the household read on the advertising pillar the call to take over sponsorship for the resettlers, an honorable competition began and each sought to distinguish themselves before the others. Aunt Eulalia brought white sheets and bedding out of the big chest; Uncle Theodor got dispensable dishes out of the sideboard; Family Müller raided the attic for unused furniture, and the Lehmanns found in theirs some superfluous clothing. And then as the resettlers arrived, they were greeted with a serenade. The front door was decorated with garlands and all the resettlers' rooms were decorated in a homey way. Not even the bouquet of flowers on the tables was missing.⁵³

⁵³ "Modernes Märchen," Pressdienst der ZVU, Nr. 34, Berlin 25.11.47, p. 1, BA-B, DQ 2, 3363.

Although such stories were only fairytales, many displaced Germans experienced diverse and varying treatment in their new communities.⁵⁴ While their landlord may have called them "Pollacks" and accused them of stealing, a neighbor or a charitable institution may have donated furniture or shoes to them. It must also be noted that many expellees and resettlers neither reported overwhelmingly negative nor positive experiences with indigenes; they were neither cursed nor helped and they simply established themselves and their families in their new community, never having considered asking anyone for help. Nevertheless, organizations existed whose sole purpose was to help destitute Germans who had sustained severe losses due to the war. What sort of assistance did these groups provide and how did they perceive the recipients?

In addition to reporting examples of unfriendly behavior towards the resettlers, the Press service of the ZVU issued reports in 1947 and 1948 on the various cases of indigene charity, thereby supporting the public transcripts advanced by the government that presented society in the new socialist Germany as harmonious. From mayors or carpenters who personally constructed furniture and performed other types of carpentry for resettlers in their communities, to a local group of farmers in Brandenburg who regularly fed 80 school-age resettler children,⁵⁵ the press service had stories they used to inspire the local population to behave in a more "social" manner. Church officials were also involved in charitable activities; one local parish office in Vorpommern placed 70

⁵⁴ Philipp Ther also addressed this contrast in treatment. See, Ther, *Deutsche und polnische Vertriebene. Gesellschaft und Vertriebenenpolitik in der SBZ-DDR und in Polen, 1945-1956* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 320.

⁵⁵ A similar event was reported by Herr H.Z., interview by author, tape recording, Berlin, 9 June 1999.

Morgen (roughly translated acres) of land at the disposal of 90 resettler families.⁵⁶ A short report titled "Wer macht's nach?" (Who will follow that?), described the volunteer work of four employees of a local shoemaker in Torgau. They worked 180 hours of overtime in two months repairing 100 pairs of shoes for resettlers in the area.⁵⁷ In Sabow in Mecklenburg local farmers gave 3 pounds of meat per person to 40 resettler families for Christmas. The purpose of these reports was to inspire other indigenes to model their behavior on the people described in these reports. One case where the purpose of the report was clearly stated involved a resettler woman who had worked for and lived in the household of a farmer from Kohlsdorf since 1945. As though she were his own daughter, the farmer paid for her wedding, which took place in December 1947. The report concluded, "This socially-minded deed of the old farmer [Altbauer] deserves recognition and emulation and at the same time shows his heartfelt bond with the resettlers."⁵⁸

Frau M.S. likewise reported charity and kindness. After she and her sick mother and aunt knocked on locked doors all over the village looking for a place to sleep, a middle-aged woman finally welcomed them, gave them food, allowed them to wash themselves, and sleep all day and night. On the next day they moved on until Frau M.S.'s mother refused to go further. They had reached a house where the mother could smell freshly baked bread. She became obsessed with obtaining a piece and knocked on the

⁵⁶ "Bürgermeister tischlert für Umsiedler," "Der Man der Tat," "Bauern helfen den Kindern," Pressedienst der ZVU, Nr. 26, Berlin 24.10.47, p. 1, BA-B, DQ 2, 3363.

⁵⁷ "Wer macht's nach?" Pressedienst für ZVU, Nr. 7, Berlin, 26.1.48, p. 2. BA-B, DQ 2, 3363.

⁵⁸ "Das ist Solidarität," "Altbauer stattet Umsiedlerin die Hochzeitsfeier aus," Pressedienst der ZVU, Nr. 8, Berlin, 28.1.48, pp. 1-2, BA-B, DQ 2, 3363.

window, begging. This family also showed compassion, giving them both food and accommodation; Frau M.S. temporarily left her sick mother and aunt there and moved on in search of relatives.⁵⁹

In addition to charity from individuals, relief organizations in the zones also helped the displaced Germans. Organizations such as the Hilfswerk in Saxony-Anhalt (which took over the responsibilities of the resettler committee after its dissolution) and relief organizations such as the Volkssolidarität, or People's solidarity, arranged for the distribution of items donated both by the local population as well as by foreign charities. For example, in 1947, the Hilfswerk distributed shoes, sugar for nursing mothers and people suffering from tuberculosis, and chocolate for orphans. In 1947 and 1948, the Volkssolidarität distributed food, money, shoes, and household items to many thousands of destitute Germans, including resettlers, Heimkehrer, and the "Victims of Fascism" (Opfer des Faschismus).⁶⁰ Similar such organizations and local administrations established potato campaigns during which needy resettlers, Heimkehrer, and children could obtain potatoes.⁶¹ Assistance from the local Volkssolidarität offices continued, especially for those destitute resettlers who were too old or infirm to work; most often those resettlers who wrote asking for assistance and explaining their situation were

⁵⁹ Frau M.S., interview by author, tape recording, Finowfurth, 19 March 1999.

⁶⁰ See the reports from 1947 and 1948 contained in, LHA-M, Rep. K 3 MdI, Nr. 6564, Bl. 43, 265, 271, 286

⁶¹ "Kartoffelkarten-Ausgabe im Stadtkreis Frankfurt (Oder)," Amtliche Nachrichten, für den Stadtkreis Frankfurt (Oder), Verantwortlicher Redakteur Bürgermeister Willi Jentsch, Nr. 15. Herausgeber: Stadtverwaltung Frankfurt (Oder) 1. Jahrgang, Frankfurt (Oder), den 11 Okt 1947

helped.⁶² According to a report issued by the Central Committee of the Volkssolidarität (Zentralausschuss der Volkssolidarität), between 1 January 1946 and 31 March 1949 the various Volkssolidarität offices throughout the SBZ had donated to resettlers over 22 million Marks, 3 million kilograms of food, 2.8 million textile goods, 369,000 pairs of shoes, 316,000 pieces of furniture, and nearly 1.6 million household articles. In addition they distributed large quantities of wood, peat, and coal.⁶³

In the Western Zones/Federal Republic there was less government involvement in charity. The author of the 1948 article, "Gegenseitige Hilfe" (Mutual Help), reported: "At first one was more open and helpful to the new arrivals; then their requests and wishes were simply too numerous, and their ethnic characteristics [Stammeseigenarten] added to it." The author reminded readers that there were many differences from place to place; in some areas the local population was inordinately nice and in other areas cruel; additionally, those persons who sustained losses during the war were more prone to generous behavior toward the expellees. The article also mentioned the local population in a small town holding a Christmas party for the orphans and children whose parents were still missing.⁶⁴

⁶² Volkssolidarität Mecklenburg, Kreisausschuss Parchim, Parchim, den 31. Mai 1951, An die Landesregierung Mecklenburg, MdI, HA Staatliche Verwaltung, - Bevölkerungspolitik-, LHA-S, MdI, 1945-52, 2660, Band 1.

⁶³ Leistungen für Neubürger (Umsiedler) 1.1.1946-31.3.1949, Zentralausschuss der Volkssolidarität, Abt. Statistik, BA-B, DQ, 2, 3775. Please note that a previous letter explained that these figures did not include help for resettler-new farmer families, because their figures in that area did not distinguish between the different new farmers. (letter dated 14 July 1949, sent to Deutsche Wirtschaftskommission, HV. Arbeit und Sozialfürsorge, Berlin).

⁶⁴ "Gegenseitige Hilfe," von stud.rer.pol. Willi Wiedemann, Kölner Universitäts-Zeitung, Sondernummer, Köln, 1 Januar 1948, p. 6. BA-B, DQ 2, 3389.

In a 1952 article, "Vertriebenen-Schicksal vor der Entscheidung" (Expellee-fate about to be Decided), Georg Berkenhoff suggested that relations between indigenes and expellees were particularly favorable in Schleswig-Holstein. Berkenhoff suggested that the local population as well as the expellees were both rural in orientation, as well as both a "deliberate, quiet race of people [Menschenschlag]. It is probably only thanks to this happy coincidence that in the over-pressurized boiler the relationship between old- and new citizens is comparatively good." The article cited the attitude of a Pomeranian farmer as an example of why the situation did not boil over. The expellee farmer had previously lived on an orderly farm in Pomerania, but now lived voluntarily in a wet bunker and when asked about the situation he replied that he could not always bother the local farmer by walking through his parlor to get to a rented room, thus he would rather live in a damp bunker. Berkenhoff cited other cases in which farmers in Holstein lent East Prussians a cow and stated, "You can keep the calves!" The author contended that such examples of friendliness were "not at all infrequent." Furthermore, often initially expellees were housed in guest-houses and hotels, and upon moving out the owners gave them the furniture they had used.⁶⁵

Just as in the SBZ/GDR, in the Federal Republic the happy stories of successful expellees and friendly indigenes received wide press. The 1958 article, "Ostpreussen-Bauer fängt von vorne an: Der 30000. ostdeutsche Bauer in Niedersachsen wieder auf eigener Scholle" (East Prussian Farmer Starts over again: The 30,000th Eastern German Farmer in Lower Saxony [is] again on his Own Soil) was one example. Farmer S. came

⁶⁵ Georg Berkenhoff, "Vertriebenen-Schicksal vor der Entscheidung," Auszug aus *Die Neue Zeitung*, Nr. 55 vom 5. März 1952, p. 4, BA-K, B 150, 1439, Heft 2.

from Insterburg, where he had operated a farm measuring 122 hectares that had been in his family for 300 years. After the flight, he and his family arrived in Bielefeld, where he took any employment he could find in order to feed his family. Recently he had been given the opportunity--with a combination of federal assistance and savings--to purchase a poorly maintained farm in Pudripp in the Lüneburger Heide. Without patience, determination, and the help of his indigene neighbors, Herr S. would never have been able to make progress on his new farm. "New citizen S. immediately established good contact with the indigene farmers. In order to cultivate farmland that had been neglected for years, he needed horses and equipment. With neighborly help, the indigene farmers stood by the new resident of the village. O.S. refused neither explanations concerning the particular characteristics of the soil in the Lüneburger Heide, nor practical help." In 1958, Herr O.S. was the thirty thousandth expelled farmer who received a piece of farm land in Lower Saxony; another 300,000 expelled in West Germany were waiting for their turn. As previously discussed, land reform measures in the BBZ/Federal Republic were carried out with far less enthusiasm than in the SBZ. Nevertheless, whether in the BBZ/Federal Republic or SBZ/GDR, succeeding in establishing or refurbishing a farm required the assistance of the indigene neighbors.⁶⁶

Often school-aged displaced Germans encountered serious difficulties due to missed years of schooling; without compassionate and patient teachers many of these children never achieved a proper education. After his family's internment in their

⁶⁶ "Ostpreussen-Bauer fängt von vorne an": Der 30000. ostdeutsche Bauer in Niedersachsen wieder auf eigener Scholle von unserem nach Niedersachsen entsandten Reporter H.J. Hoffmann, *Heimat und Familie*, Januar 1958, Folge 1, pp. 2-3, BA-K, B 150, 1564, Heft 1.

Pomeranian village, Herr H.Z. started school in the SBZ in September 1947. As was typical for school-aged displaced Germans, he was several years behind his age group in terms of schooling. During the 1947-1948 school year he thus attended the fifth, sixth, and seventh grades consecutively. In 1949 he had advanced to the proper level and attended the eighth grade. Herr H.Z. attributed this success to a particular teacher in his village who worked with resettler children to help them advance and also required the indigene children to "sponsor" the displaced German children living with their family. Herr H.Z. reported the success of this teacher's plans, but also replied that the enforced sponsorship resulted in him being perceived as a "beggar" and the landlord farmer family who sponsored him never let him forget it.⁶⁷

Particularly active in helping the expellees in West Germany were the churches. Church members received assistance from the church in the form of donations of clothing and food, and both the Lutheran as well as the Catholic organizations were active in the construction of housing for destitute and homeless Germans. In addition, both Lutheran and Catholic aid organizations helped to establish the Suchdienst, or missing persons-service,⁶⁸ which was later run by the German Red Cross, and provided loans for church members who sought to emigrate.⁶⁹ Additionally Lutheran refugee communities also

⁶⁷ Herr H.Z., interviewed by author, tape recording, Berlin, 9 June 1999.

⁶⁸ Hermann Maurer, "Das Hilfswerk der Evangelische Kirche," in *Die Vertriebenen in Westdeutschland: Ihre Eingliederung und Ihr Einfluss auf Gesellschaft, Wirtschaft, Politik und Geistesleben*, Band 1, eds. Eugen Lemberg and Friedrich Edding (Kiel: Ferdinand Hirt, 1959), 258.

⁶⁹ Initially the loans were primarily granted to ethnic German refugees and DPs, but within a few years of being established, the system also issued loans to indigenes. Maurer, "Das Hilfswerk der Evangelische Kirche," 257.

received assistance from local church organizations. For example, the Lutheran refugee community in Glandorf in Lower Saxony had no facility for their church services and the Evangelisches Hilfswerk, Sprengel Osnabrück--Diepholz, wrote to the Innere Mission der Evangelischen Lutheranischen Landeskirche (Internal Mission of the Protestant Lutheran Regional Church) in Hannover in 1952 asking for assistance with finding facilities to accommodate 200 persons.⁷⁰

In addition, foreign charitable organizations and church groups often expressed an almost immediate interest in helping the destitute and homeless Germans to attain food and shelter. During the occupation period groups ranging from the Lutherans in Norway and Sweden to American Quakers and Freemasons showed an interest in donating food, labor, and administrative assistance to the Germans.⁷¹ For example, in 1947 the Irish people donated to Saxony-Anhalt over a thousand kilograms of sugar and wool blankets which were then distributed through local relief organizations. Also in 1947 the Swiss donated toilets and liquid soap and over 150 bars of chocolate for orphanages.⁷² Likewise, particularly in West Germany and into the 1950s, the American Quakers donated milk, food, as well as other types of organizational help.⁷³

⁷⁰ Evgl. Hilfswerk, Sprengel Osnabrück--Diepholz, Osnabrück, den 15.4.1952, to Innere Mission der Ev. -Luth. Landeskirche Hannovers, Niedersächsische Staatsarchiv-Osnabrück, Rep DeZ 304, Akz 15/65 Nr. 46.

⁷¹ Adalbert Karl Gauss and Eugen Lemberg, "Hilfsbereitschaft der westlichen Welt," in *Die Vertriebenen in Westdeutschland*, vol. 1, eds. Eugen Lemberg and Friedrich Edding, 248-249.

⁷² Protokoll "Über die Prüfung der Bestände des Hilfswerkes der Provinz Sachsen, Kreisausschuss Wanzleben, durch die Vertreter der Blockparteien," Wanzleben, den 19. Juni 1947. LHA-M, Rep. K 3 MdI, Nr. 6564, Blatt 43

⁷³ Werner Middelman, Aufzeichnungen über die Reise nach den Vereinigten Staaten

Another form of assistance from foreign sources involved foreign individuals' donations. In 1945, a group of Americans founded the Cooperative for American Relief to Europe, an aid organization designed to send packages of needed items, especially food and clothing, to European countries ravaged by the war. By January 1950 in all over 5 million Care packages had been delivered to Germans.⁷⁴

One of the first foreign philanthropists to express an interest in the German postwar situation--especially the refugee problem--and to become active in seeking amelioration was ironically a man who was not only British and a socialist, but also Jewish. Victor Gollancz was a British publisher and journalist, also a Jewish philanthropist and socialist who was particularly active in assisting Jewish refugees to get out of Germany during World War II. In the immediate postwar years he turned his attention to condemning starvation in Germany. In her biography, Ruth Dudley Edwards suggested that although he enjoyed the excitement of championing unpopular causes, he also genuinely despised poverty and oppression of any group.⁷⁵ Through letters he sent to major English newspapers in September 1945, Gollancz voiced his desire to end the suffering of children--"even the children of ex-enemies"--and he announced the creation of a philanthropic organization called "Save Europe Now" in order to reach those ends.⁷⁶

von Amerika vom 13.9.1953 bis 5.11.1953, Bonn, 10.11.1953, p. 2. BA-K, B 150, 1439, Heft 2.

⁷⁴ *Zeittafel der Vorgeschichte und des Ablaufs der Vertreibung sowie der Unterbringung und Eingliederung der Vertriebenen und Bibliographie zum Vertriebenenproblem*, ed. Bundesministerium für Vertriebene, Flüchtlinge und Kriegsgeschädigte (Bonn, 1959), 33.

⁷⁵ Ruth Dudley Edwards, *Victor Gollancz: A Biography*, (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1987), 401.

⁷⁶ Gollancz's letter from the *Manchester Guardian*, 11 September 1945, in Edwards,

Gollancz, both an effective writer and energetic promoter, actively wrote letters, published pamphlets and eventually books promoting his crusade against starvation.

In *Our Threatened Values*, written in 1946, Gollancz discussed the postwar western world and suggested that it faced a moral crisis. In particular, Gollancz condemned the Allied treatment of Germans after the war. He cited many examples of unethical Allied behavior, including statements made by Lieutenant-General Sir Brian Robertson at a press conference in Berlin. Robertson discussed at the conference rationing for the German civilians: "Although Britain considered that the Germans should be adequately fed," he stated, "it was not because he was sorry for them but because it was a matter of policy." Gollancz's reaction was: "Well I *am* sorry for them: I am sorry for every man, woman or child who is in pain and distress [. . .]." He continued: "Must we hide the fact--and the very question is a measure of our moral collapse--that we want to feed starving Germans not primarily as a matter of policy, but primarily because starvation is intrinsically abominable?" He also described as abhorrent the ridiculously luxurious life style of the Allied representatives and staff living in Potsdam during the conference in the summer months of 1945. The contrast between the living conditions of the vanquished and the victors could not have been starker.⁷⁷

Moreover, in *Our Threatened Values*, Gollancz condemned the allied policies and comparing them to Hitler's: "Did we, as soon as the last shot was fired, show that Hitler's ways were not our ways, and that we cared enough for the faith we had defended to

Victor Gollancz, 410.

⁷⁷ Victor Gollancz, *Our Threatened Values*, (Hinsdale, Illinois: Henry Regnery Company, 1948), 35, 36, 39-40.

practice it--and that's the test-- in our treatment of the enemy? On the contrary. Instead of doing justice and showing mercy and walking humbly, we did as Hitler would have done. We annexed, we expelled, we stole: we exhibited an extreme of nationalist intolerance: we bore ourselves with offensive superiority: when the pinch came and the choice was between a little less comfort for ourselves and starvation for the enemy, we let them starve: and the twin bases of our policy were the secular wickedness of self-interest, or what we grotesquely misunderstood as such, and *vae victis*." As a journalist and philanthropist, Gollancz's rhetoric was often fiery, but he also placed limits on the charges he was making against the Allies. "I am not suggesting, God forbid, that we did these things to the degree to which Hitler would have done them: if I thought that I should think the war fought in vain, which is very far from being the case. But we acted more in Hitler's spirit than in ours; and was this the way, I ask, to wean the German people from Hitlerism or the basic ideas of which Hitlerism is merely one expression?"⁷⁸

The situation faced by the expellees and also the children of Germany in general was what most concerned Gollancz. He viewed Allied policies, as determined at Yalta and Potsdam, to have greatly contributed to the crisis facing Germany's homeless population. On Yalta and Potsdam, he wrote, "It is difficult to speak calmly of these decisions of Yalta and Potsdam. They may be summed up in four words: annexation, expulsion, spoliation, and economic enslavement; all of which, it may be remembered, are among the main counts of the Nuremberg indictment."⁷⁹ Additionally, on the Allied deliberations concerning Germany's "historic eastern lands," Gollancz suggested that

⁷⁸ Ibid., 127-128.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 131.

long-term consequences--particularly for German individuals--were not taken into consideration: "What the Germans might feel, what the effect might be on the lives of themselves and their children, was more than merely irrelevant: it did not even come into the sphere where relevancy or otherwise is so much as considered. The Germans had been conquered: they had no rights. That was all there was to it. [. . .] If the conscience of men ever again becomes sensitive, these expulsions will be remembered to the undying shame of all who committed or connived at them."⁸⁰

In order to strengthen his arguments, Gollancz quoted from many newspaper sources that described the situation in Germany in summer 1945. These excerpts included descriptions of the thousands of expellees arriving in cattle cars or on foot, of the children who had either lost both parents or had been abandoned and did not know where to go, of the high death rates--especially in Berlin, and of the general starvation faced by so many segments of the population. One article he cited described the desperation and starvation among the refugees: "One woman [among those seen at the Stettiner Station], emaciated, with dark rings under her eyes and sores breaking out all over her face, could only mutter self-condemnation because she was unable to feed her two whimpering babies. I watched her trying desperately to force milk from her milkless breasts--a pitiful effort that only left her crying at her failure."⁸¹

Gollancz also cited articles from newspapers from autumn 1945, articles which condemned the suffering of the German people, especially the expellees. The Berlin

⁸⁰ Ibid., 132-133.

⁸¹ Excerpt of Charles Bray (writing from Berlin), *Daily Herald*, 24 August 1945, in *ibid.*, 138. (parenthetical note is Gollancz's)

correspondent for *The Times* wrote, "It is surely not enough to say that the Germans brought these miseries upon themselves; brutalities and cynicism against which the war was fought are still rife in Europe, and we are beginning to witness human suffering that almost equals anything inflicted by the Nazis. There is an urgent need for complete information on these mass expulsions; all the control council could do to-day was to refer the subject to its co-ordinating committee for full study."⁸²

Our Threatened Values went through several printings in both Great Britain and in the United States; the first printing in Great Britain reportedly sold about 50,000 copies and sales of the cheaper version that followed surpassed previous figures. In her biography of Gollancz, Ruth Dudley Edwards suggested that the book sold spectacularly well and was well-received by many leading intellectuals and political figures. However, some bookstores apparently refused to stock the book (it was unclear whether this was the result of low sales of politically-oriented books in general or a reflection of a rejection of Gollancz's ideas.) Due to his desire not to stir up anti-British opinions among the occupied population or later in the Federal Republic, most of Gollancz's writings were never published in German or on the continent.⁸³

Both through his writings, as well as through his philanthropic organization, "Save Europe Now," Gollancz effected significant changes in British occupation policy and the public attitude towards the Germans. Gollancz and his colleagues from "Save Europe Now" started a successful letter-writing petition to reopen parcel post delivery

⁸² Excerpt of the Berlin Correspondent of *The Times* writing on September 10th. Ibid., 141

⁸³ Edwards, *Victor Gollancz*, 425, 458.

from Great Britain to Germany and acted as distribution point for food and clothing parcels destined for donation to Germans in the three Western zones. "Save Europe Now" distributed many tens of thousands of parcels to Germans and also other Europeans in other war torn countries. It must be remembered that even the tens of thousands of food parcels, although certainly appreciated, did not alone alleviate the wide-spread starvation and malnutrition. The actions of "Save Europe Now" were widely publicized in Germany and many Germans were reportedly "awestruck" that a Jewish man had organized the parcel distribution. Gollancz and his organization also campaigned for the release of German POWs from camps in Britain and improvements in POW conditions, in the latter instance he and many others who campaigned for the same issue had considerable success.⁸⁴

Gollancz wrote *In Darkest Germany* during the last weeks of 1946, following his visit in October and November of the same year. The book consisted of articles and letters he had written about the conditions he saw in Hamburg, Düsseldorf, and in the Ruhr region, especially the living conditions of expellees and children. Additionally Gollancz included 144 pages of often disturbing black and white photographs showing Germans suffering from disease and starvation, as well as primitive living conditions and shoeless children. In the book Gollancz continued his crusade against what he saw as the mistreatment of German civilians. He rejected the notion that German war guilt

⁸⁴ Ibid., 442, 450.

necessarily meant they deserved to suffer: "And now, I suppose, someone who imagines he's an Englishman in the real sense as well as by the accident of birth will say 'They brought it on themselves'. The babies too?"⁸⁵

As with *Our Threatened Values*, Gollancz's *In Darkest Germany* was also largely well-received. However, it must be noted that some people were critical of certain passages within Gollancz's writings and some critics suggested that he was exaggerating his claims and too quickly forgiving the Germans for their crimes.⁸⁶ In his examination of food supplies and agrarian policies in the Western Zones, John E. Farquharson suggested that some of Gollancz's exaggerations stemmed from citations of unreliable experts.⁸⁷

In spite of his critics, Gollancz received wide-spread support from many influential people, including the man named in April 1947 Minister for the British Zones of Germany and Austria, Frank Pakenham.⁸⁸ Pakenham was only in the position until June 1948 when he entered the House of Lords, but during his time as Minister he was apparently unreservedly influenced by Gollancz and tried to reconcile British occupation

⁸⁵ Victor Gollancz, *In Darkest Germany* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1947), 55.

⁸⁶ Edwards, *Victor Gollancz*, 443.

⁸⁷ John E. Farquharson, *The Western Allies and the Politics of Food: Agrarian Management in Postwar Germany* (Warwickshire and Dover, New Hampshire: Berg Publishers Ltd, 1985), 239.

⁸⁸ Jochen Thies, "What is going on in Germany? Britische Militärverwaltung in Deutschland 1945/46," in *Die Deutschlandpolitik Grossbritaniens und die Britische Zone: 1945-1949*, eds. Claus Scharf and Hans-Jürgen Schröder, (Veröffentlichung des Instituts für Europäische Geschichte Mainz: Abt. Universalgeschichte: Beiheft 6) (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1979), 40, 42.

policy and the humanitarian ideals as promoted by Gollancz.⁸⁹ In his autobiographical *Five Lives*, Pakenham repeatedly praised Gollancz as a friend and humanitarian. Excluding his relatives, teachers and clergy, Pakenham asserted "there is no individual in this country who has influenced my thought as much as Victor [. . . .] I have followed Victor or worked with him in many connections: [. . .] in his campaign for feeding starving Germans and for treating our defeated enemies as fellow human beings."⁹⁰ As evidenced by his successful parcel petition, his campaign for POWs, and his influence on Pakenham, Gollancz achieved substantial improvements in terms of both public opinion and also British occupation policy towards the Germans.⁹¹

Espelkamp

Perhaps the most dramatic Northern West German example of charity and compassion--and an example which combined both domestic as well as foreign benevolence towards the situation of the displaced German--was the "expellee city," Espelkamp in Northern North-Rhine Westphalia.⁹² Already in 1945 the Swedish pastor

⁸⁹ Edwards, *Victor Gollancz*, 448- 449.

⁹⁰ Frank Pakenham, Earl of Longford, *Five Lives* (London: Hutchinson, 1964), 246-247.

⁹¹ For a further discussion of Victor Gollancz' influence as well as Bertrand Russel's condemnation of the expulsion, see, Karl O. Kurth, "In der Sicht des Auslandes," *Die Vertriebenen in Westdeutschland*, Band 3, eds. Lemberg and Edding, 534-535.

⁹² Espelkamp was the most successful and largest of such settlements in Northern West Germany, and really the only expellee-city in the area. In Southern Germany Sudeten-Germans founded settlements such as Neugablonz and Waldkraiburg. For a discussion and comparison, see, Elisabeth Pfeil, "Städtische Neugründungen," in *Die Vertriebenen in Westdeutschland*, vol. 1, eds. Lemberg and Edding, 506-508.

Birger Forell was aware of the desperate need for a solution to the problem faced by Eastern German POWs, who would return to a Germany they had never called their Heimat, would possibly never see their actual Heimat again, and neither knew where they would go nor what they would do after their release. He worked in conjunction with a British pastor and two generals in order to put into motion a plan which would transform a former munitions facility (Munitionsanstalt) consisting of 1,200 Morgen with about 100 existing buildings into a new expellee settlement.⁹³ In 1947, the British occupation authorities gave provisional use of the earlier munitions facility Espelkamp to the Hilfswerk der Evangelische Kirche in Westfalen (Relief Organization of the Protestant Church in Westphalia) for charitable purposes. In 1948, a group of American Mennonites arrived in Espelkamp and helped to build some of the first apartments.⁹⁴

In a 1948 memorandum concerning the planned settlement, the Hilfswerk indicated why the Church should play such a central role in helping the expellees to find a new Heimat. The major task behind founding an expellee city was "to give as large a number as possible of the East-expellees, Heimkehrer and other uprooted people the possibility to live a middle-class life and to find their feet within the church, in other words: to experience the attainment of a spiritual as well as secular Heimat." For this goal to be most expediently reached, the creation not only of homes but also jobs "in a Christian settlement" was necessary. The Hilfswerk contended that the hopeless uprooted Germans could best be given an opportunity to start new lives in a friendly and

⁹³ Backhausen, Düsseldorf, den 12. Nov, 1951, to Referat IV-A-1 HR, Im Hause, NRWSA, NW 7, 122

⁹⁴ Baugemeinde Espelkamp e.V. und die in ihr zusammenwirkenden Organisationen, Verbände und Vereinigungen, *Espelkamp* (Münster, nd.) [8-10.] BA-B, B 150, 2914.

Christian environment; and in so doing the Hilfswerk could help to fend off anarchy, "Bolshevism," and actions based on desperation among the population. Indeed, because the problems these uprooted people faced were not just economic in nature but also "spiritual-emotional" (geistlich-seelisch) the Church felt it must be involved in the solution.⁹⁵

The 1949 "Memorandum about Espelkamp" suggested that if Espelkamp were successful then other military installations could be converted like Espelkamp into model Christian cities for the uprooted. The author especially emphasized the "highest possible accommodation of the disabled." Not only were expellees, especially those most disabled by their war and expulsion experiences, to be helped to find a new life by the programs in Espelkamp, rather they were also to become productive in the "economic, intellectual, and spiritual life of Germany and thereby Western Europe and the Western hemisphere." Furthermore the memorandum perceived the idea of Espelkamp to represent "Christian brotherly love in the world."⁹⁶

On 6 October 1948 the Steilhof, named for the pastor Ludwig Steil who had been involved in the Confessing Church and had died in Dachau in January 1945, was dedicated as the foundation for many charitable facilities for refugees and expellees in Espelkamp. This facility contained buildings erected with federal as well as foreign assistance for housing both the youth and the elderly, as well as schools and training

⁹⁵ "Memorandum über die Erwägungen und Pläne des Zentralbüros des Hilfswerks der Evangelischen Kirchen in Deutschland über Aufbau und Ausgestaltung Espelkamps" (cover letter indicated the report was from November 1948), pp. 1-2. BA-K, B 150, 2914

⁹⁶ "Denkschrift über Espelkamp: Ein Beitrag der Kirche zur Linderung der Not der Ostvertriebenen, Heimkehrer, Kriegsversehrten und heimatlosen Jugend in Deutschland," (cover letter sent February 1949), pp. 6, 24, 25, BA-K, B 150, 2914.

facilities especially designed for the needs of expellee youth. For example, local labor offices contributed to the creation and funding of an apprentice's hostel for girls, the Mädelerkheim, which was to provide expellee girls, who had completed their schooling but did not yet have positions, with training or apprenticeships in home economics or "women's occupations."⁹⁷

The planners of Espelkamp sought to accommodate over 10,000 expellees, both Protestant as well as Catholic, but it took time for them to reach--and eventually exceed--this goal. By 1952 Espelkamp had 2,500 citizens and the means to employ them through industrial, trade and commercial firms.⁹⁸ A majority, but not all of its citizens were expellees. A graphic from 1 November 1950 indicated the following breakdown: four percent indigenes, 68 percent expellees, 16.9 Ostzonenflüchtlingen (refugees from the SBZ/GDR), 10.4 evacuees.⁹⁹ Thus, as with Eisenhüttenstadt in the GDR, basically all residents were non-native and this fact eliminated many sources of social tension in the city.

Espelkamp was to become a new Heimat for its residents; however, corresponding with West German public transcripts, the expellees were not to forget their old Heimat. Assistance for the preservation of expellee culture in Espelkamp came not only from charities and church organizations, rather a considerable amount of funds came

⁹⁷ Entwurf, Betrifft: Beihilfe für das Mädelerkheim im Steilhof e.V, Der Sozialminister d. Landes NRW, Düsseldorf, den 29. März. 1952, NRWSA, NW 67, 83, Band 1

⁹⁸ Letter from Wieland, Bundesministerium für Vertriebenen Bonn, from 23. Okt 1952, BA-K, B 150, 2914.

⁹⁹ (Graphic) Herkunftsgebiete der in Espelkamp-Mittwald angesiedelte Einwohner (Stand 1.11.50), BA-K, B 150, 2914.

from governmental agencies of North-Rhine Westphalia. In the early to mid 1950s the Sozialministerium (Social Welfare Ministry) of the North-Rhine Westphalia and the local refugee authorities provided financial support that aided in the construction of a library, cinema and cultural center. These funds supported, for instance, the acquisition of 115 books (titles ranged from books celebrating Eastern German culture, such as books from Agnes Miegel and Ernst Wiechert, to books celebrating the culture of Middle and West Germany, such as books about Caspar David Friedrich, Albrecht Dürer, the cathedral in Cologne, etc.)¹⁰⁰ Even Espelkamp's street names--such as Trakehner Strasse, Danziger Strasse, and Oppelner Strasse--celebrated the culture of the Eastern territories.¹⁰¹

A brochure about Espelkamp from the early 1950s explained the purpose for preserving the culture and also group cohesion of the expellees, which the Espelkamp administration did not view to be backward-looking or a hindrance to establishing a new Heimat in the expellee-city. "Despite the well-meaning fortune that blessed several thousand refugees with an Espelkamp, also here we as expellees feel the still burning duty to demand that the greatest injustice be made good, the return of our hereditary Heimat."¹⁰²

The realization of a project such as Espelkamp required significant sources of funding, funding without which Espelkamp would have remained merely a well-meaning proposal to alleviate the problems faced by the expellee population. Elisabeth Pfeil also

¹⁰⁰ See, for example, the many related documents contained in NRWHSa, NW 67, 83, Band 1

¹⁰¹ See several documents contained in, BA-K, B 150, 2914

¹⁰² Baugemeinde Espelkamp, *Espelkamp*, [22.] BA-B, B 150, 2914.

reminded readers that due to the size and number of such cities fewer than 1 percent of all expellees could live there. The majority of Espelkamp's citizens had formerly lived elsewhere and most likely experienced the previously described types of difficulties and tensions with the indigene population in their first post-expulsion place of residence. Espelkamp provided them with a means to participate actively in their own community. Expellees were not strangers in Espelkamp because by definition there were no strangers. Indeed many Germans who moved to Espelkamp did so in reaction to their outsider image in their previous post-expulsion residence.¹⁰³

To be sure, many expellees also reacted to their outsider image, not by moving to Espelkamp, rather by seeking to establish groups and associations in which they could promote and celebrate their Heimat and their unique traditions. In West Germany the formation of such groups was not only permitted, rather also promoted with later often generous financial support; such groups served to reinforce West German public transcripts by making more tangible the goal of reunification according to Germany's 1937 borders. In the SBZ/GDR separate resettler groups of any sort were forbidden; such groups would weaken the GDR's public transcripts by promoting the uniqueness of the resettlers and insinuating their dissatisfaction with their new socialist Heimat. Whether in West Germany or in the SBZ/GDR, many displaced Germans publicly reacted not only to the experience of the expulsion and the loss of their Heimat, rather also to their outsider-status as illustrated by the reaction of the indigenes to their presence.

¹⁰³ Such "expellee cities" sometimes allowed residents to feel more quickly to be part of a "we." See, Pfeil, "Städtische Neugründungen," 519-520, 518.

CHAPTER 7

DISPLACED GERMANS' REACTIONS TO THEIR OUTSIDER IMAGE, TO THEIR DEPARTURE EXPERIENCES, AND TO LOSS OF THE HEIMAT

The shared experience of the forced departure and loss of the Heimat certainly contributed to the formation of group consciousness among the expellees and resettlers in the postwar German communities; however, in addition, the outsider-status of many displaced Germans also played a part in the emergence of feelings of distinctiveness. Whether they fled or experienced internment and expulsion, these Germans from the Eastern territories left their homes under duress, the vast majority could not under any circumstance have stayed, and they were absolutely forbidden to return; even visits to the Heimat were prohibited for almost all Germans until the mid-1970s. Upon arrival in the postwar Germanies, the majority of these Germans had few possessions, little money, and no job, and having also often lost their social status and connections, found starting over to be enormously difficult. Indeed many displaced Germans lost not only their Heimat, possessions, often family members, and jobs, they also lost their background. Reputation was still of enormous importance in German society, and in the postwar period, the

expellees and resettlers often arrived in their new society stripped of their civic past and social standing. Some Eastern Germans made use of this cleansing of their past, but many suffered greatly from the expunging of all accomplishments and connections.¹ Thus, in the new community expellees and resettlers often sought to establish a new network and new connections; some of them found this to be easiest with those Germans with whom they shared both background and experiences. Therefore, many Germans from the Eastern territories found association--both public and private--more congenial with compatriots.

During the occupation period, in all zones the formation of expellee or resettler organizations was forbidden, thus initially associations were primarily private or simply suppressed. Gradually in the Western zones officials permitted the formation of cultural groups, and by 1949 a network of cultural and political organizations emerged. In the SBZ/GDR resettler organizations of any kind were absolutely and permanently forbidden.

As expressed by public transcripts developed in the Soviet Zone, the resettlers in the SBZ/GDR were urged to strip away all that made them unique and to become citizens of the new Germany: however, many resettlers sought to preserve their cultural heritage through public associations and displays of their allegiance to the lost Heimat. The core idea behind these various activities was to maintain contact with familiar people, and

¹ Damian van Melis addressed the advantages resettlers experienced when it came to denazification in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern in his essay, "'Angabe nicht möglich'-- Integration statt Entnazifizierung der Flüchtlinge in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern," in *Geglückte Integration? Spezifika und Vergleichbarkeiten der Vertriebenen-Eingliederung in der SBZ-DDR*, eds. Dierk Hoffmann, and Michael Schwartz, (München: R. Oldenbourg, 1999), 169.

through a newfound group consciousness, maintain their connection to Eastern Germany. Many resettlers initially rejected cultural assimilation and ultimately took part in the development of a dissident subculture and through shared hidden transcripts expressed implicit resistance against assimilation. Some examples of such activities included issuing illegal newsletters, arranging covert meetings, holding prayer groups, wearing symbols signifying their group consciousness, and singing Heimatlieder behind closed doors. To counter hidden transcripts from the resettler community, the SBZ/GDR government sent secret police and informants to observe and, if necessary, arrest resettlers who attempted publicly to preserve their traditions. SBZ/GDR officials sought to create the appearance of unanimity and remove the threat of insubordination among the resettler population.

The emergence of the expellee associations in the Federal Republic coincided with the surfacing of official policies on both reunification as well as expellees. The West German public transcripts initially expressed the pervasive desire for reunification of all three Germanies in accordance with the borders from 1937. The expellees played a key role in these transcripts: they provided the anchor that held the Eastern territories in place as "German." Therefore, they were to integrate into West German society, they were even to receive some financial assistance to ease the process, but they were not to meld into the existing population. Thus, they were not only officially permitted but also encouraged to form associations for the preservation of their traditions and cultures, and--since Adenauer publicly officially promised that the Eastern Heimat would again be German--their associations were also allowed to be political in orientation and to call for the recognition of their right to their Heimat. Although elements within the local

population and the opposition party increasingly viewed reunification on the basis on the 1937 borders to be unlikely and thus perceived the political activities of many expellees to be obnoxious, the federal government continued at least to some extent to make such promises and to promote such associations until the change in government in the late 1960s. Under Brandt the governmental position shifted: the expellees were still permitted to celebrate their culture and their Heimat, to be sure the government continued financially to support such endeavors; however, it became increasingly clear that the Heimat was gone. Consequently, although political associations continued to be permitted, demands for the Heimat began to be either ignored or were increasingly considered to be revanchist and unendurable examples of relics from Germany's dark past.

Resistance in the SBZ/GDR

Initially resettlers in the SBZ sometimes found opportunities to express publicly their dissatisfaction with the state of affairs in the Soviet Zone, with both the loss of the Heimat and the recognition of the Oder-Neisse-Line, and also with the political scene taking shape around them. Gradually forums for expression of such criticism would become harder to find and those citizens prone to making such remarks sometimes left the Soviet Zone altogether and fled West. Whether this defiance involved issuing petitions, pamphlets, or chain letters, staging interruptions or making statements at political assemblies, examples of resettler resistance to official policies were numerous.

Some of the earliest examples of resistance included letters and petitions written by resettlers requesting permission to return to the Heimat and sometimes at the same time attacking the system which both allowed for the expulsion in the first place and then also prevented their return to the Eastern territories. One example of a petition signed by forty "refugees" and sent to SED headquarters in Berlin in July 1946 asked for the fulfillment of certain demands, including: to bring an end to the Potsdam Accords and the forced expulsions, to return all "Sudeten-Germans, Silesians and East Prussians to our hereditary Heimat, which we will never give up! Give back our possessions and wealth!!!" These were the demands listed under number one. In addition, they argued that not only the "refugees" should experience misery, rather they demanded the reparations be evenly distributed among the German people. The petition also called for the proper punishment of the war criminals--including those criminals involved in the persecution of Jews--and suggested that at this point the group being punished most severely were the "roughly 13 million border-Germans," who had nothing to do with the persecution of Jews and were also no more guilty for the war than any other people. "Our demands have nothing to do with Fascism, we only want justice and real democracy, humanity not cruel hostility against us defenseless [people]!!! Men of history, do not stain yourselves with greater crimes than Hitler, give us our Heimat back!!! Protect us from the dreadful terror of the Czechs and Poles! We appeal to the world's conscience and the entire civilized world, give us our Heimat back!!!"

Apparently the SED issued no response to this list of demands.²

² Flüchtlingsortsgruppe: Langendembach, Langendembach, 10 July 1946, to die SED, Berlin. Bundesarchiv Berlin (BA-B), NY 4036, 743.

Also in summer 1946 appeals from resettlers to compatriots were posted in several communities throughout the SBZ. The basic text of the different appeals contained many similarities, generally only the targeted resettlers and the locations of the postings varied. One example of such a posting called for the attention of resettlers from "Silesia, East and West Prussia, Pomerania, the Wartheland and the Sudetenland" and declared that "in the greatest desperation the Heimat turns to you for help." The appeal asked for all resettlers to cooperate in a petition expressing their fervent desire to go back to the Heimat. Furthermore, "The Allied Control Council in Berlin has promised that--if all Silesians--all Eastern Germans--express the wish to want go back to their Heimat--this question will be correspondingly addressed at the coming peace conference and the borders between Poland and Germany--in accordance with the Potsdam Accords--will be fixed as they were before 1937." The posting concluded that petitions should be drafted, distributed, and signed. The man who drafted this appeal signed it with "Heimatgruss!" (Heimat-nostalgic greetings).³

In autumn 1946 and early 1947 resettlers drafted and distributed similar petitions and then attempted to send them to the Allied Control Commission; they were intercepted by various SBZ officials. These petitions likewise reflected the rumor that the Allied Control Commission would reconsider the Oder-Neisse-Line if all resettlers expressed the desire to return to the Heimat. A typical example of such a petition stated, "We Pomeranians[,] who are scattered all over Germany, have the desire to return to our dear Heimat, from which we were expelled through the fault of the Nazis." They asked the

³ Abschrift, H.L. "Achtung Umsiedler aus Schlesien, Ost- und Westpreussen -- Pommern - - Wartheland -- Sudetenland" (Summer) 1946. BA-B, NY 4036, 743.

Allied Control Council to respect their wishes and fix the borders of Germany to reflect the state of affairs in 1937.⁴ An examination of the handwriting indicated that one man, Herr A.K. was responsible for some of these petitions, however, many similar documents from other areas were drafted by other resettlers; the signatures collected also indicated how widespread the rumor was that the Allied Control Council intended to restore Germany to its prewar borders. Herr A.K. was notified to stop spreading rumors and fuelling discontent. He was informed that "Good or evil the resettlers must come to terms with the fact that they must build their new Heimat in the place where they reside."⁵

Some resettlers rejected the political system as it had developed in the SBZ/GDR and spoke out against it at public assemblies. The young POW Rudolf Bühring--who, in the first weeks of the summer in 1945 escorted transports of displaced Germans and afterwards became active in political advising in a resettler camp in Haldensleben--experienced difficulties with outspoken resettlers. Bühring reported that some resettlers were critical of the SBZ's relationship with the Soviet Union. At one assembly, a young man came forward and dismissed Bühring's presentation altogether, stating, "Stop blathering, that is simply complete nonsense. You speak about a fascist dictatorship. Good and fine, we have that behind us, but what then is blossoming now, again dictatorship. Thus, up to this point the brown dictatorship and now we get the red

⁴ A.K., früher Nestau, Kr. Greifenberg in Pommern, Zabakuck im Oktober 1946, An den Alliierten Kontrollrat Berlin W 35, Landeshauptarchiv Magdeburg (LHA-M), Rep. K3, Ministerium des Innern, Nr. 6566 Bl. 8 (This petition was signed also by 7 others). For other examples see, Bl. 9, 12, 24, and 27.

⁵ Betrifft: Gerüchte, Herrn Kreisrat, Umsiedleramt, Genthin, 3. März 1947, LHA-M, Rep. K3, Ministerium des Innern, Nr. 6566, Bl. 6

dictatorship--what is the difference?" Bühring reported that the audience applauded wildly and he, as a novice Communist, had difficulty speaking further after this outburst.⁶

Some other resettlers also voiced such opinions concerning the dictatorship in the Soviet Zone in their correspondence. Herr F.L. previously owned a large East Prussian estate and now lived in Möllendorf, District Osterburg in Saxony-Anhalt. In East Prussia, Herr F.L. had been active in breeding Trakehner horses and apparently now worked illegally in conjunction with the Trakehner Pferdezüchtverband (Horse-breeding Association), operating out of Hamburg. Herr F.L.'s job was to locate the horses belonging to large estate owners whose livestock had been expropriated. Sometimes he helped these East Prussians to obtain their expropriated horses and sometimes he demanded user fees from the poor farmers now using them as part of the Bodenreform.

Through extensive letter writing Herr F.L. had exported his negative opinions about the SBZ and the Bodenreform; he was even in contact with the radio station Nordwestdeutscher-Rundfunk. In one letter from February 1947 Herr F.L. reported that "Through famine the Bodenreform buried and buries more people than the war had demanded from this territory. One could write volumes about these marvelous conditions." Furthermore, according to Herr F.L. a particular saying was commonly found in the area: "Dear God, give us the fifth Reich, the fourth is the same as the third." In another letter from December 1947 he reported that in the Soviet Zone formerly

⁶ Accounts from Rudolf Bühring, pp. 123-124. BA-B, Sgy 30, 1845/1. For another example of consistent interruptions during a political assembly on Poland and the friendship between the Soviet Zone and Poland, see Lantsch, *Neue Polen Veranstaltungen*, SED Landesvorstand Sachsen, Abt. Werbung, Presse, Rundfunk, 1948. BA-B, NY 4074, 146.

renowned estates expropriated by the Bodenreform now lay in a dilapidated, disordered, and dirty state. "In general, the Bodenreform is an awkward subject and definitely helps bury the desired number of Germans, then that is the intention of the other side [the Soviets], decimate the people first of all through famine." Herr F.L. represented a political danger on many levels: his negative reports concerning conditions in the SBZ, which he disseminated through contacts with the West, his efforts to assist the former large estate owners to regain their horses, and his treatment of the poor new farmers, led to his public condemnation as a "robber baron and con man," and finally his arrest.⁷

Indeed some new farmers also expressed their criticism of the Bodenreform. Some farmers complained that officials neglected to deliver promised supplies, loan applications were rejected, and that farmers were permitted to keep too little of their yield. In July 1953 a new farmer in Saxony-Anhalt complained, "We want to be free farmers."⁸ Indeed evidence suggests that some new farmers were dissatisfied with conditions and thus were active in the "fascist-attempted putsch," as GDR officials termed the uprising, on 17 June 1953.⁹

⁷ Henning, Betr.: Artikel in der Wochenzeitung *Der Freie Bauer*: "Raubritter und Bauernfänger in Sachsen-Anhalt" von Fritz Lange, Vorsitzender der Zentralkommission für Staatl. Kontrolle, Halle/S., dem 29.12.1949, Herrn Minister Brandt, im Hause, p. 4. BA-B, DY 19, 101. For his correspondence, see, Auszüge aus der Korrespondenz des Franz Lippold, Berlin, den 9.9.49, p. 3. BA-B, DY 19, 101

⁸ Volkspolizei-Kreisamt Burg, Operativ-Stab, Burg, den 24.7.1953, An die BDVP Magdeburg--Operative-Stab, Betr.: Stimmung der Bevölkerung, LHA-M, Rep. M 24 BDVP Magdeburg, 1952-1960, Nr. 182, Bl. 1

⁹ See, for example, Situationsbericht, Bezirksbehörde Deutsche Volkspolizei, Magdeburg, Abt. K., Magdeburg, 11.6.1953, LHA-M, Rep. M 24 BDVP Magdeburg, 1952-1960, Nr. 179, Bl. 192. I express my gratitude to Arnd Bauerkämper for alerting me to the participation of resettlers in this example of resistance in the GDR.

Indeed government officials monitored public and written expressions of dissatisfaction with the state of affairs in the SBZ/GDR closely. Of course, few governments enthusiastically welcome harsh criticism. In the SBZ/GDR monitoring criticism became a major industry, which made such public expressions of discontent increasingly difficult. With the resettler population the government was not merely concerned with expressions of dissatisfaction; perhaps even more threatening to the official policies as expressed through public transcripts was the formation of separate resettler groups, clubs, and associations, which were perceived not only to hinder the melding of the resettlers into the existing population, rather also to threaten both the "peace-border" with Poland and potentially the close relationship with the Soviet Union.

Illegal resettler organizations

The goal of the SBZ/GDR government was to achieve a complete melding of the resettlers, a melding that would remove all differences between the new citizens and the indigenes. Thus, resettler organizations were early on declared undesirable: allowing them to build their own groups and organizations would hinder the process of integration. Additionally the new government surmised that the occupying forces would also most certainly not allow the formation of such groups.¹⁰ This concern regarding resettler-activities persisted at least into the 1960s.

¹⁰ Betr.: Verbesserung der Lage der Umsiedler, 18. Dezember 1947, An die CDU, Landesverband Sachsen-Anhalt, LHA-M, Rep. K 3 MdI, Nr. 6564, Bl. 187. Apparently in 1948 at least one cultural event was organized by the city Römhild in Thuringia during which Eastern German culture was celebrated along side indigene culture. See, Programm, der Veranstaltung für Neubürger und Einheimische am 24. April 1948, um 20

Various SBZ/GDR authorities monitored the behavior and activities of the resettlers. During the occupation period both criminal and resettler authorities took on this task; then initially in the GDR, the Volkspolizei (the People's Police) issued reports and observed the resettlers. In the later 1950s, but also into the sixties, the Staatssicherheitsdienst (the GDR's State Security Service or Stasi) monitored the public activities of the resettler community. In a general report from January 1950 the Volkspolizei suggested that since the resettlers possessed equal rights with the indigenous population there should be no stimulus to build groups expressing a unique identity.¹¹ The Volkspolizei in Saxony explained in a 1951 report the official reaction to resettler groups: such groups were forbidden because they would only intensify the resettlers' longing for the old Heimat and hinder the formation of friendly relations with neighboring countries.¹²

What were the public activities in which resettlers were involved? One type of activity that most disturbed both the Volkspolizei and later Staatssicherheitsdienst was any form of communication with the West. One of the types of connections with the West involved attending meetings organized by expellees in West Germany. Often these meetings took place in West Berlin, but there were also many cases of resettlers,

Uhr im Deutschen Haus veranstaltet von Stadtrat der Stadt Römhild, in Verbindung mit Kulturbund Wirkungsgruppe Römhild, BA-B, DQ 2, 3399.

¹¹ Betr.: Umsiedlerorganisationen, Leiter der Hauptabteilung VP (Lust) Volkspol.-Inspekteur, 13. Januar 1950, An alle Landesbehörden der Volkspolizei, Abteilung VP 3 gesandt. BA-B, DO 1/11/886.

¹² Betr: Veranstaltung von Umsiedlern, Leiter der Abt. PM, Schöttl, VP Kommandeur Landesbehörde der VP Sachsen, Dresden, den. 28. Juli 1951, An die HV Deutsche VP, HA PM 2b, Berlin, BA-B, DO 1/11/887.

especially retired resettlers, who applied for travel permission to attend a family event and then took part on an expellee meeting.¹³ Frau K.L. described secretly attending such meetings in Osterode am Harz after she retired in 1980.¹⁴

Often the Volkspolizei could determine in advance that a meeting would take place, and they would attempt to limit resettler-participation. One example of this was when the Volkspolizei discovered that a resettler meeting would take place in Böblingen in West Germany in 1953. In order to hinder resettler attendance of this meeting, permission to travel was not to be granted to people going to the area. All resettlers who applied for interzonal passes were to report for questioning to the Volkspolizei.¹⁵

Already in 1948 the Landeskriminalamt (regional criminal authority) reported resettler meetings in Berlin, in both the Eastern and Western sectors. Examples of such events included gatherings in Berlin-Köpenick of people from Königsberg, or Küstrin, or Landsberg. Officials reported that in the near future a meeting of all East Prussian youth was planned in Berlin-Dahlem; this prospect seemed most disconcerting to the author of

¹³ Revanchistische LM und ihre Einrichtungen, report from the Bezirksverwaltung für Staatssicherheit, Neubrandenburg, Sitz Neustrelitz, Arbeitsgruppe Auswertung, Neustrelitz, den 25.6.1965, to Ministerium für Staatssicherheit, Zentrale Informationsgruppe, Berlin, BStU, Archiv der Aussenstelle Neubrandenburg, BV Nbg, Abt. XX, Nr. 235, Bl. 76-81.

¹⁴ Frau K.L., interview by author, tape recording, Schwerin, 21 June 1999.

¹⁵ Betreff: Heimattreffen in Böblingen, Leiter der Abteilung PM, Fischer, VP.-Inspekteur, HVDVP --Hauptabteilung PM, Berlin, den 26.6.53, An: alle BDVP und PdVP Berlin, Abteilung PM, BA-B, DO 1/11/886. Efforts were made to limit participation also in meetings within the SBZ/GDR, for example in May 1953, the Volkspolizei discovered that a meeting for resettlers was planned in Erfurt. In order to hinder the meeting officials issued requests to the local police to check vehicles traveling on that date. Betreff: Umsiedler-Treffen, HVDVP HA PM, Berlin, 22.5.1953, An: alle BDVP einschliesslich PdVP-Berlin Abt. PM. BA-B, DO 1/11/887.

the report. Due to lack of personnel in the division which observed such activities, Dezernat K 5 (Department K 5), they knew almost nothing about these meetings or who organized them and thus sought intermediaries (Vertrauensleute) in order better to monitor resettler meetings.¹⁶ Officials neither permitted group consciousness based on an Eastern German identity nor based on the experience of forced departure; both orientations expressed resistance to the policies promoted by public transcripts and threatened the political harmony of the SBZ.

In June 1948 in Hamburg-Blankensee, a meeting of the former compatriots of Tilsit, Ragnit, and the surrounding district took place in the Garden restaurant "Sülberg." Those persons in attendance recited poems about Tilsit, made speeches, held prayers and also gave lectures. In the report it was estimated that 4,000 people participated, 2,000 of whom were from the SBZ; altogether 60 percent of the 4,000 were women. The majority of the roughly 2,000 Soviet Zone citizens came from Mecklenburg, and many left the SBZ without proper permission. Many participants expressed dissatisfaction with the rally because it was more of a "group tour and holiday trip," and it was too "superficial." Only one of the lectures was mentioned as containing subversive information: it focused on the mistreatment of East Prussians at the hands of the Red Army soldiers.¹⁷

¹⁶ Betr.: Zusammenkünfte von Ostflüchtlingen in Berlin, Landesregierung Brandenburg-Minister des Innern- Abt. Polizei Landeskriminalamt, Dezernat K5, Potsdam, 9. Juli 1948, An den Herrn Minister des Innern in Potsdam. BStU, MfS, Allg. s 458/67, Bl. 3.

¹⁷ Betr.: Tilsiter Treffen am 17.6.1948 in Hamburg-Blankensee, Sachsen-Anhalt, Polizeibehörde, Halle (Saale) 25. Juni 1948, An die deutsche Verwaltung des Innern in der SBZ, Abteilung K- Referat K5, z. Hd. des Herrn Lange. BStU, MfS. Allg. S, 459/67, Bl. 17.

One of the major concerns of the Volkspolizei when they investigated such a meeting was the percentage of youth and women present at the meeting. Very often women were in the majority (this reflects in part the percentage of resettlers who were women). The Volkspolizei seemed less concerned about the elderly who attended such meetings. In addition to being concerned about the presence of women and children at such meetings, the Volkspolizei also noted and investigated the presence of prominent citizens, such as mayors and Volkspolizei-inspectors, at such events.

Given the restrictive environment, how did resettlers find out about these meetings? They often received such information from friends and relatives, but also from West German printed materials. In September 1950 the chief inspector of the Volkspolizei informed units in the different states that citizens were receiving printed materials from West Germany, mostly from expellee church groups. These private citizens were suspected of being members of the resettler groups and were to be observed and questioned. The chief inspector expected to receive a report concerning these citizens and their activities.¹⁸

The Volkspolizei regularly collected names and addresses of resettlers suspected of being linked to resettler organizations. Their addresses ended up with the Volkspolizei, who then investigated them as possible members of "illegal" or "forbidden" resettler groups. When questioned the resettlers generally stated that they had no idea that they had done something wrong by receiving this newspaper or bulletin. The

¹⁸ Betr.: Jugend- und Umsiedlerorganisationen innerhalb der evangelischen und katholischen Kirche, Leiter der Hauptabteilung VA, Lust, Chefsinpekteur der Volkspolizei, 4.Sept. 1950, An die Landesbehörde der Volkspolizei (of the different states), BA-B, MdI, DO 1/11, 904. Bl. 1-5.

Volkspolizei then ascertained whether the resettler had additional incriminating newspapers or address lists, or anything that indicated a connection to the West. Often by the time the Volkspolizei got the address and then went to investigate they found that the resettler in question had fled West. But the most frequent situation was that the resettler had merely tried to find a lost husband or relative and claimed not to be political or radical at all.¹⁹

Also in the late 1940s, there was a great deal of concern from the government and the Volkspolizei that religious organizations could serve as covert resettler groups. Any organization that consisted primarily of resettlers was observed and forbidden. In summer 1948, it was reported that the religious leaders of the Catholic and Protestant communities across Brandenburg, in addition to people involved within the communities, intended to create a united resettler organization that would be for all resettlers, regardless of origin. In connection with this one person was briefly arrested. The people involved drafted a bill that called for a revision of the Eastern border and a return of all displaced Germans to the Eastern territories.²⁰

The Revierkriminaldienststelle (district criminal authority) in Brandenburg reported on a series of resettler meetings in Nessdorf near Forst during the summer of 1949. The report suggested that the organizers were largely involved in the local Protestant church, which had been active in resettler organization, especially resettler women and youth. One of the pastors from the church was also trying to hinder the

¹⁹ See documents contained in BA-B, DO 1/11/886 and 887.

²⁰ Betr.: Umsiedler-Organisation im Lande Brandenburg, Notiz, Berlin, den 22. Juni 1948, MfS, Allg. S. 406/67, Bl. 5

development of the FDJ.²¹ A further report from the Revierkriminaldienststelle in Forst on the Lausitz described the meeting of late June in Nessdorf. Three hundred resettlers from all over the SBZ were present. The church bells rang at appropriate times indicating the beginning of the meeting. Pastor Witzburg held a sermon in which he dealt mainly with religious issues, but also said: "The people can rob us of our Heimat, but no one can take from us the faith in the Heimat." One woman also asked that the meeting not become political because the police only gave permission for the meeting to take place on the grounds that it would not become political. The report stated that it was not known who gave her this permission. One woman then recited a piece titled "Heimweh" in which she described the longing for the Heimat as so intense that it is impossible to live when one has been forced to leave it. There was also a dance portion of the event and the general conversations that were overheard dealt mostly with whether or not there would be a return to the Heimat. A 72 year old Resettler stated that with the current government in place, there would never be a return home. At the train station as the train departed a group of resettlers sang "Now farewell, you my dear Heimatland."²²

In 1950 a group in Mecklenburg called the Gemeinde Gottes (Congregation of God), consisting mostly of East and West Prussians, was observed and eventually forbidden. Not only was it feared that this group could become a general resettler organization, but it was also noted that they had connections in the West. A member of

²¹ Abschrift, Revierkriminalstelle Forst, K5, Forst, Lausitz, den 29. Juni 1949, An das LKP Dezernat K 5. MfS, Allg. S., 406/67, Bl. 41.

²² Bericht, Betr.: Umsiedler-Treffen in Forst/Lausitz, Revierkriminaldienststelle Forst/Lausitz K5, Forst/Lausitz 26.6.1949. MfS, Allg. S., 406/67, Bl. 43-45.

the group wrote to the President of the GDR asking that the group be allowed to continue and expressing his frustration that the group was forbidden although there was allegedly religious freedom in the GDR.

In late 1951 and early 1952, the meetings of the Apostelamt Jesu Christi were observed and it was likewise feared that because a large number of members were Pomeranians, this group could also be a cover-up for a resettler organization. Their church services generally took place in restaurants and through observation it was determined that a prominent Volkspolizeimeister (People's Police chief) and his family were members of this group. The main office of this group wrote a letter to Grotewohl expressing frustration that the group was to be banned. The letter pointed out that the group had been banned once before--by decree of the Nazi government--and asked for a loosening of restrictions in the new Germany.

Later that year the General inspector of the Volkspolizei was concerned that the Silesian Protestant Church and the Pomeranian Protestant Church, in Saxony and Mecklenburg respectively could be cover-up organizations. In addition, the fear was expressed that these groups may have connections to the already dissolved Altpreuussische Union der Evangelischen Kirche (Old Prussian Union of the Protestant Church). Both groups were to be observed and banned. All of the above-mentioned groups were not only suspected of being cover-up organizations for resettler activities, they were also considered threatening to the Oder-Neisse-Peace-Border and the friendship with the people's republic of Poland.²³

²³ See the different documents concerning these groups contained in BA-B, DO 1 /11.0/ 865.

From a western publication called *Heimatwerk*, a news bulletin for Catholics from Danzig and West Prussia, the Volkspolizei determined that 50 resettlers from Danzig met in 1949 in Zarrentin, Mecklenburg, and participated in Danzig-style church services. Through this experience the participants were "transferred" emotionally back to their Heimat. The Volkspolizei investigated all persons they could find who were connected with the meeting or the newspaper. The people who were determined to have some connection to the event or newspaper were questioned and their houses searched. One woman questioned about her connection to the organization claimed she was only trying to find out about the whereabouts of her husband and had no idea that the organization was illegal. The report suggested "It is not known to her that she thereby serves an organization that with all its power seeks to destroy all that which we have built up in our GDR."²⁴

However, there were also secular meetings organized by resettlers that took place in restaurants and other public places. One such meeting in 1949 in Apolda inspired a report which indicated that future meetings of the mostly Silesian resettler group would be prevented, the group would be dissolved, and the attempt would be made to determine if this group was formed due to western influences. The activities of this group included singing songs, remembering the dead, and planning Christmas festivities. In this report

²⁴ Brief: Leiter der Abteilung VA, Bachert, V.P.-Kommandeur, Schwerin, 29.6.50, An die Hauptverwaltung der Deutschen Volkspolizei; Hauptabteilung VA, BA-B, DO 1/11/886.

the Volkspolizei suggested that the resettlers from this group were opposed to the Oder-Neisse-Border, but provided no evidence.²⁵ Apparently the very existence of such a group was alone sufficient evidence.

In May 1951 a resettler meeting took place in Halle in the zoo. The participants were mostly Sudeten-Germans, but there were also Silesians and East Prussians present. According to the report, the resettlers could be recognized on the basis of their clothing. During the meeting, many resettlers wrote or signed postcards. The Volkspolizei emptied the zoo mailbox and checked the contents. Many of the participants upon leaving said "See you in September." Two resettlers upon leaving made the Hitler Gruss (Nazi salute).²⁶

In September 1951 a report was issued about a resettler meeting in Jena for Silesians, East Prussians and Sudeten-Germans that took place on Sundays. During the observed meeting there were 18 participants. They were mostly women between the ages of 50 and 65. One man present reported a rumor that they would be able to return to Silesia soon. The five listeners expressed their doubts at this utterance. The report also indicated that nothing negative was said about the GDR or the Soviet Union.²⁷

²⁵ Betr: Neubürgerversammlung in Apolda, Absender: Kother, Leiter der Abteilung VP, 21. Okt.1949, Empfänger: An das Volkspolizeikreisamt, Weimar. BA-B, DO 1/11/886.

²⁶ Betr: Umsiedlertreffen in Zoogelände Halle, Landesbehörde der VP Sachsen-Anhalt, 28.5.51, An die Hauptverwaltung Deutsche VP--Hauptabteilung PM--Berlin-Niederschönhausen. BA-B, DO 1/11/887.

²⁷ Betr: Illegales Treffen der Umsiedler, Landesbehörde der VP Thüringen, Weimar, den 9.1.1951, An die Hauptverwaltung Deutsche VP, Hauptabteilung VA, Berlin-Niederschönhausen. BA-B, DO 1/11/887.

In addition to founding religious organizations and meetings that resembled the activities of the Western Landsmannschaften, there is also evidence that some resettlers attempted to form other groups. When a majority of the proposed group was resettlers, the Volkspolizei was immediately convinced that it was a cover-up group. For example, 17 resettlers from Bunzlau attempted to form a Skat and Billiard club. The police informed them that that would not be allowed and that there were many clubs and groups already in existence of which they could be members.²⁸

Although it was a rare occurrence, the Volkspolizei files also indicated that some East Prussian resettlers wore symbols representing their Heimat. The West German Landsmannschaft Ostpreussen manufactured these pins, which represented East Prussia through moose antlers. Several examples appear in the files: In 1955 a man from Königsberg, present resident of Kreis Zittau, was seen wearing the pin. Also in 1955, a woman from Insterburg, resident of Leipzig, was seen wearing the pin. The report indicated that she and her husband had no party allegiance, the fact that her husband was in Deutsch-sowjetische Freundschaft was considered only work-related.²⁹

In the mid-fifties the Volkspolizei and agents from Staatssicherheitsdienst made it increasingly difficult for the resettlers publicly to preserve their traditions and thus many resettlers reduced to private, often family-oriented, displays of commitment to their traditions and their old Heimat. Stasi reports from 1960 from Rostock and the

²⁸ Betr.: Skat- und Billardklub Görlitz, 10. Okt.1951, An das Sekretariat des Ministerpräsidenten, Berlin. BA-B, DO 1/11/887.

²⁹ Betr.: Umsiedlerabzeichen, Bezirksbehörde Deutsche VP, Leipzig, Abteilung Pass- und Meldewesen, Leipzig, den 1.2.1955, An die Hauptverwaltung Deutsche VP, Hauptabteilung PM, Berlin. BA-B, DO 1/11/886.

surrounding areas indicated that disguised meetings continued to be held under the guise of church meetings, family reunions,³⁰ Skat evenings and drinking sessions. The Stasi also continued to arrest resettlers who participated in what they labeled espionage, underground activities or agitation.³¹

Despite tremendous pressures to melt into the existing population, many resettlers in the late 1940s and early 1950s attempted to maintain the traditions that made them unique and thereby express their group consciousness as Germans from the Eastern territories. Hence they took part in a dissident subculture which they expressed through shared hidden transcripts. Of course many resettlers were overwhelmingly concerned with material issues and thus a resettler identity proved to be inconvenient. And many resettlers embraced the new government, its policies, and the political system. However, that many resettlers preserved their unique set of identities and cultural heritage in the GDR is indicated not only by the existence of underground resettler organizations in the postwar years, but also by the quick emergence of Landsmannschaften and monuments in the new federal states and is a testament to the resilience and complexity of their Prussian traditions.

³⁰ Frau K.L. confirmed that such family reunions took place during which friends and family from the old Heimat would meet, reminisce, sing Heimatlieder, etc. Frau K.L., interview by author, tape recording, Schwerin, 21 June 1999.

³¹ See the documents contained in Bezirksverwaltung für Staatssicherheit, Rostock, Abt. XX, Rep. 2, 112, Bl. 351-367, especially 352.

Expellee political activities and associations in West Germany in the 1950s

Although initially occupation officials forbade the formation of expellee groups in the Western Zones, gradually authorities recognized the need for non-political organizations and advisory committees to represent refugee and expellee concerns. By summer and fall of 1948, associations focusing on welfare and cultural issues began to emerge and were generally accepted by the occupation authorities as long as there was no apparent obvious political intent.³² By the late 1940s Landsmannschaften representing different groups of refugees and expellees had been formed on both the local, regional, and eventually federal level. Initially these new groups only received permission to operate if they had no open political intentions; however, as such groups meshed with official policies supported by the emerging public transcripts, their previously tacit political objectives could be expressed openly. Therefore officials permitted Landsmannschaften and regional and federal expellee associations to represent the social, financial, cultural, as well as the political interests of the expellees. Because the initial West German policy concerning the future of Germany's boundaries called for German reunification according to the 1937 borders, the expellees, as well as any political manifestation of their interests, provided validation for reunification as publicly expressed by Adenauer's government. In the early 1950s, the major activities of such Landsmannschaften included the cultivation of the traditions and history of Germany's

³² *Chronik 1945-1982*, Bund der Vertriebenen Landesverband Nordrhein-Westfalen e.V., (Düsseldorf, 1992), 5.

East through meetings, assemblies, lectures, publications, youth groups, museums, Heimatstuben (Heimat rooms or parlors), as well as providing financial and emotional assistance to destitute expellees and especially orphans.³³

After the lifting of the requirement for political parties to be licensed through the Allied Control Commission, the Block der Heimatvertriebenen und Entrechteten (Voting Block of the Germans expelled from their Homeland and deprived of their Rights, BHE) was founded in Kiel on 8 January 1950. The BHE was neither tied to particular political nor economic views and sought instead to represent the interests of refugees and expellees regardless of their political orientation. The perception of some of the expellees involved in the BHE was that because expellees stood outside of society as "German pariahs" or a "fifth class" (fünfter Stand) they needed their own political representation to assure their concerns were addressed and their voices heard.³⁴ The two major issues for which the BHE fought were thus the equalization of the burdens of the war and the expellees' right to their Heimat.

In the early 1950s the BHE attained the support of considerable numbers of expellees in Schleswig-Holstein, Lower Saxony, and Bavaria--the Western states with the highest percentage of expellees. For example, in the Landtag election in Schleswig-Holstein on 9 July 1950 the BHE achieved 23.4 percent of the vote.³⁵

³³ See, for example, the Satzungen des Vereine "Landsmannschaft Ostpreussen e.V." (sent to BMVt in mid 1952), Bundesarchiv Koblenz (BA-K), B 106, 276369.

³⁴ Franz Neumann, *Der Block der Heimatvertriebenen und Entrechteten, 1950-1960: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte und Struktur einer politischen Interessenspartei*. Marburger Abhandlungen zur Politischen Wissenschaft, Band 5 (Meisenheim am Glan: Verlag Anton Hain, 1968), 20-21.

³⁵ Neumann, *Der Block der Heimatvertriebenen und Entrechteten*, 34, 62.

Although the BHE initially had widespread support, it was short-lived. It must be noted that certainly not all expellees sought separate political representation or agreed with the rhetoric of the BHE. One expellee woman who did not support the BHE explained her position, "I love my Heimat and also want to uh, uh, remember my Heimat, so what should BHE do for me? That was no direction for me, because after all I cannot get back my Heimat with force."³⁶

On 5 August 1950 prominent expellees--many of whom had already begun their careers as politicians representing expellee interests--drafted and signed the "Die Charta der deutschen Heimatvertriebenen," or charter of those expelled from their Heimat, a document expressing the expellees' continued hope for and belief in a return to the Heimat, but also--in order to avoid further suffering--the renunciation of revenge or retribution. In the document, the expellees called for the reconstruction of Germany and Europe as well as the creation of a free and united Europe, and expressed the central role to be played by expellees in this process. The Charter also called for an equalization of the burdens of the war and legal and social equality of the expellees with the local West German population. The central purpose of the Charter, however, was to assert the expellees' right to the Heimat: "We have lost our Heimat. The Heimatlose are strangers in this world. God placed people in their Heimat. To divide people with force from their Heimat means to kill them spiritually. We have suffered and experienced this fate. That is why we feel called upon to demand that the right to the Heimat is recognized and

³⁶ Frau E.M, interview by Alexander von Plato, transcript, Hildesheim, 27 January 1995, 17. Deutsches Gedächtnis Archiv (DGA).

realized as a God-given basic right of mankind."³⁷ Thus, the expellees publicly announced their intention to regain and return to the Heimat, but not in such a way that further suffering would be thereby brought about.

How did expellees react to this declaration? The drafting and signing of the Charter was already made public on 6 August 1950 at a large demonstration in Stuttgart, and was mirrored by hundreds of similar simultaneous demonstrations in major cities all across West Germany and in West Berlin; estimates suggested that as many as 150,000 expellees took part on the demonstration in Stuttgart alone. The reaction of participants was overwhelmingly positive; to this day, many expellees regard this document to be "heroic" and some expellee politicians reflected proudly on the "united Europe" emphasis of the Charter.³⁸ This event became the first "Tag der Heimat" and began a tradition that has since been upheld annually. In the 1950s "Tag der Heimat" or day of the Heimat, was the day on which displaced Germans and refugees from Eastern as well as "Middle" Germany "professed their faith in" their Heimat but also issued an appeal to the United Nations and the Europarat (Council of Europe) to support their right to return peacefully to their Heimat.³⁹ Of course, it must also be added that some expellees--particularly those who avoided politics altogether--probably had little awareness of or interest in the drafting and signing of this document.

³⁷ "Die Charta der deutschen Heimatvertriebenen, 5. August 1950," *Kulturelle Arbeitsheft* 22, (Bonn: Bund der Vertriebenen, 1995), 15.

³⁸ See, for example Linus Kather, *Die Entmachtung der Vertriebenen Zweiter Band, Die Jahre der Entscheidung* (München, Wien: Günter Olzog Verlag, 1965), 98-99.

³⁹ Aus den Fröhnachrichten, Radio SBC, Schweizerische Kurzwellensender 6:15, 6. 8. 1951, BA-K, B 150, 3355.

How did West Germans in general react to the Charter? In his 1954 summary discussion of "Die Charta der deutschen Heimatvertriebenen," Reinhard Wittram described the drafting and formulation of the expellee charter as primarily a political but also a moral action. He suggested that through the charter expellees were attempting to influence politicians as well as national and international public opinion and to help people to understand the political and moral implications of the loss of their Heimat.⁴⁰ Wittram generally welcomed the idea behind that charter, but critiqued the wording of one passage: the charter claimed that the expellees were "those most affected by the suffering of the times."⁴¹ Wittram contended that this claim could "not be maintained in this generality and exclusivity" and explained that other groups had also suffered greatly in the 1940s: the Jews, the internees, POWs and prisoners in the Soviet Union, as well as the Germans who remained behind in the now Communist former Heimat. Wittram suggested sensibly that the passage must be altered, and should read: "the Heimatvertriebenen who are among those who were most affected by the suffering of the times."⁴²

The official GDR reaction to the Charter was summarized in the report issued by the Westkommission (West Commission) in 1950. According to this report, the charter

⁴⁰ Prof. Dr. Reinhard Wittram, "Die Charta der deutschen Heimatvertriebenen," Zusammenfassung der Seminararbeit Neuenettelsau, 19.-21. Okt, 1954, p. 2. BA-K, B 150, 1439, Heft 2.

⁴¹ "Die Charta der deutschen Heimatvertriebenen, 5. August 1950," *Kulturelle Arbeitsheft* 22 (Bonn: Bund der Vertriebenen, 1995), 15.

⁴² Prof. Dr. Reinhard Wittram, "Die Charta der deutschen Heimatvertriebenen," Zusammenfassung der Seminararbeit Neuenettelsau, 19.-21. Okt, 1954, p. 1. BA-K, B 150, 1439, Heft 2.

itself only abstractly addressed the "right to the Heimat" and it was the speeches held at the demonstrations and the subsequent press commentary that was "in part openly chauvinistic" and thus a cause for concern. "This chauvinistic feature was especially prominent at meetings of people from Danzig [that took place] near Hamburg." At these meetings at least 20,000 expellees claimed to represent nearly 300,000 "Danziger" from both Germanies. The general message of the meeting was that Danzig up to 1939 did not belong to the "Reich" and should thus not share in the consequences faced by Hitler's Germany. At these meetings the "Danziger" called for the recognition of Danzig as a state and the return of all its citizens to the Heimat with rights to regain their former possessions and reimbursement for all losses. The final remark concerning the document as expressed in the Westkommission report was that the Charta der Heimatvertriebenen was not generally regarded as anything more than a phrase within expellee circles.⁴³

Shortly after its creation in 1950, the BHE quickly began to lose voters. In the early 1950s, expellees tended to vote overwhelmingly CDU, especially at the federal level, and Adenauer's public transcripts expressing his support for reunification based on the 1937 borders contributed greatly to widespread expellee support for his regime. In many elections, Adenauer owed the CDU victory in large part to the expellee population; for example in the 1953 election, more than 50 percent of the expellees voted CDU. Well aware of the support for the CDU from expellee ranks, Adenauer advanced a coalition of his own party with the BHE, a coalition that gradually drove more expellee voters to side

⁴³ Westkommission, Bericht über die Tagung der Umsiedler Kommission am 30.9. und 1.10 im Nationalrat, 2.10.1950, BA-B, NY 4062/122, pp. 13-14.

with the CDU.⁴⁴ Due to crises within the expellee politicians' ranks, the BHE suffered from division and never again achieved the five-percent minimum. By 1957 they began to disappear from the scene altogether as the CDU and SPD absorbed their voters.⁴⁵

Expellee demonstrations already begun taking place in the late 1940s, and during the 1950s and 1960s, such public assemblies became more frequent. Initially these events focused generally on the expellees' demands for an equalization of burdens, or Lastenausgleich. Demonstrations also increasingly dealt with the desire to regain the lost territories and return to the Heimat. One such East Prussian demonstration in Hannover in July 1954 called for the reunification of all three Germanies up to Memel. In addition to the 40,000 East Prussians who attended this event, the Federal Minister for the All-German Question, Jakob Kaiser, was also present and called upon the expellees not to let the world forget the legal rights of the expellees. "We will not tire of shouting to the world that peace and right will again come to Europe only when the division of Germany belongs in the past." Expellee politicians Linus Kather and Alfred Gille called upon the federal government "never to forget that the territories on the other side of the Oder-Neisse-Border also belong in a united Germany." They stated, "When we speak of a reunification then we mean not only the Soviet Zone, rather the entire German territory up to the Memel."⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Kather, *Die Entmachtung der Vertriebenen*, Zweiter Band, 8, 9, 13.

⁴⁵ Karsten Krieger, "Parteien," in *Deutschland unter alliierter Besatzung, 1945-1949/55*, ed. Benz, 157.

⁴⁶ R.S., "Ostpreussen fordern Vereinigung bis zur Memel," Hannover, 4. Juli. Ausschnitt aus *Die Welt* vom 5. Juli 1954, BA-K, B106, 27369.

During the first years of his chancellorship, Adenauer had gained the trust and respect of the expellees through his official statements concerning the former territories and through his repeated affirmation of the official policy that supported a future Germany according its 1937 borders. Gradually during the mid to late 1950s some expellees, particularly those active in politics, began to question Adenauer's sincerity as the staunch protector of the Heimat. In 1959 the spokesmen of the Pomeranian Landsmannschaft, sent in a letter to Adenauer asking him as a "persistent and courageous champion" of expellee goals and defender of their rights to continue--despite emerging opposition--to promote the return of the Eastern Heimat to Germany. "We Eastern Germans do not generally lose our cool [verlieren im allgemeinen die Nerven nicht leicht]. However, if our Heimat is threatened with becoming Polish then heart and head are ready to seize the reins and stop any policy that idly surrenders Eastern German land." The letter expressed the expellees' trust in Adenauer that he would not allow the Heimat to be abandoned. "We place, as before, all our hope in you, highly esteemed Federal Chancellor, because we know that you with all your authority stand protectively before our Eastern German Heimat. We put our trust in you that you will never sign a treaty that would sanction a new wrong, a wrong which would be greater than that of Versailles."⁴⁷

Indeed some expellee politicians in the mid to late 1950s even began to distrust Adenauer and regard his promises to the expellees concerning their Heimat to be little more than political machinations. The East Prussian expellee politician Linus Kather

⁴⁷ Pommersche Landsmannschaft, Der Sprecher, Dr. Eggert, 23. März 1959, to Hoch verehrter Herr Bundeskanzler!, BA-K, B 136, 6717, Band 2.

criticized Adenauer for his German-Polish condominium idea from 1953 and regarded his selection of Federal Expellee Minister for his second cabinet, also in 1953, to have been an irresponsible "political crime." The replacement for Hans Lukaschek was Theodor Oberländer, whom apparently Adenauer himself once referred to as the man with the "deep brown waistcoat."⁴⁸ Despite articles and public allegations concerning Oberländer's Nazi past--which apparently included far more incriminating details about his activities during the war than just party membership since 1933--he remained Federal Expellee Minister until 1960. Understandably, many Germans aware of Oberländer's former activities connected the ministry he represented and the goals of that ministry with the Nazi policies Oberländer had supported during the war. Statements concerning the expellees' right to the Heimat made by a man allegedly linked to the deaths of thousands of Jews in Budapest seemed as tainted as the federal expellee representative himself.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Adenauer's cabinet apparently contained several Germans with Nazi backgrounds. See, Rudi Goguel and Heinz Pohl, *Oder-Neisse, Eine Dokumentation*, Quellen und Studien, Deutsches Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Berlin (Berlin: Kongress-Verlag, 1956), 98-101.

⁴⁹ Kather, *Die Entmachtung der Vertriebenen*, Zweiter Band, 13, 143-145, 244. Weinberg suggested that the two leaders of the BHE, Waldemar Kraft and Theodor Oberländer (also Federal Expellee Minister) "had both played prominent roles in earlier efforts to expel and expropriate non-Germans" and that this fact "effectively undermined whatever resonance German complaints might have had," 792, n. Gerhard L. Weinberg, *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 792. The opposing sides of the recent German debate concerning Nazi historians is well presented in *Deutsche Historiker im Nationalsozialismus*, Winfried Schulze and Otto Gerhard Oexle (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1999). On Oberländer, see especially, Wolfgang Mommsen, "Vom 'Volkstumkampf' zur nationalsozialistische Vernichtungspolitik in Europa: Zur Rolle der deutschen Historiker unter dem Nationalsozialismus," 183, and Ingo Haar, "'Kämpfende Wissenschaft' Entstehung und Niedergang der völkischen Geschichtswissenschaft im Wechsel der Systeme," 219-220.

In his book *Die Entmachtung der Heimatvertriebenen* (The Debilitation of the Heimatvertriebenen, which he considered titling "Die Selbstentmachtung der Heimatvertriebenen," or The Self-debilitation of the Heimatvertriebenen)⁵⁰ Kather also cited from an interview with Adenauer from 1957 aired on the American CBS program, *Face the Nation*. During this interview Adenauer was asked to reflect on the inevitable political death of the West German politician who would give up hope concerning regaining the territories East of the Oder-Neisse-Line. Adenauer's response was to stall by asking what the interviewer understood by "territories in the East." Eventually Adenauer replied that the expellees must have the right to return to their Heimat. Kather suggested that Adenauer's public statements indicated that his ultimate concern lay elsewhere. Even in the first postwar years Adenauer's focus was more Western in orientation; by the late 1950s the federal government's perception of reunification was more centered on a reunification of West and "Middle" Germany.⁵¹

Whereas the initial focus of such groups was on attaining an equalization of burdens, in the mid-1950s West German expellee associations increasingly focused on the preservation of Eastern German culture as part of their central agenda. This cultural emphasis included singing, dancing, Eastern German traditional costumes, cooking, humor, etc., but the primary focus was on "Ostkunde," or the introduction of the history,

⁵⁰ Linus Kather, *Die Entmachtung der Vertriebenen, Erster Band, Die entscheidenden Jahre* (München, Wien: Günter Olzog Verlag, 1964), 8.

⁵¹ The *British Zone Review* published a series of articles on West German politicians. The article on Adenauer from 1946 stated that he distrusted and disliked Prussia and "undeniably" looked "West rather than East." "German Politicians of the British Zone: Dr. Adenauer, Christian Democrat," *British Zone Review*, Vol. 1, Nr. 21 (July 6, 1946), 8. [N.A.R.H.] Kather, *Die Entmachtung der Vertriebenen, Zweiter Band*, 146-155.

culture, and traditions of the Eastern Heimat in the Western classroom. If German school children knew nothing about the German past of the former territories, eventually they would simply seem foreign and a plan for reunification of the three Germanies would appear aggressive, unreasonable, and also appear to echo expansionist policies from Germany's dark past. And politically active expellees feared that if the children forgot the Heimat, the Heimat might be lost forever.

Some expellees sought to expand on the understanding of Eastern German culture and thereby avoid overly sentimental interpretations of what ought to be preserved. In an article on cultural and educational policies from a September 1953 edition of the newspaper, *Vertriebenen-Anzeiger*, a representative of the expellee youth reminded readers that nostalgia for traditions was not synonymous with culture. "What differentiates the Eastern Germans from the local population are not really customs and traditions or linguistic forms [Sprachformen][,] rather profoundly the experience of the Eastern border, the foreign neighbors. This experience goes deeper within all of them [Eastern Germans] [. . .] than they suspect." The author contended that "knowledge about the East must remain lively" and in order to realize this goal, not just Eastern German traditions should be studied but rather attention should be focused on the entire Eastern German milieu, both past and present, among expellees as well as among the Germans who stayed behind in the old Heimat.⁵²

The expellee professor Eugen Lemberg was particularly active in promoting a broader understanding of expellee culture in the classroom. In his 1954 essay concerning

⁵² "Neue Wege der Kulturpolitik: Die Jungere Generation der Vertriebenen meldet sich zu Wort: Das Wissen über den Osten muss lebendig bleiben," *Vertriebenen-Anzeiger*, 1. Sept 1953, BA-K, B 150, 3402, Band 1, Heft 1.

recommendations to the Kultusminister (Ministry of Culture and Education) for dealing with subjects related to the expulsion as well as Central and Eastern Europe in schools and universities, Lemberg contended that these issues extended beyond the historical disciplines and into political and social studies. "The people of the German East live today in the West and have to prove themselves anew." They brought their culture with them and it should be woven into the existing milieu as an intrinsic part of German culture. Lemberg argued that not only the expellees lost the Heimat, rather all Germans lost an area of traditional German settlement and the accompanying economic, political, and cultural achievements. Thus it was essential that this cultural aspect of the German nation (Kulturnation) also be taught in West German schools. Lemberg contended that through Ostkunde, cultural and political developments, intercultural relations, as well as the meaning of borders could be better understood; thus rather than promoting nationalist or imperialist aims or methods, Ostkunde could improve relations and understanding between Germany and the other nations in Eastern and Central Europe.⁵³

Government officials and expellee politicians perceived Ostkunde as a means to strengthen the support for official policies concerning the desire for reunification based on the 1937 borders. The Kultusministerium (Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs) sought through Ostkunde to maintain "the awareness of German unity and the

⁵³ Prof. Dr. Eugen Lemberg, Empfehlungen an die Herren Kultusminister der Länder der deutsche Bundesrepublik über die Behandlung des deutschen Ostens und der aus den Vertreibungen entstandenen Probleme in Erziehung und Unterricht, Mai 1954, An das Sekretariat der Ständigen Konferenz der Kultusminister der Länder z.Hd. Herrn Köngeter, Bonn, pp. 1-5. BA-K, B 150, 2360. For more on how Ostkunde could improve relations with neighboring countries, see also, Lemberg, *Ostkunde: Grundsätzliches und Kritisches zu einer deutschen Bildungsaufgabe* (Hannover-Linden: Verlag Ch. Jäger & Co., 1964), 126-142.

will to reunification and peace and freedom." According to the ministry, in concrete terms, Ostkunde should acquaint German youth with the "German East and its cultural achievement" and help "firmly to establish it within their historical awareness." In addition, the government sought through Ostkunde to improve relations with the people of Eastern Europe.⁵⁴ It must be added that the German school system was in many respects regionally administered and federal suggestions concerning education were often not implemented.

Since the creation of the expellee Landsmannschaften, local, regional, and federal associations, and the BHE, the various groups faced internal divisions and often the inability to cooperate outside of the individual organization. Often without a unified voice, the groups had difficulties representing expellee interests outside of local politics. Some of this division was gradually lessened by the creation of the Bund der Vertriebenen (Federation of Expellees), founded in fall 1957.⁵⁵ The Bund der Vertriebenen acted more or less as an umbrella organization for many of the individual Landsmannschaften and local groups. Of course in-fighting did not altogether disappear, and expellee politicians continued in the 1960s to disagree on means and sometimes even ends, thereby slowing down or even halting the implementation of expellee agenda.

⁵⁴ Citation of recommendations concerning Ostkunde, as issued by the Kultusminister am 13.12.1956, Answer to question 14. Wie stark wird in Praxis Ostkunde im Unterricht betrieben? Internal report from Dr. Morys, Bonn, den 15. Dezember 1965, to Referat I B 3c, über Herrn Referatsleiter I B 3, im Hause. pp. 1-2. BA-K, B150, 3339.

⁵⁵ Bund der Vertriebenen vereinigte Landsmannschaften und Landesverbände, Landesverband Nordrhein-Westfalen e.V., *Bund der Vertriebenen: 40 Jahre für Deutschland*, (Mönchengladbach-Rheydt, Landesversammlung, 14./15. Mai 1988), 16.

Expellee political activities and associations in West Germany in the 1960s

Over the course of the 1960s more and more segments of the population began to break from Adenauer's official reunification policy, regard a retrieval of the former Eastern territories as not only unreasonable but also objectionable, and reject the political activities of the expellees. Some expellee groups sensed dwindling public support for their activities and for the retrieval of the Eastern Heimat and consequently became more vigorous and aggressive in their campaigning.

All across the Federal Republic in the early 1960s, expellee groups began visual campaigns condemning the unjust division of Germany and called for reunification. One example of such an operation was the poster campaign, "Dreigeteilt? Niemals!" (Divided into three? Never!). One of the posters that was part of this operation showed a black and white photo of Germans on a street looking to their left at two posters. These posters were printed in red, black, and white and contained a map of Germany from 1937, divided into three parts. The caption read: "Divided into three? Never!" Additional information was located on the other side of the placard, including the statement: "Our fatherland is Germany, *the entire undivided Germany!*"⁵⁶ Landsmannschaften produced these posters condemning the division of Germany into three parts and placed them prominently on public places and streets in cities and districts. This poster campaign was supported and financed not only by expellee organizations, rather also by some city and state administrations. In the early 1960s, public disdain for such activities was minimal,

⁵⁶ Plakate Werbung, "3-geteilt?--Niemals!" BA-K, B 106, 27584 (emphasis in original).

and one of the only examples of rejection of the call for reunification took place in a district in Schleswig-Holstein; a vandal destroyed the posters by carving swastikas into them and making the message indecipherable.⁵⁷

Many similar campaigns emerged in the early 1960s, likely in part in connection with events in the GDR. Some of these campaigns used postcards depicting "Middle Germany" bound in chains and "East Germany" cut off and suffering under Polish and Soviet rule. A movement associated with "Unteilbares Deutschland" (Germany Indivisible) likewise demanded the right of self-determination for "Middle" and East Germany and called for reunification based on the borders of 1937.⁵⁸ Such groups also erected monuments during the 1960s visually arguing that Germany was indivisible and reminding viewers of the German names of the cities in the former Eastern territories.

Another type of visual campaign took the form of pamphlets and newsletters. For example, the Aktion Oder-Neisse (AKON) e.V. issued a news report entitled, *Oder-Neisse* that discussed and rejected the political trend to recognize the Oder-Neisse-Line. The use of visual depictions of the "proper" borders for Germany appeared prominently

⁵⁷ R. Paul, Landsmannschaft Pommern Kreis Eutin, Eutin, den 5.7.61, to the Pommersche Landsmannschaft, Landesgruppe Schleswig-Holstein, Kiel, Landesarchiv Schleswig-Holstein (LA-SH), Abt. 761, 23493. A further example of vandalism, where Communists were seen to be the likely culprits, was described in another letter from the Kreisverband Steinburg der vertriebenen Deutschen--Vereinigte Landsmannschaften, Itzehoe, den 3. Februar 1961, An das Ministerium für Arbeit, Soziales u. Vertriebene des Landes Schleswig-Holstein, z.Hd. von Herrn Dr. Walsdorff, Kiel, LA-SH, Abt. 761, 23493.

⁵⁸ See, for example, Postkarte: Landkarte 1937 Deutschland, "DDR" in chains, Ostpreussen, Pommern und Schlesien: Unter Polnischer oder Sow. Verwaltung. Caption: Soll es so bleiben? Nein! Niemals! Selbstbestimmungsrecht für alle Völker! Wiedervereinigung in Frieden und Freiheit Resolution, BA-K, B 106, 27584. See also, BdV, Kreis und Ortsgruppe Kitzingen/M., Tag der Heimat, Kitzingen, Kitzingen, den 24. Sept. 1961, BA-K, B 106, 27584.

on their letterhead and also on the cover of the newsletter. For example, the issue from December 1966 showed Central Europe with 1939 borders and three men standing on the map representing respectively the Germans, Poles, and the Czechs. The men stood within the respective 1939 borders of their countries shaking hands. The caption read: "Friendship, yes! But like this."⁵⁹ In other words, according to AKON friendship would only be possible if the 1939 borders of Germany were respected.

Between about 1962 and 1967 a small group of expellees from Danzig attempted to regain their Heimat using thoroughly unorthodox means: they tried to establish a "Committee for UN-Membership for the Free City of Danzig" and a "Government in Exile of the Republic of Danzig." A lawyer from Danzig and current resident of Berlin, Dr. Georg Brosa attempted to establish around 1964 a "Provisional Neutral Government of the Free City of Danzig." Brosa had been registered in Leipzig with the chief of police as a foreigner in 1946 and received an Identity Card for Foreigners (Kennkarte für Ausländer). Under nationality, it indeed read "Free City of Danzig until clarification." Brosa had a small network of associates in other states in West Germany working with him to reestablish a Free City of Danzig and attain UN recognition.⁶⁰

One of the men connected to Brosa's small network was the self-declared president of the Action Committee of the Free City of Danzig, Herbert Adler. As had Brosa, Adler sent letters to foreign countries and domestic agencies asking for support and recognition. Apparently an African republic did recognize the "government in exile"

⁵⁹ Aktion Oder-Neisse (AKON) e.V., *Oder-Neisse 12/66*, BA-K, B 136, 6718.

⁶⁰ See, Betr.: "Freie Stadt Danzig-- Aktionskomitee," Bonn, den 29. Sept 1966. BA-K, B106, 22477.

and perhaps more surprisingly the West German Federal President sent a thank you note for birthday greetings in which he addressed Adler as "Dear President. . ." In addition an unanswered 1966 letter from Adler to the Federal Expellee Minister suggested that the peaceful Free City of Danzig should not have faced the same fate as Germany and it was a gross infringement of international law that its citizens were either murdered or expelled. By 1967, Adler claimed to be the President of the "Government in Exile of the Republic of Danzig." Gradually, in part as a result of in fighting, the leaders of this mini-movement were arrested or fined for fraud. Eventually even newspapers took advantage of the comedic aspect of the existence of a president of the "Government in Exile of the Republic of Danzig."⁶¹

Despite gradually declining public awareness of expellee concerns and declining support for their political activities, many expellees continued to participate in expellee associations and also maintained an active interest in celebrating their Heimat and traditions. The list of 15 questions sent in 1965 by the Hessische Rundfunk to the Federal Ministry for Expellees concerning expellee integration also asked about expellee participation in politics and public expressions of their group consciousness. The response to the question concerning the number of members of expellee associations

⁶¹ See the materials in BA-K, B106, 22477. In particular see, Herbert Adler, Präsident, Freie Stadt Danzig, Aktionskomitee, Essen 30.8.1966, to Herrn Bundesvertriebenenminister Grabbe; Vermerk, Betr. Vertretung der Stadt Danzig, Bonn, den 2. März 1967; Betr.: Unruhestiftung und Amtsanmassung von zwei aus Danzig stammenden Personen auf dem Gebiet der Bundesrepublik, Absender: Der Bundesminister des Innern, Bonn, den 16. März 1967, An die obersten Bundesbehörden den Herrn BMVt; Absender: Aussenministerium, Republik Freie Stadt Danzig, Exilregierung, 28.11.1967, Empfänger: An das Bundesvertriebenen-Ministerium der Bundesregierung der Deutschen Bundesrepublik, Bonn; "Der 'Präsident von Danzig' wohnt im Parterre rechts: "Ich werde wiedergewählt"/ Hauptquartier in Wilhelmsburg, *Hamburger Abendblatt* vom 7.6.1969.

indicated that the Bund der Vertriebenen had 1.5 million dues-paying members and 1 million members not required to pay dues because they were welfare recipients. The representative of the ministry answering this question further contended that only the head of the family was an official member but the whole family was represented, thus they suggested that in all around 7 million expellees were affiliated with the Bund der Vertriebenen, and therefore just over 70 percent of expellees in West Germany in 1965 were involved in some way in the organization. There was no indication that this information reflected members without families or families who may have been divided over the issue. Nevertheless, it can thus be concluded that millions of expellees were card-carrying members, and many of their family members were likewise involved in some way.⁶²

One of the first indicators that a shift in the official policy was imminent came from the German Protestant Church and their 1965 EKD-Ostdenkschrift, a document unsurprisingly rejected by some expellees. A 75-year-old East Prussian man, Herr E.J. sent a letter in February 1967 to the Federal Expellee Minister, expressing his, as well as his pastor's and their community's, condemnation of the Ostdenkschrift. Herr E.J. "damned it to hell, because we will never give up our Heimat, especially not ceded to Communists, to whom we owe nothing." Herr E.J. rejected the Church's statement on the grounds that they did not possess the authority to make decisions concerning national policy. His solution for the border problem involved the Soviet Union giving back to Poland the land they stole and then consequently Poland would return to its original

⁶² Internal report from Referat I B2 x im Hause, Bonn, 9 December 1965, BA-K, B150, 3339.

borders and give up the German Heimat. He asked that Church representatives either maintain a proper distance to politics or renounce their position within the Church.⁶³

Additional examples of some expellees' rejection of the EKD-Ostdenkschrift appeared on placards and banners at demonstrations. For example in May 1966, at a demonstration in Bonn attended by around 70,000 expellees, in addition to placards stating "Renunciation is high treason against the German fatherland," some expellees carried banners with statements aimed at the Protestant Church and their Ostdenkschrift, for example: "God will also pass judgment on the EKD-Ostdenkschrift," and "We renounce [verzichten] the Protestant bishops."⁶⁴ In addition, Aktion Oder-Neisse (AKON) e.V. issued flyers with caricatures of one of the Protestant bishops responsible for the Ostdenkschrift. According to an article in *Die Zeit*, excluding some hostile socialist student groups, the demonstration remained peaceful and ineffective. The article suggested that although the expellees sought to prove to the world that they were patriots, all they really achieved was to demonstrate that they were aimless and impractical.⁶⁵

In the late 1960s expellees often reacted to Brandt's Ostpolitik with outrage. Brandt's treaties with the Soviet Union and Poland, as well as his state visit to Warsaw, triggered in many Germans--not just expellees-- feelings of irritation and hostility.

Examples of public expressions of resentment were numerous. In May 1972 a reader

⁶³ "Die Vertriebenen von Ostpreussen," Herr E.J., Winsen/Luhe, den 3. Februar, 1967, an den Herrn-Bundes-Vertriebenen-Minister von Hassel, 1-4. BA-K, B 106, 22485.

⁶⁴ "Vertriebenendemonstration in Bonn--Zurückhaltung der Organisatoren," *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* Fernausgabe Nr. 133, 16. Mai 1966, BA-K, B 106, 22476.

⁶⁵ Dietrich Strothmann, "' . . . über alles in der Welt'. Auf Bonns Marktplatz: eine Deutschland-Kundgebung und das Deutschland-Lied," *Die Welt* Nr. 21, 20. Mai, 1966, BA-K, B 106, 22476.

wrote into the newspaper, *Das Freie Wort*, calling for Brandt's resignation: "Mr. Brandt, Bonn. Please abdicate immediately with your entire government before the curse of a million Eastern Germans is brought upon you!"⁶⁶ Expressions of disdain for the new government and their public transcripts came in numerous forms. Also in the early 1970s another small newspaper, the *Deutsche National-Zeitung*, published a creative example of a reader's disdain in a parody of the national anthem:

Bonn's Anthem

Other countries above all
above all in the world.
Let us first full of humility
do what pleases others.
Let us atone, let us pay
in renunciation of international law.
Listen to our mass media
only we Germans, we are bad.

Other countries above all
you noble majestic examples.
Should you also sometimes murder
courteously silent we will look on.
Our funds gladly help
buy that which you demand,
and many foreign battlefields
inspire us to alleviate suffering.

Other countries above all
Heralds of freedom in our time
Just look how we good Germans
obsequiously are prepared
to please the people of all nations,
as is proper for vassals;
despite extortion, hatred and wall--
question is, where will it lead.

Die Bonner Hymne

Ausland, Ausland über alles
über alles in der Welt.
Lasst zuerst uns voller Demut
tun was anderen gefällt.
Lasst uns sühnen, lasst uns zahlen
in Verzicht auf Völkerrecht.
Hört auf unsers Massenmedien
nur wir Deutschen, wir sind schlecht.

Ausland, Ausland über alles
edel hehres Vorbild du.
Mag bei dir man auch mal morden
artig schweigend sehen wir zu.
Freudig helfen unsere Gelder
kaufen, was ihr uns befiehlt,
und manch fremder Schlachtenfelder
Not zu lindern uns beseelt.

Ausland, Ausland über alles
Freiheitskünder unsrer Zeit.
Seht nur wie wir braven Deutschen
unterwürfig sind bereit,
allen Völkern zu gefallen,
wie Vasallen es gebührt;
trotz Erpressung, Hass und Mauer --
fragt sich nur, wohin das führt.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Herr A.D., "Sofort abtreten," *Das Freie Wort*, 26.5.1972, S. 7, LA-SH, Abt. 761, 4785

⁶⁷ "Die Bonner Hymne," *Deutsche National-Zeitung* (n.d, possibly 1971), LA-SH, Abt. 761, 4785. This newspaper still exists and presently represents a radical right-wing

It is not clear whether the author of this mocking and embittered parody was an expellee, refugee, or indigene, but the references to Brandt's Ostpolitik were clear. The reference to the extortion of the former territories and the erection of the Berlin Wall indicated the author's perception that Brandt was leading West Germany in a dangerous political direction.

Brandt also received telegrams directly accusing him of treasonous behavior. One such telegram stated that the regional representative group of the East Prussian Landsmannschaften in Hamburg "heard with outrage the recognition-offer of your representative in Warsaw. You are acting against your promise that nothing would happen behind the backs of the expellees. We will not recognize any of your renunciation offers. You serve not peace[,] rather provide for Communism a certificate of blamelessness [Persilschein] for the unjust treatment of expellees."⁶⁸ Because Kiesinger had indeed on several occasions publicly promised the expellees that nothing would happen behind their backs and because Brandt publicly contended that renunciation of the Heimat meant treason, many expellees felt deceived by his Ostpolitik.⁶⁹

position.

⁶⁸ Telegramm, Herr E.W., Landesgruppen Vorsitzender, die Delegierten Versammlung der Landesgruppe Hamburg der Landsmannschaft Ostpreussen, an den Bundeskanzler Herr Willy Brandt, BA-K, B 136, 6789.

⁶⁹ See, for example, the speech Brandt made in March 1956 in Hannover in which he stated, "No one can, as things are now, expect us to renounce our legal rights." And, "No one can expect from you, my friends, that you will rip the Heimat from your hearts." Cited in Kather, *Die Entmachtung der Vertriebenen, Zweiter Band*, 126-127. Apparently in a speech from 9 June 1963, Brandt told his Silesian audience verbatim that "Renunciation is treason." See, the quotes from, *Verfassunggebenden Nationalversammlung des deutschen Ostens*, Bonn, 27. Sept. 1970, p. 1. LA-SH, Abt.

Brandt was not the only public official under attack for promoting friendship and reconciliation with Poland. For example, Klaus Schütz, the SPD mayor of Berlin and colleague of Brandt, received an embittered attack in 1969 from an irate expellee in Karlsruhe. The opening of the letter read "To Klaus Schütz" and explained that "one cannot address a traitor [Landesverräter] with 'sir' [Herr]." According to the author, Schütz had conducted an official journey to Poland and among other activities visited Auschwitz and lay a wreath honoring the victims of the Nazi regime "in the name of the German people." Schütz had also argued that Germans must come to terms with the loss of the former territories; indeed this was the comment with which the anonymous author had the greatest problem. He asked how Schütz, whom he constantly addressed as a "scoundrel," could ignore the suffering of the Eastern Germans, his own people, and also ignore international law, by giving the Poles the Eastern territories. The Poles had murdered or expelled these Germans and regardless Schütz sought simply to grant them traditionally German land. The author called for Schütz "*to abdicate immediately* and go as quickly as possible through the wall to Ulbricht, and then you are there where you belong!" The letter closed with the following statement: "Soon I have something to do in West Berlin, then I will seek you out, but not to speak to you, rather *to spit in your face, you swine!*"⁷⁰ It must be noted, that such virulent attacks were not the norm; even among those expellees upset by the shift in official policy, few would have made such comments to a public official.

761, 8649.

⁷⁰ (anonymous) Karlsruhe, den 28. Juni 1969, An Klaus Schütz, ehemaliger Bürgermeister in Westberlin, pp. 1-2. BA-K, B 106, 22485. (emphasis in original)

Many expellees voiced their rejection of Ostpolitik through letters to public officials such as members of the Bundestag. In one such letter from 1973 an expellee called the Brandt-Scheel-Bahr government a "renunciation-government" (Verzichts-Regierung) and criticized the suggestion that war reparations for Poland come from German taxpayers; Herr O.D. asked if expellees should have to pay twice. Since they lost everything to the Poles, the author of the letter contended that the expellees should thus not have to pay additional extra taxes.⁷¹ Indeed, this issue of reparations to Poland was a subject of many such letters in the early and mid 1970s.

A Silesian journalist and writer sent a letter of complaint to a member of the Bundestag in 1973 suggesting that Ostpolitik was dominated by Leftists who "just want to support the spread of Communism." He asked why German losses East of the Oder-Neisse-Line had not been compensated and expressed his frustration with the Polish demands for war reparations in spite of the fact that they got so much through their absorption of the Eastern territories. He remarked, "Since Attila there has not been to this extent mistreatment of entire tribes with death and destruction."⁷²

Also during this time period of establishing the new official policies toward reunification and expellees, certain elements within the indigene population began accusing the expellees of being "revanchists," "right-wing radicals," "those who live in the past," (Ewig-Gestrige), and "dusty nationalists." Because they were concerned with the family, traditions, values, the "Vaterland," and the Heimat, such groups considered

⁷¹ Herr O.D., Brünen, den 4.1.1973, An den Bundestagsabgeordneten, Herrn Stoltenberg. LA-SH, Abt. 761, 4784.

⁷² Herr P.C.E., Journalist & Schriftsteller, Euskirchen/Niederkastenholz, 7.4.75, Herrn Dr. Gerhard Stoltenberg, MdB, Bonn, Bundeshaus, LA-SH, Abt. 761, 4784.

expellees to be outmoded, and sought to silence them in the public sphere.⁷³ In addition, some groups, especially Communists, accused expellees of seeking to launch a new war and therefore called for a halt to governmental funding for the Landsmannschaften and expellee activities. One such letter suggested that expellee politicians sought to "torpedo the Moscow and Warsaw Treaties" and thereby showed "their people-hostile convictions!"⁷⁴

In June 1969 an indigene dentist wrote to the Federal Expellee Minister Heinrich Windelen complaining about the expellee groups and their activities. He wrote, "Without the expellee noise we would have already come much further with our Ostpolitik." Further Herr A.B. wrote that the Eastern Europeans would have been idiots not to seek revenge on--and some kind of compensation from--the Germans, who had, after all, attacked them. Further he stated, "If these people knew how hated they make themselves and how hated these idiotic meetings are they would cease."⁷⁵ This rejection of expellee public activities reflected a shift within the popular perception of expellees, a shift that had been brought on both by changes in the political scene and as a reaction to the aggressive voices within the expellee population.

Even in the months prior to the Moscow and Warsaw Treaties, the official reaction of the expellee politicians and associations was that the federal government's

⁷³ Leserbrief: Die bösen Vertriebenen, Herr W.v.K., Eckernförde, 20.10.70, LA-SH, Abt. 761, 4784.

⁷⁴ Offener Brief, Herr G.V., Deutsche Kommunistische Partei, Ortsgruppe Ost, Lübeck, den 12.4.1972, An den Parlamentarischen Staatssekretär für innerdeutsche Angelegenheiten, Herrn Herold, Bonn. LA-SH, Abt. 761, 4784.

⁷⁵ Herr A.B., Zahnarzt, Saarbrücken, den 3.6.69, an Herrn Minister Windelen, pp. 1-2. BA-K, B 106, 22485.

new political stance in 1970 could not actually determine Germany's permanent Eastern border, a border that could only be decided at an international peace conference upon which the Western Allies also took part. Furthermore, some expellee politicians argued that a recognition of the Oder-Neisse-Line would mean a legalization of the expulsion.⁷⁶ No German government, not even decades later, would be prepared to make that assertion.

Following the Moscow Treaty some expellees attended demonstrations seeking to hinder the ratification of the treaty, expressing their disappointment with Brandt's policies--policies that indeed contradicted statements he made earlier to expellee groups--and called for expellees to withdraw their support for the government.⁷⁷ To be sure, however, the majority of expellees did little to oppose the governmental measures. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s the federal government still supported expellee cultural activities and gradually many associations and Landsmannschaften shifted to a more cultural and less political agenda. Although the majority of expellees no longer believed they would again live in the Heimat, many of them continued to celebrate their culture and traditions both privately and publicly.

⁷⁶ Betr.: Vertriebene und Ostpolitik der Bundesregierung, Protokollnotiz, Bonn, den 8. Juni 1970, (Comments cited above came from Herbert Czaja, president of the Bund der Vertriebenen, and Herbert Hupka, SPD Member of the Bundestag. In attendance was also Walter Scheel). pp. 1-3. BA-K B 106, 22476.

⁷⁷ One such demonstration, Verfassunggebenden Nationalversammlung des deutschen Ostens, was held in Bonn, 27. Sept. 1970, LA-SH, Abt. 761, 8649.

Expellee political activities and associations in Germany after Reunification

As did many Germans, expellees in both the old and new federal states profoundly felt the effects of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the reunification of Germany. Generally expellees in West Germany welcomed the fall of Communism and the collapse of the GDR government; however, reunification brought with it the official federal recognition of Germany's Eastern border. Those expellees who had doubted the finality of Brandt's treaties now witnessed Helmut Kohl's acknowledgement of the Oder-Neisse-Line. The vast majority of expellees accepted the fact that they would never again reside in the old Heimat, but traveling to it was made easier by the events of the late 1980s and early 1990s. The Landsmannschaften and associations--graying but certainly still in existence--often focused their activities on arranging annual trips for members and associates. Political demonstrations have become less frequent than they were, but many expellee groups still attend lectures, literature circles, coffee and cake sessions, singing and dance evenings, craft events, etc. And of course Tag der Heimat and other larger gatherings still take place. The Landsmannschaften organizers now especially strive to bring in younger members and interest Germany's youth in the Eastern Heimat.

In the former GDR, or new federal states, "resettlers" often now use the term "expellee" to describe themselves and already in the early 1990s began forming their own Landsmannschaften and groups. Indeed after roughly 45 years of living under a regime where such forms of expression were forbidden, expellees in the new federal states have energetically formed associations and erected monuments in memory of the Heimat and those compatriots who died during the flight or expulsion.

Ironically the organizers of the new Landsmannschaften are most frequently those GDR citizens who had been coerced into early retirement due to the politicized nature of their former employment (in other words, teachers, Volkspolizei officers, party functionaries and bureaucrats). These people often have the time and energy to devote to the administration of such groups.⁷⁸ As in the old federal states, the members tend to be older Germans of dwindling energy most interested in reminiscing, attending social events with compatriots, singing, embroidery or other crafts, and traveling. Occasionally, members of such groups express a desire for a second expulsion; at one Landsmannschaften meeting in Magdeburg a rather radical man even wore a self-styled "Pomeranian" uniform (the other members barred him from speaking to me because they feared he would make a bad impression.) It must be noted that such behavior is rare. It must also be added, however, that after the collapse of the GDR many expellees in the new federal states experienced a reawakening of their sense of Heimat (Heimatgefühl) and happily embraced the opportunity publicly to talk about their experiences and their traditions for the first time.⁷⁹

The federal government also provided some financial assistance to many expellees living in the new federal states. In the early 1990s, the government developed the Vertriebenenzuwendungsgesetz (Expellee Financial Assistance Law), which required displaced Germans to fill out forms proving their status as expellees and in exchange

⁷⁸ Frau S.D., "Die landsmannschaftliche Arbeit in den neuen Bundesländern," Sachsen-Anhalt, 12.9.1992.

⁷⁹ Frau G.S., interview by author, tape recording, Magdeburg, 19 May 1999.

qualified applicants received a one-time payment of 4,000 Deutsche Mark.⁸⁰ Indeed, some staunch socialist "former resettlers" who were uncomfortable with the term "expellee" adopted it in order to receive this one-time payment and sometimes even their pensions.

Some groups exist in the new federal states that believe that political action may still bring about the retrieval of the old Heimat. These groups, much like the Landsmannschaften in West Germany in the 1950s, call for compensation for losses and a retrieval of the Heimat for their successors. Some of these groups seek to achieve such an objective through promoting "Shared Heimat--shared responsibility--shared human rights through the Eastern expansion of the EU."⁸¹ Despite the fact that there is little interest in understanding the expellee position outside of their own circles, museums, monuments, and institutes that celebrate the German roots of some regions in Poland are slowly appearing across Northern Poland.⁸² Nevertheless, the Poles are far from

⁸⁰ Karl Heinz Schäfer discussed the expected number of applicants and the actual numbers in, "Anmerkungen zur Zahl der in der SBZ/DDR zwischen 1945 und 1990 lebenden Vertriebenen," in *50 Jahre Flucht und Vertreibung: Gemeinsamkeiten und Unterschiede bei der Aufnahme und Integration der Vertriebenen in die Gesellschaften der Westzonen-Bundesrepublik und der SBZ-DDR*, ed. Manfred Wille (Magdeburg: Block, 1997), 56.

⁸¹ See, for example, the newspaper article in reference to a conference on this subject in Potsdam, "Zum Problem der Vertreibung: Gemeinsame Wurzeln," *Märkische Allgemeine* 15. November, 1999.

⁸² For a recent example of an expression of lack of comprehension of the expellee perspective, see, "A spectre over Central Europe: The Benes decrees," *The Economist* Volume 364, Number 8286, 41-42. On the other hand, of late there has been an increasing awareness of such issues in Poland as well as interest in communicating with Germans. See, *Verlorene Heimat: Die Vertreibungsdebatte in Polen*, eds. Klaus Bachmann and Jerzy Kranz, eds. Center for International Relations (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1998), originally published as *Przeprosic za wypedzenie?* (Znak, Krakow, 1997). In October 1996, a group of Polish and German historians and authors created an essay

accepting a "shared Heimat" with former German inhabitants or "shared human rights through Eastern expansion of the EU" which they fear would allow those former inhabitants to purchase property in their old Heimat. Herr P.G., a displaced German from the Memel territory in Northern East Prussia, summed up the frustration some expellees feel when they hear: "that the Poles and the Czechs still seek to justify the expulsion and label it as proper [. . .] And such people want to get into the EU? And such [people] want to present this whole expulsion affair as lawful."⁸³

contest concerning Poland's first postwar decade and thereby sought to evoke remembering and communication. The book which emerged out of this contest was titled, *Vertreibung aus dem Osten: Deutsche und Polen erinnern sich*, eds. Hans-Jürgen Bömelburg, Renate Stössinger, Robert Traba, (Olsztyn: Borussia, 2000).

⁸³ Herr P.G., interview by author, tape recording, Brandenburg, 22 March 1999.

CHAPTER 8

IMAGES OF THE LOST "HEIMAT"

Longing for the Heimat

The experience of the flight or expulsion from the Eastern territories left many displaced Germans with emotional and sometimes even physical scars, scars that would influence their integration into their postwar communities. Moreover, departure experiences often in some respect determined their level of participation in the dominant culture of their new societies. As with any refugee population, a minority never came to terms with the new postwar world. Some literally sat on suitcases waiting to return to the Heimat (indeed doctors sometimes diagnosed such patients as suffering from "refugee neurosis" or "homesickness disease").¹ According to West German opinion polls, many refugees and expellees in the 1950s and 1960s would have returned to the Heimat if given the choice; indeed many of them organized and actively sought peacefully to win back the lost territories. On the other hand, in the SBZ/GDR such opinion polls were not

¹ See, for example, the accounts from Rudolf Bühring, p. 56, Bundesarchiv Berlin (BA-B), Sgy 30, 1845, 1. Alfred Karasek-Langer also described this problem, "Volkstum im Umbruch," in *Die Vertriebene in Westdeutschland: ihre Eingliederung und ihr Einfluss auf Gesellschaft, Wirtschaft, Politik und Geistesleben*, eds. Eugen Lemberg and Friedrich Edding, vol. 1 (Kiel: Ferdinand Hirt, 1959) 638-9.

conducted, the resettlers were forbidden to organize, and they virtually disappeared from the public record by the mid 1950s. Regardless of where they stood on returning to the Heimat, refugees, expellees, and resettlers--almost with out exception--expressed a bond with their birthplace and a longing to talk about it, see it, experience it, and relive it, a bond often articulated through reminiscing with family and friends, and sometimes through trips to the old Heimat; in West Germany expellees sometimes expressed this bond through participation in political or cultural groups. Thus, the wartime experience was not the only hardship endured by Eastern Germans, rather the loss of the Heimat, and the inability to return home as anything more than often unwelcomed tourists sometimes set expellees apart from the other German citizens of their postwar communities. In his account of his first trip back to East Prussia, Fritjof Berg explained, "The yearning to return to our Heimat and to have there a happy new beginning was denied to us. We had become permanent refugees and thereby strangers on this earth. *Our Stunde Null* [Hour Zero] has lasted already over 30 years and is still not at an end."²

During the flight, expulsion, or internment many Eastern Germans were not aware that the Polish and Soviet administration of the territories East of the Oder-Neisse-Line would be permanent and their Heimat would thus be lost to them. Indeed some Germans for years held onto the hope that their residency in the postwar Germanies was only temporary. A resettler woman wrote repeatedly to Wilhelm Pieck in 1946--unaware of

² Berg's description of his 1977 trip to East Prussia was one of the first published accounts. He indicated the miserable conditions he encountered and also the difficulties in obtaining a visa. He suggested that Germans who wished to obtain a visa had to list the Polish name of their place of birth if they wished to receive permission to travel. Fritjof Berg, *Über die Weichsel: Eine deutsche Rückkehr* (Düsseldorf: NWZ-Verlag, 1978), 35. (emphasis in original)

Stalin's propensity to displace entire populations--asking him please to encourage the "just Russian ruler" to "Allow the poor refugees--especially those with completely clean records!--to return to the Heimat--give them and their children the Heimat again! . . . And if the just Russian ruler would open up his great realm--to immigration--to settlement. . . that would be the best propaganda for the party and would be the only correct solution--because it would serve justice and humanity." The author of the letter asked Pieck to observe the situation in the SBZ and warned about the consequences of this destitution: "Look at the growing misery! The cities--bombed out--refugeeing into the country--there is already too much overcrowding--what is the consequence--disease--misery--an enormous hatred. [. . .] Oh, I would go myself to the 'Fatherly Stalin' in order to ask him--for the poor refugees driven onto the country roads! Give them their Heimat back."³

The letters from this woman appear not to have been answered, but similar letter writers sometimes received a brief statement explaining that there would be no return to the Heimat, or at least no return in the foreseeable future. As a result of Hitler's atrocities against Eastern Europeans these territories were lost to Germany. One such response to a homesick Silesian "party comrade" read, "Alone from this situation it is explainable that the German people must accept the loss of the territories in the East, territories that were incidentally formerly [a] Slavic sphere and were forcibly colonized by the Prussian kings."⁴

³ E.T., Ladenburg, den 9. März 46, to Mein Lieber und hochgeschätzter Herr Pieck!, pp. 1-2, BA-B, RY 1, 12/5/45 a und b 9a: A-M; b: N-Z.

⁴ Sekretariat des ZK der KPD, 18.März.46, to Herr O.G., Dahlen bei Leipzig. BA-B, RY 1, 12/5/45 a und b 9a: A-M; b: N-Z.

For many expellees and resettlers, this longing to go back to the Heimat continued for years and could become a paralyzing pining for the lost territories. In the SBZ/GDR such resettlers often lived in border towns. A GDR report from 1950 concerning the "new citizen" (Neubürger) situation in border towns in Saxony and Thuringia cited Eastern Germans who refused to settle into their new communities. "In the visited Saxon border districts Niesky and Zittau almost all new citizens are controlled by the thought of one day returning to the former Heimat. [. . .] The CDU-chairman, new citizen H. remarked: 'We will not forget our Heimat, never will we give up the hope of again returning.' New citizen G. from Cybin/Kreis Zittau is of the opinion that it is pointless to settle down in the Republic [GDR]. He refused to purchase the bed offered to him by the community and said: 'What should I do with the bed? How should I transport that stuff when we go over the Neisse again?'[. . .]" Often the age of the expellee or resettler played a significant role in their ability to accept the loss of the Heimat or any kind of major change. According to the report, a 70 year old resettler woman in Cybin/Kreis Zittau who received a 50 Mark pension recently purchased a wooden handcart in order to be able to transport all her "junk" when it was time to go back.

Destitute expellees or resettlers were also prone to hoping for a return to the Heimat. In Schlossvippach in District Weimar, a resettler woman named H., whose family lived in miserable conditions, stated, "Even if we received a new house, we would indeed immediately go back to the old Heimat, if we could."⁵ A report from 1950 concerning another border district, Seelow, in particular the communities Hagenow and

⁵ Inform-Nr. 47/50, Amt für Information, HA Informationskontrolle, Berlin, den 3. April 1950, pp. 2-3, BA-B, NY 4090, 561.

Grünow, indicated that some resettler "new farmers" also "still" refused to move into apartments or establish anything permanent due to the hope that they would be able return to the Heimat.⁶ Indeed many Eastern Germans chose to live in such border towns in order to facilitate a quick return once the announcement was made.⁷

The situation in the Western Zones/Federal Republic was similar. In a January 1948 article from the *Kölner Universitäts-Zeitung*, "Die Haltung der Ostflüchtlinge im Rheinland" (The Attitude of the East-Refugees in the Rhineland), the author argued that many refugees were destitute because they simply showed no initiative. "In general they maintain good 'Prussian' discipline around the camp directors and show little yearning to get out of the mass accommodations. The reason is likely the wish to return to the Heimat. One wants only interim conditions and does not want to put down roots, [and] wants through this passive resistance more or less consciously to lead the proper authorities to their expected solution to the refugee problem, to nullify all resettlement and expulsion measures."⁸

With the creation of the Federal Republic the common expellee hope that their residence in Western Germany was only temporary and they would see their Heimat

⁶ Häslinger, Zusammenfassender Bericht, betr. Überprüfung des Bodenreform-Bauprogramm 1950, Berlin, den 12.8.1950, DDR Staatliche Plankommission, Inspektions-Abteilung, pp. 2-3. BA-B, DY 19, 104.

⁷ Gerald Christopheit discussed such border towns and Brandenburg as a whole in 1949 in his article, "Die Vertriebenen im Gründungsjahr de DDR--Versuch einer Standortbestimmung anhand ihrer Lage im Land Brandenburg, 1949," in *50 Jahre Flucht und Vertreibung: Gemeinsamkeiten und Unterschiede bei der Aufnahme und Integration der Vertriebenen in die Gesellschaften der Westzonen-Bundesrepublik und der SBZ-DDR*, ed. Manfred Wille (Magdeburg: Block, 1997), 256-270, especially 257, 266.

⁸ Luise Fischer, cand. rer.pol. "Die Haltung der Ostflüchtlinge im Rheinland," *Kölner Universitäts-Zeitung*, Sondernummer, Köln, 1 Januar 1948, p. 3. BA-B, DQ 2, 3389.

again became the standard party line of the CDU--and thus of the federal government--during roughly the first two decades of its existence. Officially the Oder-Neisse-Line was regarded as not only regrettable but also temporary. Initially, integration measures were pursued, but only to the extent that the displaced Germans would live comfortably during their temporary residence in West Germany; after all the Oder-Neisse-Border would be revised and then they could return home.

In his report on expellee integration, retired Federal Minister Hans Krüger discussed the expellees' attachment to their Heimat. He suggested that in 1945 the arriving expellees were "rootless and wretched" and had no hope that their further existence would bring anything beyond continued tragedy. "For these reasons the image of the lost Heimat naturally appeared more and more to be the desired ideal in which all the good things in life melted together into a unity." The governmental authorities and local population strengthened this tendency to long for the old Heimat by encouraging expellees to believe that they would go back to it. "The return to the old Heimat appeared to be the only hope for a better existence. This thought was not only at the time common knowledge of the expellees, also the indigenes and the governmental authorities saw in it [the return to the Heimat] the only possibility to improve life for the expellees as well as the indigenes." Krüger suggested that the predominance of this view was indicated by numerous official documents, statements and speeches from many politicians, and even in the preambles of the Refugee Law (Flüchtlingsgesetz) of North-Rhine Westphalia, the Basic Law, and the Lastenausgleich Law. Each one of these

documents supported either implicitly or explicitly the notion of a Germany according to its 1937 borders, thereby assuring expellees of the temporary nature of the loss of their Heimat.⁹

In spite of the official rhetoric, not all expellees believed they were likely ever to see the Heimat again. Heinrich Albertz, a Silesian Protestant Pastor, who during the Nazi period was at times imprisoned for his role in the Confessing Church, wrote a letter in 1950 criticizing federal "refugee policies" for supporting the unrealistic hopes of many expellees. Albertz served in various political positions in Lower Saxony as an SPD politician in the late 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, and was active in refugee issues through 1955. In 1950, Albertz addressed a letter to several federal ministers and reflected on a recent assembly in Helmstedt, during which the federal labor minister discussed the reunification of Germany and the revision of the Oder-Neisse-Line. Albertz suggested that press reports indicated that this official "gave a definite hope, if not a certainty, that in a few years we will again see the territories now under Polish administration." Albertz then explained that he afterwards went to a refugee settlement (Flüchtlingssiedlung) in District Northeim, Lower Saxony, where he spoke to some Silesians who asked what sense it made to work for such settlement projects if they would be returning home soon.

Albertz further described the "unpopular struggle" he led in trying to convince the West Germans that they must speak and act as though "not one expelled German" would return to their Heimat. Albertz contended that promising expellees they would again see their Heimat weakened their will to work and their interest in the reconstruction of West

⁹ Hans Krüger, "Welche Faktoren haben sich für die Eingliederung der Heimatvertriebenen als hemmend und welche als fördernd erwiesen," Juni 1967, pp. 30-31. Bundesarchiv Koblenz (BA-K) B 106, 22480.

Germany, as well as strengthened the rumor concerning "lazy refugees," which truthfully reflected only the "psychological situation of those who sit around on packed suitcases." Albertz asked, why give them a hope none of us can ever fulfill? He felt that to behave in any other way was irresponsible and exacerbated "already indescribably difficult refugee policies."¹⁰

The West German government publicly strove for a reunification of West, "Middle," and Eastern Germany and the official policy was to integrate not only the expellees but also Eastern German culture and history into West Germany; since the Eastern Heimat was not permanently lost, public awareness and interest needed to be awakened and maintained in preparation for the imminent return of the Eastern territories to Germany. Thus, as expressed in official West German public transcripts, expellees were encouraged and financially supported in their endeavors to celebrate and promote their Heimat.

How did expellees understand Heimat? What sort of attachment did they have to their Heimat? Whether or not they shared this desire to return, how did expellees celebrate and promote the old Heimat while living literally without it? In his summary discussion of "Die Charta der deutschen Heimatvertriebenen," Reinhard Wittram described the attachment or closeness many expellees felt to their Heimat and suggested "The violent taking away of the inherited Heimat is an injustice that must be characterized all the more strongly, since the consequences are to a great extent too little understood." According to Wittram, many expellees regarded the forcible removal of the

¹⁰ Pastor Heinrich Albertz, Staatsminister, Hannover, den 16. Januar 1950, to Herrn Bundesminister Storch, Bonn, pp. 1-2, BA-K, B 150, 1150, Heft 1.

Eastern Germans from their Heimat as equivalent to their spiritual death. He knew some readers would consider this perception to be a melodramatic exaggeration, and explained "'Heimat' is not only connected with the soil, but to a great extent is dependent on the community forms [Gemeinschaftsformen], on the spiritual climate, that reigns within it."¹¹

The displaced Germans' images of Heimat reflected not only nostalgia but also their background, departure experience and post-departure value system. Many expellees reflected nostalgically on their childhood and equated such experiences with their Heimat. They thought about the houses they grew up in, the farms, the landscape, the forests and lakes, neighbors, school friends, family members.¹² When they thought of their Heimat some displaced Germans remembered old customs and how certain holidays were celebrated, Heimatlieder (Folk songs), dialects, humor, clothing, recipes. Many Eastern Germans simply connected Heimat with their family and feelings of safety and familiarity. Some displaced Germans, particularly professors and teachers, connected Heimat to Immanuel Kant, Lovis Corinth, Käthe Kollwitz, and other artists, philosophers, and writers.¹³ Many Eastern Germans also sought literally to preserve small pieces of their Heimat by collecting local amber, painting pictures of or creating poetry describing

¹¹ Prof. Dr. Reinhard Wittram, "Die Charta der deutschen Heimatvertriebenen," Zusammenfassung der Seminararbeit Neuenettelsau, 19.-21. Okt, 1954, BA-K, B 150, 1439, Heft 2.

¹² Frau H.B., interview by author, tape transcript, Ziesar, Brandenburg, 18 March 1999.

¹³ Herr G.W., a retired GDR professor, emphasized Kant and also amber as elements of East Prussia with special meaning for him. Herr G.W., interview by author, tape recording, Berlin, 8 April 1999.

the landscape, or even holding onto small samples of soil they brought back with them. Most frequently, even among those who found a "second Heimat" in the West, displaced Germans preserved their Heimat in their memories and reminiscing.

It must be noted that many Eastern Germans quickly came to terms with the fact that they would stay West of the Oder-Neisse-Line and consequently found there a second Heimat. Many of them were so busy trying to make ends meet that they had no time for vocal expressions of homesickness. In that same GDR report from 1950 about border towns, the communities Dielsdorf and Vippachedelhausen in District Weimar were cited as examples where resettlers "hardly speak of returning home, although many of them do not yet feel themselves to be inhabitants with equal rights." The report cited one resettler from Vippachedelhausen as an example, and quoted him: "We are doing quite well. We have settled down. We are far from feeling ourselves to be entirely equal, but that will never be. We know quite well that we cannot again go back. If they ask me about the recognition of the Oder-Neisse-Line, I would have to answer: that interests me very little. That goes into the political [realm] and we do not want to know anything of such matters."¹⁴ Indeed many Germans in the postwar period, whether in the Federal Republic or GDR, avoided involvement in politics. Many non-political displaced Germans quickly accepted the situation and were more interested in paying the rent and buying proper shoes for their children. For many expellees and resettlers, the real longing for the Heimat would begin later, often after retirement, when they had more time to think nostalgically about the past.

¹⁴ Inform-Nr. 47/50, Amt für Information, HA Informationskontrolle, Berlin, den 3. April 1950, p. 3, BA-B, NY 4090, 561.

Generally, certain groups of Eastern Germans never accepted the loss of the Heimat: those Germans on fixed incomes, such as the elderly, war invalids, and widowers often never settled into their postwar community. Some of them were simply too tired or weak to expend the necessary energy to start over.¹⁵ Many of these people would therefore also not have had the energy necessary to go back to their Heimat. In addition, some of the Germans whose departure experiences were traumatic never managed to let go of the lost Heimat. Of course, it must also be added that many of the homesick Eastern Germans were predisposed to persistent melancholic reminiscing by virtue of their personality type.

Expressions of longing for the Heimat also sometimes contained indications of resentment against those people whom displaced Germans blamed for the loss. An anonymous letter entitled "An ihren Taten sollt ihr sie erkennen" (Ye shall know them by their fruits) from June 1948 used biblical references to suggest that the "Russians" were merely wolves in sheep's clothing: "Why does not Russia with its expanse take in any fellow human beings? [. . .] Why does Russia exploit Germany three years after the war? We are starving, we are freezing, we want to go [back] to our Heimat. Away with the foreigners in Germany. We have gotten to know their subhumans. We have been

¹⁵ See, for example, a discussion of the 1,500 resettler-new farmers who refused to build and the majority of whom still believed they could go back to the old Heimat some day, Betr.: Realisierung des Umsiedlergesetzes vom 8.9.1950, Landesregierung Mecklenburg, Ministerium für Land und Forstwirtschaft, HA I/I -E, 26. Jan. 1952, An das Ministerium des Innern, HA Staatliche Verwaltung,-Bevölkerungspolitik, Schwerin, p. 1. Landeshauptarchiv Schwerin (LHA-S), MdI; 6.11-11, 2630. For a further example, see the discussion from 1950 of a family with four children from Danzig who all lived and slept in one room even though the mother suffered from tuberculosis. Aufzug aus dem Fernspruch des Wahlbüros Rostock (Kreis), v. 4.10.50, LHA-S, MdI, 1945-1952, 2657.

lied to and deceived long enough. Therefore by their fruits ye shall know them." This statement was signed: "several expellees--victims of hate--so-called democrats."¹⁶

Moreover some displaced Germans looked to the Poles as thieves of the Heimat and initially rejected the officially promoted friendly relationship between the SBZ and Poland. From 1947 on, through assemblies, exhibits, organizations, and eventually an honorary friendship month, the SBZ/GDR vigorously promoted friendship with Poland, a friendship that would lead also to the recognition of the Oder-Neisse-Line, which became official in 1950. One such assembly took place in Freiburg, Saxony, in July 1948 and was attended by over 2,000 people, mostly resettlers from the surrounding area.

Apparently many resettlers constantly interrupted the speaker, Kurpath, with remarks indicating their rejection of the shift within SED border policies. Kurpath concluded his speech with the following statement: "There is no hope that you can return to your Heimat. If you have such a hope, it is wrong because through that you undermine your own foundations."¹⁷ Thus, entertaining unrealistic hopes for the return to the Heimat would achieve nothing beyond ensuring that one's life would remain in ruins.

¹⁶ This biblical reference is from Matthew 7:16-20. "An ihren Taten sollt ihr sie erkennen," Anonyme Zuschrift, Poststempel: Wurzen, 7.6.1948, An Herrn Kurpath, Journalist, z.Zt. Wurzen, BA-B, NY 4074, 146.

¹⁷ Was geht in Polen vor?, Referent: Genosse Kurpath, SED, Kreisvorstand Freiburg, Abt. Information, Freiburg, den 10.7.48, p. 3, BA-B, NY 4074, 146. This file also contains other examples of assemblies during which the resettlers reacted with disdain for governmental policy. During another assembly where Kurpath discussed the new modern equipment in use in Poland people yelled out: "The machines first came from us!" and "There's nothing to it, it was all made with German machines and German prisoners!" See, Lantsch, Neue Polen Veranstaltungen, SED Landesvorstand Sachsen, Abt. Werbung, Presse, Rundfunk, 1948. BA-B, NY 4074, 146.

Following this assembly, Kurpath received an angry letter from a man who had been at the assembly, a letter expressing his longing for and attachment to the Heimat. His letter rejected every aspect of SBZ resettler policies, beginning with the term resettler, which he called an "idiotic expression." He asked, "since when are we resettlers, which we have never been, we are those who were expelled from the Heimat. We never had the desire to settle somewhere in another region, for our dear Heimat always pleased us up until the days during which the Pollacks [Pollaken] attacked us." The author of the letter continued with a condemnation of the Poles, accusing them of "stealing, plundering, drinking, whoring and using a big mouth." Further he stated that "every honest German is very attached to his Heimat" and accused Kurpath of not being able to understand their loss because he still had his Heimat. Losing the Heimat, according to the letter writer, was "the worst thing that can happen to someone."¹⁸ Such assemblies took place more and more frequently over the course of the late 1940s as the SED marked a transition away from refusing the Oder-Neisse-Line and towards acknowledging it as Germany's Eastern border. This shift in the official position roused the indignation of many resettlers.

Following the EKD-Ostdenkschrift and culminating in the change of government in late 1969, official West German public transcripts began gradually to express a fundamental shift in policy in the late 1960s. Many expellees rejected this shift in policy and the recognition of the Oder-Neisse-Line, and wrote letters asking to be able to return to their Heimat. One such letter from February 1969 from a woman for whom Stettin

¹⁸ K.F., Freiburg, (undated, must have followed the assembly in Freiburg from July 1948), to Herrn Kurpath, Dresden, Betr.: Halt, Herr Schenkel! p. 1-2. BA-B, NY 4074, 146.

was Heimat asked that "the German border be moved 50 kilometers East of the Oder and Neisse." The woman sent her letter to the Federal Ministry for Expellees as well as to the governments of Great Britain, France, the U.S.A., and the Soviet Union. She asked, "When will we be allowed to return?" and expressed her frustration that her many letters had gone unanswered.¹⁹

The expellee reaction to the EKD-Ostdenkschrift was often embittered, involving more than a simple request to return to the Heimat and generally forming an attack on the current political scene. Such an attack was demonstrated by a 75 year old East Prussian man, Herr E.J., whose letter from February 1967, expressed his, as well as his pastor's and their community's, condemnation of the Ostdenkschrift. He suggested that people who have never lost their Heimat cannot understand what Heimat even means or how difficult it was to have to leave it. "We expellees would put every scoundrel against a wall who dares to renounce our Heimat. Our Heimat is our mother, whom we will never and under no circumstances give up. [. . .] Under no circumstances will the Oder-Neisse-Line be recognized as the Eastern border, otherwise one will bring us to defend out Heimat by force."²⁰ Although it must be added that only a minority of expellees expressed sincere willingness to use force to recover the Heimat, many expellees reacted with hostility against the official shift in policy during the last years of the 1960s.

A second letter from Herr E.J. expressed his belief that those politicians urging recognition of the Oder-Neisse-Line and the renunciation of the Eastern Heimat were

¹⁹ Frau A.H., Barsinghausen, 11.2.69., An die Regierungen von Gross-Britanien, Frankreich, U.S.A. und Sowjet-Union. BA-K, B 106, 22485.

²⁰ "Die Vertriebenen von Ostpreussen," Herr E.J., Winsen/Luhe, den 3. Februar, 1967, an den Herrn-Bundes-Vertriebenen-Minister von Hassel, 1-4. BA-K, B 106, 22485.

young people who themselves had never developed a Heimat and lacked understanding for what "Heimat" means. Herr E.J., now 76 years old, wrote, "For that what these young people are doing borders on treason and self-destruction of their own nation, *not to mention real patriotism*. For he who loves his fatherland and knows his Heimat as we old people would never allow that this our Heimat would be given up." Herr E.J. further suggested that this treason against the fatherland was grounded in "egoism and an absence of patriotism. They are too young to grasp what the word 'Heimat' actually means." According to Herr E.J. only the old gray-haired expellees and the government had the right to decide upon border-issues.²¹ The respondent to this letter thanked Herr E.J. for his letter and his interest and assured him that the Federal Minister for Expellees worked for the complete reunification of Germany and encouraged a healthy patriotism among the youth.²²

Many expellees asserted with every possible shred of evidence the Germanness of their Heimat as a further indication of the righteousness of its returning to Germany. In reaction to remarks made by the French president Charles de Gaulle on his visit to Danzig in 1967, another East Prussian man, Herr A.R. wrote a letter to the Federal Minister for Expellees in which he defended the Germanness of his Eastern Heimat. Herr A.R. mentioned ploughing the East Prussian countryside as a young boy, the 1920 plebiscite in which nearly 98 percent of the population chose to stay with Germany, and the roughly 700 year-old castles built by the Teutonic Knights scattered throughout East

²¹ Herr E.J., Winsen/Luhe, den 11. Dezember, 1967, an den Herrn-Bundes-Vertriebenen-Minister von Hassel, BA-K, B 106, 22485. (Emphasis in original)

²² Gräbe, Bundesministerium für Vertriebenen, Bonn, 8. Februar 1969, an Herrn E.J., Winsen/Luhe. BA-K, B 106, 22485.

Prussia, and asked in summation how the "Gallic General" could presume to call the land Polish. Herr A.R. suggested it was time forcefully to sing: "Wake up, Wake up you German land, you have slept enough." He signed the letter "With Prussian greetings" and included as an attachment a flyer from AKON, Aktion Oder-Neisse, calling for the reunification of all three Germanies plus the Sudetenland. Nearly every time the word "German" was used or the historical Germanness of the Eastern Heimat was asserted, Herr A.R. underlined the passage emphatically and used exclamation points.²³

Also in 1967 some expellees who felt their Heimat was threatened sent incensed telegrams to the Federal Chancellor. For example in January, an expellee or expellee group from Lübeck wrote, "'1st Warning' In case you sell our Eastern German territories we are ready to form Freicorps," signed "the Waffen SS from Lübeck."²⁴ In February, this time largely in reaction to public statements made by a British governmental representative, additional telegrams reached Federal Chancellor Kiesinger. Representatives of different expellee groups sent telegrams asking for intervention on behalf of the expellees: "Most highly esteemed Mr. Federal Chancellor, in the circles of expellees, who through deportation had to leave their 700-year Heimat after the war[,] prevails outrage over the attitude of the British government that infringes against international and human rights in giving way to the imperial Soviet demands. In the interest of internal peace may I ask that you express unequivocally the national interests

²³ Herr A.R., Herford, den 23.9.67, Sehr geehrter Herr Minister! B 106, 22486.

²⁴ Deutsche Bundespost, 28.1.1967, Lübeck, to Bundesrepublik Deutschland Bundeskanzler Bonn. BA-K, B 136, 6718.

of our people to the British Prime Minister."²⁵ Many similar examples can be found in the files. Particularly those expellees who were active in organizations became politically active in defense of their Heimat.

In December 1970 the expellees living on an island off the coast of Schleswig-Holstein expressed not only their disdain for the policy shift expressed within public transcripts in the political scene in the Federal Republic, but also their sorrow for the personal implications of Brandt's Ostpolitik. Among the obituaries in an early December issue of the newspaper *Der Insel Bote* appeared also a death notice for the Heimat: "We mourn for our hereditary Eastern- and Middle-German Heimat--including our capital Berlin--whose abandonment we fear."²⁶ Ostpolitik entailed reconciliation with Poland, and reconciliation meant granting concessions; in other words, from the perspective of some expellees, the Federal Government turned their back on them and the Eastern Heimat.

A second "Zuhause"? Or a second Heimat?

Herr E.K., the thirteen-year-old Pomeranian boy who described his experiences with the flight, expulsion, and Soviet soldiers in his report "Grenzenloses Flüchtlingsleid-

²⁵ Deutsche Bundespost, Dr. Jahn, der Vorsitzende des ständigen Rates der Ostdeutschen Landsmannschaft, Bad Godesberg, 15. February, 1967, (Empfänger) Herrn Bundeskanzler Dr. Kiesinger Palais Schaumberg Bonn. BA-K, B 136, 6718.

²⁶ "Wir trauern um unsere angestammte ost- und mitteldeutsche Heimat--eingeschlossen unsere Hauptstadt Berlin--deren Preisgabe wir befürchten müssen." "Vertriebene und Flüchtlinge auf der Insel Föhr, Wyck auf Föhr, den 7. Dezember 1970. *Der Insel Bote*, p. 4. Landesarchiv Schleswig-Holstein (LA-SH), 761, 4784.

-grenzenlose Lieblosigkeit" (Boundless Refugee-suffering--boundless unkindness), also expressed his feeling as an adult about the lost Heimat. By the time he wrote the report, he was married to an indigene, had five children, had built one house in 1956 which had burned down in 1958, and after accruing extensive debt, rebuilt. The last line of his report read: "Should there be a return to the Heimat, I am with it at once."²⁷ Often displaced Germans who married indigenes lost some of their separate identity as expellees or resettlers and more quickly found their second Heimat.²⁸ That Herr E.K.'s experiences were so extreme may have hindered his processing of the loss and left him with an irrepressible desire to go back to a Heimat which may have represented for him a past free from pain and worries.

During her internment under Russian and then Polish authorities in her village in Pomerania, Frau M.S. experienced rape, the deportation of her father, the death of her sister, disease, and forced labor. She perceived the expulsion in October 1945 to be more of a liberation. In spite of these traumatic associations with the Heimat, she maintained a connection to Pomerania. She explained, "Despite everything that we have built up here [in Brandenburg], I will never be at home here. [. . .] I have lived here over 40 years. We have good relations with the people. And despite that it always seems to me that I am just visiting. That must mean something. That must have some deep psychological grounds, because one was so suddenly uprooted." She contended that although one

²⁷ Herr E.K., "Grenzenloses Flüchtlingsleid--grenzenlose Lieblosigkeit," p. 6. BA-K, B 106, 27837.

²⁸ See, for example, the IMIS interview with Herr H.M., Julz 29, 1985. Herr H.M. married a local woman and replied that he was fully integrated, "nothing else was missing," p. 48.

generally leaves the parental home when one marries, this departure was different. A married person could go back and visit. "That is a very different feeling than if one does it [departs] according to plan. When one is against one's will so distraught, then one will never be freed from the pain. My mother took it to her grave and it will go the same way with me." Frau M.S. contended that those displaced Germans who do not experience this loss of Heimat or a connection to it likely had a "parental home in which something was not right."²⁹

As a young boy, Herr G.S. experienced the Soviet occupation of his Northern East Prussian Heimat and was interned with his mother and brother on a large farm until their release in 1948, after which the family lived in Leipzig. Herr G.S. described himself as a "really a pretty heimatloser [Heimat-less] fellow" and indicated that his non-native status had always been an issue for him. His reaction to the reunification, or as he called it "standardization," of Germany was that it really only concerned him to a limited degree, "because my Heimat is not at all intended" to be part of the new Germany. He referred to himself as an "one who has settled down" (Eingelebter), "one who has become accustomed" (Eingewöhnter), and as a "guest" of Leipzig. He suggested that it would be impossible for him to claim Leipzig as his "Heimat" in the same way that someone who was born there could, despite the fact that he spent the longest period of his life there. "One cannot really feel comfortable [heimisch] . . . , if if one . . . if one . . . by force . . . left the Heimat. It is probably that way for every everyone."³⁰ Indeed many Eastern

²⁹ Frau M.S., interview by author, tape recording, Finowfurth, 19 March 1999.

³⁰ Herr G.S., interview by Michael Hoffmann, (Forschungsprojekt: Der Wandel der Sozialstruktur und die Transformation Sozialer Milieus in den neuen Bundesländern), transcript, Leipzig, 12 November 1991, "Deutsches Gedächtnis" Archiv (DGA), 1, 6-7.

Germans attributed their strong attachment to the Heimat to the fact that their departure was not voluntary. It must be noted, however, that Eastern Germans who left the Heimat willingly during the war often also felt strong attachments to the place where they grew up. Perhaps an important feature shared by both the Eastern Germans forcibly displaced and those who willingly left was that neither group could return to the Heimat as anything more than unwanted tourists.

Some authorities contended it would be easier for displaced Germans to find a second Heimat if they were not forced to meld into existing communities but rather could create their own. In West Germany, towns such as Espelkamp and Neu-Gablonz were founded for the purpose of allowing the expellees to establish themselves in their own separate area. Also in West Germany "Flüchtlingssiedlungen" (literally, refugee settlements) and "Flüchtlingsstrassen" (refugee streets) were created in which displaced Germans could purchase houses at lower interest rates or with other advantages. In an effort to encourage refugees and expellees to feel a continuing attachment to their Heimat, the street names in such neighborhoods or communities focused on Eastern cities and people. Thus, streets were named, for example, "Graf-Stauffenberg-Strasse," "Luisenstrasse," or "Kantstrasse," and "Danzigerstrasse," "Königsbergstrasse," and "Kolberger Strasse."³¹

There were no "Flüchtlingssiedlungen" or "Flüchtlingsstrassen" in the SBZ/GDR, but there were "Mustersiedlungen" or "Aufbausiedlungen" (model settlements or

³¹ See the documents concerning such streets in Espelkamp, the expellee city. BA-K, B 150, 2914. For a discussion of such settlements and streets, see also Egon Lendl, "Wandel der Kulturlandschaft," in *Die Vertriebene in Westdeutschland*, vol. 1, Lemberg and Edding, eds., 490-491.

reconstruction settlements) which generally consisted of large farms confiscated through the Bodenreform and opened up to settlement for applicants to the Bodenreform, often a majority of whom were indeed resettlers. These settlements sometimes never made it beyond the planning stage.

An interesting example of such a model settlement was proposed in November 1945 by Ilse Balg for a property in Brandenburg. Balg initially conceived of a settlement that would be "a model establishment of womanly work [fraulichen Schaffens] out of women's initiative and [their] creative power, [and] should be a settlement exclusively based on the work of women." The purpose of the settlement was to offer a new home, possibilities of employment, and basis of food to "those who indirectly and directly through the developments of war were torn away from their connection to their Heimat and families." Initially Balg especially intended for widows and their children, war invalids and their families, and orphans to move to her proposed settlement.³²

Gradually, as she developed her plan, Balg suggested that in addition to the already mentioned groups, some other Germans should be welcomed to the community, namely: male and female resettlers, and "Heimkehrer" (here she likely meant POWs) who were from "six years of war physically and emotionally worn out, robbed of the Heimat and home, walking next to us day after day as a nameless army of the 'living dead.' To give their tortured souls peace, their life a sense of fulfillment," was Balg's asserted intention in proposing the creation of her model settlement, whose final size should range from 250 to 300 families. (The orphans should be brought into the families

³² Ilse Balg, "Plan einer Mustersiedlung," Stadtarchiv Frankfurt (Oder) (StA FfO) BA II. Rat der Stadt Frankfurt (Oder) 1945-1952, 2000, Bl. 17-18

with fewer than 3 children.) Balg felt that such uprooted Germans would thus find a family and a Heimat and become productive citizens within their community. Balg's plan was never realized.³³

Why would such a plan fail? It is not clear, but in addition to the financial difficulties associated with initiating such a project, often the Soviets had occupied the larger properties, thereby making them unavailable for such a model settlement. Some new farmer settlements in other parts of the SBZ/GDR did come into existence, but often faced serious problems due to shortages of materials, improper facilities, and inadequate equipment.³⁴

Displaced Germans who ended up in new or separate towns or settlements sometimes had fewer problems feeling comfortable in their new homes. Frau S.'s family was expelled from Pomerania in 1947 and ended up in the early 1950s in Eisenhüttenstadt, a new factory town in the GDR. When asked if she felt at home in Eisenhüttenstadt, Frau S. replied, "That is. . . it is better here than elsewhere as a refugee. [. . .] Here there are no refugees. Because they come from all regions[,] the people. [. . .] They come from Thuringia, they come from Saxony, they come from

³³ Ilse Balg, Referentin für Landesplanung, Provinzialverwaltung Mark Brandenburg, Frauenselbsthilfe! [Balg later crossed this out], Umsiedler und Heimkehrer, Kriegsversehrte, Witwen und Waisen, bauen eine Lehrhof!, StA FfO BA II. Rat der Stadt Frankfurt (Oder) 1945-1952, 2000, Bl. 2-3.

³⁴ See, for example, the descriptions of conditions in the Prenzlau District in Mecklenburg: "Die landwirtschaftlichen Verhältnisse der Neubauernsiedlungen: Jagen, Lauenhof, Carlstein Kreis Prenzlau" [nd, presumably 1950-51], p. 5. BA-B, DY 19, 104

Mecklenburg. There are refugees from Pomerania. Here everything is muddled."³⁵

Indeed reports of conditions in Espelkamp also indicated that many displaced Germans settled more quickly and felt more comfortable in such an environment.

Certainly most displaced Germans eventually settled into their postwar homes and many even found a second or new Heimat. However, the vast majority maintained ties to their old Heimat and enjoyed reminiscing. Often those expellees and resettlers who declared they had a second Heimat in the postwar Germanies indicated entrenched connections to the old Heimat and identification with the place in which they grew up. For example, Herr H.G., a POW from East Tilsit in Northern East Prussia, referred to himself as Heimatlos as he arrived in Bitterfeld in the SBZ. In an interview he later remarked, "I have found here my Heimat, my second Heimat." And yet while reflecting on the birth of his son, who was expected on 17 June 1953 but was late, he replied: "Yeah, the 17th of June came, but not the boy, [he] is as stubborn an East Prussian as I am, yes he came later." Herr H.G. thus not only expressed his own connection to his Heimat, but referred to his son, who was born in the GDR and never saw East Prussia, as a stubborn East Prussian, just like his father.³⁶

Some displaced Germans felt the Heimat was lost not only because they could not return, but also because it was now so different. Many Eastern Germans did not wish to return to a Heimat under Communist administration or a Heimat populated by Poles or Russians. Most Germans were aware of the extent of destruction; whether it was brought

³⁵ Eheleute S., interview by Alexander von Plato, transcript, Eisenhüttenstadt, 25 April 1987, (DGA) p. 33.

³⁶ H.G., interview by Alexander von Plato, transcript, Wolfen, June 2, 11, 1987, (DGA) p. 24, 13.

upon towns by the invading Red Army or it was the result of months of fighting, the level of destruction throughout the former Eastern territories often exceeded that which was experienced in the rest of Germany. And postwar reports, as well as observations made by expellees on later visits as tourists, suggested that the conditions had only worsened. Some Eastern Germans would rather visit the Heimat in their memories and photographs and see it as it was or as they perceived it to have been.

Heimkehrwille of the expellees

During the 1950s and 1960s different organizations and newspapers conducted many polls in which expellees were asked if they would go home if the possibility arose. One such survey was conducted in 1953 by the expellee newspaper, *Die Stimme--Für Heimat-Deutschland-Europa* (The Voice: for Heimat-Germany-Europe). This survey, "Was ist aus uns geworden?" (What has become of us?), asked readers to answer a series of questions. Questions 8 and 9 asked, "If you today had the possibility to return to a Heimat freed-from-the-yoke-of-Communism, would you give up your newly established existence here and go back to the Heimat, even if that meant you had to start over again from the beginning? Do you think your sons and daughters who have grown up here would go along?" Ninety-five percent of the readers who answered the survey answered yes to the first question, although some of them made the reservation that they would not

go "as long as the Poles still lived there." According to the newspaper the five percent who said "no" were primarily the elderly and the infirm who lacked the energy to start over again. Eighty-five percent of readers felt their children would go along.³⁷

In 1954, the Allensbacher Institut für Demoskopie (Allensbach Institute for Opinion Research) published the results of their opinion poll concerning the willingness of expellees to return to the Heimat, a poll with unsurprisingly different results (here not only readers of an expellee newspaper were asked to participate). Fifty-five percent responded with "definitely," 17 percent stated "maybe," 8 percent were undecided, and 20 percent were not interested in returning to the Heimat. An article from the *Ost-West-Kurier* expressed frustration with the manner in which the question was phrased, and suggested that if the question specified under what conditions--whether or not in a German-Polish Condominium, or under Communist administration, or living with Poles--more expellees would likely have said yes (or no) to returning to the Heimat.

The Allensbacher Institut also asked a group of Germans which included indigenes and expellees if they believed that "Pomerania, Silesia and East Prussia would once again belong to Germany or were these provinces lost forever?" Sixty-six percent answered yes, the Eastern territories would be regained. The *Ost-West-Kurier* again contended that the question was phrased improperly and should have read, "Are you of the opinion, that Pomerania, East Prussia and Silesia are German territories to which we

³⁷ "Was ist aus uns geworden?" Ostdeutsche Zeitung: *"Die Stimme" --Für Heimat-Deutschland-Europa*, vom Oktober 1953, Nr. 41, BA-K, B 150, 1439, Band 2, Heft 2.

have an inalienable right?" Regardless of the wording, that sixty-six percent of those persons questioned still believed the territories would return to Germany indicated that a large percentage, even of non-expellees, believed the Eastern Heimat not to be lost.³⁸

In July 1956 another opinion poll organization, the EMNID-Institut in Bielefeld (Erforschung, Meinung, Nachrichten, Informationsdienst or Research, Opinion, News, Information service) conducted a similar survey, asking Germans if they would return to the Eastern territories if they again belonged to Germany. The results indicated that 65 percent of the expellees were ready to return (62 percent of the men and 68 percent of women questioned), 20 percent were undecided, 15 percent replied that they would not consider it, and one percent did not answer the question. This particular survey also utilized age categories. Seventy-one percent of expellees between the ages of 16 and 30 would return, whereas among the group between 30 and 50, sixty-three percent said yes; among those respondents between 50 and 65, sixty-five percent said yes, and of the expellees over 65, sixty-two percent said they would resettle. In the article "Der Heimkehrwille der Vertriebenen," (The Will of the Expellees to Return Home), the author expressed surprise that the younger expellees, whom one assumed would forget the Heimat, were the group with the largest number of interested persons. In examining such a survey, one must note that they did not ask questions quantifying to what extent respondents still felt a close attachment to their Heimat or suffered from serious

³⁸ "Wer würde zurückkehren? Eine Frage an die Heimatvertriebenen, die falsch gestellt wurde," Ausschnitt aus: Ost-West-Kurier, Nr. 3. Januar 1954, BA-K, B 150, 1439, Band 2, Heft 2

homesickness. Thus, it is not surprising that the expellees over 65 were less ready to return than the younger expellees, but that was not necessarily a measurement of their connection to the Heimat.³⁹

The polling of expellees' interest in returning home continued into the 1960s. In December 1960 EMNID conducted another opinion poll, again asking Germans if they would move back to the Eastern territories if they again belonged to Germany. The results indicated that 50 percent of the expellees were ready to return, 6 percent were undecided, 44 percent replied that they would not consider such a move. Of the 50 percent of respondents who would return, 42 percent said they would do so due to "attachment to the Heimat" (Heimatverbundenheit), 5 percent said moving would mean for them improved living conditions, 1 percent said they would return because of the land, another 1 percent would return due to the wishes of their relatives, and the last percent gave different reasons.⁴⁰

"Die Rückkehrwilligkeit der deutschen Vertriebenen im Spiegel der deutschen Meinungsforschung" (The German expellees' will to return as reflected in the German opinion research), an examination of these different surveys from the various organizations, suggested that results could be skewed by the wording of the questions, the selection of the respondents, the timing of the questionnaire, etc. For example, the

³⁹ Among the expellees married to indigenes the figures differed: instead of 66 percent, 55 percent of the respondents would have returned to the Heimat. "Der Heimkehrwille der Vertriebenen," *Der Europäische Osten: Politische Monatsschrift für eine neue Ordnung*, Nr. 8, 3 Jahrgang, München 1957, BA-K, B 136, 6515.

⁴⁰ Quelle: EMNID-Pressedienst Nr. 1099 a/1961, "Die Rückkehrwilligkeit der deutschen Vertriebenen im Spiegel der deutschen Meinungsforschung." 28.6.1967. Tabelle 1, 6. BA-K, B 106, 22452.

Infratest Intitut conducted a survey in 1963 shortly following the television broadcast of an "unobjective" documentary about the Poles in Breslau. The responses to questions concerning willingness to live with Poles in present-day Poland were overwhelmingly negative. The author of the "Rückkehrwilligkeit" report considered the timing of the survey and the wording of the questions most unreasonable.⁴¹

The preceding examination of surveys from different organizations, years, and with diverse pools of respondents, indicated indeed that the majority of expellees--regardless of the varying factors--would have welcomed the chance to return to the old Heimat throughout the 1950s and even into 1960s. That the percentages of those persons willing to go declined over the 1960s reflected the state of integration, the increasing age of the respondents, the political reality, the establishing of families in the West, and for some expellees the increasing distance perceived between themselves and the old Heimat, which for some expellees was fading somewhat from their memory. Indeed by the 1960s, many expellees would rather not have moved permanently back, but large numbers of displaced Germans sought any possibility to visit the old Heimat, thereby re-awakening memories and celebrating that which was lost.

Returning to the Heimat as tourists in Communist Poland

Many displaced Germans sought to return to the Heimat, even if only temporarily, in order to quench a kind of nostalgic thirst; however, in the 1950s and 1960s neither

⁴¹ Quelle: Infratest 1963, Tab. 47, 53. "Die Rückkehrwilligkeit der deutschen Vertriebenen im Spiegel der deutschen Meinungsforschung." 28.6.1967. Tabelle 3, 4. BA-K, B 106, 22452.

Germans from the Federal Republic nor average GDR citizens were permitted to travel into the former Eastern territories. Starting in the early 1960s, a small number of politically reliable GDR citizens were permitted to apply for permission to travel to Poland, permission often not granted and involving an application process which was lengthy and complicated. In the 1970s the process became more flexible and travel was open to a greater number of GDR citizens. Also in the 1970s, West German citizens could apply for visas and if granted, first crossed the Oder-Neisse-Line and enter Poland as tourists. Often what they saw distressed them; cities, villages, and streets frequently appeared to be in the same state as in 1945, begging children followed especially the West German citizens around, often the houses where they were born were no longer standing.

One of the first Eastern Germans to visit her Heimat was a woman from Zoppot, a suburb of Danzig, who married a Frenchman and through her possession of French citizenship was already entitled to visit Poland in the mid-1960s. The report of her trip described the primitive conditions she saw: there were few cars, horse-drawn wagons still served as a major means of transport, and the houses and gardens all seemed overgrown. Although the remaining Germans she met had officially become Polish, they still spoke German, but only in private, and their children could speak German, but not well. Many of these Germans who remained wished they had left for West Germany when it was still possible. The author of the report also emphasized that everything seemed as German as it once had been, despite the fact that Poles now lived there. She concluded by remarking that she now said "farewell to the Heimat. The longing that

would not let me rest in the years between is now satisfied. I want to say: it [the longing] is dead, just as that graveyard in Zoppot, where I searched for a familiar grave, and instead of an eternal resting place, found a forest which had developed in 20 years."⁴²

In 1981 and 1982, Frau L.B. and her family returned to their farm as tourists. They asked the current occupants if they could enter their old house and the Poles gladly showed them in. The house itself was falling apart and Frau L.B. described the experience as shocking. She suggested she would only go back for a third visit if her son went along, but he showed little interest. In the immediate postwar years the family always thought they would go back soon. Now she replied, "I am firmly convinced that it will come about that it [the Heimat] will again become German. [. . .] how can one as a German, not only that we expellees come from there, that is simply German land, how can one voluntarily renounce it.["?]"⁴³

For years Frau K.L. longed to see Osterode, East Prussia--her Heimat--again. Her mother had warned her that the Red Army left Osterode in rubble as they handed it over to the Poles. (According to her mother, the Soviets would have preferred to give Osterode back to the Germans rather than transfer it to the Poles; before their departure the Red Army intentionally destroyed the city.) In 1988 Frau K.L. finally made the journey back to East Prussia and found Osterode totally foreign. The experience was so painful that Frau K.L. never again wanted to return physically to her Heimat.⁴⁴

⁴² "Eine Zoppoterin sieht ihre Heimat wieder," (1965 or 1966), pp. 1-4. LA-SH, 761, 8649

⁴³ Herr und Frau B., interview by IMIS, transcript, 26 January 1985, p. 12.

⁴⁴ Frau K.L., interview by author, tape recording, Schwerin, 21 June 1999.

Trips and tour groups in the Heimat after the dissolution of the Eastern Bloc⁴⁵

The frequency of such trips and tour groups in the Heimat increased dramatically after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the GDR. Indeed some expellees go on trips to the former territories at least once a year. Some tours are organized by Landsmannschaften, clubs, or even organized around class reunions or other gatherings of families or associates from the old Heimat. The Heimat-trips have spawned an industry both in Germany as well as in Poland. Specific German travel agencies focus on organized trips by bus, rail, or ship, for varying age groups and interests. In Poland "luxury" hotels--with prices too outrageous for those people earning the local currency--try to attract foreign visitors. In addition, stores have cropped up which sell items that would appeal most to tourists, especially German tourists. Stores selling amber jewelry, German language books, videos, and maps, and other items of nostalgic value abound. Many of the castles of the Teutonic Knights have been restored and are open to visitors, often the majority of whom consist of German tour groups. Poles living in the former Eastern territories are apparently accustomed to the throngs of mostly elderly German tourists who pour in every summer.

In May 1999 one group of expellees--now living mostly in Brandenburg--toured around Pomerania, West Prussia, and Danzig by bus. As the passengers took their seats and the bus headed to the Oder-Neisse-Border, the organizer of the trip commented, "We

⁴⁵ The author took part on the two trips described in this section and the quotes and comments reflect the author's notes taken at the time of the trip.

are traveling in the Heimat as guests." The border control near Stettin lasted about two hours; the long lines of buses and cars heading East clogged up the system. Once the bus crossed the border, the streets were immediately in remarkably poor shape and lined with little Polish shops or kiosks selling colorful garden gnomes and other kitsch to German tourists. The streets throughout Poland tended to be narrow, in poor shape, with often no street lines or street signs. Many of the passengers repeatedly made statements about the condition of the streets or houses, such as, "Not a thing has been done in 60 years." One woman, a Spätaussiedler, contended that she always thought the lack of signs was intentional.

One of the women traveling with the group was back in her Heimat for the first time and wanted to see her old town and house. The village was near Stargard, in Pomerania, but the lack of street signs made the now Polish backroads even more confusing. The bus stopped and the Spätaussiedler woman asked a Polish man for directions. Although she spoke to him in Polish, he answered in heavily-accented German. Eventually the one passenger's village and house were located and she and the Polish-speaking Spätaussiedler cautiously walked up to the front door of the now relatively dilapidated house. Some of the new residents greeted the original owner warmly and let her come inside and look around. The house was occupied now by three families, none of whom owned the house and as residents had no interest in maintaining it. One of the families' sons wanted to save up money and buy the house. Upon hearing about their reception, the other passengers replied, "The ordinary people get along with

each other; it is only the politicians who cannot get along." The woman seeing her Heimat and home again for the first time since 1945 cried quietly as she returned to her seat on the bus.

The passengers particularly enjoyed the landscape, which to a large extent had not changed. Often they began singing Heimat-songs (Heimatlieder), such as the "Ostpreussenlied," as the bus traveled down rough and rocky narrow tree-lined streets. The trip organizer repeated, "We are guests in our own Heimat." He advocated a policy reflecting his belief that "The shared Heimat is our Heimat and it has also become Heimat for the Poles. A shared Heimat, to develop, to remember and to shape." As the group traveled to Leba to see the enormous wandering dunes, he reminded passengers, "The ordinary people are not responsible for the expulsion and the tragedies associated with it. The politicians are at fault." In Danzig, the trip organizer spoke to Polish employees at the hotel and informed them that he was from Danzig and never voluntarily left the city. According to him, the Poles showed interest in his experiences and asked where in the city he had lived.

A new museum is located in the Pomeranian estate of the Krockow family, a museum remembering the German inhabitants and their culture. Three flags flew outside the museum: the Polish, the German, and the EU flag. The museum itself receives most of its funding from the West Prussian Museum in Münster. It is apparently the first of its kind in the former territories and, according to the trip organizer, represents a beginning of German-Polish cooperation. For no apparent reason, on the day of the visit, the museum was closed.

Also on the Pomeranian coast, the tour group visited Wittenberg, where a German woman who stayed behind in 1945 recently established a guesthouse for German tourists. She explained that 80 percent of her village stayed behind in 1945 due to the protection and machinations of their Kashubian priest. The village had been purely Catholic, and they were permitted to remain in the Heimat. Frau E.D. not only ran a guesthouse for German tourists, rather she was also the chairwoman of the local group for the German minority, a group with 400 members. Her goal was to preserve the German culture of Pomerania, which she closely associated with Heimatlieder. The association for the German minority in Danzig had 4,000 members; Herr P.S., the chairman, suggested that their 4,000 members represented about half of Danzig's German population.

On the ride back to Brandenburg, some of the passengers complained that the tone of the trip was too serious; a trip in the Heimat should also be fun. These passengers were more interested in singing songs and buying inexpensive amber than talking about the expulsion and the horrors of the war and postwar period.

Another type of bus tour involving mostly women from the old federal states departed for West Prussia and East Prussia in July 1999. This tour was a "study trip"--partly subsidized by the federal government--arranged by a politically active West Prussian woman, Frau S.D., under the title, "'We are looking beyond our noses.' Women protect and preserve the culture of East- and West Prussia, study trip for women." The organizer of the trip expressed her regret that Germans show no interest in the expulsion and contended that central information centers were needed (such as the one planned for Berlin). Moreover, she detailed the atrocities experienced by the Poles and the Jews during World War II and discussed the subsequent expression of "bitter revenge" against

the Eastern Germans at the end of and following the war. She called upon expellees to come to terms with the border situation and objectively deal with the realities of the persecution of the Poles.

The first stop on this tour was Potulice, where the group examined the area of the former concentration camp. A large monument was erected to remember the Poles and "victims of fascism" killed during the war; a newer, separate, and small monument mentioned the deaths of the Germans in the internment camp on the same location in the postwar period. Frau S.D. asked why victims of totalitarian regimes could not be remembered on one monument.

As with any large group, some participants were more argumentative and expressed unusual opinions; one indigene and one expellee, both women, contended not only that America and Britain started both wars in order to destroy Germany, rather they also suggested that the German chancellors had to take oaths of allegiance to America and were thereby puppets of the American government. The Freemasons also of course posed a serious and dangerous threat to the world order.

The purpose of this study trip was not merely to tour old German cities and castles of the Teutonic Knights, rather its purpose was to promote contact with the German minority in the old Heimat and to cultivate German traditions through interaction between the Eastern Germans who left and those who stayed. This agenda was to be achieved through traditional arts and crafts, cooking, singing Heimatlieder, and of course through conversation. The members of the German minority seemed to benefit from having the opportunity to talk about their often harsh postwar experiences, the persecution they faced as Germans, and the official restrictions against the German

minority that have been lifted only recently. They simply seemed to enjoy speaking German and of course singing. On one evening, after a traditional Eastern German dinner, both groups of Germans began singing Heimatlieder. When the Germans were done singing, the few Poles present spontaneously sang Polish songs with tremendous enthusiasm. Some of the Germans present looked shocked and uncomfortable at this development.

Although the passengers on both trips frequently expressed their sadness that so much was decaying in their old Heimat, they rejoiced in the landscape, a landscape that still looked very much the same as before the flight or expulsion. The storks still built their nests, the wind still stirred the fields of wheat giving the appearance of golden waves, the many lakes still graced the countryside, and amber still washed up on the coast. One passenger on the second trip replied, "When you are parted from someone you love, you wish them well and want them to be happy and prosper." She was referring to her Heimat.

'Prussia' after German reunification

Although a small minority of expellees actually believe that their Heimat will return to Germany one day much like Poland or even Israel regained long lost territory, most expellees have come to terms with the physical separation from their Heimat.⁴⁶ Indeed for many displaced Germans, this separation is primarily physical: their

⁴⁶ The controversial author David Irving forecasted the return of Germany's former territories within a decade in his book, *Deutschlands Ostgrenze: Weder Oder noch Neisse. Die Rückkehr des deutschen Ostens* (Kiel: Arndt, 1990).

memories of--and their connection to--the Heimat persist. This connection is expressed through reminiscing, conversation, cooking, humor, poetry, artwork, crafts, traveling, dreaming, etc. In part because the physical Heimat is now so altered, the majority of expellees would not return permanently if given the chance; for many displaced Germans the physical location of the Heimat has little meaning. They are what is left of the Heimat. Perhaps in retrospect one could conclude that the Heimat was expelled with them and persists in their memories.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

In December 1949 a group of disgruntled Germans sent an anonymous letter of complaint addressed to Wilhelm Pieck, the president of the new German Democratic Republic (GDR) . The author of this letter represented "The voice of certain expellees from the East," a group of Germans who had been displaced from Germany's former Eastern territories lost at the end of World War II. This letter contained a thorough description of the complex situation faced by the displaced Germans in the Soviet Zone/GDR and thus served as an excellent summary of the formative experiences of expellees in their new society.

The author described the ongoing predicament of the displaced Germans, who, even years after the expulsion still sat "under an empty Christmas tree as beggars of the people." According to the letter, elderly or infirm expellees received "a pension that is neither adequate for living or dying," the able-bodied ones worked in occupations for which they were not trained or were over-qualified, and "in the rural areas refugee workers are paid very little and are excessively exploited." In addition to depicting the poor working conditions, the author suggested that the "spatial accommodation, whether in the urban or rural communities, is largely shocking and often defies any effort at

description." Indeed the author bitterly remarked that "The refugee is supposed to be satisfied with his pitiful existence, while certain other circles already lead a tranquil existence. It is well known that both during the flight and also later we had to forfeit our last possessions, possessions that have still not been replaced in the slightest manner." The letter concluded with an "appeal to the justice of the new democratic government" to address and alleviate the social inadequacies faced by the displaced Germans in the GDR.¹

Already in 1948/49 the politicians in the Soviet Zone and GDR officially contended that they had solved the resettler-problem; both the local and federal committees on resettler affairs were permanently dissolved. However, why did the sender of the above-quoted letter write that resettlers had still not achieved equality with the indigenes by Christmas 1949? Why was the letter written anonymously? Was there no opportunity to discuss openly such problems? The archives house hundreds of such letters. Many resettlers felt they were not socially accepted in the SBZ/GDR; they were frequently regarded as strangers by the local population and often had enormous problems settling in their new environment.

Were refugees and expellees in the Western zones and Federal Republic more successfully integrated? Did they more quickly feel as though they were an accepted and integral part of their new society? Or did they also often feel disadvantaged and placed in the unfortunate position of being "beggars of the people"?

¹ "Im Namen der Heimatvertriebenen!" Die Stimme gewisser Ostvertriebener, Weihnachten 1949, An den Herrn Präsident der DDR, Wilhelm Pieck, Berlin, Bundesarchiv Berlin DQ 2/ 3391, Bl. 13 (emphasis in original)

The integration of the displaced Germans involved a three-way dialogue in which the newcomers, the public officials in both Germanies, and the indigene populations took part. The three groups of participants were often at odds with one another as they interacted in multiple arenas in their respective postwar societies. In *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, James Scott described interaction between groups in power and their subordinates as transcripts, transcripts that could take both public and hidden expression. According to his terminology, public transcripts were "openly avowed" records of what was said and could take verbal, nonverbal, and/or written form. Public transcripts were particularly used to reinforce the existing set of power relationships and the unanimous consent to those relationships of all participants. Scott termed the other type of records "hidden transcripts," "offstage" discourse that generally contradicted the public transcripts.²

Applying this terminology to the postwar Germanies enables an examination of this three-way dialogue and its influence on the integration of the displaced Germans. The governments of the SBZ/GDR and Federal Republic established public transcripts through which they urged integration of the displaced Germans according to the respective official political orientation. In both cases integration required the full participation of the newcomers as well as the existing population. Officials sometimes found the two groups more prone to reject the official policies concerning the integration

² James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), 2, n. 1, 52-53, 4, 55.

of the displaced Germans and to express this rejection through hidden transcripts. Thus, the use of Scott's terminology enables a comparative analysis of the duration of the integration process, its successes, as well as its failures in both postwar Germanies.

Millions of Germans were displaced from the Eastern territories at the end of and following World War II. No zone had the space to accommodate these incoming Germans, the food necessary to feed them, nor proper employment for these uprooted peoples. The majority of East Prussians, West Prussians, and Pomeranians either fled or were expelled and transported westward to Schleswig-Holstein and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. Many of these displaced Germans also arrived in Lower Saxony, North-Rhine Westphalia, Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt and Brandenburg (the Sudeten-Germans and Silesians, who are not the emphasis of this study, ended up primarily in the American Zone and in the Southern states of the Soviet Zone.) The states with the largest ratio of displaced Germans were the states least damaged in the air raids and thus the states thought to be most capable of housing these refugees, expellees, and resettlers. Accordingly, authorities confiscated "underused" rooms in all states, but especially in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and in Schleswig-Holstein, for the purpose of housing displaced Germans. Where this policy was either not carried out or "underused" rooms were in short supply, refugees, expellees, and resettlers were housed in barns, huts, stalls, camps, old castles, military hospitals, etc. Often work was not available in these mostly rural Northern German states, and the Eastern Germans were encouraged or sometimes forced to move to other areas where employment could be found. In the Soviet Zone some resettlers could re-establish themselves as farmers on land they received through the Bodenreform, or land reform.

In the British Zone, occupation authorities primarily allowed Germans to deal with what they deemed to be a "German" problem. Thus, local committees and authorities emerged which were intended to help the refugees and expellees find housing outside of the overcrowded camps and to find employment. The majority of displaced Germans were either unaware of these groups, or they had not been part of an official transport and were not considered eligible for assistance. It was an arduous and lengthy process, but most refugees and expellees found their own housing and jobs.

In the Soviet Zone, officials had a different attitude towards the resettlers. In the SBZ, German and Soviet officials worked together to establish a new official policy for the new socialist Germany, a Germany that was friendly and peaceful towards its Eastern neighbors. The role of the resettlers in this process was simply to disappear. The resettlers were to meld into the existing population and lose all distinction based on heritage. Thus, the resettlers were to be housed as quickly as possible, to be given employment, and to be granted any other form of assistance the state could afford. However, due to the reparations policies of the Soviet Union, the state could not afford much; consequently, most resettlers received minimal or no assistance whatsoever. Again, those displaced Germans who were not part of an official transport often also received no help finding housing or employment. Nevertheless, initial conditions for the resettlers in the Soviet Zone were often better than conditions in the Western Zones. The officials were more willing to confiscate "underused" rooms and possessions and to give them to destitute, politically acceptable resettlers. The ultimate result was that living conditions for the indigenes in the Soviet Zone generally declined and it was thus easier to erase social and economic distinctions between the existing population and the

incoming resettlers. Herr G.N. described the situation from the perspective of a 9-year-old resettler boy in the SBZ: "We worked just like everyone else and starved just like everyone else."³ Thus the melding of the resettlers into their new society could be achieved. The government's public transcripts publicized this successful melding of the newcomers into the existing population and thereby supported both the official policy as well as the existing power relationships in the SBZ/GDR.

In the Federal Republic the Adenauer government established a Federal Ministry for Expellees, which sought further to assist the refugees and expellees in the Western Zones. In the 1950s the ministry worked to achieve an equalization of burdens (Lastenausgleich) and to support the expellees in their efforts to preserve and promote the Eastern German Heimat and culture. By the mid-1950s conditions indeed improved for most expellees and, in keeping with the official policy in the Federal Republic, they became a distinct but central part of West German society. As expressed through public transcripts, the official West German position entailed widespread support for the eventual reunification of Germany according to its 1937 borders and--in the mean time--the preservation of the cultures and traditions of all three Germanies--West, "Middle," and Eastern. Thus the expellees served as important anchors to Eastern Germany and were to be integrated into West German society; however, at the same time West Germans were to be integrated into the cultures and traditions of the other two Germanies.

The speed and ease of the integration of refugees, expellees, and resettlers were fundamentally determined by a constellation of factors relating to their background, their

³ Herr G.N., interview by author, tape recording, Stralsund, 23 June 1999.

method of departure, and their experiences surrounding it. In addition to the fact that their social, educational, and demographic background factored into their postwar experiences, whether they successfully fled or they were interned and then expelled also influenced their perceptions of themselves and often their comfort level in their new society. In addition, the method of departure generally determined their degree of interaction with enemy soldiers and/or Soviet or Polish administrators. These factors--methods of departure and the extent of interaction with enemy soldiers--often determined the degree of persistence of the traumatic memory associated with the experience. The influence of their diverse backgrounds and the uniqueness of the different departure experiences played important roles in their integration into their postwar societies; perhaps surprisingly these factors often played more important roles than in which of the two Germanies they experienced integration.

However, even though many displaced Germans succeeded in fleeing and never personally encountered the Soviet army or participated in forced labor, they shared in the collective memory of their relatives, friends, or associates who did. In the 1950s the persistence of collective trauma was officially encouraged by West German officials and influenced not only the integration of expellees and their self-perception, rather also to some extent the general West German perception of collective victimhood. Robert G. Moeller suggested that the flight, expulsion, and internment experiences of the Eastern Germans conveniently provided a new public memory for West Germany as a whole; this public memory allowed for all Germans to share in the status of victims of Hitler's war. Indeed, Moeller suggested that the foundation for the German "imagined community" that emerged in the 1950s rested largely on the devastation of World War II and the

losses sustained by the displaced Germans.⁴ It must be noted, however, that this "imagined community," as described by Moeller, may have been desired by some prominent West German politicians, historians, and film makers, but was never actually realized. Too many West Germans perceived the expellees to be a foreign presence in their midst to embrace their suffering as part of a contrived West German postwar public memory.

Did the proscription of public discussion of the subject free the resettlers in the GDR from the burden of the collective memory of the expulsion? On the contrary, the traumatic memory merely moved offstage and found expression through hidden transcripts; many resettlers privately passed on information about their experiences with family and friends.

For many displaced Germans the yearning for the lost Heimat was intensified by their forced departure and its unattainability in the postwar period. Because many expellees also left behind their possessions, they craved anything reminiscent of the Heimat and longed for photos, maps, documentary footage, local music and clothing, compatriots, and friends. Even the majority of expellees who fully assimilated into their postwar society felt a connection to their Heimat and to other people whom they encountered who also experienced forced departure.

⁴ For a discussion of expellees as the "most important representatives of German victimhood," see, Robert G. Moeller, "Remembering the War in a Nation of Victims: West German Pasts in the 1950s," in *The Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany, 1949-1968*, ed. Hanna Schissler (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), 84, 86, 100. Also see, Moellers' *War Stories: The Search for a Usable Past in the Federal Republic of Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

The expellees' longing for the Heimat and the past was intensified by their feeling of being unwanted in or shut out of their postwar societies. The interaction between the newcomers and the local populations took place most frequently as a result of shared living quarters; local housing officials billeted displaced Germans in private households. In both Germanies the official policies as expressed through public transcripts called for the welcoming of the newcomers; in both Germanies the indigenes often expressed their rejection of the official policy by verbally abusing or otherwise mistreating their unwanted lodgers. The expressions of this rejection could thus be considered hidden transcripts through which the indigenes articulated their view that the arriving displaced Germans were burdensome outsiders: who would willingly give up their "underused" living space, furniture, or household goods to strangers? Especially given the general destitution faced by many Germans in the 1940s, the prospect of giving up anything of value was likely disagreeable.

Additionally, many indigenes resented the presence of the expellees because they seemed too Eastern, too foreign, too different. Some of them were literally unclean, diseased, and emotionally unstable. Many indigenes would not welcome such strangers as tenants into their homes, nor would they necessarily desire to employ such persons. In addition, in their desperation, some expellees resorted to stealing local produce or other items; of course there were even cases where some expellees used their destitute status as a means to swindle. Regardless of the reasons for stealing, such cases--even if isolated--provided a poor reputation for displaced Germans as a group; for some indigenes such cases supplied a justification for their mistreatment.

Conversely, some displaced Germans reported examples of benevolence. In every zone there were cases of compassion and generosity both from groups as well as individuals. Organizations outside of Germany also sometimes took an interest in the welfare of the expellees. Foreign church groups, philanthropists, and individuals provided food, clothing, blankets, soap, and building assistance for destitute Germans, including expellees and resettlers. Additionally, both external and internal church and state assistance made such projects as Espelkamp, an expellee city, possible.

Although many displaced Germans personally never experienced either hostility or charity from the local populations or organizations, they often shared in the post-expulsion collective memory of the group as a whole. In particular the indigenes' use of hidden transcripts to express their hostility towards the unwanted newcomers informed the collective memory of the expellees and resettlers. Thus, many displaced Germans expressed frustration concerning societal rejection they perhaps never personally experienced. On the other hand, some Eastern Germans measured their own success in contrast to relatives, neighbors, friends, or associates who experienced such hostility; in doing so they sometimes reflected on their own determination and hard work as the key to their comparative success.

How did displaced Germans react to their outsider status, to the forced departure, and to the loss of Heimat? Many displaced Germans sought to shed their special status and fit into the existing society. They neither wanted special treatment nor scorn. They preferred not to be recognizable as expellees. For other expellees, such camouflage was either not possible or not desired. Often their clothes alone marked them as one of the displaced. They needed assistance and charity. Some of them sought a political voice in

order to achieve an equalization of burdens and to try to regain the old Heimat for Germany. In the Soviet Zone/GDR, such efforts to organize contrasted with the official policy and were thus forbidden. In the Western Zones/Federal Republic, such groups were initially forbidden because the occupying powers opposed them, but as West Germany began to take shape and develop their official policy, such expellee associations were permitted because they substantiated the Adenauer government's support for a Germany according to its 1937 borders.

The majority of expellees, in part because their departure was forced and their Heimat was off-limits, and in part as a reaction to the frequent derision of the local population, maintained a connection to their Heimat that was stronger than the typical nostalgia for one's place of birth or childhood. For nearly 30 years after the end of the war, most Eastern Germans were forbidden to go back even as tourists. Even after obtaining employment, establishing a home and family, many displaced Germans never felt truly established in their Western societies. Some expellees and resettlers would continue to feel uprooted and estranged. Others felt "at home" in their new society but still longed for the old Heimat. In the 1970s displaced Germans were permitted--with certain restrictions and requirements--to visit the old Heimat. Upon seeing their lost Heimat, some Eastern Germans felt it was so deteriorated that it was no longer the Heimat. Other expellees and resettlers returned as frequently as possible, often once or twice a year, in order to revisit their Heimat.

After the GDR crumbled and West and "Middle" Germany reunified, the resettlers living in the new federal states were permitted to found Landsmannschaften, to establish monuments in remembrance of the expulsion, and to call themselves expellees.

After nearly 45 years of enforced silence, many of the resettlers-turned-expellees founded and joined such groups, donated for the erection of the monuments, began talking about their experiences and using the word "expellee," and began taking part in expellee activities with their compatriots in the old federal states. Both sets of expellees found traveling to their old Heimat to be easier and many of them eagerly took part in such tours and trips.

Now the expellees are aging and Germany's Eastern border is no longer perceived as provisional. Few expellees speak of returning to the Heimat as anything more than tourists. Even if the opportunity arose, most expellees would never seek permanently to return to the old Heimat. Is the Eastern German Heimat thus lost forever? Is there no longer an interest in the Heimat? Indeed, many Germans have recently demonstrated considerable interest in "Prussia." From the "Prussian Year" in 2001 to the recent discussions of uniting Berlin and Brandenburg and renaming the new larger state "Prussia," it is clear that the dissolution of Prussia in 1947 did not erase it as an entity in the minds of Germans.⁵ Following these events--as the web site for the Berlin Stadtschloss (city castle) argued--"Prussia is once again chic."⁶

⁵ See, for example, Michael Naumann, "Ein Land im Rückwärtsgang: Ein bescheidener Vorschlag, die Geschichtstruhe nicht bei jeder Gelegenheit zu öffnen und die nationalen Emotionen im Wahljahr nicht zu wecken," in *Die Zeit*, September 2002, and Florian Giese, "Preussens Sendung und Gysis Mission: Sollen Berlin und Brandenburg unter preussischem Namen fusionieren? Während die Öffentlichkeit noch diskutiert, hat die PDS schon beschlossen, von Berlin aus die innere Einheit für ganz Deutschland voranzutreiben" in *Die Zeit*, September 2002

⁶ See, "Berliner Stadtschloss," "<http://sga.euweb.cz/001/debata/download/hruska-001.doc>."

However, these events emphasized Brandenburg-Prussia. Therefore, has Altpreußen or Old Prussia disappeared? The term is no longer in use, but media interest in the expellees and the Eastern German territories has recently increased dramatically, as demonstrated by a number of documentary series, by issues of *Der Spiegel*--including a special issue dedicated entirely to expellees and the expulsion--and by recent literary works, such as Günter Grass' *Im Krebsgang*.⁷ With the recent deaths of some of the most prominent contemporary German cultural figures, including the Pomeranian author and professor Christian Graf von Krockow and the East Prussian author, journalist, and editor of *Die Zeit* Marion Gräfin Dönhoff, public attention has been drawn to the Germans from the former territories and their roles in postwar Germany. Perhaps the Prussian Heimat was expelled along with the Eastern Germans, and Prussia persists only in the memories of the expellees and is embodied in their cultural, social, and political contributions to postwar German(ies)y.

In conclusion, at the end of the war Germany experienced political and economic ruin. The victors of World War II dismantled the Nazi state, divided Germany into three, established four occupation zones, and sought to democratize the people according to the occupiers' respective political orientation. The dire situation was made more dramatic by the physical state of Germany at the end of the war. Because most of Germany had literally become the warfront, entire cities often lay in rubble, the urban population often had no housing; evacuated individuals and families only added to the confusion. The shortage of housing combined with the lack of supplies created an environment in which many city dwellers were malnourished and embittered. The survivors of the war often

⁷ Günter Grass, *Im Krebsgang: Eine Novelle*, (Göttingen: Steidl Verlag, 2002).

wondered if their husbands, fathers, sons, and brothers would ever come home.

Occupation authorities arrived, requisitioned housing, and often treated the population either condescendingly or sometimes even cruelly.

The daily arrival of thousands of displaced Germans only exacerbated this already difficult postwar situation. Considering that the local populations faced extreme housing shortages and scarcity of supplies, how should officials house and feed millions of homeless, often malnourished and sometimes sick expelled Germans? Some of the uprooted Germans found relatives, friends, or associates with whom they could live and thus independently of the officials establish a postwar existence. Many other expellees and resettlers knew no one. The successful integration of the Eastern Germans required a three-way dialogue between the newcomers, the local populations, and the officials; given the conditions in the postwar Germanies this relative success was arguably remarkable.

The expulsion of the Reichsdeutsche and their subsequent successful integration into the two postwar Germanies were events without parallel in European history. At the end of World War II, the Reichsdeutsche--who had been the majority group in their Heimat--experienced forced migration out of what they perceived to be their Germany and into an often unknown Germany. The expulsion took place because they were German and involved what officials termed "repatriation"; thus the event shared certain characteristics with ethnic cleansing. Yet the Reichsdeutsche were the majority group and could in no way be classified as "ethnic" Germans returning home. The expulsion of

the Reichsdeutsche from Germany's Eastern territories was thus unique not only in terms of size of the group and duration of the event, but also the demographics of the areas involved.

The three-way dialogue that enabled the moderately successful integration of millions of uprooted Germans in both postwar Germanies was also unique in European history. Despite ideological differences of the two states and the dire postwar conditions, the integration of the Eastern Germans into the two Germanies occurred relatively rapidly. By the mid 1950s expellees and resettlers were already basically politically and economically integrated into their new societies. However, the time frame and extent of their cultural integration is harder to track and messier. In spite of often tremendous odds and in addition to maintaining a strong connection to their Eastern Heimat, the majority of uprooted Germans significantly contributed to the economic, political, and cultural rebuilding and also to the success of their new postwar German(ies)y.

GLOSSARY

Altpreußen (Old Prussia)	The areas that had already been Prussian before 1806, especially the territories east of the Elbe River
Aussiedler:	Germans who "resettled" after the mid 1950s
B-Soldat (B Soldiers):	The West German term used to describe POWs whose home had been in the Eastern territories
Block der Heimatvertriebenen und Entrechteten (BHE):	Voting Block of the Germans expelled from their Homeland and Deprived of their Rights
Bodenreform:	Land reform measures enacted by the occupation authorities after World War II
Bund der Vertriebenen:	Federation of the Expellees
EKD-Ostdenkschrift:	Protestant Church of Germany's Memorandum concerning the future of the former Eastern territories.
Evangelisches Hilfswerk	Protestant charity organization
Federal Republic	The official name for West Germany, the successor state of the Western zones. According to German law, it was unacceptable to abbreviate this term.
German Democratic Republic	The official name for what would popularly be termed "East Germany," the successor state of the Soviet Zone.
Heimat	Literally translates as home or homeland; however, it also connotes a rich tapestry of meanings relating to one's personal and deeply-rooted ties to the ancestral soil, heritage, customs, gastronomy, dialect, landscape, etc.

Heimatgefühl	Heimat-feeling
Heimkehrer	One who returns to the German Heimat
Heimkehrwille	The will to return to the Heimat
heimatlos	The state of being removed from one's Heimat
Heimatlose Heimkehrer	The GDR term for the POWs whose home had been in the Eastern territories
Heimatvertriebene	Those who were expelled from the Heimat
Hectare	2.47 acres
Hidden Transcripts	James Scott used the term "hidden transcripts" to describe the self-expression of subjugated people in the absence of the dominating group: or "offstage" communication.
Intitut für Migrationsforschung und Interkulturelle Studien	Institute for Migration Research and Intercultural Studies
Kulturarbeit	cultural activities
Landsmannschaften	Clubs or organizations for Germans from the former Eastern territories, clubs that focus on a certain regional pride and attempt to preserve regional traditions.
Lastenausgleich	Equalization of burdens
Mitteldeutschland	"Middle Germany," the Cold War term for the GDR
Morgen	A old term for measuring land, roughly translates into acres
Ostgrenze	The border between the GDR and Poland.
Ostkunde	The introduction of the history, culture, and traditions of the Eastern Heimat in the Western classroom

Ostpolitik	Policies and politics concerning West Germany's relationship with the GDR and with the current powers controlling the former Eastern territories (i.e. Poland and the Soviet Union) or neighbors to Germany's East.
Public Transcripts	According to James Scott "public transcripts" were "openly avowed" records of what was said. This discourse could be spoken, printed, or communicated through gestures or expressions. The purpose of public transcripts was to reinforce the current set of power relationships and the unanimous consent to those relationships of all parties involved.
Reichsdeutsche	Germans who came from Germany according to either its 1871 borders or sometimes its dimensions from 1918
Spätaussiedler	Germans who "resettled" from the East in the 1980s or later
Volksdeutsche	A term apparently first used under National Socialism to refer to German ethnic minority groups.
Volkspolizei	GDR People's Police
Volkssolidarität	People's Solidarity, a GDR charity organization
Umsiedler	Resettler
Vertriebene	Expellee
Volkssturm	Local defense units of teenaged boys and older men at the end of World War II
Zentralverwaltung	central administrative apparatus
Zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl	feeling of belonging together

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Rep 347 Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund, Landesvorstand, Ideologische
Abteilung

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DO 1-11.0 Hauptverwaltung Deutsche Volkspolizei
DO 1-34.0 HA Innere Angelegenheiten
DO 2 Zentralverwaltung fuer deutsche Umsiedler
DQ 2 Deutsche Zentralverwaltung fuer Arbeit und Sozialfuer Sorge/ Ministerium
fuer Arbeit und Berufsausbildung
DY 6 Nationalrat der Nationalen Front
DY 19 Vereinigung der gegenseitigen Bauernhilfe (VdgB)
DY 24 Freie Deutsche Jugend (FDJ)
DY 30 Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (SED)
DY 34 Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (FDGB)
NY 4036 Nachlass W. Pieck
NY 4062 Nachlass H. Rau
NY 4072 Nachlass F. Dahlem
NY 4074 Nachlass W. Koenen
NY 4090 Nachlass O. Grotewohl
NY 4182 Nachlass W. Ulbricht
RY 1 Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (KPD)
Sgy 2 Flugblattsammlung
Sgy 30 Erinnerungen

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