

Patriots or Traitors? – The Soviet Government and the ‘German Russians’ After the Attack on the USSR by National Socialist Germany

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Instrumentalizing Volga Germans for Propaganda at the Beginning of the War

After the Third Reich’s attack on the USSR the Soviet government still believed for a short while that it could influence the enemy ideologically with the rallying cries of class struggle. In speeches at the outbreak of war both Molotov and Stalin endeavoured to create a more nuanced image of the German population within the Soviet Empire and allowed themselves to be led by the hope of proletarian solidarity. This was heard clearly in a radio speech by Molotov on 22 June 1941: ‘This war is not forced upon us by the German (*germanskii*) people, not by the German (*germanskimi*) workers, farmers and intellectuals, whose suffering we sympathise with, but from a clique of bloodthirsty fascists rulers in Germany.’¹ Even Stalin was provisionally in favour of a balanced view of the War, although he had already provided the War with its prefix ‘patriotic’ in his speech on 3 July: ‘In this great war we will find true allies in the peoples of Europe and America, and also among the German people, who are enslaved by the fascist rulers.’²

In this scenario of internationalist propaganda, still valid at that time, the German minority was to play a significant role in the Soviet Union. Countless meetings

of anti-fascists took place during the first weeks of the War in the Autonomous Socialist Soviet Republic of the Volga Germans (ASSRVG), in which almost all the adult German population took part. In these meetings appeals were made to the soldiers in all branches of the *Wehrmacht*, to workers, farmers and other members of ‘working’ classes in the land of the aggressors. Knowledge of these appeals was immediately sent to the party leaders in Moscow, was published in Soviet newspapers and was used as propaganda against Germany in the form of fliers and radio programs. A direct speech was given to the working-class population of Germany by Alexander Heckman, the chairman of the Council of People’s Commissars of the Volga Republic, on 13 July 1941:

To the working population of Germany. The fascist rulers of Germany, with the bloodthirsty animal Hitler at the helm, who have enslaved a number of European peoples, have stretched their bloody actions to the USSR... In these decisive struggles with the German fascist monster and the further strengthening of the friendship between people of all nationalities with the Russian people... The working Volga Germans, united in the Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, which is a solid territory of the Russian Federation, have their own state government based on the most democratic constitution in the world. Take me for example, I as a weaver and the son of a worker lived in constant need under the Tsar. Under the Soviet power I was educated as an engineer and rose to be a statesman, to be the Chairman of the Council of People’s Commissars of the Republic. There are hundreds and thousands of such examples. The life of Volga Germans in the Soviet land is free, happy and prosperous. The life of working people in Germany under the rule of the fascist clique is one long nightmare, full of suffering and deprivation... In the name of the people of the Republic of the Volga Germans and in my own name I call on the German (*germanskii*) people to turn their bayonets on the fascist cannibals, help the people to rid their soil of the aggressors!³

Similar information and articles appeared in July and August of 1941 in several central Soviet newspapers.⁴ Taken together these appeals aimed to unmistakably signal that there was a consequent difference between the fascists, i.e. the enemy and the simple working Germans, regardless of the country in which they lived. The international solidarity of the workers should persevere. This observation appeared to be important for the Soviet Union at the time and the message was also treated

as significant by the media. However, a rational public debate was missing, which often led to such name-calling as ‘first bandit Hitler’, ‘fascist band of murderers’, ‘Hitler, the black blooded dragon’, ‘fascist cannibals’, ‘the Hitler group, gone mad from blood’ and ‘*Mein Kampf*, the Bible of the cannibals’. This kind of vocabulary had already become established in the mainstream of Soviet society during the 1930s through the process of ‘exposure’ and of banishing the Trotskyites along with other supposed people’s enemies, and thus it was brought back in the first days of the War for contemporary propaganda purposes.

Changes in Soviet War Propaganda

On the eve of military conflict with the Third Reich ‘romantic’ images of the future war as a ‘struggle against the property owners and capitalists’, in which the Soviet troops were received by ‘the working masses’ with enthusiasm, and hordes of proletarians in soldiers uniforms would rush to the side of the Red Army, was not only in the minds of the normal soldiers but also in the thoughts of the political leaders. Such dreams were fed by the experience of similar encounters in the Soviet-Polish War and on the annexation of the Baltic States and Bessarabia in 1939—40. Even the campaign against Finland, with its many losses and the clear refusal by Finnish civilians and those belonging to the military to support ‘the liberation from the yoke of imperialism’, changed little in this stance.⁵ The offensive Soviet military doctrine, according to which the enemy should be defeated on his territory, ‘with a destructive blow and few own (Soviet) losses’ (*maloi krov’iu, moguchim udarom*), stood in vivid contradiction to the harsh reality: in the process of the first two months of the War the *Wehrmacht* had stormed up to Kiev and Dnepr and hundreds of thousands of soldiers and officers had fallen. By the end of August 1941 1.5 million Red Army soldiers had been captured or had deserted to the Germans under the influence of *Wehrmacht* propaganda.⁶ Added to this, noticeable signs of local collaboration with the enemy were coming to light in the occupied areas.

The following events contributed significantly to a radicalization of war propaganda. During the retreat from the recently annexed areas, employees of the People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs (*Narodnyi Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del - NKVD*) executed thousands of prison inmates and several military personnel, who had been under arrest.⁷ Russian authors estimate the number of arbitrarily shot inmates

of the prisons to be exactly 9,817 people, of whom 2,464 came from prisons in the region of Lvov (*Lviv*). There were cruel executions on the evacuation march, such as the head of the prison in the town Glubokoe ordering up to 600 prisoners be shot in a wood.⁸ The Nazis made propaganda gains after the discovery of this mass murder. In the first statement from the Moscow foreign affairs ministry on the subject, the allegation was labelled a ‘libellous accusation’, whose only purpose was to ‘distract’ the public from their ‘own sins’.⁹ The reports and portrayals of German atrocities in the Soviet media were aimed initially at the criminalization of *Wehrmacht* personnel. Whoever expressed the slightest doubt about the credibility of such reports was dealt with immediately by the secret police. This happened to the well-known anti-fascist director and theatre manager Bernhard Reich, who portrayed German soldiers in his plays as ‘thinking people’ and not solely as ‘idiots, robbers or animal-like beings’, and thus contradicted the official propaganda. Reich was sentenced to several years in a labour camp on a charge of anti-Soviet propaganda.¹⁰

The fate of Heinrich Hoffmann from the village of Rosental in the Volga German Republic serves as one of the countless examples of ‘German bestiality’ and was even temporarily taken into the martyrdom ideology of Soviet heroes. Initially the army newspaper, *Boevoi natisk*, reported his heroic death on 5 August 1941. On 24 August the central newspaper *Komsomol’skaia Pravda* published a photo of Hoffmann’s bloody Komsomol book with the description of a fearless fight and spine-chilling account of the cruelty of ‘Hitler’s soldiers’. As a Soviet German who had courageously fought against his fascist blood brothers and had given his life for the party and for Stalin, Hoffmann at first appeared to be a suitable symbol for the embodiment of Soviet patriotism. In his name soldiers began to swear revenge, but in the midst of the deportation of Germans from the USSR, which began shortly thereafter, he was forgotten.¹¹ That is why this Volga German was not included in the canon of Soviet heroes together with such names as Zoia Kosmodem’ianskaia, Aleksandr Matrosov or Musa Dzhilil’, although at first his case followed the normal pattern of Soviet hero-making. The appeal for greater Russian patriotism, together with a more or less discernible anti-German sentiment, now clearly promised a better chance of success in mobilizing the masses. A ‘German hero’, even with the prefix ‘Soviet’ or ‘Volga’, no longer suited the freshly indoctrinated ideological direction.

The agitation and propaganda organized by the Soviet leadership in the first few

weeks of the War proved neither to be effective for the mobilization of the Soviet peoples, including the Russians, nor was it a good way to influence the enemy. During his meeting with William Averell Harriman, the representative of the US President, at the end of September 1941, Stalin is reported to have said, 'We know that the people do not want to fight for a world revolution, they also won't fight for the Soviet powers [...] Maybe they will fight for Russia.'¹² After the failure of the first attempts to influence the advancing enemy with the sentiments of class struggle and international solidarity between workers and farmers, the official propaganda quickly became an uninhibited torrent of hate and cruelty. 'German' was increasingly used as a synonym for 'fascist', which was to have fatal consequences for the Russian Germans.¹³ The ASSRVG - with representatives in the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and in the Russian Federation, and with workers in the state and party apparatus - protested against this U-turn, which went against their formal constitutional rights. The existence of a recognized 'Soviet' German minority with vested rights of autonomy certainly presented an obstacle for the war propaganda, with its characterization of the Germans as 'two-legged animals', 'cannibals' and 'rabid dogs'.¹⁴

On the other hand, as in the First World War, the military leadership attempted to blame their failure on, among other things, the existence of 'treasonous' activities of the German population in regions near the front.¹⁵ On 3 August 1941 a battle update from the war council of the Southern Front arrived in the headquarters of the Supreme Command of the Soviet forces:

1. The acts of war on the Dnestr have proven that the German population shot on our retreating troops from windows and gardens. Furthermore it has become clear that the German troops invading a German village on 1 August were welcomed with salt and bread. In the immediate surroundings of the front there are many settlements with a German population.
2. We are asking the local authorities to give orders for the immediate removal of this unreliable element.¹⁶

Whether this message reflected the real situation or an invented story from the twilight world of spy hysteria, is in this case of secondary importance. This telegram

carried Stalin's note, '*Tovarishchu Beriia. Nado vyselit' s treskom - Comrade Beriia. Out with them with a bang,*' and pointed to another entry: 'The People's Commissar [i.e. Beriia] has been informed of this, 25/08/1941.' With that the fate of the Russian Germans was sealed and on the very same day Beriia presented a draft for the decision to resettle the Germans currently living in the Volga region.¹⁷ One result of this draft was the decision by the Council for Evacuation and the War Council of the Southern Front to deport 53,000 Crimean Germans on 15 August. This was thinly veiled by officially calling it an evacuation.¹⁸

The Deportation of the German Minority

Stalin, supported by his colleagues in the politburo, had by 26 August 1941 ordered the resettlement of the Volga Germans. This was camouflaged as a decision by the central committee of the Communist Party (*Vsesoiuznaia Kommunisticheskaia Partia (bol'sheviki) - VKP(b)*) and the Council of People's Commissars (CPC), i.e. the government. In this top-secret decision, to which only a close circle of party and state leaders were privy, there was no evidence of guilt on the part of the German minority. The directive, comprising nineteen articles and written in an emphatically factual fashion, gives the impression of an orderly planned resettlement. The regions (*krai*) of Altai and Krasnoyarsk, the provinces (*oblast'*) of Omsk and Novosibirsk, as well as Kazakhstan, functioned as reception areas. The complete plan was entrusted to the NKVD.¹⁹ The secretly formulated party and government decision to liquidate a Soviet republic which was firmly anchored in the constitution did, however, require permission, if only for a purely formal legal 'blessing' from the state apparatus. Thus, the decree, 'Pertaining to the re-settlement of the Germans in the Volga District', which was supposed to give the whole operation 'legitimate' grounds, was signed two days later on 28 August, by the head of state, Mikhail Kalinin, in the name of the President of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. This decree was only published in the 'News of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR' and in the local press.²⁰ Through a further decree on 7 September 1941 the annexation of the territory of the Volga German Republic into the bordering provinces of Saratov and Stalingrad followed.²¹ Contrary to the 'internally' recorded government and party decisions, hefty accusations against the

Germans were raised in the official decree on 28 August 1941. They were accused of harbouring ‘thousands and tens of thousands of saboteurs and spies’ who on a certain German signal would carry out bomb attacks. On the basis of this allegation, the German minority was declared an enemy of the Soviet state and was ‘resettled’ in the eastern parts of the country. On 9 September 1941, Serov, the leader of the ‘German’ operation and a deputy of the People’s Commissar of Internal Affairs, reported to his boss Beria that at this time four (!) agents from the German secret service were active in the area. As an example of the anti-Soviet sabotage in the Volga German Republic such grotesque evidence was brought forward as ‘torn pictures of the Soviet leader, of destroyed private gardens or fruit plantings’.²² This did not however stop the secret police in the service of the Bolshevik leadership from retrospectively discovering the presence of thousands of traitors to the fatherland among the deported Germans. In the ensuing weeks, the NKVD began a witch-hunt for the Germans to catch, isolate and deport those who remained unregistered:

Because the registration of the Germans in the town of Tula did not occur with the involvement of the military authority, an undercover operation to track down all the Germans currently resident in the town and territory is being carried out with the help of the housing department. On top of that the same work is also being done by special departments in industry and in the authorities [...] and by the undercover informants of the operative department of the NKVD. This work should be finished by 27 September this year [1941].²³

Over the next few months the exile of other groups of the German population, who did not enjoy the ‘status of autonomy’ - for example, from the Ukraine, the Trans and North Caucasus, from the towns of Moscow or Gorki - followed as a result of the secret decision taken by the state committee for defence (*Gosudarstvennyi Komitet Oborony - GKO*), on the orders of the Council of People’s Commissars, under the command of the NKVD and the various war councils of the individual army fronts. The complete ‘German operation’ was carried out under a press and publicity blackout. According to official figures, by the end of 1941, 799,459 people had been ‘resettled’ from the European territories of the Soviet Union to Kazakhstan and Siberia, including 444,115 Volga Germans.²⁴

Cultural Destruction and Economic Plundering

The measures taken by the state and party leadership according to the resolution on the deportation were clearly directed at the complete and total eradication of every trace of German life in the Soviet Union.²⁵ Immediately after the publication of the decree on 28 August 1941, the dissolution of the national cultural institutes in the independent republic began. On 30 August the final edition of a German language newspaper was published with a hurried translation of the decree. Teaching in the German language was immediately forbidden; all German educational institutes in villages and even in towns such as Marxstadt and Balzer, where Germans were the absolute majority, were forced to close. The wave of disbanding also affected cultural institutions such as the German State Theatre in Engels and the theatres in Marxstadt and Balzer, the German state teacher training college, the teachers' institute and the technical colleges, the state folk schools of the ASSRVG, the Philharmonic with its symphony orchestra and German state publishers. The writers' and composers' association, the organization for the fine arts and other cultural organizations were disbanded.²⁶ Even writers of German origin were immediately rejected from the Soviet writers' association.²⁷

In order to fully eliminate the memory of the former inhabitants, the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR had at its disposal the decree from 19 May 1942 on the Russification of German place names. Some places already had both German and Russian names, so from then on only the Russian name was to be used. The others were given mainly patriotic Soviet names: the town of Balzer became Krasnoarmeisk, which means member of the Red Army; one of the oldest and biggest Volga German settlements, Mariental (founded in 1766), mutated into Sovetskoe; Jost was renamed Oktiabr'skoe. Where there were inhibitions due to abiding ideological reasons, the renaming was slightly more restrained: the former capital Engels was allowed to keep its name, which it had only been given in October 1931, while with Marxstadt, only the first half was to remain - the revealing German suffix of *-stadt* had to go.²⁸

The systematic method of destroying national cultural institutions and the erasing of the memory of the over 175-year-long history of the Volga Germans is best illustrated in the example of the museums, archives and libraries. The central museum of the ASSRVG was founded in 1925 in Engels (at the time still called Pokrovsk). Alongside numerous linguistic, ethnographic and folkloric expeditions in the 1920s and 1930s for

the research and conservation of the intellectual and material culture of the Volga Germans, the collection also grew thanks to state purchases of contemporary art, as well as gifts. All in all, it owned 5,400 exhibition pieces in 1940.²⁹ After the dissolution of the Volga German Republic, it did not take long before the museum was closed and other organizations moved into its rooms. The museum of local history in Engels was founded after the central museum was re-profiled, i.e. cleansed of everything that referred to its German inhabitants. After the War, the director of the museum, I. Struin, made an informative statement on the fate of the exhibition pieces, collections and magazine provisions:

Up to 1946 the exhibition pieces and treasures of the museum were laid chaotically in a shed, where many were damaged because of dampness. In this time [between 1941 and 1946] the museum changed its residence many times and three directors came and went [...] With the exception of 1936 no full inventory list remains, no description, no records. Because of these conditions many valuable exhibition pieces were damaged, rotted or fell into the hands of thieves.³⁰

The Central Library of the ASSR of the Volga Germans was dissolved in a similar fashion. The Library, founded in 1918, also housed alongside the scientific, educational and aesthetic literature in German, Russian, French and other European languages, testimonials of the history and culture of the Volga Germans and other geographical groups of Germans in Russia and the USSR. A considerable number of these books, which were collected over many years, were destroyed due to inappropriate storage; selected works were confiscated. About 3,500 valuable publications, mainly in Western European languages from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries were selected in 1943 by a delegation from the University of Saratov to be taken to their academic library. A further part of the collection, which had no direction connection to the German Russians, was strewn across the country in different libraries in an attempt to top up their foreign language sections. Books with the stamp of the central republic library of the ASSR in Engels, can be found in the state libraries of Moscow and St Petersburg, in lending libraries in Volograd, Karaganda, Novosibirsk, Almaty and dozens of other towns.³¹

The fate of the collections of documents from the Central State Archive of the Volga German Republic was not as tragic as that of the documents from other national institutions. The 1,475 funds and the 320,195 records which were registered on 1 January 1941, provide an invaluable source of the socio-cultural, religious, demographic, economic and political development of the German population on the Volga during the Tsarist Empire and after the October Revolution in 1917.³² In the process of only a few days, the archives comprising tens of thousands bundles of paper from agricultural and industrial firms, authorities and institutions were confiscated. Numerous scripts were lost for ever in the ensuing chaos. As far as can be ascertained, the papers were not intentionally destroyed. Russians and Ukrainians comprised about a third of the total population in the territory of the ASSRVG, while in the capital, Engels, they formed an absolute majority, so in many cases it was impossible to cleanly separate the documents by nationality. A branch of the Saratov provincial archives was created for the safe keeping of such documents. Despite the losses suffered, the archives managed to keep a considerable collection of documents on the history of the Volga Germans. However, the collection remained closed to the public and academia. Those who wanted to research in the archives were immediately thought to harbour anti-Soviet sentiments. Until the end of the 1980s it was forbidden to refer to Soviet publications in the library in Engels; even during the period of perestroika all mention of the archives and their catalogues were missing from reliable reference books.³³

In addition to the cultural destruction, the Soviet state also economically ruined the citizens of German origin. The August ukase led to a wave of confiscations of private, collectivized and state wealth. Those who were deported were only allowed to take some food, bed linen and clothes with them. Their household contents, preserved food, tools, animals and their cultivated land fell into state hands. After the deportation alone in the eleven southern cantons the following wealth of the German kolkhoz lay fallow: 908,600 hectares of farmland, 333,102 houses with outbuildings, about 120,000 cattle, more than 120,000 sheep and goats, almost 20,000 horses and approximately 1,500 camels.³⁴ In order to give this widespread dispossession the appearance of an ordered resettlement project, the government passed a bill on 30 August 1941 issuing 'guidelines for the repossession of the wealth from the kolkhoz and the collective

farmers, who were resettled as a result of a special decision'.³⁵ These guidelines even foresaw compensation for the Germans, which - given the property they had forcibly abandoned - could have only been felt as mockery: once in the new settlements a percentage of the confiscated cattle were to be replaced in type or remunerated according to state prices; no member of the family was to receive more than 3 double hundredweight of corn. Further, the law foresaw cheap credit for the building of houses in the new colonies. City inhabitants were allowed to sell their households or contract others to do so on their behalf. Nonetheless the actual economic situation of the kolkhoz in Siberia and Kazakhstan, the complete concentration of the land's resources on the war effort, and a rapid currency depreciation reduced these modest promises to waste paper.³⁶

A large-scale ethnic redistribution was taking place - by 3 September 1941, as the deportation was in full swing, the government of the USSR decided to send 44,744 Russian and Ukrainian families from the Zaporozh'e, Kursk and other territories to the recently vacated homes and businesses. The repopulation continued slowly, although more orders soon came from the government to facilitate the acceleration of the repopulation of the evacuated areas. However, at the beginning of 1945 the population in the former German cantons was still only 20-35 per cent of the pre-war level. A considerable part of the deserted houses and business premises fell into disrepair; parts were scavenged during the War for heating or they served the new inhabitants as replacement stones for other buildings. Many countryside villages were never resettled after the deportation of the Germans.³⁷

Germans as Second-class Citizens

The breach of law (Benjamin Pinkus), which the Soviet government committed by dissolving the ASSRVG and the resultant deportations, was not only disastrous for the Russian Germans in the fields of politics, culture and economics, but it also led to grave reductions to their civil rights.³⁸ In contrast to their totalitarian opponents in Germany the Soviet Union had not anchored the discriminatory legal norms regarding ethnic communities in the law.³⁹ Through this skilled move the Bolshevik leaders were able for decades to deny the huge suppression, initially of the Russian Germans, and later of other nationalities.

A complicated web of discriminatory regulations was soon in place resulting from the internal party decisions and the secret police briefings. A decisive role in this process was played by the department of special settlements (*Otdel Spetspereselenii ~ OSP*), which had been formed by 28 August 1941, was directly subordinate to the central apparatus of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs (NKVD) and was solely concerned with the organization of the expulsions, followed by re-accommodation in Siberia and Kazakhstan.⁴⁰ The state government must have recognized the growing gulf between, on the one hand the persecution of the former Kulaks because of a class principle, however vague, for which the Department for Work and Special Resettlement of the Main Camp Administration (*Glavnoe Upravlenie Lagerei - GULag*) was responsible, and on the other hand, the currently implemented repressions on an ethnic basis. The head (*nachal'nik*) of this authority, a major in the State Security, Ivan Ivanov, and his eight co-workers became very active in the period that followed in order to instruct their subordinates in the 'correct' way of dealing with the Germans who had by now been expelled from the brotherly Soviet peoples and were under the charge of the Interior Affairs Ministry. In numerous round robin letters to the district departments of the NKVD, Ivanov told them over and over again: seek and disclose the fascist agents among the resettled Germans; track down every expression of discontent; force the Germans, irrespective of their family status and professional or academic qualifications, to work in the *kolkhozes* and *sovkhoses*; and scrutinize their whereabouts within their designated areas.⁴¹

The party and government decision from 26 August 1941, along with other regulations, ensured that the resettlement of the Germans was only possible in small countryside villages or small district towns. Finding accommodation or moving to a regional town, an industrial area or even a major city was strictly forbidden. Added to this, the deportation soon also affected those Germans who lived in the eastern areas of the Soviet Union. Many had been there for generations; their mass deportation had never been intended. On 16 October 1941 the central committee of the communist party of Kazakhstan decided upon the deportation of Germans from the regional centres of the republic and henceforth they were banned from occupying any leading posts in the party, the soviet or in industry. A few days later the registration of Germans living in regional centres and industrial zones began. They were rounded up and banished to countryside settlements in the provinces of Molotov (Perm'), Chelyabinsk, Sverdlovsk and Chkalov (Orenburg) in the Urals. The forced resettlement

from the large towns in the Soviet Republic of Uzbekistan followed in January 1942.⁴²

For the national intelligentsia and professionals this was the beginning of a fatal development with devastating results which reached their low point when they were forced into the labour camps. Clearly all these measures were aimed at the destruction and humiliation of the political and cultural elite among the German Russians. What sort of professional future could be expected for the 212 doctors, teachers, actors and a further 452 state employees from Engels, the capital of the Volga German Republic, on the Siberian collective farms, specifically in the district of Kansk, in the region of Krasnoyarsk? As city dwellers they arrived with little food and could not even hope for a meagre compensation for their confiscated cattle or wheat. Very few were successful in finding employment in the district centre; most were defenceless against the hard physical farm labour and were already starving by December 1941.⁴³ In the district of Oiashino, in the province of Novosibirsk, 574 of the 1,300 Germans fit for work were professional experts, among whom were 66 professors, their assistants, librarians and teachers, 47 doctors, 22 engineers, and 120 accountants and chief accountants. Professor Werner, head of the chair for microbiology at Saratov University, was forced to do simple work in the Gorn kolkhoz, and the gynaecologist (Dr) Wilhelm was sent to the kolkhoz Voroshilov to do general work.⁴⁴

The mass deportation from 1943 to 1944 led to a drastic increase of the number of people with limited civil rights. In accordance with a decree of 9 January 1945, special military headquarters were created in areas where the deportees were sent in order to observe and control them. In the designated areas the Germans, along with other deportees, were required to register themselves and any change in the number of family members (through death, escape, birth, etc.) within three days; they were unable to leave their place of residence without permission from the commandant. The regime of special colonies was tightened with the adoption of the decree from the presidency of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on 26 November 1948, which stated that the banishment of the 'punished' people was to be 'permanent' and envisaged the sentence for escaping from the special colonies as twenty years forced labour in a penal camp.⁴⁵

Germanophobic Propaganda and Hostility among the Population.

The August decree was never mentioned by the Soviet mass media, the printed compendium of laws and the academic literature both during and after the War; only the scarcely available 'News of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR' published it. The regime could not face the disgrace of admitting that a people, despite years of ideological influence, were 'entirely' comprised of enemies of the Soviet Union. Obscure claims often thousand spies and saboteurs' among the Volga Germans also did not appear particularly believable. Numerous party and Soviet officials in the central authorities and in the places of deportation were told through official channels the 'reason' for the disbanding of the Volga German Republic. A 'directive' letter from the central committee of the communist party of Kazakhstan to the leading officials in the regions and districts, dated 4 October 1941, repeated the claims of the August decree and called on the party organization to sharpen protection of socialist property, increase vigilance and keep the newly arrived refugees under constant surveillance.⁴⁶

A wide stratum of the Soviet population learned of the 'political' dangers of their new neighbours through word of mouth. Through indirect slander the Bolshevik rulers were able to safeguard their own history, to continue praising 'the equal Soviet family of nations' and to denounce the policy of 'national suppression' in fascist Germany.⁴⁷ In addition, the extensive deprivation of rights and the defamation of Soviet citizens of German descent sent out signals which made clear that the propagation of national hate, chauvinistic remarks and every type of discrimination would not be prosecuted by the law. 'We are allowing too much humanism to reign over these fascist scoundrels,' said a district party secretary in the territory of north Kazakhstan, and with such an opinion of the German deportees he was not alone.⁴⁸

Calls by the central committee of the VKP(b) on the twenty-fourth anniversary of the October Revolution show the remains of the slogans of international solidarity: 'Our greetings to the German (*germanskomu*) people, who groan under the yoke of Hitler's national socialist mob - we wish them victory over the bloodthirsty Hitler.'⁴⁹ The constantly worsening conditions on the front, however, removed the last ideological blinkers. The clearest example of this change is the order from the supervisor of the head office for political propaganda for the Red Army, Lev Mekhlis, which on

10 December 1941 ordered the replacement of the slogan 'Workers of the World, Unite' with 'Death to the German Occupiers' in all military newspapers. He justified this change by claiming that the international proletarian slogan had disorientated many in the armed forces 'in the face of the assignment to destroy all German occupiers'.⁵⁰

The immense suffering of the civilians and the complete destruction of areas around Moscow, which became apparent upon their first recapture during the fight for Moscow, immeasurably increased Germanophobic hysteria in the mass media. On the whole, however, the destruction was the result of merciless Soviet war policy. On 17 November 1941 Stalin ordered, in command No. 0428 from the Headquarters of the Supreme Commander, the destruction of all human settlements and housing within a 40-60 km radius of the German front. The arsonist commandos, who were formed especially for this purpose, began with a systematic destruction of the basics for survival, so that the German conquerors should freeze under the open skies. On 25 November the operatives of the Fifth Soviet Army alone reported the destruction and burning of fifty-five settlements.⁵¹ The concerns of the Soviet population who fell under the German occupation were not taken into consideration: 'The Soviet arithmetic is simple - to send one German and with him a hundred Russians to ruin is a heroic action. But if one spares the life of one German along with a hundred Russians - that is bad; that amounts to treason.'⁵²

Molotov's diplomatic notes of 25 November 1941, 'On the outraging bestialities practised on Soviet prisoners of war by German authorities', and of 6 January 1942, 'On the general plundering, the thefts from the population and the dreadful bestialities of the German authorities in the territories under their occupation', increased the country's desire for pogroms. The main aim of the Soviet mass media was the propagation of hate against the enemy within - as programmatically announced by the famous author Aleksei Tolstoi in a *Pravda* appeal on 28 July 1941. Supporting him in this regard were a whole host of famous authors, such as Leonid Leonov, Mikhail Sholokhov, Ilya Erenburg, Konstantin Simonov et al. Poems such as Simonov's 'Kill him' or Surkov's 'I hate' obviously served to raise fighting lust in the troops. Ilya Erenburg's pamphlets and articles even described the Englishman Alexander Werth, not particularly known for his sympathy towards the Germans, as 'nothing short of propaganda for a race war'.⁵³

Uncountable articles in flyers and newspapers, books and magazines, radio programmes and films discriminated primarily against Germans (i.e. not against the enemy or the fascists). Violent feelings were propagated, clearly poisoning the relations between the population of all other nationalities and the Russian Germans, especially since the Soviet authorities made no effort to differentiate between Russian Germans and the attacking nation. The picture of the enemy as including the ‘domestic’ Germans was soon ‘scientifically’ supported. The Central Archive Administration of the NKVD published a collection of sources on German espionage in tsarist Russia. The documentation allegedly verified that Russian citizens of German descent, including farmers, all professionals, entrepreneurs, high-ranking public officials and officers, had en masse carried out activities as German agents. Such accusations appeared repeatedly in the detailed foreword of the collection, which promptly appeared as a book in its own right.⁵⁴ This reporting, naturally without any critical screening, served as the basis for the writing of further works on German espionage in Russia during the First and the Second (current) World Wars, which eventually ran into several hundred thousand copies.⁵⁵

Not only the secret police but also many literary figures profited from the stirring up of resentment against their fellow German citizens. In early 1943 the literary scholar Aleksandr Dement’ev wrote the book *The reactionary role of the Germans in Russia’s history* (printed in Leningrad, circulation 10,000 copies, during the siege of the city). A year later a collection appeared providing the worst possible descriptions of the ‘local’ Germans in the works of classical Russian literature, which Dement’ev had carefully selected and supplied with a disparaging commentary. Similar to the pattern of anti-Semitic propaganda, the planned publications were full of prejudices, suspicion and slander of every type.⁵⁶ The well-known author Pavel Bazhov had been publishing his malicious caricatures of *Tales on the Germans (Skazy o nemtsakh)* in several newspapers since August 1941. These later appeared as brochures and books for mass circulation. He was helped by the use of the most primitive clichés and common stereotypes in his works, in order to underline the clear intellectual and moral superiority of the Russian masters and workers in contrast to the German administrators, miners and professionals, who had been active in considerable numbers in the iron industry in the Urals since the beginning of the eighteenth century.⁵⁷

A growing antipathy and bitterness against Germany, German culture and language

increased constantly as the war continued with its human and material war victims. Local NKVD authorities' reports reflect the hopeless situation of the German Russians.

A completely irregular relationship, even antagonism, has arisen among some leading specialists in economics, the kolkhoz director, production managers, and the district party and soviet regarding the accommodation and employment of the specially resettled Germans [...] Instead of finding accommodation for them, the director of the salt works behaves towards them coarsely, calls them parasites and swears crudely about them [...]. In the district of Sharipovo the chairman of the kolkhoz 'Proletarian Work', Komisarenko, explained in a conversation about supplying the refugees with bread, 'all Germans should die of hunger, I will not give them any bread [...]'. The female collective farmer Churilova explained to the German Schmidt, 'Why did they bring you here to our district, it would have been better if they had killed you back there. You are traitors, you should die of hunger, or be sent out into the cold, so that you fascists can feel it' [...] Of the 7,396 children only 2,403 go to school. This can be explained by the fact that the majority of children do not own shoes, warm clothes or school equipment. Children older than the age of twelve do not go to school because they must work in the industry or go into service. Also the lack of knowledge of the Russian language plays a part [...]. In the schools in some districts the German schoolchildren are thoroughly terrorised by their Russian peers and called 'fascists'. That is why they stop going to school.⁵⁸

Similar incidents were also recorded by the security services in other territories, to which deported Germans were sent. The responsible party and Soviet organizations did not, however, see fit to take any measures in the face of such grave disrespect of Soviet law. Indeed, expressions of discontent at the living conditions in the new location, or complaints about national discrimination, were often dismissed and punished as anti-Soviet agitation, propaganda, or as slander against the actions of the party and government.⁵⁹

Forced Entry into Labour Camps and Terrorization by the Secret Police

As a result of the secret decision of the Politburo of the VKP(b) on 31 August 1941 entitled 'On the Germans living in the Ukrainian SSR', all men between the ages of sixteen and sixty were conscripted into military construction units.⁶⁰ The acting leader

of the NKVD, Chernyshev, reported the creation of thirteen construction battalions with a total of 18,600 men by 3 September 1941.⁶¹ On 8 September 1941, Stalin signed directive No. 35105 of the People's Commissariat for Defence, which stated: 'In the military, including military academies, military colleges and agencies of the Red Army, soldiers of German descent are to be sifted out from the reserves and the command corps and sent to construction troops in the central military zone.' Only a few soldiers of German descent were to be retained on special recommendation from their superiors.⁶² Officers were sacked from the Army without the usual transfer into the reserves and sent to remote areas, while the rank and file had to continue their service in labour battalions. At the beginning of 1942 there was an almost total transferral of German military personal into labour camps.⁶³ Thus the foundations were laid for the forced labour of Russian Germans.

The next stepping stone towards special treatment of the German minority was the widespread deportment of youths, men and women to labour camps, which had been operating since early 1942. These were disguised by the officers and later by the authorities as *trudovaia armiia* or *trudarmiia*: 'work army'. Officially these measures were called 'mobilisation of the workforce', although the commander in the camps' headquarters GULag, General Lieutenant Nasedkin, openly admitted in an internal lecture that the forced admission of Germans to the labour camps was above all seen as a measure of repression and punishment towards this national minority.⁶⁴ Because Stalin's regime apparently wanted to keep the civil rights of those deported to a minimum, recruitment of construction troops for the construction battalions was out of the question. At the same time they made use of a clever trick: because it was technically impossible to lawfully pass judgement on all adult Germans in such a short time, to legally send them to a punishment camp, a new category of GULag was created - the *trudmobilizovannyi nemets* - 'work mobilised German', which meant that these forced labourers never appeared in GULag statistics.

The majority of Germans found themselves in work camps as a result of the top-secret resolutions of the GKO from 10 January (No. 1123), 14 February (No. 1281) and 7 October (No. 2383) 1942. Further mobilization followed over the coming months and years, which in the face of the exhaustion of the human potential yielded considerably smaller contingents. The legal status of those mobilized can be characterized as a

mixture of that of camp inmate, construction worker and military personnel, although the camp-inmate characteristic was the most dominant. That can be seen primarily by the fact that the distribution of food and clothes was carried out according to normal GULag regulations. A further similarity with the GULags is revealed in the role of the NKVD to keep the mobilized German troops and labour columns under surveillance, and to enforce strict order and discipline. Furthermore, these Germans were isolated from the normal workforce, were accommodated in barracks and were deprived of their freedom of movement. As with GULag prisoners, they were assigned the most strenuous physical jobs and unskilled work, such as railway and industrial construction, coal and oil extraction or wood cutting. Their forced conscription by the local war commissariat and their subordination to military courts gave this group the appearance of military recruits. The existence of party and *Komsomol* organizations at the sites - albeit with severely restricted authority - and the envisaged wages in accordance with the salary scale of their civilian careers ultimately suggested the survival of some elements of civil rights. The same fate awaited healthy men of other minorities who were capable of work, whose 'motherland' was at war with the USSR. The GKO resolution of 14 October 1942 (No. 2409) proclaimed these regulations for Soviet citizens of Finnish, Hungarian, Bulgarian, Italian or Rumanian descent. All in all during the War, no fewer than 350,000 of the approximately 1.12 million Russian Germans who stand under Soviet jurisdiction were sent to forced labour camps.⁶⁵

A speciality of this conscription was its absolute inclusiveness: alongside the simple workers and farmers, the entire intellectual and functionary classes of the Russian Germans found themselves in the camps. This included deputies from the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and from the Union Republics and Autonomous Republics; ministers and government officials; party, economic and Soviet specialists; professors and lecturers; writers and doctors; teachers and engineers; officers and judges from the Volga German Republic. Numerous German, Austrian and Sudetenland emigrants were also threatened with this forced recruitment and some of them endured years in labour camps.⁶⁶

The highest concentrations of German workers were those on construction sites for industrial buildings and penal camps that specialized in tree felling. Thus on 1 January

1943, on the construction site of the Chelyabinsk iron and steel combine of the NKVD of the USSR, there were 27,783 *trudarmiia* workers; on the site of the Bogoslov aluminium plant, a further 12,683, and in Ivdel'lag, 12,266 people, the latter two camps belonging to Sverdlovsk province. Miserable living and working conditions, the pitiless coercion and a feeling of the impunity of the camp leaders and managers rapidly produced a large number of deaths and cases of serious illness among these Germans. According to official statistics in 1942, 12,047 members of the forced labour force died on NKVD projects alone, or 10.3 per cent (117,429) of Germans who up until 1 January 1943 were registered there. Due to complete physical exhaustion, a further 8,073 people were demobilized, of which the majority subsequently died.⁶⁷

In the labour camps all contact with conscripted Germans other than the most necessary was strictly forbidden, rules that were consistent with the treatment of prisoners. But as they were being used toward the members of a particular nationality - who according to formal legal grounds did not belong to the category of prisoner - they took on a racist undertone. This can be seen from the many instructions and orders which denounced close contact with the German forced labourers and doled out hard punishment to offenders. Above all, relationships with Russian women were subject to repressive measures - because of 'intimate contact with one of the mobilised Germans' the *Komsomol* secretary for the organization for free employee personnel in Ivdel'lag lost her position and was expelled from the communist youth organization. A female doctor had to tolerate public denunciation because on a few occasions she met one of the German forced labourers in her own flat, and that 'was contrary to the strict regulations of the building authority of Chelyabinsk iron and steel combine', which forbade 'relationships of any sort between personnel and the mobilised German workforce'.⁶⁸

In addition to military supervision, Soviet secret police played a major part in the suppression of these Germans. Representatives of the secret police were to be found in the work places and were called the notorious 'Security Officer Section' (*Operativno-Chekistskii Otdel* - OChO). The OChO acted mainly autonomously and were territorially subordinate to the province administration of the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs and the operational department of the GULag Central office. In April 1943 the NKGB (People's Commissariat for State Security) was formed from the ranks

of the NKVD. Supervision of the German labour force essentially remained the responsibility of the NKVD. Only in the case of suspected espionage and serious legal or economic wrongdoing did the NKGB assume the investigation. A massive wave of repression seized the Russian Germans: by July 1944, 8,543 forced labourers were arrested on the grounds of attempted escape, alleged acts of sabotage and counter-revolution, and also because of self-mutilation and 'intentional' weight loss. Of these, 6,392 were sentenced to many years imprisonment and 526 to death.⁶⁹ In the majority of cases the punishment was handed down by a Special Board (*Osoboe Soveshchanie*) by the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs thus circumventing proper criminal jurisdiction.

The terrorization of forced labourers served many purposes; on the one hand it was an important method of intimidating them and making them compliant - in particular the intellectuals, professionals, the former civil servants and leaders of business. The ruination of the national elite reduced the Germans to a weak-willed, disposable mass. On the other hand the number of convicted or exposed counter-revolutionary organizations among the Germans had to be large enough to provide a *raison d'être* for every single *Chekist* to secure their job and spare them from being sent to the front. And last but not least, credible evidence of the Germans' treacherous and criminal activities had to be discovered in order to support the deprivation of their rights retrospectively. An analysis of the early commemorative books of the victims of political repression in the province of Sverdlovsk indicates that during the years 1941-45, the German minority received a fifth of all convictions, although their employment rate during this time hovered between a mere 3 and 4 per cent.⁷⁰

The search for the suspected connection between the German minority and political, intelligence and military posts in the Third Reich was the focus of attention right from the beginning: dozens of secret processes with hundreds of accused were aimed at confirming the existence of Hitler's '5th Column' in the USSR.⁷¹ In June and August 1942, on the construction site of the Chelyabinsk iron and steel combine, the OChO arranged two trials of the recently arrived *trudarmii* workers' 'counterrevolutionary and mutinous' organizations. The leaders of one of the groups of conspirators was Jakob Müller, the first party secretary of the canton of Krasnoyarsk, in the Volga German Republic from 1938 to 1941, and Wladimir Hartmann, the chairman of the executive

committee of the same canton. The second organization was supposed to be led by Theodor Trautwein and Alexander Root, the second and third party secretaries of the same canton of Krasnoyarsk. In the investigation papers a case was made that since the beginning of the 1930s the ringleaders had been spying for Germany and had actively taken part in preparations for an armed revolt which was to take place just after the start of the War. According to the confessions of the accused, only the well-timed resettlement of Germans had stopped their treacherous plans. In the labour camps they began preparing for an uprising which was to take place at the approach of the German Army, this time expected as far as the Urals. Of the 51 Germans prosecuted, of whom many were in groups - economic, soviet and party - of middle and lower rank, 24 were executed, the rest receiving many years imprisonment. In the years between 1943 and 1945 dozens more former German intellectuals and leading groups from the Volga German Republic were criminally prosecuted at the camp in the region Krasnoyarsk.⁷² In this and in many other cases the state security used forced confessions to implicate the former leaders of the ASSRVG in treason and subversive activities. Its aim was to discredit and, where possible, to criminally prosecute them, in order to legitimize Stalin's regime retrospectively, the disbanding of the Volga Republic and the repressive measures taken against citizens of German descent.⁷³

The following secret trial is easily the most important among the hundreds of cases against German forced labourers during the War and in the early years after it. It is concerned with the deputy to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and the last head of government of the Volga German Republic, Alexander Heckmann, the third secretary of the territory's party committee, Heinrich Korbmacher, the former People's Commissars Friedrich Fritzler (agriculture), Johannes Maier (finance) and other leading economic and soviet officials, who served their time at the construction site of the Bogoslov Aluminium works of the NKVD. They were found guilty of heading a counter-revolutionary organization in the former Volga German Republic and of arranging an uprising in collaboration with the German *Wehrmacht*, behind the back of the Red Army. Heinrich Korbmacher was the first to be arrested, on 24 April 1944; Alexander Heckmann followed on 22 May and the others by early July. The Chekists of Sverdlovsk were clearly keen to complete their assignment from the Moscow headquarters of State Security and to fabricate from these people the alleged

‘command centre’ of the mutinous counter-revolutionary organization. By means of torture, these prominent Germans were forced to admit their formation of an anti-Soviet organization in the former ASSRVG and of planning to carry out extensive sabotage. On top of that, they were accused of preparing this ‘expanded’ underground organization for an armed uprising against the Soviet powers following an attack from Nazi Germany.⁷⁴

The investigation, which lasted more than a year, the prisoners’ contradictory statements and the ‘particular importance’ of this case led the Deputy People’s Commissar for State Security, Colonel General Kobulov, to order the Moscow NKGB headquarters to take on further investigations from 4 November 1945.⁷⁵ The case became the responsibility of the department assigned with particularly important investigations on behalf of the NKGB of the USSR. Heckmann, Korbmacher, Fritzler and Maier were transferred to Moscow. Everything pointed to a large-scale show trial, with public condemnation of the ‘treason’ committed against the socialist homeland by the Volga Germans and, by association, by all the Russian Germans. However, for such a plan to work, credible confessions and trustworthy evidence was needed. With mere personal confessions the risk of public condemnation was far too great if the evidence was to be based on mere personal confessions, particularly as during their stay in Moscow prisons the accused had distanced themselves from their previous confessions made under duress. The careful investigation took over six months and included official visits to Sverdlovsk and Krasnoyarsk, where dozens of previous and new witnesses were questioned. Everything which could be related in any way to this process - the rich state security archive, current and closed investigations, extensive personal indexes etc. - was subject to meticulous examination.

These far-reaching inquiries revealed nothing new and no trace of any rebellious group or fascist dissidents could be found. The final indictment therefore declared that ‘the membership of Korbmacher, Heckmann, Fritzler and Maier to an anti-Soviet rebellious group could not be proven.’⁷⁶ They were then simply charged with anti-Soviet propaganda with ‘nationalist’ tendencies and on 9 August the “Special Board” sentenced each to four years’ imprisonment. As later investigations from the Khrushchev period proved, this and other group punishments could only be carried out by drastically violating the legitimate laws of the time. Most of the people involved were later pardoned - after they had died.

From 1945 and 1946, the labour columns were steadily disbanded and members of the 'German special contingent' were transferred to the permanent staff of firms or construction companies where they had been employed during the War. They still did not, however, enjoy the same rights as normal Soviet citizens and were instead given the status of special settler - as were almost all of the remaining Germans in Siberia or Kazakhstan. If their finances permitted, their families were allowed to join them. Or, if their managers and the special commander agreed, they could return to the place from whence they had come.

Conclusion

Under the pretext of collaboration, the Stalinist leadership declared the Russian Germans state enemies and banished them to the eastern territories of the country. Without exception they were deprived of their rights, primarily to enable the patriotic mobilization of the Soviet society for the 'Great Patriotic War'. Sent east and subject to the 'special regimes' of the NKVD, they had to work principally on construction sites, in pits or doing hard physical labour on the land, and were barred from all intellectual work or positions of responsibility. In contrast to other nationalities the state leadership ordered the forced admission of every German man, woman and youth into labour camps. Soldiers and officers of German descent were sifted out of the military and also sent to labour camps. Official Germanophobic propaganda stirred the flames of national hatred; personal insults and abuse relating to nationality remained unpunished.

Attentive observers quickly recognized the fatal connection between the unbridled hatred of the Germans and the ever-growing xenophobia. The well-known literary scholar Sergei Bondi had already said in July 1943: 'I really regret the anti-democratic tendencies that one sees every day. Look at national chauvinism. From what is it evoked? Most of all through the mood of the army, which is anti-Semitic, anti-German and against all national minorities.'⁷⁷

The fateful ideological developments of the post-war period, with its greater Russian chauvinism and its anti-Western slogans, the fight against the so-called 'rootless cosmopolitans' and 'fawning on the West', is hardly imaginable without the groundwork and clichés laid and 'tested' during the War. The fate of the Russian Germans clearly shows that the Soviet totalitarian regime was fully able to embrace

racist measures of suppression, despite internationalist lip service and the rhetoric of class struggle.

Translated by Catherine Venner

Notes

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- ¹ *Dokumenty vneshnei politiki. 1940-1941*, vol. 23, book 2 (2). 2 marta 1940 - 22 iunia 1941 (Moscow, 1998), pp. 764-5. German version in Gerd R. Ueberschläger and Wolfram Wette (eds), *Der deutsche Überfall auf die Sowjetunion. Unternehmen Barbarossa 1941* (Frankfurt am Main, 1991), p. 271.
- ² Quoted from I. Stalin, *O velikoi Otechestvennoi voine* (Moscow, 2002), p. 15. In German, Josef Stalin, *Über den großen Vaterländischen Krieg der Sowjetunion*, 3rd edn (Moscow, 1946), p. 13. Here the different meanings of the two Russian words *nemetskii* and *germanskii* should be explained. *Nemetskii* means belonging to the German *Volk* in the ethnic sense. *Germanskii*, apart from describing the old Germanic tribes, serves in relationship to the state as a national feature and as such has a political nature.
- ³ ”Povernite Vashe oruzhie...” (Ispol’zovanie povolzhkikh nemtsev v kontrpropagande na naselenie i vooruzhennye sily Germanii letom 1941 g.), in *Voенно-istoricheskie issledovaniia v Povolzh’e*, 2 (Saratov, 1997), pp. 274-94, here pp. 279-83.
- ⁴ ”Povernite oruzhie protiv bandy gitlerovskikh ubiits!” *Golos krest’ian Respubliki nemtsev Povolzh’ia*, in *Pravda* 194, 15 July 1941; the same in *Krasnaia zvezda* 164, 15 July 1941; ’Sil’nei beite prokliatykh izvergov: pis’mo Konrada Geringera iz kantona Kukkus, Respublika nemtsev Povolzh’ia’, in *Krasnaia zvezda* 202, 28 August 1941.
- ⁵ See also V. Nevezhin, *Sindrom nastupatel’noi voiny. Sovetskaia propaganda v predverii “sviashchennykh boev”*, 1939-1941 gg. (Moscow, 1997), p. 67; V. Tokarev, *Sovetskoe obshchestvo i pol’skaia kompaniia 1939 g.: “romanticheskoe oshchushchenie voiny”*, in *Chelovek i voina. Voina kak iavlenie kul’tury* (Moscow, 2001), pp. 399 ff.
- ⁶ Ortwin Buchbender, *Das tönende Erz. Deutsche Kriegspropaganda gegen die Rote Armee im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Stuttgart, 1978), pp. 60 ff.; Hartmut Schustereit, *Vabanque* (Herford and Bonn, 1988), p. 73.
- ⁷ *Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg*, vol. 4: *Der Angriff auf die Sowjetunion* (Stuttgart, 1983), pp. 781-2; Bogdan Musial, *’Konterrevolutionäre Elemente sind zu erschießen’. Die Brutalisierung des deutsch-sowjetischen Krieges im Sommer 1941* (Berlin and Munich, 2000), pp. 200-9; Alfred M. de Zayas, *Die Wehrmacht-Untersuchungsstelle*.

Dokumentation alliierter Kriegsverbrechen im Zweiten Weltkrieg, 7th expanded edn (Munich, 2001), pp. 327-35.

⁸ A. Kokurin, N. Petrov, Gulag: struktura i kadry. Stat'ia deviataia, in *Svobodnaia mysl'* 5, 2000, pp. 109-24, here p. 110; 'Evakuatsiia zakliuchennykh iz tiurem NKVD SSSR v 1941-42 godakh', in *Voенno-istoricheskii arkhiv* 2, 1997, pp. 232-53, here p. 252.

⁹ *Pravda*, 14 July 1941.

¹⁰ A selection of documents from the investigation is to be found in '*Vernite mne svobodu*'. *Deiateli literatury i iskusstva Rossii i Germanii - zhertvy stalinskogo terrora. Memorial'nyi sbornik dokumentov iz arkhivov byvshego KGB* (Moscow, 1997), pp. 304-20.

¹¹ 'Wir nehmen an ihnen Rache für dich, Genosse!', in *Nachrichten* (Engels) No. 203, 29 August 1941; David Wagner, Das Komsomolmitgliedsbuch Nr. 12535944, in *Bis zum letzten Atemzug*, vol. 2 (Alma-Ata, 1972), pp. 171-81.

¹² Quoted from B. Nikolaevskii, *Tainye stranitsy istorii* (Moscow, 1995), p. 204.

¹³ E. Seniavskaia, *Psikhologiya voiny v XX veke. Istoricheskii opyt Rossii* (Moscow, 1999), pp. 263-79.

¹⁴ A typical example is the wordplay of the title in the main article 'Besposhchadno istrebliat' fashistskoe zver'e', in *Pravda*, 3 January 1942.

¹⁵ After heavy defeat during the First World War, in mid June 1915, tens of thousands Russian citizens of German and Jewish descent from the Baltic States, Poland, Volhynia and the Ukraine were accused of collaboration with the advancing German and Austro-Hungarian troops and forcibly resettled by their governments at the suggestion of the military authority. Cf. Ingeborg Fleischhauer, *Die Deutschen im Zarenreich* (Stuttgart, 1986), pp. 507-9; S. Nelipovich, "'Nemetskuiu pakost' uvolit' i bez nezhnostei...' Deportatsii v Rossii 1914-1918 gg., in *Voенno-istoricheskii zhurnal*, 1997, 1, pp. 42-53; Frank Schuster, *Der Krieg an der inneren Front. Deutsche und Juden im westrussischen Kriegsgebiet während des Ersten Weltkriegs 1914-1916*, MA thesis (University of Gießen, s.a.), available online: <http://www.uni-giessen.de/~g814/Schuster.html>

¹⁶ *Izvestiia TsK KPSS*, 1990, 9, p. 195; in German in Alfred Eisfeld and Victor Herdt (eds), *Deportation, Sondersiedlung, Arbeitsarmee: Deutsche in der Sowjetunion 1941 bis 1956* (Cologne, 1996), pp. 54-5.

¹⁷ *Organy gosudarstvennoi bezopasnosti SSSR v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine, Vol. 2, book 1: 22 iunia - 31 avgusta 1941. Sbornik dokumentov* (Moscow, 2000), p. 521.

¹⁸ A. German and A. Kurochkin, *Nemtsy SSSR v 'Trudovoi armii' (1941 - 1945)* (Moscow, 1998), p. 29.

¹⁹ The text of this directive can be found in A. German, *Istoriia Respubliki nemtsev Povolzh'ia v sobytiikh, faktakh, dokumentakh*, 2nd rev. edn (Moscow, 2000), p. 229-33.

²⁰ *Vedomosti Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR 1941*, No. 38; *Bol'shevik* and *Nachrichten* (Engels), No.

204, 30 August 1941, also published in German in Eisfeld and Herdt (eds), *Deportation...*, pp. 54-5.

²¹ *Vedomosti Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR 1941*, No. 40. German translation in Eisfeld and Herdt (eds), *Deportation...*, p. 72.

²² German, *Istoriia Respubliki nemtsev...*, pp. 240-2.

²³ *Deportatsii narodov SSSR (1930-e - 1950-e gody)*, Part 2: *Deportatsiia nemtsev: sentiabr' 1941 - fevral' 1942* (Moscow, 1995), p. 116.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 171-2.

²⁵ These are primarily presented via the example of the Volga Germans, because for the first time in the history of the USSR such actions took place in relation to a titular nation and with such excess. Lessons in the native language, and German educational and cultural institutions outside the ASSRVG had already been extensively forbidden or disbanded during the 1930s.

²⁶ A. German, Gorod Engel's - stolitsa respubliki nemtsev Povolzh'ia (Nekotorye siuzhety iz istorii goroda 20-30-kh godov), in *Soobshcheniia Engel'skogo kraevedcheskogo muzeia, fasc. 5: Nemtsy v Saratovskom Povolzh'e* (Saratov, 1997), pp. 46-55; E. Erina, K istorii nemetskogo gosudarstvennogo pedagogicheskogo instituta, in *Rossiiskie nemtsy na Donu, Kavkaze i Volge* (Moscow, 1995), pp. 336-45.

²⁷ *Apparat TsK KPSS i kul'tura. 1953-1957: Dokumenty* (Moscow, 2001), pp. 454-5.

²⁸ *Karte der ASSR der Wolgadeutschen/Beiheft* (Göttingen, 1997), pp. 27, 30-1.

²⁹ N. Malova, Otdel sotsialisticheskogo stroitel'stva Tsentral'nogo muzeia ASSR nemtsev Povolzh'ia i ego ekspozitsiia 1931-1941, in *Soobshcheniia Engel'skogo kraevedcheskogo*, pp. 139-45; E. Fleiman, Iz istorii kraevedeniia v Avtonomnoi respublike nemtsev Povolzh'ia (1918-1941), in *Rossiiskie nemtsy na Donu...*, pp. 223-32.

³⁰ Quoted from Malova, 'Otdel sotsialisticheskogo stroitel'stva...', p. 144.

³¹ N. Popkova, Pervye itogi rekonstruktsii fonda Tsentral'noi biblioteki ASSR NP, in *Kraevedcheskie chteniia. Doklady i soobshcheniia IV - VI chtenii* (Saratov, 1994), pp. 192-4.

³² E. Erina, Sud'ba arkhivov nemtsev Povolzh'ia v gody voiny s fashistskoi Germaniei v 1941-1945 gg., in *Nemtsy SSSR v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny i v pervoe poslevoennoe desiatiletie 1941-1955 gg.* (Moscow, 2001), pp. 525-33.

³³ *Gosudarstvennye arkhivy SSSR. Spravochnik*, Parts 1 and 2 (Moscow, 1989).

³⁴ V. Kherdt (Victor Herdt), Etno-demograficheskie protsessy v Saratovskoi oblasti v 1940-e gody, in *Rossiiskie nemtsy na Donu...*, pp. 211-22, here p. 215.

³⁵ The text of this instruction is printed in *Deportatsiia narodov SSSR...*, pp. 94-105.

³⁶ Viktor Bruhl, *Die Deutschen in Sibirien*, vol. 2 (Nuremberg, 2003), p. 28- 44.

³⁷ Kherdt, 'Etno-demograficheskie protsessy', pp. 215-19; O. Skuchaeva, "Novye raiony" Saratovskoi oblasti v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny: migratsionnyi aspekt, in *Nemtsy*

SSSR, pp. 115-24; A. German, *Nemetskaia avtonomiia na Volge. 1918-1941*, Part 2: *Avtonomnaia Respublika 1924-1941* (Saratov, 1994), pp. 320-8 ('Pokinutaia zemlia').

³⁸ Benjamin Pinkus and Ingeborg Fleischhauer, *Die Deutschen in der Sowjetunion. Geschichte einer nationalen Minderheit im 20. Jahrhundert* (Baden-Baden, 1987), pp. 321-38.

³⁹ An extensive analysis of the national socialist term *völkische Ungleichheit* (racial inequality) and the principle of privileges which stems from it, as well as the theoretical grounding and practical use that can be found in Diemut Majer, *'Fremdvölkische' im Dritten Reich. Ein Beitrag zur nationalsozialistischen Rechtssetzung und Rechtspraxis in Verwaltung und Justiz unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der eingegliederten Ostgebiete und des Generalgouvernements* (Boppard am Rhein, 1981) (Schriften des Bundesarchivs, vol. 28).

⁴⁰ The statute of this department is printed in *Lubianka. VChK-OGPU- NKVD-MGB-MVD-KGB. 1917-1960. Spravochnik* (Moscow, 1997), pp. 270-1.

⁴¹ More in Viktor Krieger, *Personen minderen Rechts: Rußlanddeutsche in den Jahren 1941-46*, in *Heimatbuch der Deutschen aus Rußland 2004* (Stuttgart, 2004), pp. 93-107; L. Oberderfer, *Deportirovannye nemtsy v Zapadnoi Sibiri (1941-1944 gg.): Deistvitel'nost' i pravovoi status, in Sibir' v XVII-XX vekakh. Problemy politicheskoi i sotsial'noi istorii* (Novosibirsk, 2002), pp. 187-200.

⁴² Krieger, 'Personen minderen Rechts...', pp. 99-100.

⁴³ Head of the local department of NKVD in Kansk (Krasnoyarsk region), Zabludovskii, to head of OSP, Ivanov, 17 December 1941, on the accommodation of 1,500 Germans from the town of Engels, in *Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF)*, f. 9479, op. 1, d. 85, l. 230.

⁴⁴ Bruhl, *Die Deutschen in Sibirien*, p. 46.

⁴⁵ L. Belkovets, *Spetsposelenie nemtsev v Zapadnoi Sibiri (1941-1955 gg.)*, in *Repressii protiv rossiiskikh nemtsev. Nakazannyi narod* (Moscow, 1999), pp. 158-80; L. Burgart, *Nemetskoe naselenie v Vostochnom Kazakhstane v 1941-1956 gg.* (Ust'-Kamenogorsk, 2001); V. Zemskov, *Spetsposeleltsy v SSSR 1930-1960* (Moscow, 2003). Among the affected peoples were Chechens, Karachays, Germans, Ingush, Kalmucks, Crimean Tatars as well as Greeks, Turks, Iranians and Kurds from the Trans-Caucasus, and Armenians, Greeks and Bulgarians from the Crimea.

⁴⁶ *Iz istorii nemtsev Kazakhstana. 1921-1975. Sbornik dokumentov* (Almaty and Moscow, 1997), pp. 102-4.

⁴⁷ See for example the leading article 'Sem'ia narodov SSSR - edinyi nerushimyi lager' in *Pravda*, 29 December 1941.

⁴⁸ *Iz istorii nemtsev...*, pp. 107-8.

⁴⁹ *Pravda*, 31 October 1941.

⁵⁰ *Russkii arkhiv. Velikaia Otechestvennaia. Tom 17-6: Glavnye politicheskie organy*

vooruzhennykh sil SSSR v Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voine 1941-1945 gg. Dokumenty i materialy (Moscow, 1996), p. 91.

- ⁵¹ “‘Vygnat’ nemetskikh zakhvatchikov na kholod v pole”. Prikaz Stavki Verkhovnogo Glavnokomandovaniia 17 noiabria 1941 g.’, in *Istoricheskii arkhiv* 1993, 3, pp. 148-50; *Skrytaia pravda voiny: 1941 god. Neizvestnye dokumenty* (Moscow, 1992), pp. 213-14. Cf. the German translation of this order and its interpretation in Christian Hartmann and Jürgen Zarusky, Stalins “Fackelmänner-Befehl” from November 1941. Ein verfälschtes Dokument, in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 48 (2000), pp. 667-74.
- ⁵² Recollections of a Russian émigré, R. Neratova, *V dni voiny: Semeinaia khronika* (Sankt-Peterburg, 1996), p. 149.
- ⁵³ Alexander Werth, *Rußland im Krieg 1941-1945* (Munich and Zurich, 1965), p. 16.
- ⁵⁴ *Nemetskii shpionazh v tsarskoi Rossii. Sbornik dokumentov* (Moscow, 1942); Off-print of the introduction, I. Nikitinskii and P. Sofinov, *Nemetskii shpionazh v Rossii vo vremia voiny 1914-1918 gg.* (Moscow, 1942).
- ⁵⁵ See e.g. I. Nikitinskii and P. Sofinov, *Nemetskii shpionazh v tsarskoi Rossii* (Saratov, 1942); I. Nikitinskii, *Gitlerovskii shpionazh* (Moscow, 1943).
- ⁵⁶ A. Dement’ev, *Reaktsionnaia rol’ nemtsev v istorii Rossii* (Leningrad, 1943); idem, Russkie pisateli v bor’be protiv nemetskoï reaktsii i agressii, in *Velikie idei patriotizma v tvorchestve russkikh klassikov* (Leningrad, 1944), pp. 39-75. I am grateful to Sergei Nelipovich (Moscow) for this reference.
- ⁵⁷ P. Bazhov, *Skazy o nemtsakh* (Sverdlovsk, 1943); *ibid.*, (Cheliabinsk, 1944); *ibid.*, (Moscow, 1945); V. Cherepov, ‘P.P. Bazhov i khudozhestvennaia kul’tura Sverdlovskia 1941-1945 godov’, in *Ural* (Ekaterinburg), 2004, 1; the text is available online: <http://magazines.russ.ru/ural/2004/1/cherep6.html> The majority of these Germanophobic tales still exist in many editions. Only lately have Russian academics begun to tackle critically this chapter in writing history. V. Liapin, *Nemetskie oruzheinyi na Urale*, in *Deutsche auf dem Ural und in Sibirien (XVI-XX. Jh.). Nemtsy na Urale i v Sibiri (XVI-XX vv.)* (Ekaterinburg, 2001), pp. 138-42.
- ⁵⁸ ‘About economic accommodation and work incorporation of the special settler who are were settled in the region Krasnoiarsk’, 25 May 1943, in *GARF*, f. 9479, op. 1, d. 133, l. 330-2, 337.
- ⁵⁹ German, *Nemetskaia avtonomiia*, pp. 314-19.
- ⁶⁰ *Nemtsy SSSR...*, p. 48.
- ⁶¹ ‘Mobilizovat’ nemtsev v rabochie kolonny... I. Stalin’. *Sbornik dokumentov (1940-e gg.)* (Moscow, 1998), p. 52.
- ⁶² I. Shul’ga, ‘Iz’iatie iz riadov Krasnoi Armii voennosluzhashchikh - nemtsev v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voiny (1941-1945 gg.)’, in *Nemtsy Rossii v konteksle otechestvennoi istorii:*

obshchie problemy i regional'nye osobennosti (Moscow, 1999), pp. 347-58.

- ⁶³ A typical example is the fate of an experienced military pilot, First Lieutenant Viktor Fuchs. In September 1941 he was recalled from active service for no reason and sent together with a further twenty officers of German descent to the town of Magnitogorsk, where they were set to work with spades and shovels on the construction of a railway. Their protests had the support of the military prosecutor of the district, which brought about a postponement. Fuchs worked for some months as leader of the construction department of the local school for civil aeronautics, until he was removed from his position and forcibly conscripted to a labour camp at the beginning of 1942, V. Fuchs, *Pogrom. Dokumental'naia povest' o prestupleniakh sovetskogo rezhima - fizicheskoi unichtozhenii nemetskoi natsii v SSSR s 1930-kh godov i do kontsa stoletia* (Krasnoarsk, 2001), pp. 157-71.
- ⁶⁴ 'Lektsiia nachal'nika GULaga V.G. Nasedkina, prednaznachennaia dlia slushatelei Vysshei shkoly NKVD SSSR, 5 oktiabria 1945 g.', in *GULag (Glavnoe upravlenie lagerei). 1918-1960* (Moscow, 2000), pp. 296-315, here p. 310.
- ⁶⁵ Viktor Krieger, 'Verweigerungs- und Protestformen der Rußlanddeutschen im Arbeitslager (1941-1946)', in Ralph Tuchtenhagen and Christoph Gassenschmidt (eds), *Ethnische und soziale Konflikte im neuzeitlichen Osteuropa. Festschrift für Heinz-Dietrich Löwe zum 60. Geburtstag* (Hamburg, 2004), pp. 145-79; idem, 'Nekotorye aspekty demograficheskogo razvitiia nemetskogo naseleniia 1930-kh - 1950-kh godov', in *Nemtsy Rossii: sotsial'no-ekonomicheskoe i dukhovnoe razvitie 1871-1941 gg.* (Moscow, 2002), pp. 470-92.
- ⁶⁶ Carola Tischler, *Flucht in die Verfolgung. Deutsche Emigranten im sowjetischen Exil 1933 bis 1945* (Münster, 1996), pp. 186-93; Barry McLoughlin, Hans Schafrank and Walter Szevera, *Aufbruch - Hoffnung - Endstation: Österreicherinnen und Österreicher in der Sowjetunion, 1925-1945* (Vienna, 1997), pp. 578-85; lists of members of the Communist parties of Germany (131 members), Austria (74), Finland (7), Hungary (76), Rumania (57), Czechoslovakia (Sudetenland Germans, 44 members) were handed over from the control commission of the Komintern to the NKVD with the request that these members of the party be excluded (as party reservists) from recruitment to the *trudarmii*, or that those who had already been called up be released, 20 November 1942, in *GARF*, f. 9479, op. 1, d. 107,1. 84-106.
- ⁶⁷ Calculated according to card indexes in *GARF*, f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1172, 1. 1-16.
- ⁶⁸ Krieger, 'Personen minderen Rechts...', p. 103.
- ⁶⁹ 'GULag v gody voyny. Doklad nachal'nika GULaga NKVD SSSR V.G. Nasedkina. Avgust 1944', in *GULAG (Glavnoe upravlenie lagerei)...*, pp. 272-96, here pp. 285-6.
- ⁷⁰ Calculated according to *Kniga pamiati zhertv politicheskikh repressii. Sverdlovskaiia oblast', vols 1-3: A-B, V-D, E-I* (Ekaterinburg, 1999- 2001); Klaus Segbers, *Die Sowjetunion im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Munich, 1987), p. 244; G. Kornilov, *Ural'skoe selo i voina* (Ekaterinburg, 1993), p. 38; G. Malamud, Mobilizovannye sovetskie nemtsy na Urale v 1942-1948 gg., in *Repressii protiv rossiiskikh...*, pp. 128-45, here p. 131.
- ⁷¹ For more information on the procedure of NKVD/NKGB by means of the example of a region

deep in the hinterland, see Andreas Decker, Stand Hitlers “5. Kolonne” im sowjetischen Hinterland? Zu Einsatz und Verfolgung deutscher Agenten im Ural während des Zweiten Weltkrieges, in *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 52 (2004), 3, pp. 421-31.

⁷² Alexej Gauß, ‘Wir blieben Kommunisten’, in *Neues Leben* (Moscow) 25 January 1989, p. 7.

⁷³ Viktor Krieger, *Secret Criminal Proceedings Against the Last Volga German Government During the Years 1944-46*, (Lincoln 2005).

⁷⁴ Details of this case are to be found in the State Archive of the Administrative Authorities of the Territory of Sverdlovsk (*Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Administrativnykh Organov Sverdlovskoi Oblasti, GAAOSO*), f. 1, op. 2, d. 28234, toma 1, la, 2, 3, 4 (criminal case A. Heckmann, H. Korbmacher u.a.).

⁷⁵ Orders from Lieutenant Usmanov, leader of the investigation team of the NKGB authority in Sverdlovsk, on the handing over of the inquiry into A. Heckmann and others to the NKGB in Moscow, 4 November 1945, in *GAAOSO*, f. 1, op. 2, d. 28234, tom 1, l. 244.

⁷⁶ Indictment on 12 July 1946, which was confirmed by the acting Minister for State Security, Ogoltsov, in *GAAOSO*, f. 1, op. 2, d. 28234, tom 1a, l. 184-7.

⁷⁷ *Vlast' i khudozhestvennaia intelligentsiia. Dokumenty TsK RKP(b) - VKP(b), VChK - OGPU - NKVD o kul'turnoi politike 1917 - 1953 gg.* (Moscow, 1999). p. 491.