

Andrzej Topij

RESETTLEMENTS OF THE GERMAN POPULATION
IN THE SOVIET UNION
(1941–1942)

Under the Stalinist regime, in particular during the Second World War, many nations were forcibly transferred to Syberia or Kamchatka. Among them was the large German population for the Soviet authorities regarded the Germans living in the Soviet Union as a dangerous element that might pose a threat to the hinterland after the invasion of the USSR. In the official view, most of the Soviet Germans were spies, saboteurs, fascists and traitors, in brief a Fifth Column. Opinions of this kind were of course also rampant in other countries. Greater or smaller restrictions were imposed on many Germans in Poland in 1939, even before the outbreak of the war (these steps were however justified, at least partly), and on a smaller scale the same happened in France and Belgium. After 1943 the many Germans living in Switzerland were placed in concentration camps. In the United States all Japanese were deported from the western states in 1942. In this situation Soviet policy towards Soviet citizens of German descent was by no means surprising, had it not been for the fact that the Soviet authorities did not treat the resettlement as a preventive measure and openly emphasized that the Germans would never go back to their native parts (this will be discussed later).

The Germans were scattered throughout the whole of the Soviet Union and could be found in all republics. They were descendants of German colonists who came to Russia in large numbers in the late 18th and 19th centuries. According to the census of 1939, there were 1,427,232 persons of German natio-

nality in the Soviet Union, their largest concentrations being in the Russian Federative Republic (700,231) and Ukraine (392,458), but smaller groups could be found in all republics, the smallest number of Germans living in Armenia (only 433 persons). The Germans lived in compact, sometimes large groups or were scattered among other nationalities¹.

During the interwar period the German population enjoyed wide-ranging freedoms. The Germans living in the Volga region were given the right to set up their own republic which in 1924 was named the Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic of Volga Germans. Germans accounted for about two-thirds of the population there (366,685 in 1939)². National regions were also established in other territories inhabited by compact groups of Germans. In Ukraine the Spartacus, Karl Liebknecht, Zielck, Fritz Gekkert, Molachan and Rotfront regions were set up. Among other well known German national regions were the Telmanov region (in the Crimea which was part of the Russian Republic at the time), and the Kichka and Luxemburg regions in Siberia³. There were many German village councils. In the second half of the 1930s restrictions were imposed on the German minority: some German schools and newspapers were closed down and German national regions were liquidated. The worst situation for the Germans was in the regions bordering on Poland. As early as 1933 the Germans in the Zhitomir region (ca 70,000 persons) were deported 50–100 km beyond the Stalin Line and their national region, the Paulin region, was liquidated⁴. However, these measures did not depart from the general nationality policy of the Soviet authorities at that time. The situation of the Germans was the most favourable in the Republic of Volga Germans.

The outbreak of the German–Soviet war on 22 June, 1941 marked a turning point. Nearly all Germans who had for generations been living in their national regions were forced to leave them and settle in Central Asia or Siberia.

In the first weeks of the war the authorities started deporting Germans from front-line regions, but because of the quick with-

¹ *Istoriya rossiyskikh niemtsev v dokumentakh*, Moskva 1993, p. 156.

² *Ibidem*.

³ *Ibidem*, pp. 8–9.

⁴ Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, R 57, 927b, *Lage des Deutschtums im Gebiet von Shtomir*, p. 2.

drawal of the Red Army they managed to deport only a small part of the German population (e.g. ca 6,000 persons from the Odessa region). The first to be transferred were Germans from the Karelo-Finnish Republic, a total of 1,200 families who had been forcibly transferred there from the border regions of Ukraine in 1932-1933. This time they were sent to the Republic of Komi⁵.

A large-scale transfer of Germans began after the liquidation of the Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic of Volga Germans. The idea to resettle the Germans from that republic was not new. During the First World War the tsarist authorities had similar plans. On 2 February, 1917 Nicholas II ordered that the Volga Germans be deported to Siberia but the outbreak of the February Revolution made it impossible to carry out the plan⁶.

In July 1941 Lavrenty Beria and Vyacheslav Molotov arrived in the capital of the Volga Republic called Engels (it was previously, and is again, named Pokrovsk) and took part in a meeting of the local party apparatus. The meeting drew attention to the danger posed to the Soviet state by the presence of Germans, and emphasized the necessity for repressive measures⁷. Until March 1941 the Saratov NKVD unit had not handled a single case of espionage for Germany and between June 22 and August 10 only 145 persons were arrested in the republic; two of them were indicted for espionage, the majority were accused of spreading panic and defeatism⁸.

In connection with the deportation of the Volga Germans let us recall the provocation engineered by the NKVD to justify this decision. I have in mind the parachuting of Soviet soldiers dressed in German uniforms in areas inhabited by Germans. Beria informed local security organs that German paratroopers had landed, but when security functionaries went to the places mentioned by him, they did not find anybody. We have an account of a certain Mikhail Varlanov who spent nearly the whole war as a member of the staff of General Konstantin Rokossovski. He

⁵ *Deportation, Sondersiedlung, Arbeitsarmee: Deutsche in der Sowjetunion 1941 bis 1956*. Köln 1996, p. 40.

⁶ A. Eisfeld, *Autonome Sozialistische Sowjetrepublik der Wolgadeutschen. Chance oder Gefahrenherd*, in: *Die Deutschen in der UdSSR in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Baden-Baden 1990, p. 50.

⁷ A. Kichkhin, *Sovietskiye niemtsy: Otkuda, kuda i pochemu?*, "Voyenno-istoricheskiy zhurnal" 1990, № 9, p. 33.

⁸ *Deportation*, p. 44.

said that on 27 August Beria had ordered them to prepare aircraft and 400 soldiers of German nationality dressed in German uniforms. They were then dropped in the neighbourhood of Saratov, probably on the border of the Republic of Volga Germans⁹.

In fact the fate of the Volga Germans was sealed on 12 August when the Central Committee of the CPSU(b) and the Council of People's Commissars issued an ordinance providing for their deportation¹⁰. The ordinance was confirmed by an official decree of the Praesidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of 28 August *On the transfer of Germans living in the Volga region* (it referred to the Saratov region, the home of the Republic of Volga Germans, and the neighbouring Stalingrad region). Incidentally, the decree was not published in the central, but only in the local, press ("Nachrichten" and "Bolshevik")¹¹. To justify these measures the decree stated that thousands of German saboteurs and spies living in that region were ready to undertake sabotage actions at a signal from Germany and since no German had informed the Soviet authorities of their presence this meant that the German population was harbouring enemies of the Soviet nation. The adoption of the principle of collective responsibility was therefore justified. The Praesidium of the Supreme Soviet found it necessary to transfer the whole German population from the Volga region to Kazakhstan, western Siberia and the Altai, which were defined as territories rich in arable land¹².

Soon afterwards, on 7 September 1941, the Praesidium of the Supreme Soviet issued a decree which dissolved the Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic of Volga Germans. Its territory was divided between the Saratov and Stalingrad regions¹³.

Of course the state security organs took the necessary measures earlier. Long before the planned deportation, the NKVD council of the Republic of Volga Germans was instructed by Moscow to collect detailed data about the number of Germans living there. The NKVD set their number at 374,225¹⁴. On 27

⁹ *Sud'ba rossijskikh niemtsev*. Moskva 1993, p. 24.

¹⁰ *Deportation*, p. 46.

¹¹ L. Malinovskiy, *Istoriya niemtsev v Rossii*, Barnaul 1996, p. 122.

¹² *Deportation*, pp. 54-55.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 72.

¹⁴ N. Bugay, *40-gody: Avtonomiju niemtsev Povolzha likvidirovat*, "Istoriya SSSR" 1991, № 2, p. 173.

August the People's Commissar for Internal Affairs, Lavrenty Beria, issued a secret order that Germans from the Republic of Volga Germans and from the Saratov and Stalingrad regions should be deported. The operation was to be directed by one of his deputies, General Ivan Sierov. Three-man teams composed of the head of a regional NKVD unit, the militia chief and the secretary of a regional CPSU(b) committee were to carry out the operation locally. It was emphasized that all Germans, without any exception, were liable to deportation, including members of the party and the *Komsomol*. In practice, an exception was made for NKVD employees of German nationality, for their cases were to be examined individually. Families in which the husband was not German but the wife was were exempted from forcible deportation. Inmates of hospitals and persons on business trips were to be sent to the places of their new residence at a later date. The resettlers were allowed to take an unlimited amount of money, things of personal use, tools, etc. to the weight not exceeding one tonne per family. Moreover, townspeople could authorize other persons to sell the property they had left behind, but the whole operation had to be accomplished in ten days. The resettlers were told to take food for at least a month. They were to be transported to their place of destination by train or, more seldom, by boats. The whole operation was expected to take 18 days (from 3 to 18 September)¹⁵.

1,200 NKVD functionaries and 2,000 militia men as well as 7,350 soldiers of the NKVD armed forces were sent to the still formally existing Republic of Volga Germans to secure the operation militarily¹⁶. Some difficulties were encountered at the beginning (e.g. the departure of the first contingent was delayed because the wagons were, from the sanitary point of view, unsuitable for transporting people¹⁷. But the whole operation was completed on time. All in all, in 158 transports 367,717 persons of German nationality were transferred from the Volga Republic, that is fewer than had been planned (401,746). This was probably due to the fact that some men of military age were in the army

¹⁵ *Deportation*, pp. 50-53.

¹⁶ *Deportatsiy narodov SSSR (1930-e-1950-e gody)*, part 2: *Deportatsiya niemtsev (sientabr 1941-fievral 1942)* Moskva 1994, p. 18.

¹⁷ Gosudarstvenniy Arkhiv Rossiyskoy Federatsiy (henceforward referred to as GARF), fond 9479, opis' 1, dielo 83, p. 74.

(81,106 men and as many as 116,917 women were deported). Only 1,488 Germans remained in the former republic, most of whom (1,094) came mixed families (the husband was Russian), 371 persons escaped resettlement because of illness and 23 were on a business trip¹⁸. Let us add that some Russian women married to Germans divorced their husbands to escape deportation¹⁹. In keeping with Soviet tradition, arrests were also made, but on a small scale (192 persons)²⁰. 46,706 Germans were deported from the Saratov region (the plan provided for the deportation of 54,389 persons) and 26,245 from the Stalingrad region, that is, more than had been planned (23,720)²¹.

The Soviet authorities did not confine deportations to the Volga region, that is a region that was far from the front-line zone at that time. They resolved to deport also those Germans who lived in front-line regions. On 30 August the State Defence Committee decided to evacuate Germans as well as Fins from Leningrad and neighbouring towns. But on that very day the rail connection with Leningrad was severed²².

On 6 September the State Defence Committee decided to transfer 8,617 Germans from the Moscow region and 21,400 from the Rostov region to Kazakhstan. Then the Committee issued orders providing for the deportation of Germans from other regions of the European part of the USSR: on 21 September from the Krasnodar and Ordzhonikidze territories, the Tula region and the Autonomous Soviet Socialist Kabardino-Balkar Republic and the North Ossetian Republic; on 22 September from the Zaporozhe, Stalino and Voroshilovgrad regions; on 3 October from the Autonomous Republic of Daghestan, Chechnya and Ingushetia²³.

The majority of the deportation decisions were taken by the State Defence Committee. But there were some exceptions. For instance, Germans from the Kalinin region were deported in September and October 1941 on the order of the Western Front Council²⁴.

¹⁸ *Deportation*, p. 86.

¹⁹ A. Gierman, *Nemetskaya avtonomiya na Volghie 1918–1941*, part 2, Saratov 1994, p. 297.

²⁰ *Deportation*, p. 86.

²¹ *Deportatsiy*, part 2, pp. 17, 48.

²² *Josif Stalin — Laurentiyu Beriy — Ikh nada deportirovat*, Moskva 1992, p. 38.

²³ *Deportation*, pp. 87–88, 90–92, 100–101, 109.

It was not only Germans from the European part of the USSR who were deported. The deportations also covered Germans from Asian republics. On 8 October the State Defence Committee ordered that Germans from Georgia (23,580 persons), Azerbaijan (22,741) and also Armenia be evicted, even though only 212 Germans lived in the last-named territory²⁵. Nor did the Soviet authorities forget the Germans who lived, though in small numbers, in Central Asia (I am not thinking here of the many German kulaks who had been forced to settle in Kazakhstan) and who, of course, could not pose any threat to the front-line zone. On 30 October 1941 Beria instructed the government of the Kirghiz republic to deport Germans from towns to kolkhozes (8,426 persons). The Germans living in Turkmenia (1,019) and Tadzhikistan (946) met with a similar fate²⁶. The Soviet authorities did not even leave the Germans living in Siberia in peace. This may have been due to the fact that they feared acts of sabotage and diversion on the neuralgic Trans-Siberian railway and in armaments industry centres, as was indicated by the security organs' alarming reports that after 22 June 1941 Germans in the Amur district had intensified their hostile activities²⁷. It is not surprising therefore that repression afflicted mainly German inhabitants of towns in the Chelabin and Chita districts (6,019 and 1,205 persons, respectively) and in the Khabarovsk territory (5,696 persons)²⁸. Naturally, the majority of the Siberian Germans (I am not thinking of the Germans settled there by force) lived in the country. They were not deported, but the state security organs treated them with distrust.

The State Defence Committee adopted its deportation decisions at the motion of the people's commissar for internal affairs, Lavrenty Beria who always explained them by the necessity of preventing anti-Soviet activity on the part of the Germans. Consequently, the NKVD deemed it purposeful to arrest all suspected anti-Soviet persons (detailed numbers were always cited) and evict the rest of the German population²⁹.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 95.

²⁵ *Istoriya*, p. 166.

²⁶ GARF, fond 9479, opis' 1, dielo 83, pp. 17–18.

²⁷ A. Kichkhin, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

²⁸ GARF, fond 9479, opis' 1, dielo 83, p. 12.

²⁹ *Deportation*, pp. 100, 103.

The arrested persons were, of course, not deported. Let me recall that, as for Soviet conditions, not many people were arrested in the Republic of Volga Germans, only 192 persons of a population of 400,000. But this number, especially the percentage of arrested persons kept increasing. Many people suspected of being anti-Soviet were arrested in Moscow and the Moskow district, as many as 142 persons, that is nearly 10 per cent of the German population in that area. This may have been due to the fact that white-collar workers were the main professional group among the Germans living in Moscow³⁰.

All deportations were governed by principles similar to those applied during the deportation of the Volga Germans. The only difference was that later each family was allowed to take personal property weighing no more than 200 kg. Executive regulations did not mention the possibility of taking money. As was the case with the Volga Germans, the families in which the husband was not a German as well as persons on business trips and in hospitals escaped deportation. Some insignificant exception were made to this rule. NKVD reports indicate that old people (the required age was not stated) were allowed to remain in their place, being probably regarded as innocuous; other groups that were not forced to leave were outstanding experts (in the nature of things this applied to a small group of people, mainly in towns) as well as secret NKVD collaborators (some, however, were deported)³¹.

It follows from NKVD reports that the deportation operations went smoothly and did not encounter resistance. There were some single suicides or attempts to commit suicide³². The reports stressed that the political mood among the Germans was, on the whole, good, but a number of counter-revolutionary organisations, groups and individuals carried out harmful espionage and sabotage activity during the deportations³³.

There was naturally no time to transfer all Germans from the western parts of the USSR, that is, from Ukraine, Byelorussia and the Crimea which belonged to the Russian Federative Republic at that time. Besides, up to the end of August the Germans living

³⁰ GARF, fond 9479, opis' 1, dielo 83, p. 127.

³¹ *Deportation*, p. 70.

³² GARF, fond 9479, opis' 1, dielo 83, p. 128.

³³ *Ibidem*, fond 9479, opis' 1, dielo 84, p. 71.

there were, on the whole, not transferred to other parts of the USSR but evacuated, like other Soviet citizens. This applied, for instance, to the Crimean Germans. The Soviet authorities managed to evacuate 1,900 of them to the Ordzhonikidze territory and the remaining 50,000 to the Stavropol territory. The former were, together with the local Germans, settled in Kazakhstan in the autumn of 1941³⁴.

According to a NKVD report, by 1 January 1942 a total of 799,459 Germans had been resettled, excluding those resettled earlier from towns to the countryside in central Asian republics and Siberia.

Number of Germans deported from the individual regions of the USSR by 1 January 1942³⁵

REGION	NUMBER OF DEPORTED GERMANS	NUMBER OF TRANSPORTS
Azerbaijan SSR	23,493	12
Georgian SSR	20,423	12
Armenian SSR	212	1
ASSR of Volga Germans	371,164	154
SSR of Daghestan	7,306	3
ASSR of North Ossetia	2,415	1
Kalmyk ASSR	5,843	4
Crimea	1,900	1
Kabardino–Balkarian ASSR	5,747	3
Krasnoyarsk Territory	37,733	15
Ordzhonikidze	99,940	38
Moscow and its district	8,640	5
Tula region	2,702	1
Rostov	38,742	17
Gorkov	3,162	2
Voronezh	5,125	2
Kuibishev	8,782	4
Zaporozhe	31,326	14
Voroshilovgrad	12,488	4
Stalino	35,925	16
Dnepropetrovsk	3,260	1
Stalingrad	26,425	12
Saratov	46,706	22
TOTAL	799,459	344

³⁴ *Deportatsiy*, part 2, p. 233.

³⁵ GARF, fond 9479, opis' 1, dielo 83, p. 203. As we see, the data for the former Republic of Volga Germans are slightly different from earlier figures.

Thus, in four months more than 55 per cent of the Soviet Germans were forcibly deported from their place of residence. Let us remember that a considerable part of the German population found itself under Nazi and Romanian occupation. According to the census of 1939, 392,000 Germans lived in Ukraine, of whom no more than 120,000 were resettled, and 8,000 lived in Byelorrussia, but there are no data about their evacuation; it was probably not carried out on any significant scale because the front moved rapidly. A large number of Germans lived in the countryside in Siberia, mainly in the Altai.

This means that even though the operation was not carried out at the same time in all places it was undoubtedly of a complex character. By the end of 1941 there were practically no Germans left in the European part of the USSR and in Transcaucasia, with the exception of occupied regions, the Urals (there was quite a large German centre there) and the territories in the far north (few Germans lived there).

The deportation of Germans who still lived in the European part of the USSR continued in 1942, but this concerned mainly Germans living in the front-line zone. On 20 March 1942 the War Council of the Leningrad Front ordered the deportation of Germans from the Leningrad district. 18,895 persons were deported then³⁶. In May Germans from the Smolensk region were deported and a month later from the Kursk (521 persons), Kharkov (1,500) and Stalingrad regions (369)³⁷.

According to the historian Nikolai Bugay, as many as 1,209,430 Germans were resettled in 1941–1942³⁸. But the author probably included in this number those Soviet Germans who were seized by the Red Army at the end of World War II or soon after its conclusion and were forcibly resettled. In reality 949,829 Germans were deported during the war (an overwhelming majority in the years 1941 and 1942). Later some 50,000 Crimean Germans who in the summer of 1941 had been evacuated to the Stavropol territory (north of Caucasia) were deported and as many as ca 70,000 were deported from the former Republic of Volga Germans after 1941³⁹ (as we will remember the

³⁶ *Deportation*, p. 161.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 167; GARF fond 9479, opis' 1, dielo 116, pp. 54–55, 76, 82.

³⁸ N. Bugay, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

³⁹ *Deportation*, pp. 271–272.

plan envisaged the deportation of 401,000 persons while in fact about 376,000 were deported; this means that persons who had previously not been liable to the regulations of August 1941 or even persons from mixed marriages must have also been deported).

The conditions in which the Germans were transported were bearable, considering the Soviet reality. This was due to a large extent to the fact that the resettlement campaign reached its climax in the autumn. Each transport consisted of 7-8 goods wagons for the resettlers' private property, a sanitary wagon and a wagon for the guards (usually 21 persons). An elder, appointed from among the resettlers, supervised 8-10 wagons. There was a physician and two nurses on each train as well as medicines and basic medical instruments, though in too small quantities. Many sanitary wagons were below standard. Every day the resettlers were to receive two hot meals, boiling water and 500 grams of bread when their train stopped at a fixed railway station. But the distribution of food was badly organized, hot meals being frequently unobtainable for various reasons. Sometimes resettlers had to do without a hot meal for two days because their train arrived at the appointed station with great delay. Sometimes a station did not have enough bread, even though bread had been ordered. The heads of transports were not entirely blameless for they tried to save on food (ca 40 per cent of the money earmarked for it had not been spent)⁴⁰.

It is worth while to compare the conditions offered to the Germans with those in which other nationalities, in particular Poles, were deported. The deportation instructions did not discriminate against Poles, some regulations being even more favourable for them. As I have already mentioned, the Germans were allowed to take 200 kilograms of luggage per family (the Volga Germans could take one tonne) while Poles could take 500 kg⁴¹. Transport conditions were on the whole similar: freight cars for heavy luggage, a sanitary wagon, a physician and two nurses with medicines and medical equipment, a hot meal once a day

⁴⁰ *Deportatsiy*, part 2, pp. 92-93, 218-219; GARF, fond 9479, opis' 1, dielo 83, pp. 90, 52-53.

⁴¹ D. Boćkowski, *Syberyjskie losy Białostoczan w latach II wojny światowej (The Siberian Fate of Inhabitants of the Białystok Region during World War II)*, in: *Walka i martyrologia narodowa w latach 1939-1945*, Nadarzyn 1997, p. 44.

and 800 grams of bread per person⁴². The Germans were to get only 500 grams of bread but they were resettled during the war. Another thing is that in the case of both nationalities the regulations were frequently not observed.

To be quite objective, let us point out that the conditions in which Poles were evicted and transported were not the same as those the Germans had for everything depended on the time of eviction and the social group that was deported. The worst treatment was handed out to military settlers who were deported in February 1940 during a very severe winter. The people deported two months later were treated much more leniently. They were allowed to take a greater amount of personal property, children were given milk during the journey, the deportees were allowed to buy food when their train stopped at a station. When they reached the place of their destination Polish resettlers were even given money for their immovables which were sold by NKVD functionaries⁴³. The Germans could not count on this. But despite wartime conditions the deportation of Poles was carried out in a relatively humane way (given Soviet conditions), for during the deportations of Chechens and Ingushetians in February 1944 the security organs committed mass crimes: they executed women, children and old men, drowned them in lakes, burned or buried them alive⁴⁴.

But let us go back to the Germans. Each transport included secret NKVD collaborators recruited from among resettlers; their task was to collect information on "anti-Soviet, pro-fascist" individuals who would be later arrested. They were also to act as agitators, to prevent escapes, etc.⁴⁵ There were few arrests until the end of 1941, only ca 400 persons being detained⁴⁶. But the state security organs acquired information about anti-Soviet statements made by former civil servants, party functionaries and even militiamen⁴⁷.

⁴² S. Ciesielski, G. Hryciuk, A. Srebrakowski, *Masowe deportacje radzieckie w okresie II wojny światowej (Mass Soviet Deportations during World War II)*, Wrocław 1994, p. 41.

⁴³ P. Żaroń, *Ludność polska w Związku Radzieckim w czasie II wojny światowej (Polish Population in the Soviet Union during World War II)*, Warszawa 1990, p. 129.

⁴⁴ S. Ciesielski, G. Hryciuk, A. Srebrakowski, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

⁴⁵ GARF, fond 9479, opis' 1, dielo 86, pp. 28-30.

⁴⁶ A. Gierman, *op. cit.*, part 2, p. 319.

⁴⁷ GARF, fond 9479, opis' 1, dielo 84, pp. 53, 72.

An overwhelming majority of the resettlers reached the place of destination alive. But a small percentage of the deportees did not survive the journey. These were mainly small children as well as sick and old people. The reports of the heads of transports show that cases of death were rare (a few, seldom over a dozen persons) though there were exceptions. For instance, out of 2,911 resettlers in transport N° 44 from Ordzhonikidze territory to Kazakhstan, 312, that is over 10 per cent, died⁴⁸. The causes of death varied. Sometimes death was due to an advanced stage of a disease (e.g. tuberculosis)⁴⁹. But there were also unnatural deaths, for murders occurred too. Eight persons were arrested in transport N° 44 for murdering a fellow-traveller⁵⁰. Births, frequently on the bare floor, took place too⁵¹. In the five transports that arrived in the Dzhabul camp (12,100 resettlers) 23 children were born (41 persons died)⁵².

Some Germans feared the worst, they were afraid that they would be executed when they reached their destination⁵³. A small number maintained they had been "brought here to be left to die"⁵⁴. Others, and these constituted a majority, thought at first that their stay in Siberia and Kazakhstan was only temporary and that they would be allowed to return to their homes after the war. Local people frequently regarded the Germans as evacuees from the front-line zone⁵⁵.

Just under 50 per cent of the German resettlers were sent to Kazakhstan, the rest arrived in Siberia, most of them in the Krasnoyarsk territory (60 per cent), the others in the Altai territory and the Omsk and Novosibirsk districts. The Germans deported to Siberia were after all lucky not having been sent to the north of that vast region. For there were proposals to send them to fishing grounds on the Kolyma and Indigirka rivers. But the Council of People's Commissars and the Central Committee

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, fond 9479, opis' 1, dielo 86, p. 49.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, fond 9479, opis' 1, dielo 83, p. 89.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, fond 9479, opis' 1, dielo 86, p. 49.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, fond 9479, opis' 1, dielo 83, p. 90.

⁵² *Deportatsiy*, part 2, p. 218.

⁵³ GARF, fond 9479, opis' 1, dielo 83, pp. 144–145.

⁵⁴ *Deportatsiy*, part 2, p. 221.

⁵⁵ GARF, fond 9479, opis' 1, dielo 83, p. 199.

of the CPSU(b) were against this idea because the maintenance of fishing settlements would have been very costly⁵⁶.

An overwhelming majority of Soviet Germans were sent to kolkhozes in Kazakhstan or Siberia. About 90 per cent of all resettled Germans (including 50 per cent of the urban population which constituted a small percentage of the resettlers) found themselves in the countryside⁵⁷. The others were placed in towns with the exception of the capitals of territories and districts. The worst fate awaited the Germans who were settled in south-eastern Kazakhstan, a sparsely populated and very weakly developed region. This turned out to be the fate of, for instance, Germans from the Stalingrad region. Not much better was the fate of Germans from Moscow who were settled in the Kizil-Ordin region⁵⁸.

Great difficulties were frequently encountered in the transportation of resettlers to villages and settlements. This was due not only to the shortage of transport means (barges, carts, oxen) but also to the excessive luggage brought by the Germans. Wardrobes and sofas did not make it easy to reach the place of destination⁵⁹. The Germans sometimes travelled on oxen for about a week⁶⁰.

The authorities saw to it that no compact centres of Germans were established. The resettlers were scattered over the whole Kazakhstan and the above-mentioned regions of Siberia. Resettlers from a single transport (each transport usually consisted of 2,000–2,500 persons) were frequently located in two or three districts, placed in small groups in local kolkhozes and mixed with the local population, which was usually Russian, Ukrainian or Kazakh⁶¹. In Kazakhstan the Germans, to their great dissatisfaction, were sent mainly to small settlements. Only townspeople could count on being settled in Russian or Ukrainian kolkhozes (or in towns). A decided majority of German kolkhoz members wanted to settle in Russian or Ukrainian kolkhozes (because of the language, culture, instruction in schools); after all the Ka-

⁵⁶ *Deportation*, pp. 134–135.

⁵⁷ GARF, fond 9479, opis' 1, dielo 83, p. 199.

⁵⁸ A. Gierman, *op. cit.*, part 2, p. 219.

⁵⁹ GARF, fond 9479, opis' 1, dielo 83, p. 89.

⁶⁰ *Deportatsiy*, part 2, p. 219.

⁶¹ A. Gierman, *op. cit.*, part 2, p. 309.

zakhs were on a much lower level of civilisation and culture than Russians⁶². In Siberia the Germans at first asked for permission to set up purely German kolkhozes but this was decidedly rejected by the Soviet authorities which thought this would be a waste of state money⁶³.

Local people and local authorities were usually indifferent to the German resettlers, though there were exceptions. For instance, in the Kizil-Ordin district the local population was ready to receive anybody except Germans and it took the NKVD a long time to explain who the resettlers were⁶⁴. Exiled Poles assumed a decidedly hostile attitude to the Germans and called their new companions in misfortune fascists⁶⁵. Local authorities in Siberia did their best to get the largest possible number of Germans⁶⁶. As regards the Germans themselves, they quickly established contact with their compatriots who had settled there earlier (e.g. former *kulak* peasants). In the opinion of the NKVD, they planned to draw their compatriots into counter-revolutionary activity⁶⁷.

At the beginning the situation of the Germans was difficult, especially in kolkhozes, with the exception of people who landed up in kolkhoz administrative offices which usually could offer jobs vacated by persons mobilised into the army. Naturally, the most difficult was the situation of townspeople, especially non-workers, who adapted themselves the most slowly. The authorities recommended that physicians, engineers, lawyers and university lecturers should be settled in towns, but this is not what usually happened. As a result many members of the intelligentsia were settled in kolkhozes, often in compact groups, which made things even worse. The situation of mothers whose husbands were on the front or, what was even worse, were victims of purges, was very difficult too. They could not go out to work for very often they had nobody to leave their children with⁶⁸.

⁶² *Deportatsiy*, part 2, pp. 219-220.

⁶³ GARF, fond 9479, opis' 1, dielo 85, pp. 258ob-259.

⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, fond 9479, opis' 1, dielo 84, p. 57.

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 67.

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 68.

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, fond 9479, opis' 1, dielo 84, pp. 73-74.

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*, fond 9479, opis' 1, dielo 83, pp. 41-42; A. Gierman, *op. cit.*, part 2, p. 314.

The German resettlers found the situation trying; the living conditions were hard to endure and food supplies were scarce. Some of them obtained accommodation because previous inhabitants had been crammed into a smaller number of flats. Old buildings were repaired but they frequently were unsuitable, especially in winter (lack of windows). It is not surprising that as a rule several families were frequently crammed in a two- or three-room flat. The worst was the fate of people who had first to build a house for themselves. Fortunately, they were in the minority and they could console themselves with the fact that the Council of People's Commissars was ready to give them a loan of 2,000 roubles per family on favourable terms (3 per cent for five years)⁶⁹. Food was another problem. The majority of kolkhozes had no food reserves, and this is why usually only persons working in the fields got food. This put families with many children and single mothers in an extremely difficult situation⁷⁰.

It is not surprising therefore that, taking advantage of omnipresent chaos, many Germans left the kolkhoz to which they had been sent — especially before the authorities provided everybody with a passport — and either moved to another kolkhoz where the conditions were better or fled to a town, frequently moving from one region to another. This provoked a reaction from the Soviet authorities which insisted on a quicker allocation of passports. It is interesting that some Germans wanted their nationality to be stated as Russian in the passport, but the authorities firmly rejected such demands⁷¹.

The chaos deepened because local administrations were very inconsistent. In some regions Germans were repeatedly moved from one place to another (e.g. in the Omsk region and the Krasnoyarsk territory in 1942)⁷². The chaos was even greater in Kazakhstan where the authorities decided to transfer ca 50,000 Germans from the south to the north because the areas where the Germans were at first settled were wild and inhospitable, had no houses and only a sparse Kazakh population. The northern part of Kazakhstan was more civilised but had a more severe cli-

⁶⁹ *Dokumentation*, p. 110.

⁷⁰ GARF, fond 9479, opis' 1, dielo 85, p. 114; dielo 84, p. 288v.

⁷¹ *Ibidem*, fond 9479, opis' 1, dielo 84, p. 80; dielo 83, p. 199.

⁷² S. Ciesielski, G. Hryciuk, A. Srebrakowski, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

mate⁷³. This shows that all the Soviet authorities wanted to resettle the Germans; they did not seek, even indirectly, their physical extermination.

What is more, the deportation of Germans from areas in which they enjoyed considerable privileges as a separate nationality did not mean full Russification. The authorities allowed German children whose knowledge of Russian was inadequate to go to those Russian or Ukrainian schools in which instruction was given in German⁷⁴. Nevertheless, the fact that the Germans were scattered in small groups over the vast territories of Kazakhstan and south-western Siberia indicated that the authorities were interested in their quick denationalisation.

At first the kolkhoz authorities had many difficulties with the newcomers. They were frequently unable to allot plots of ground, cattle and seeds to them, which they were obliged to do for on leaving their kolkhozes the resettlers were given receipts stating what they had left behind⁷⁵. Secondly, some Germans, in particular townspeople and women, objected to working in the fields. Believing that their stay in the new territory was temporary and that they would go back when the war was over, some settlers stubbornly refused to work. Specialists did not want to do physical work, saying that they were promised to be employed in their profession. Women evaded work for various reasons. Some pointed to the lack of appropriate footwear (the kolkhozes were usually unable to provide their new members with footwear and clothing), others tried to excuse themselves by saying that in German families “women did not work”. This led to a deterioration of relations with the other kolkhoz members in whose opinion the Germans had been brought in as a workforce and should subordinate themselves to the kolkhoz authorities. Conflicts and even scuffles ensued. The state security organs advised kolkhoz authorities not to be tolerant towards Germans who shirked working and to take all necessary measures to force them to work⁷⁶.

The state authorities' decision to incorporate able-bodied German resettlers of military age (from 17 to 50) into the Labour Army marked a turning point. Their number was estimated at

⁷³ *Ibidem*, p. 95.

⁷⁴ GARF, fond 9479, opis' 1, dielo 84, pp. 302–303.

⁷⁵ *Deportatsiy*, part 2, p. 220.

⁷⁶ GARF, fond 9479, opis' 1, dielo 85, pp. 73, 157–158, 259.

120,000. 45,000 men were to be employed in the felling of trees and the rest were to work on the construction of railways. The NKVD organs were instructed to deal strictly with the Germans so as to ensure that they attained a high labour productivity and fulfilled production norms⁷⁷.

On 14 February 1942 the ordinance was extended to include Germans of military age who had not yet been resettled. This meant that persons of German nationality could still be found in the north-eastern part of European Russia (e.g. in the Arkhangels, Vologda and Penza regions), in the Urals (Sverdlovsk region), in the Autonomous Tatar, Udmurt, Chuvash and Marii Republics, in Siberia and in central Asiatic republics⁷⁸. But with the exception of Siberia, where 122,000 persons of German nationality had lived before 1941, and also Kazakhstan, inhabited by a large number of German peasants resettled there during the period of collectivisation, there were not many Germans in the above-mentioned territories.

As if this was not enough, on 7 October 1942 the State Defence Committee issued an ordinance on an additional mobilisation of Germans for the USSR national economy. It covered men between the ages of 15–16 and 51–55 as well as women from the age of 16 to 45, with the exception of pregnant women and women raising children below the age of three⁷⁹.

What was the fate of Soviet soldiers of German nationality? In the middle of August 1941 measures began to be taken to withdraw them from the Red Army. On 8 September the State Defence Committee recommended that persons of German nationality, officers and soldiers should be transferred from the army, military schools and academies to building battalions deep in the country, but commanders of military units could apply to the People's Commissariat of Defence for permission to keep Germans, if this was required by the situation⁸⁰. Later, after 7 October, they were incorporated into labour battalions. But in 1941 they were not sent to labour camps subordinated to the NKVD. This began to happen after the ordinance of the State De-

⁷⁷ *Deportation*, pp. 151–152.

⁷⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 157–158.

⁷⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 182–184.

⁸⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 74.

fence Committee of 10 January 1942⁸¹. It is estimated that a total of 33,615 soldiers and officers of German nationality were withdrawn from the front in 1941-1945⁸².

The resettlements of 1941-1942 turned out to be lasting. At the end of the war Germans from territories liberated by the Red Army and, after the war, repatriates of German nationality were sent to Kazakhstan and, in smaller numbers, to Siberia. The policy pursued by the Stalinist regime brought lasting changes in the USSR nationality map. The large German population which for many generations had lived in many regions of that vast country, frequently in compact groups, was doomed to live in Asia and be scattered among Russians, Ukrainians and Kazakhs. This could only portend their denationalisation.

(Translated by Janina Dorosz)

⁸¹ E. Ayrikh, *Sovietskiye niemtsy v trudarmii*, in: *Sovietskiye niemtsy: istoriya i sovremennost*, Moskva 1990, p. 186.

⁸² N. Bugay, *op. cit.*, p. 174.