

Exclave: Politics, Ideology, and Everyday Life in Königsberg–Kaliningrad, 1928-1948

By

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Abstract

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“Exclave: Politics, Ideology, and Everyday Life in Königsberg-Kaliningrad, 1928-1948,” looks at the history of one city in both Hitler’s Germany and Stalin’s Soviet Russia, following the transformation of Königsberg from an East Prussian city into a Nazi German city, its destruction in the war, and its postwar rebirth as the Soviet Russian city of Kaliningrad. The city is peculiar in the history of Europe as a double exclave, first separated from Germany by the Polish Corridor, later separated from the mainland of Soviet Russia. The dissertation analyzes the ways in which each regime tried to transform the city and its inhabitants, focusing on Nazi and Soviet attempts to reconfigure urban space (the physical and symbolic landscape of the city, its public areas, markets, streets, and buildings); refashion the body (through work, leisure, nutrition, and healthcare); and reconstitute the mind (through various forms of education and propaganda). Between these two urban revolutions, it tells the story of the violent encounter between them in the spring of 1945: one of the largest offensives of the Second World War, one of the greatest civilian exoduses in human history, and one of the most violent encounters between the Soviet army and a civilian population.

This dissertation argues that the postwar socialist revolution in Kaliningrad began as a reenactment of the Russian Revolution of 1917, but the encounter with Germans in Kaliningrad changed both the goals and the outcome of that revolution: the Soviets annexed Königsberg to replace the ethnic exclusivity of fascism with the internationalist ideology of socialism, but in the end, they erected Kaliningrad as a Russian national homeland, complete with a Slavic myth of origin and ethnic requirements for membership.

*to ykw
for all the flotsam and jetsam*

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Introduction

The German city of Königsberg, destroyed by bombing and siege, became the Soviet Russian city of Kaliningrad on 4 July 1946, amidst fanfares, choruses, speeches, and parades with banners of Marx-Engels-Lenin-Stalin. Soviet Kaliningrad was modeled as the anti-Königsberg, rising from the ruins of the devastated city: the spot on which socialism would replace fascism, a “friendship of the peoples” would triumph over racism, and freedom would defeat all forms of oppression. But two years later, in November 1948, the Kaliningrad local newspaper, *Kaliningradskaia Pravda*, explained to the new Soviet settlers that Comrade Stalin’s victory in the war (“the judgment of history over Prussian militarism”) inaugurated not a new age of socialist internationalism in Kaliningrad, but the final return of “ancestral Slavic lands back to their true homeland.” The city’s remaining German population was expelled that same month. The Soviet Union annexed Königsberg to replace the ethnic exclusivity of fascism with the internationalist ideology of socialism, but they erected Kaliningrad as a Russian national homeland, complete with a Slavic myth of origin and ethnic requirements for membership.

The dissertation follows the transformation of German Königsberg into Soviet Kaliningrad from 1928 to 1948, focusing on the period from 1944 to 1948, when the citizens of two mutually-exclusive totalizing regimes lived together in the same city, with competing visions of the future and conflicting explanations for the war that had brought them together. Unlike other studies of Hitler’s Germany and Stalin’s Russia, it analyzes an instance in which these two regimes governed the same city—not as foreign occupiers or puppeteers, but as rulers of their own patrimony. Whereas most previous studies of “totalitarianism” have focused on ideologies and politics of the center, this dissertation studies Nazism and Stalinism “from below,” as the entangled history of two ideologies, two peoples, and one place. By foregrounding the city as subject, the story does not begin with the rise or fall of regimes but focuses on everyday experience of space in a city during the decades of its most dramatic and catastrophic transformation.

As two exclaves of their respective regimes, Königsberg and Kaliningrad became laboratories of violence and revolution, where local conditions led to peculiar re-articulations of ideology and its implementation. It looks at Königsberg’s shifting role in the German East from trading nexus to military stronghold to a local understanding of National Socialism that emphasized the city’s location and particular responsibility in uphold-

ing German civilization. In the first years after the war, the newest Soviet city grew up in the wild western frontier of socialism, without consistent influence from Moscow or overarching control of the state. The socialist revolution in Kaliningrad was designed as a reenactment of the Russian Revolution of 1917, but encounters with Königsberg's Germans and the material remains of their former city changed the goals and outcomes of that revolution.

In particular, the unresolved tensions between nationalism and internationalism in the Soviet Union during the Second World War led to the peculiar birth and development of Kaliningrad as a Russian national homeland. Day-to-day decisions in Kaliningrad were left up to local administrators, most of whom were young and under-educated, having been inducted into the party because of their bravery in battle, not for their study of Marxist theory. They brought with them an intuitive understanding of communism that combined the old goals of socialist internationalism ("workers of the world, unite") with new currents of nationalism (the victory of the Great Russian people over the German fascists). Tensions between these two ideologies led to inconsistent practices in Kaliningrad: local officials planned alternately for the Sovietization of their German neighbors (with anti-fascist clubs, collective work brigades, and the promise of full citizenship) and their eradication (through starvation wages, imprisonment and executions, and increasing marginalization). In the end, the experience of cohabitation along with cues from Moscow at the beginning of the Cold War came to favor ethnic nationalism. The ideology of socialism, it turned out, was a part of the cultural (sometimes even physical) constitution of the Russian people, and fascism, likewise, seemed to be imbedded in the genetic makeup of Kaliningrad's Germans. The Kaliningrad dilemma was resolved with the final expulsion of the remaining German population to the future East Germany, where, in the triumph of the national principle, the Germans of Kaliningrad could become good communists.

Between these two stories of urban revolutionary transformation, the dissertation tells the story of the downfall of Königsberg and the invasion of East Prussia in the spring of 1945: one of the largest offensives of the Second World War, one of the greatest civilian exoduses in human history, and one of the most violent encounters between the Soviet army and a civilian population. Soviet propaganda called for "sacred" revenge as retribution for the unprecedented destruction and violence that the Nazis carried out during their occupation. In calling for retribution that would fit the crime, however, the Soviets confronted the problem of how to avenge themselves while maintaining the ideals of international solidarity and the position that ordinary German civilians would not be held responsible for the crimes of the "Hitler clique." At the height of mass violence in East Prussia during the last months of the war, the question of fitting retribution was discussed repeatedly by Soviet officials, newspaper correspondents, propagandists, political officers, intellectuals, and simple soldiers. Some of them condemned the violence wholeheartedly, some justified it with reservations, and some accepted it with righteous enthusiasm. I discuss the contours of these debates in the context of the Soviet-German encounter in East Prussia as a way to explore the general theme of violence and retribution in Soviet socialism. I argue that the Soviet experience in East Prussia set the precedent for Soviet reevaluations and changing national self-identification after the war.

Acknowledgements

This dissertation owes itself to a veritable city's worth of people, without whose support and friendship Königsberg-Kaliningrad would never have been built, destroyed, and (partially) rebuilt again.

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present in the afterlife, as this dissertation is resurrected in the form of a book. Yuri has been both a wonderful advisor and a loyal friend, and I look forward to the many conversations to come.

I would also like to thank Reggie Zelnik, my first mentor, for convincing me to come to Berkeley, for pretending that learning Russian in grad school was not an entirely foolish endeavor, and for welcoming me into the family of Russianists with all of the ritual of an induction into a secret society. It was in that first year as an interloper at the Berkeley Russian History *Kruzhok*—when I could utter little more than “da,” “net,” and “khorosho” with a faint Midlands twang—that I became fascinated with the still-unanswered questions and paradoxes of the world’s first socialist society.

I have benefited from the support from many scholars beyond Berkeley, particularly those in our vibrant little niche field of Kaliningrad studies. Markus Podehl, Bert Hoppe, Per Brodersen, Katja Grupp, and Holt Meyer made up the “German contingent” of enthusiasts who shared my love affair with the city’s German past and its Russian present and pointed me to invaluable archival materials; David Bridges, a fellow American researcher of Kaliningrad, provided not only an introduction to the archives but also exacting wit during Kaliningrad’s 750th anniversary. Natalia Palamarchuk, as a world citizen and genuine *Kaliningradka*, provided me with friendship in Kaliningrad and across Europe. With Katja Grupp and Markus Podehl, in particular, I shared intellectual conversations spanning two countries, three languages, and many years.

In many ways, this dissertation is the product of friendships over the course of a decade, and it was only with the constant encouragement, feedback, and support of the Berkeley community that I was able to put this dissertation on the map. I would especially like to thank the Russianists and fellow travelers at Berkeley, including Ned Walker, Victoria Frede, Christine Evans, Stephen Brain, Jared Tanny, Alexis Peri, Victoria Smolkin, Erik Scott, Brandon Schechter, Andrew Kornbluth, Sener Akturk, and Alina Polyakova. Two writing groups kept me from falling down the rabbit hole, including a Russianist triumvirate with Alexis Peri and Elisa Gollub, and a transcontinental “Bossing Group” with Alina Polyakova, Ryan Calder, and Kuba Wrzesniewski. I would also like to extend a hearty *Reichsdank* to Alice Goff for her friendship and support in Berlin, and thanks to Tehila Sasson, Filippo Marsili, James Skee, Mark Sawchuk, Stephen Gross, Ellen Bales, and Alex Wellerstein for companionship, laughter, and the occasional bike ride that made the dissertation writing process far more enjoyable. I benefitted immeasurably from ongoing conversations about the “bigger picture” with Steven Sage at USHMM, particularly during ambling bike rides around Washington. I would like to thank Nadia Dmytriw for her boundless generosity and genuine Russophilia, Myrrhia Resneck for creative inspiration beyond the printed page, Star Rabinowitz for a back pillow that gave me the Sitzfleisch to put in long hours at the computer, and Johanna Duke Tuğluer for bringing my head out of the clouds.

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Nicole M. Eaton
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Part I: Königsberg

Seeing the City: Königsberg 1927

While riding in the streetcar through the East Prussian city of Königsberg in 1946, Lucy Falk, a young German woman, wrote in her diary about the nostalgia she felt as the train made its way toward the city center. She had spent her whole life in the town and remembered how magical the place had seemed to her as a child. Moved by this experience on the streetcar, she borrowed a picture book of the town to help her recreate the Königsberg of her childhood. The book contained all sorts of depictions of life in the city, from postcard scenes of the many bridges crossing the Pregel River, to panoramas of the ancient castle that loomed above the town from the river's upper bank. Falk remembered her excitement as she and her classmates took tours through the old castle, wandering through the courtyards up to marvel at the amber apartment of Friedrich I or the silver-bound books in the library of Duke Albrecht. For the previous 700 years, the town of Königsberg had grown up around the castle; as the historic seat of the Hohenzollern monarchy, the city had become over the course of those centuries, according to Falk, "the greatest cultural landmark of the East."¹

She was certainly not alone in her judgment; Königsberg, rich in the traditions of the Prussian aristocracy, was also a center for artists, musicians, philosophers, and scholars of all kinds, especially at the prestigious University of Königsberg, affectionately known as the Albertina. Decades after Falk reminisced in her diary, Ernest Gellner wrote about Königsberg in a retrospective on Hannah Arendt (who, like Falk, had grown up there): "It was in Königsberg that the torch of the Enlightenment burned with its fiercest flame, in the thought and the person of Immanuel Kant, who was a universal mind without ever having left the city; and it was there too that the Jewish followers of Moses Mendelssohn systematically transmitted the new secular European wisdom to the East European Jewish community."² The Königsberg described by Gellner was a city of Enlightenment and civili-

¹ Lucy Falk, *Ich blieb in Königsberg. Tagebuchblätter aus dunklen Nachkriegsjahren* [sic] (Munich: Gräfe and Unzer, 1965), 82 [early June to 12 August 1946].

² Ernest Gellner, "For Love of the World. Biography of Hannah Arendt," *The Times Literary Supplement*, 6 August 1982, 844-5, quoted in Olga Sezneva, "Living in the Russian Present with a German Past: The Problems of Identity in the City of Kaliningrad," in David Crowley and Susan E Reid, eds., *Socialist Spaces: Sites of Everyday Life in the Eastern Bloc* (Oxford: Berg, 2002), 50.

zation; the Königsberg of Lucy Falk was one of old aristocratic tradition and nostalgia for the innocence of childhood.

The desire to see the city is the desire to give it meaning.³ Medieval and Renaissance painters produced complete cityscapes from impossible bird's-eye views, drawing together disparate architectural spaces and the flurry of activity that took place within them. Lithographs, woodcuts, and maps from as early as the sixteenth century into the twentieth century served as portable images to give the traveler a first view of Königsberg. They depict a medieval ring set into a wide peninsula on the Baltic Sea, its architecture contained by dense fortress walls, but transected in four places by water: in the north by a narrow pond that extends downward to the city center, on the west side by the Pregel River, and on the east side by the north and south fork of the river after they split to form an island at the city's center. The southern section of this ring remains empty in the earliest images, filled with textured shrubs or grazing horses to depict marshlands; later, the geometric structures of settlement push the marshes to the edges of the ring, as the city expands outward. To the north of the river, narrow rows of steep-roof houses extend outward from castle, marking the city's center. By the early twentieth century, the fortress walls that contained the city have disappeared, but former shape of the container remains. To the north, northwest, and southwest, new suburbs sprout up outside the former city walls.⁴

In the twentieth century, the introduction of air travel and photography made it possible to see the city in panorama, to view its contours, its streets, and its architecture in their totality. The desire to see the city is bound up with the desire to endow it with a particular meaning, and in the case of Königsberg, that meaning is often bound particularly to its geographical position. The 1927 *Fremdenführer durch Königsberg in Preußen (Travel Guide through Königsberg in Prussia)* captures these simultaneous urges to see and to understand:

Königsberg today is the capital of a colony, the only one that Germany possesses, at the same time a bridge from West to East, perhaps more so than Breslau and Vienna; moreover it is not a rich city. That makes itself unmistakable in its outward appearance. The vista from afar, with the arrival by water or by land, is not terrible: a vast sea of houses, dominated by a towering castle and crowned by numerous towers. The view is especially majestic when one arrives by airplane.⁵

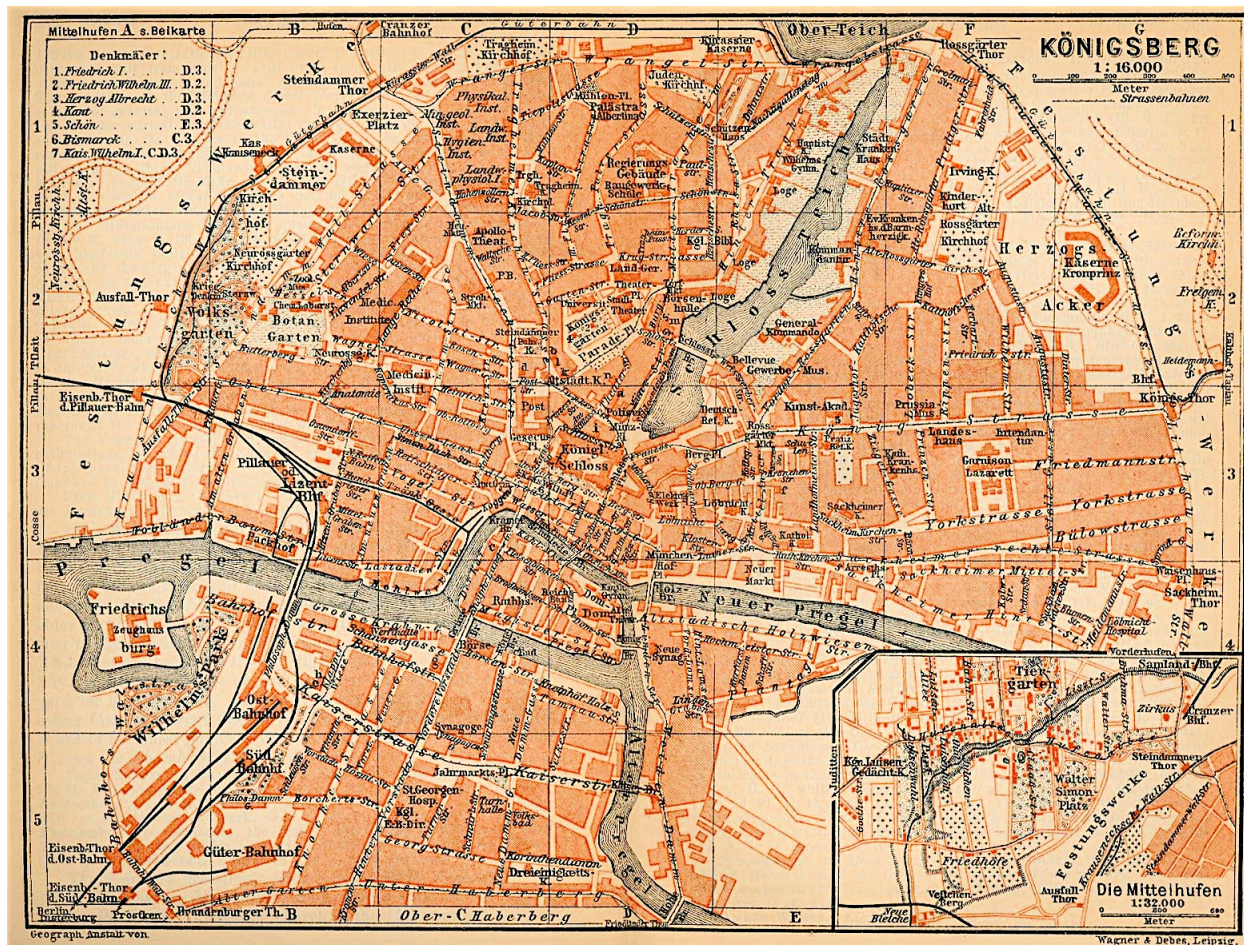
By virtue of its geography and historical development, Königsberg was a trading city, made rich through the commerce of people, goods, and ideas. But in the late 1920s, the bridges to Germany and the East had disappeared, and the former Hanseatic city had lost its identity. The average German traveler, armed with a Baedeker or Meyer guide, might spend a few days in Munich, Stuttgart, Hamburg, or Berlin but never make it to Königsberg. After the war, East Prussia and its capital were severed from the mainland of the Reich by the Polish

³ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 92.

⁴ *Die Fürstliche Hauptt Statt Königsberg in Preussen (1503), Königsberg (1613), Gru Plan der Königl. Pruss. Haupt und Residenzstadt Königsberg* (Königsberg, Germany: JH Bons Buch und Musikalienhandlung, 1834), *Führer-plan der Königl. Haupt- und Residenzstadt Königsberg* (Berlin: Bogdan Gisevius, 1910), 91, 93.

⁵ Regiomontanus [Gustav Springer], *Fremdenführer durch Königsberg in Preußen*, 3rd ed. (Königsberg, Germany: Königsberger Allgemeine Zeitung und Verlagsdruckerei, 1927), in *Reisebücher von Anno dazumal: Königsberg Pr., Reprint von 1927, 1938 und 1942* (Leer, Germany: Rautenberg, 1990).

Corridor, and traveling to East Prussia by land required a multiple-day journey that was both complicated and humiliating: a Polish transit visa and border crossing through formerly German territory, or a ferry connection over the Baltic Sea. Few German visitors braved the inconvenience. Königsberg had fallen off the symbolic map of Germany.



Map of Königsberg, c. 1910, preserving the prominent shape of the outer ring through color coding. By that time, Königsberg had already begun to grow beyond those boundaries. In the center, where the river splits, is the Kneiphof Island with the Cathedral and Kant's Mausoleum; to the north, between the island and the Schlossteich (Castle Pond) is the grounds of the Königsberg Castle and the narrow streets of the old city center.⁶

Königsberg continued to produce travel guides, however—not for far-flung vacationers from the Reich but for more familiar strangers: visitors from nearby East Prussian towns and villages who came to visit family, to shop, to drink and eat, to dance, to go to festivals, plays, and concerts, to take in the latest film at the cinema. Guidebooks told them where to go and what to see in order to experience their city, including not only the standard travelers' tips—information about arrival and departure, local transportation, the names of the largest restaurants and accommodation—but also expositions on the city's his-

⁶ Königsberg [map]. Leipzig: Wagner & Debes, 1910.

torical development, opinions about current prospects for industry and trade, and directories of major administrative offices, schools, sports facilities, hospitals, and other services in town.

The guidebooks were usually published by the Königsberg's newspapers or booksellers and have a distinctly local character. They are written in a tone that is both distantly objective and casually familiar, sometimes addressing the hypothetical long-distance traveler with general information about the city (arrival, hotels, transportation lines) while leaving out important practical details, other times lecturing the well-seasoned East Prussian visitor with emotive editorials on favorite themes (especially architectural history and the city's current economic prospects). The map of Königsberg in the 1927 guidebook included only major streets, hotels, and a few place markers that do not correspond with the main sights noted in the text (a seemingly random list includes one school, the Königshalle, and the Stock Market Gardens, a few grain silos on the harbor, and the locations of major factories). The map was not designed to help the reader navigate the town, and the vague list of street cars would alone be useless helping the unfamiliar traveler reach a particular destination. These lists were more symbolic than practical: most visitors would already know the main attractions, shops, restaurants, buildings, and streets of the old town. These local guidebooks, rather, were an exercise in city self-presentation, affirming many stories that would already have been familiar to their readers, in other cases cautiously trying on new stories that only began to make sense through their repetition. In the case of the 1927 *Fremdenführer*, the 'autobiographical' nature of the guide was all the more explicit: its author is listed only as "Regiomontanus," the Latin toponym for Königsberg.

If you were one of these travelers to Königsberg in the late 1920s, you might arm yourself with the third-edition copy of the *Fremdenführer durch Königsberg in Preußen* and set off to see the city.

Your first experience is your arrival. If you are traveling from as far away as Berlin, you arrive at the Main Train Station in the south of the city, but you might also arrive there if you are coming from the nearer East Prussian cities of Allenstein or Labiau, or from the eastern border town of Eydtkuhnen. Or perhaps you arrive at one of the several regional train stations scattered throughout town: the former South Train Station next door (for trains from Prostken and Gerdauen), the Lizent Train Station (Pillau, Palmnicken, Labiau, and Tilsit), the Samland Train Station (the Baltic resort town Warnicken), or the privately-operated Kleinbahn Station at Königstor (Tapiau and Schaaksvitte on the Curonian Spit). If you are a far-flung traveler with money to spend, you first glimpse the city from above, and land in Devau, Königsberg's new airport (built 1922), with weekday flights from major cities in the Reich (Berlin, Leipzig, Fürth, Munich, Breslau, Gleiwitz, Kassel, Essen) and the East (Danzig, Memel/Klaipėda), Riga, Tallinn, Helsinki, Kaunas, Smolensk, and Moscow). After your arrival, you reach the city center on one of fifteen streetcar lines or on one of two newly-established bus lines. Horse carriages and automobile taxis are available in all parts of the city, but the old town is small enough that you can walk to most destinations.⁷

Upon reaching the city center, you consult your guidebook for suitable accommodation. You find a list of twelve hotels, many of which evoke the territorial expanse of the Prussian monarchy (the Berliner Hof, the Preußischer Hof, the Rheinischer Hof, the Schlesi-scher Hof, and Hotel Germania), and some that promise less elegance (Train Station Hotel,

⁷ Regiomontanus, *Fremdenführer*, 7, 10.

Central Hotel). Your guide provides you with only a sparse list of names and addresses, so you visit a few hotels before finding a suitable one in the old town, perhaps the Preußischer Hof, which lies directly on the embankment of the Pregel River and overlooks the picturesque Kneiphof Island.⁸

You are encouraged by your guidebook to dine at the hotel restaurant, but in the mood for a walk, you explore the numerous restaurants in the city's main commercial districts: on the Kneiphof Island, particularly the Kneiphöfische Langgasse, on the streets surrounding the castle, or in the bustling neighborhood around the Paradeplatz and Steindamm. There are also restaurants located in most major public buildings, including the Exhibition Grounds Restaurant at the *Ostmesse* (Eastern Trade Fair Exhibition Grounds), the City Hall Restaurant at Vorder-Roßgarten, and the Stock Market Restaurant (*Börsenteller*) on the ground floor of the Stock Exchange building. All of the notable restaurants, you find, specialize in the traditional local delicacies: Königsberger Klops (meatballs in white sauce with capers), Königsberger Fleck (calf stomach, served especially at the Fleckbude, a guesthouse known to produce the freshest variety),⁹ gray peas with bacon, Schwarzsauer (aspic gelatin made with blood and poultry or pork giblets), Neunaugen (lamprey), and Schmand mit Glumse (sour cream and crème fraîche). After dinner, you enjoy a glass of wine at one of several wine taverns throughout the old town (although far from any wine region, the port city is a hub for regional wine distribution), perhaps at the beloved Blutgericht ("Blood Court"), housed inside the ancient cellar rooms of the castle. Beer halls and taverns are so ubiquitous that your guidebook does not list them individually. For dessert or coffee, you relax or read the newspaper in a cafe or go to a confectionary, where you enjoy the local treat: Königsberg marzipan (a noble competitor to the more famous variety from Lübeck).¹⁰

The next morning, you set out to see the city in the manner your guidebook has directed. Your guide suggests three walks: the first crosses from the South Train Station through the old town and along the Steindamm to the northwest suburb of Hufen; the second departs from old town along Königstraße and heads to the east of the city, passing by the former homes of local notables, the Catholic church (one of the finest baroque buildings in the city), and a series of cemeteries; a third walk follows a loop around the old town, from the Paradeplatz (the former pleasure garden of the Prussian dukes), past the book dealer Gräfe and Unzer (one of the most comprehensive bookstores in Germany and the home to the oldest known portrait of Kant), to the Schloßteich (Castle Pond), through the new campus of the university (built in 1862), and past the City Theater (where both Richard Wagner and August von Kotzebue spent time).

The first walk seems to be the most comprehensive, and so you make your way through the streets of the old town toward the northwest suburb of Hufen. Beginning at the South Train Station, you walk north on the Vordere Vorstadt, taking note of Kant's childhood home (marked with a plaque) on your way to the Green Bridge. You reach the south entrance to the Kneiphof Island, the center of the city's commercial district and notice to the right the Stock Market building, designed in the historicist style of an Italian Renaissance

⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 11; Anton Freiherr von Eiselsberg, *Lebensweg eines Chirurgen* (Hamburg: Severus Verlag, 2010, reprint from the 1st edition, Innsbruck 1929), 162.

¹⁰ Regiomontanus, *Fremdenführer*, 11-12.

palace. Your guidebook deems it perhaps the most beautiful building in Königsberg, bringing a “friendly, almost cheerful note to the earnestness of strenuous commercial labor and this bustling city district.” The view from the Green Bridge over the Pregel River, you notice, is especially appealing as you gaze down to the old embankment streets lining the city ports. You take a moment to watch the cargo ships, boats, countless sea gulls, and the ceaseless work of loading and unloading of goods into red brick warehouses.



*Postcard View of the Kneiphof Island, the Cathedral (center) and the Königsberg Synagogue (far right).*¹¹

Returning to the Kneiphöfische Langgasse, the main thoroughfare on the island, you find yourself amidst bustling pedestrian traffic and pass several shops and restaurants. At the center of the Kneiphof Island is the Cathedral, which also houses the most prominent historical marker in the city, the mausoleum of Immanuel Kant, rebuilt in modern style in 1924 by the Professor of Architecture Friedrich Lahrs. Inside the Kant rooms housed in the city library (formerly the university building), you behold the relics of the great philosophers' life and work. Returning to the Kneiphöfische Langgasse, you cross the Krämer bridge and look back to see the Hauptspeicherviertel (Main Granary Quarter), one of the most picturesque streets in the city, and take a detour among the decorative row houses and narrow grain silos. Heading north, you soon reach Kaiser Wilhelm Square, where the original old town church once stood, now marked only by a memorial stone designating the

¹¹ Königsberg i. Pr.—Blick auf den Kneiphof und Dom [postcard, circa 1920-1935] (Königsberg, Bruno Perling, n.d.), <http://www.bildarchiv-ostpreussen.de>, picture I.D. 7817 (accessed 14 August 2013).

burial place of Luther (that is, Hans Luther, the son of the great reformer), who rests under the former altar.¹²

Looming above you now is the Königsberg Castle, “a genuine patchwork of several centuries of architectural forms”—Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, Rococo, and Classicism. Although the castle is not classically beautiful, nor abundant with architectural and artistic detail, you nonetheless appreciate its stateliness. Inside you find several museums contained within its walls, including the Painting Gallery (“good collection, mainly newer art”), the Arts and Crafts Museum, and the Prussia Museum (including a weapons collection, an ethnological section, and a “very notable” prehistorical section). Leaving the castle, you stroll along the shops and restaurants around the Paradeplatz, and walk through the new campus of the University of Königsberg.¹³



*Postcard view of the Grüne Brücke (Green Bridge) toward the Kneiphöfische Langgasse, with view of the Königsberg Castle in the background, c. 1889-1914.*¹⁴

Beyond the castle, the Kneiphöfische Langgasse becomes Kantstraße, in honor of its most famous resident. (The former name, Prinzessinstraße, was sacrificed in 1924 for the philosopher’s 200th birthday.) Once you pass Gesekus Square, you reach the Steindamm,

¹² *Ibid.*, 38, 41.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 16, 41.

¹⁴ *Königsberg i. Pr.: Blick von der Grünen Brücke nach der Kneiphöfischen Langgasse* [postcard, circa 1889-1914] (Cassel: Siegfried Bäcker, n.d.).

the broad commercial thoroughfare linking the old town to the newly-incorporated city districts in the northwest. To the left, you notice the house where the young Richard Wagner lived during his stay in Königsberg in 1836-7, (“where he and his Minne Planer spent their honeymoon and had their first marital spats”); on the right, the Steindamm Church, the oldest surviving medieval church in the city. Further to the left are the Clinic Quarters of the university, and Bessel Square, where the astronomer Friedrich Wilhelm Bessel built his observatory in 1811. Nearby you find the Botanical Gardens (unfortunately closed until further notice) and the university’s Zoological Museum.¹⁵

The recently-incorporated Hufen district begins when you reach the former city walls. Many of the city’s newer administration buildings are located here, where space is more plentiful than in the dense, narrow streets of the historic center. At the north end of the Steindamm to the right are the two monuments to Königsberg as a center of eastern trade: the *Ostmesse* (Eastern Exhibition Grounds) and the House of Technology. Across from the *Ostmesse*, you see the large and “slightly cumbersome” Stadthaus, and directly ahead of you lie the Police Presidium, the Courthouse, the Main Postal Administration, and New Dramatic Theater. Passing by the Courthouse, a long building with sparse baroque details, you see a sculpture of two large bulls engaged in head-on struggle: the “Fighting Oxen” by the Berlin Secession artist August Gaul. (Local humor designates them “attorney and prosecutor.”) Entering the Hufen district, you find numerous parks and green spaces, as well as ample opportunity for relaxation and recreation. The Königsberg Sports and Recreation Center is one of the largest sports complexes in Germany, and the Tiergarten (1896), which features not only a zoo but also daily concerts and festivals, is a main gathering point for social life in the city. At the end of the Hufenallee across from the Tiergarten is Park Luisenwahl, a large walking park dedicated to the memory of Queen Luise, and a fifteen-minute walk farther leads to the picturesque country suburb of Amalienau, with its new Art Academy and artist colony (also designed by the Professor of Architecture Friedrich Lahrs).¹⁶

Because you are a frequent visitor to Königsberg, you consult your guidebook not only for tourist highlights, but also for more quotidian services. You find venues for recreation and enjoyment (theaters, museums, the Stadthalle concert house, the zoo, and several cinemas); bookstores (including Gräfe and Unzer, the most famous); universities, institutes, art academies, libraries, and public reading rooms; hospitals and clinics, including the City Hospital, the Samaritan Hospital, St. Elizabeth Hospital (Catholic), St. Katharine Hospital (also Catholic); swimming facilities (Palästra Albertina, the Preußenbad), three public bathhouses for hygienic bathing (*Volksbrausebäder*), plus numerous swimming possibilities in the Oberteich (Upper Pond, in the north of the city); communications offices (the Main Postal Administration, the Rail Postal Office, and Telegraph Office); foreign consulates for Denmark, Austria, Finland, France, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Sweden, the United States, England, the Soviet Union (still referred to as “Russia”), Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Argentina, Belgium, Greece, Italy, Romania, Spain, and Turkey (the Swiss consulate was not far away in Elbing); and the Police Presidium and Passport Office.¹⁷

¹⁵ Ibid., 46.

¹⁶ Ibid., 48-9.

¹⁷ Ibid., 15, 10-11.

Now that you have properly experienced the city, you retreat for the weekend to the coast, in one of the Baltic seaside towns on the Samland Peninsula or the Curonian Spit. The popular seaside resorts Rauschen and Cranz are only an hour north by train, or you can ride west to Palmnicken, the home of the only amber manufacturing center in the world.¹⁸

Returning from your tour, you read about the history of the city. The narrative presented by your guide begins with the comforting reassurance of a well-rehearsed script. Königsberg, although it is a distant outlier in the geography of the Reich, emerges as central to the history of the German empire, founded in 1255 on “ancient German soil,” when the Teutonic Knights defeated the old Prussians to reclaim the territory originally inhabited by Germanic Goths. To defend themselves against the insurgent Prussians, you read, the Teutonic Knights established their fortress on a hill overlooking the Pregel River, and named it Königsberg, “the most important bridge of Germandom and of all of Europe to the wild [rauh] Northeast.”¹⁹ Königsberg’s role as a center of trade developed throughout the Middle Ages, and as the Teutonic Order waned, Duke Albrecht, then the Grand Master of the Order, finally disbanded it in 1525. Königsberg became the residence of the secular, Protestant Prussian dukes, which it remained until 1618; in 1701, Königsberg became the capital of the new Prussian monarchs. The first king, Friedrich I, was coronated in the Königsberg castle.

Your guided tour has already introduced you to the material traces of Königsberg’s history, when you were instructed to behold impressive architecture and appreciate cultural artifacts with pre-determined interpretations. The monuments to the city’s history mostly celebrate the deeds of important men through sculpture (especially of Prussian politicians and military heroes, but also of local scholars, theologians, and artists) or plaque (often before the former homes of local notables).²⁰ The castle museums celebrate Teutonic heritage

¹⁸ Ibid., 6.

¹⁹ Ibid., 65-6.

²⁰ Most of the monuments feature Prussian political and military figures: King Friedrich I, Grand Duke Albrecht (the last Teutonic master and first secular duke of Königsberg), Kaiser Wilhelm I, Bismarck, King Friedrich Wilhelm I, King Friedrich Wilhelm III, *Oberpräsident* Theodor von Schön, Queen Luise, and General Yorck (Ludwig Count Yorck von Wartenburg, the Prussian Field Marshall who fought Napoleon). Others celebrate cultural figures, many of them local scholars: Martin Luther, Franz Neumann (the physicist, minerologist, and mathematician), Friedrich Schiller (not himself active in Königsberg), Julius Rupp (a theologian and founder of a free evangelical community, whose sculpture was crafted by another Königsberger, his granddaughter Käthe Kollwitz), Max von Schenkendorf (the poet), Hans von Sagan (the Teutonic legend immortalized by Schenkendorf during the Napoleonic Wars), Archbishop Ernst Ludwig von Borowski (theologian and contemporary of Kant), Professor Heinrich Friedrich Jacobson (a law professor, free evangelical and contemporary of Rupp), Friedrich Bessel (the mathematician and astronomer, who worked in the Königsberg Observatory). Some residences of famous Königsbergers are marked by plaques: Immanuel Kant (conveniently located on Kantstraße 3), E.T.A. Hoffmann, Heinrich von Kleist, Hermann Goetz (the composer), Eduard von Simson (liberal jurist and First President of the German Reichstag), Gustav Friedrich Dinter (Prussian pedagogue and school reformer), Julius Rupp, President Paul von Hindenburg. Other former residences are not marked in town, but your guidebook has catalogued them here: Kant’s birth house (Vordere Vorstadt 22) and second residence (Sattlergasse 3), Zacharias Werner (“unfortunately torn down in August 1925”), E.T.A. Hoffmann and Zacharias Werner (both at Poststraße 33), Felix Dahn (the historian and professor in Königsberg from 1872-88), Ernst Wichert (the author and jurist), Bessel, Johann Georg Hamann (the opponent to Kant’s Enlightenment, Hamannstraße 1), Hippel, Rosenkranz, Richard Wagner, Simon Dach (the poet).

and Prussian royal lineage; the amber collection shows East Prussia's prominent role in the manufacture of luxury; the museums and objects surrounding Kant's life and works affirm Königsberg as an inheritor of the legacies of Enlightenment philosophy and scholarship; and even the East Prussian Heimat Museum (a *plein-air* reconstruction of a traditional village inside the Tiergarten) demonstrates the centrality of Königsberg to Prussian—and therefore German—history.

As you read the city's history and tour the material traces of its grandeur, however, you notice the unmistakable anxiety of a city trying to come to terms with its marginality. Your guide focuses more on Königsberg's role in the broader current of German history than on the internal growth and development of the city, and accordingly, details about the last hundred years in the city, when German unification rendered Königsberg merely a curiosity in the history of Prussia, are sparse. You hear how Königsberg, the beneficiary of ancient wars of expansion, became the victim of more recent ones; the invasions by the Russians during the Seven Years' War and the French during the Napoleonic Wars destroyed the city and left it in an economic depression for most of the nineteenth century.

Throughout your tour, you are reminded that Königsberg is a city of bridges—seven bridges connecting the Kneiphof Island to the city, and more, or perhaps less, substantially, bridges connecting Germany to the East. The relative prosperity of the city in previous centuries depended on Germany's complex relations with the Russian Empire:

All of the fluctuations there reflect themselves in the well-being of Königsberg. Whenever Russia waged wars, especially if its Baltic Sea ports were closed, trade and commerce here skyrocketed. When Frederick the Great directed the trade of old Poland westward through the construction of the Bromberg canal when Germany was in a tariff war with Russia a few decades ago, Königsberg suffered serious trading losses.

Now in the postwar period, political revolutions and economic collapse had caused Königsberg's harbor to grow silent. The new exclave tied its hope to new trading partnerships with the new states in the East, in the hope that "the general re-ascent of the German Empire and the awakening of the slumbering power of the states in the East, above all Russia, will fill Königsberg's harbor and warehouses once more."²¹ The city renovated the harbor and constructing new warehouses; the new *Ostmesse*, or Eastern Exhibition Grounds, especially, would be "a factor of monumental importance for Königsberg and the entire German East,"²² and a new institute for the study of Russia promised to facilitate trades with Königsberg's eastern neighbor.

Your guidebook presents Königsberg as a city of high culture and royal grandeur: a capital for museums, theater, art, music, and scholarship. But these declarations of beauty, majesty, and sophistication also reveal the fragility of a city trying to come to terms with its waning significance. Your guidebook admits readily that Königsberg is not beautiful compared with other German cities:

When you step closer, you can't help but feel a slight disappointment. Even the train station and mundane station square look unpleasant, almost a little Russian. [...] The image of the city elsewhere is also not always beautiful.

²¹ Ibid., 32.

²² Ibid., 70.

Built on an unfavorable, partially swampy soil, continually struggling with financial difficulties (the Napoleonic War destruction burdened the city up to the turn of the century), often plagued by large fires, and not always treated kindly by powerful rulers: therefore one cannot reasonably expect an exceptionally beautiful city.²³

Most of the scenic sights that your guide directs you to behold are impressive mainly in that they remind you of somewhere else even more spectacular: the port conjures images of Hamburg or Scandinavia (“only the fleets are missing”),²⁴ the Stock Market tries to recreate an Italian Renaissance palace, the Kneiphöfsche Langgasse seems reminiscent of old Danzig (even though your author laments that most of its picturesque buildings were sacrificed to expansion in the late nineteenth century). One gets the sense traveling through the *Fremdenführer* that Königsberg is a poor reflection of other more assuredly German cities. But the city does possess some beauty, you are reassured, and that is its maritime setting: Königsberg is surrounded by water, with picturesque canals and rivers rivaling even Hamburg. And while Königsberg offers fewer attractions than larger German cities, it offers itself on a more human and humane scale: the commute across town was quick and painless, and within a ten minute walk, one could reach everything needed for a good life: administration offices, friends, theater, entertainment centers, restaurants, and the train stations for excursions to the sea and countryside.²⁵

Through the pages of the guidebook, you see and experience an image of Königsberg, you walk through the city, past monuments, architecture and artifacts of history, public spaces, restaurants, theaters, and parks. Even as your guidebook betrays the insecurities of a city uncertain of its position in the postwar, the Königsberg you see is an idealized depiction. You are viewing a modern panorama painting, depicting a city of royal lineage, culture and scholarship, a port city filled with ships, bridges connecting it to the Baltic and lands to the East. Your guidebook tries to present you with a complete picture of Königsberg, but ultimately it can only capture its shadows. That is the dilemma of the guidebook: even when it tries to describe the nebulous character of everyday life that makes up the city, it can never fully translate the living, moving city onto the page. The living city—the Königsberg as experienced by you the traveler and as experienced by its everyday inhabitants who walk, eat, talk, consume, work, rest, and wander—resides between the cracks of the static city created by your guide.

Despite the impossibility of fully seeing and understanding the city, the desire remained—not only paintings, in Lucy Falk’s picture book, or in travel guides, but also in the dreams and plans of government officials and city planners. Over the course of the next two decades, the two regimes that claimed Königsberg as their own attempted to understand the city and assign meaning to it in order to reshape it in their own image. They refashioned its streets, its buildings, its past, and its inhabitants, creating a multitude of overlapping Königsbergs (and Königsbergers) to reflect their dreams of perfection. But no matter how comprehensive their dreams, no matter how transformative and far-reaching their plans, and no matter how thorough the implementation, these utopian panoramas of Königsberg could never fully capture the living city. The real Königsberg, the one made up

²³ *Ibid.*, 28.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 38.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 29.

of the everyday practices of its inhabitants, remained forever out of the grasp of those who sought to define it.

On the Other Side of the Corridor

Countess Marion Dönhoff grew up on an estate in Friedrichstein, a few miles east of Königsberg. The Dönhoffs, like other East Prussian noble families, lived a modest lifestyle in comparison to their western counterparts. After the war, when East Prussian agricultural estates fell into poverty, the Donhöff family became even more frugal, traveling third class on the railroads, even for long trips. The most frequent of these journeys, from Königsberg to Berlin, underscored for the Dönhoffs and other East Prussian families the difference between them and other Germans and the peculiar challenges they faced when traveling from their homeland in the East. The trip from Königsberg to Berlin meant “going to the Reich,” as Dönhoff recalled.

Curtains on train compartments had to be drawn, nobody was allowed to look out, and passengers had to be prepared for any eventuality. It was not unusual for people to be ordered off the train because something in their passports appeared questionable or because they were suspected of having Polish currency on their person.

Dönhoff remembered the rumors that grew up around these darkened train journeys through Poland. One woman was allegedly escorted off the train by the Polish border guards, who found a hidden message imprinted on her buttocks: “the officials were convinced they’d uncovered a secret agent. It seems that this hapless woman had visited the not very clean toilet on the train and had covered the seat with a newspaper—the print had rubbed off.”¹

After the First World War, East Prussia became an exclave. Separated from the mainland of the German Reich, it found itself surrounded by new political creations of the postwar settlement: Poland in the East, South, and West, the free state of Danzig in the western corner, and Lithuania in the north. Poland had not existed as an independent state since the final partitions between Prussia and the Russian Empire in 1795, but in the interest of protecting the new nation-state’s economic viability, the former German territories of West

¹ Countess Marion Dönhoff, *Before the Storm. Memories of my Youth in Old Prussia*, trans. by Jean Steinberg (New York: Knopf, 1990), 10-11, 34. Dönhoff later took part in the 1944 plot against Hitler, became the postwar editor of the West German newspaper *Die Zeit*, and is one of the most famous memoirists of prewar East Prussia.

Prussia and Posen, lying between the German Reich and East Prussia, were transferred to Poland in 1920 to connect its mainland to the Baltic Sea. The argument for creating the “Polish Corridor,” put forth by the architects of Versailles, was that the economic viability of East Prussia could be assured by allowing free transit across the Corridor to Germany, but that the reverse situation (allowing Polish transit across a contiguous Germany to reach the Baltic Sea), would hinder Poland’s free trade and leave the vulnerable young state at the mercy of a much stronger Germany.

Redrawing borders along national lines was designed to foster lasting peace in Europe by allowing each nation to express itself according to its own political customs and traditions. Problems arose, however, when the victors tried to transfer these ideas of national self-determination to the map of postwar East-Central Europe. By no stretch of the Wilsonian imagination could East Prussia, with its overwhelmingly large German population, be considered a Polish homeland, nor could the city of Danzig, where 90 percent of the population spoke German and identified with Germany (as a compromise, Danzig was re-branded as a free city, overseen by the League of Nations). For the mixed territories making up the corridor, West Prussia and Posen, greater Poland’s economic viability trumped local ethnic considerations, and German towns and villages lining the Baltic sea were placed under Polish rule. The final border settlement left a large German minority in Poland—up to 1.1 million, with about 412,000 Germans living in the territory of the corridor in 1920.²

Another problem with the principle of national self-determination came inside East Prussia itself. In the Masurian region in the southern part of the province, most local residents spoke a dialect of Polish as their main language. The Masurian dialect also predominated urban areas, where a merchant in the town of Sensburg noted, for example, that “only the outside officials and their families spoke German; German merchants and artisans were forced to speak Masurian” with their customers³. The principles of self-determination might dictate that these Polish-speaking Masurians were Poles by virtue of their language and should therefore live in a Polish state, but most Masurians refused to identify as Poles, even if they did not consider themselves to be Germans. Masurians confounded even the most committed cartographers of the nation-state: they fused Polish origins and customs with German political traditions, spoke Polish but wrote in German, combined Polish last names with (often) German first names, and wed Polish-Catholic religious traditions with a formal affiliation with a Prussian-Protestant church. If they called themselves anything, it might be “Prussian,” “Lutheran,” or even “Masurian-speaking Prusaki.” (To most Masurians, being “a Pole” meant being Catholic.⁴)

While the territories of the Corridor were given to Poland as a part of the Versailles settlement, a plebiscite was arranged in 1920 to give Masurians the choice whether to stay in East Prussia or join Poland. Leading up to the vote, campaigners on both sides to convince the Masurians that they were definitively German or Polish. Both sides accused each other

² Alexander C. Diener and Joshua Hagen, “Russia’s Kaliningrad Exclave,” in *Borderlines and Borderlands: Political Oddities at the Edge of the Nation State*, ed. Alexander C Diener and Joshua Hagen (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010), 125.

³ Erich Wentscher, *Unsere Masurische Heimat. Zum hundertjährl. Bestehen d. Kreises Sensburg*, 2nd ed, ed. Karl Templin (Sensburg, Germany: Kreisausschuss, 1926), 309, quoted in Richard Blanke, *Polish-Speaking Germans?: Language and National Identity among the Masurians since 1871* (Cologne, Germany: Böhlau, 2001), 40.

⁴ Blanke, *Polish-Speaking Germans*, 40.

of misinformation, obstruction of the voting process, and fraud. On the eve of the vote, Germans attempted to bring up to 114,000 “out-voters” back to East Prussia to vote, while Polish customs officials blocked their passage, insisting that anyone passing through the Corridor for the plebiscite must have a photo identification with a stamp from their East Prussian place of birth (which most did not have) along with proof that they had registered to vote.⁵

When the vote finally took place on 11 July 1920, approximately 90 percent of eligible voters turned out to vote. The voice of Masurians was almost unanimous: almost 98 percent voted for East Prussia, and only 2.2 percent chose Poland. Seventy percent of those who did choose Poland came from the predominantly Catholic area of Warmia, voting along religious lines. But even there, there only a small minority, 10 to 15 percent of the population, voted to leave Germany. The majority in a few small villages along the border did vote to leave, and these communities were transferred to Poland, a total of 4786 people.⁶ But over all, language failed to be a clear expression of national identity. Even in the Stuhm district, where a relatively large percentage of the population (19 percent) voted for Poland, less than half of those who spoke a dialect of Polish (43 percent of the total population, according to the 1910 census) chose to identify with Poland.⁷

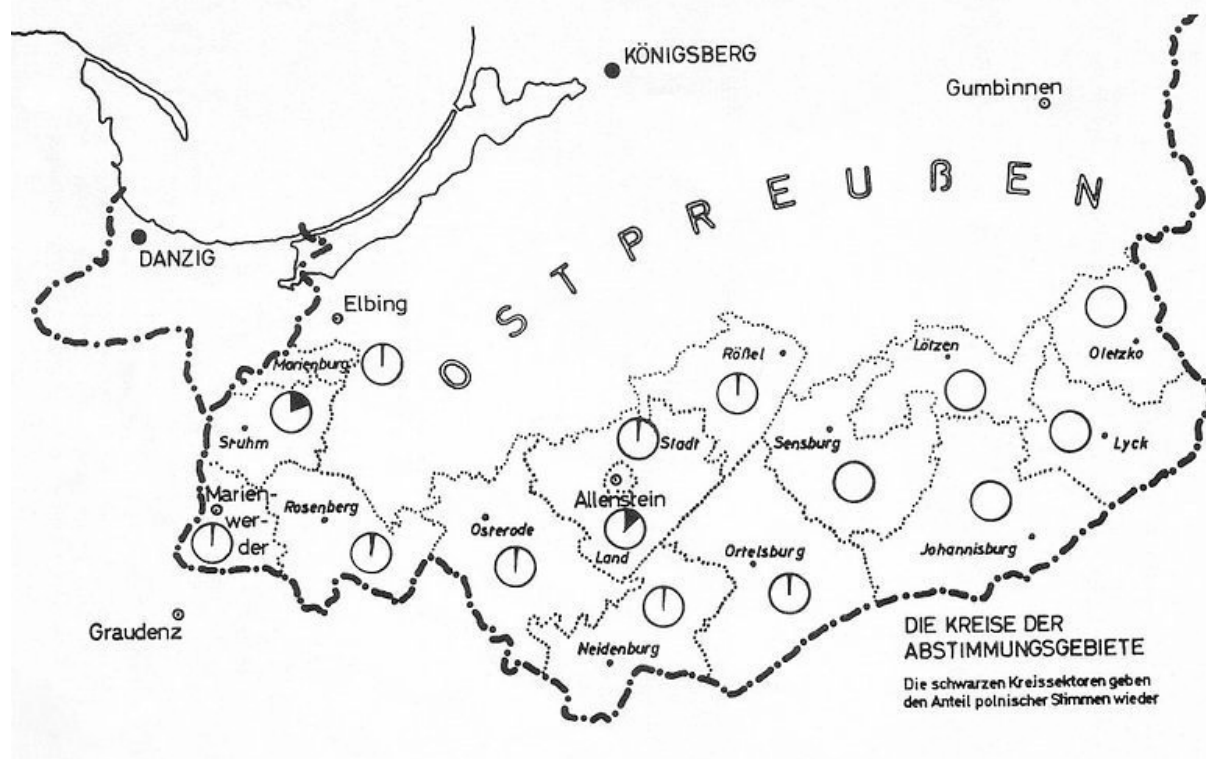
Adopting the language of Versailles, Germans denounced the transfer of the small border villages that had voted for Poland as a violation of the principles of national self-determination, while Poles used this minor victory as proof that most Masurian voters had been too intimidated to vote their conscience. The international plebiscite oversight commission, however, declared that the plebiscite had been a valid expression of the population’s national consciousness. The Prussian state government, expressing its satisfaction, extended its “warmest thanks to the citizens of the East Prussian [...] plebiscite district, [...] who have given such an overpowering expression of faith in their Prussian and German fatherland. We knew that the inhabitants of the land that gave the entire Prussian state its name would be the last to abandon [it].”⁸

⁵ Blanke, *Polish-Speaking Germans*, 185. Polish customs officials blocked 600 out of 700 train passengers at the Konitz/Chojnice border when the first out-voter train arrived; another 1,950 the following day, and held up 800 people at the border at Gelsenkirchen. Several small airplanes used to transport out-voters across the Corridor were reportedly fired upon, and three forced down. Out-voters formed only a small minority of voters in the plebiscite, and their votes did not play a decisive role in the outcome.

⁶ Richard Bessel, “Eastern Germany as a Structural Problem in the Weimar Republic,” *Social History* 3, no. 2 (May, 1978), 201 [199-218]; Blanke, *Polish-Speaking Germans*, 189-91. The final vote was 97.8 percent for East Prussia or 363,209 votes, versus 2.2 percent or 7980 votes for Poland. Cities with a large Masurian-speaking population voted similarly to rural areas: Ortelsburg/Szczytno, where 70.9 percent of the population was Polish-speaking, voted only 1.49 percent for Poland; Johannsburg/Pisz, where 68.1 percent of the population was Polish speaking, voted only 0.04 percent for Poland.

⁷ Hans Rothfels, “Der Vertrag von Versailles und der deutsche Osten,” *Berliner Monatshefte* 12 (1934), 18f.

⁸ Ebert and Hirsch telegrams, July 12, 1920, WAPO, RegAlle, #224, pp.254ff; Gayl to Interior Ministry, 17 August, 1920, GStAM, II, Rep. 77, Tit. 856, Nr. 226, p. 253, quoted in Blanke, *Polish-Speaking Germans*, 189.



Map depicting the regions in the East Prussian plebiscite in 1920. The black sectors of the circle indicate the percentage of the population that voted to join Poland.⁹

Separated by the corridor and threatened by the plebiscite, East Prussians in the 1920s found themselves seemingly surrounded by enemies. As the borders became porous, foreign armies and foreign ideas seemed to threaten the province's continued existence. East Prussia became a battlefield already in 1914, one of only two German territories (along with Alsace-Lorraine) to be invaded and occupied during the war. The Russian army first entered East Prussia in August, occupying much of the province until they were driven out in the summer of 1915 at the Battle of Tannenberg. More than 41,000 buildings were destroyed, half a million inhabitants became refugees, and the economy of the province fell into disarray.¹⁰ At the end of the war, Polish national uprisings in West Prussia and Posen in December 1918 cut off connection between East Prussia and the Reich (precipitating the transfer of these territories during Versailles),¹¹ while some Polish military groups planned to invade East Prussia and capture some of the territory for the new Polish state. Their ef-

⁹ *Selbstbestimmung für Ostdeutschland*, Göttinger ArbeitsKreis 394 (Göttingen, Germany: Göttinger ArbeitsKreis, 1970), 6.

¹⁰ Ernst Siehr, "Ostpreussische Wirtschaftsprobleme," *Zeitschrift für die gesamte Staatswissenschaft* 86, no. 3 (1929), 467 [449-471].

¹¹ Diener and Hagen "Russia's Kaliningrad Exclave," 125. Despite numerous calls for Polish statehood during the First World War, the prospects for Polish statehood had seemed remote, but the collapse of both the Russian and German monarchies at the end of the war created a power vacuum, allowing Polish nationalists to attain control of Posen before the Allied Powers gathered in 1919 to draft the peace treaty.

forts were thwarted by the onset of the Russian Civil War, which shifted attentions eastward, only after both Polish and Russian troops crossed over into East Prussia during their campaigns.¹²

The German Revolution of 1918 also contributed strongly to the formation of a “siege mentality” in Königsberg. During the winter of 1918, after the disastrous defeat and the Kaiser’s abdication, soldiers and sailors seized control over parts of the city, including the Königsberg Castle, and established rule by workers’ and military councils. The sailors and their *Volksmarinedivision* held the castle and certain “red” districts of the city until March of 1919, when the Weimar government called in border guard brigades and *Freikorps* divisions from the East to reestablish order.¹³ The revolution in Königsberg did not take place on as grand a scale as in Berlin and was resolved with little bloodshed, but its threat—and its possibility—was perhaps felt more strongly by both participants and bystanders. As Königsberg’s later historian-in-exile Fritz *Gause* explains, with little sympathy for the goals of international socialism, “the proletarian world revolution knocked in East Prussia on the door of Germany, only held back by the weak forces of the German *Freikorps*.”¹⁴ Königsberg was geographically close to Bolshevism, and the province’s seclusion seemed to leave it more vulnerable to socialist contamination.

Throughout the 1920s, life in an exclave provided constant reminders of East Prussia’s isolation from the German Reich. Despite guarantees in the Versailles Treaty that East Prussia should have free access to trade through the corridor, in practice, bureaucratic hurdles and uncertainties discouraged both travel and trade. Several cities found themselves suddenly transformed into borderlands, including Tilsit, Marienburg, Deutsch-Eylau, Freystadt; the cities of Bischofswerder and Garnsee lost their train stations to Poland when the maps were drawn, and the Tilsit water works (responsible for the water supply for the entire city) ended up on the Lithuanian side of the border.¹⁵ Bridges, train stations, highways, and twelve rail lines had to be abandoned once their destinations were severed because the cost of rebuilding them or redirecting their traffic was too great. The greatest symbol of East Prussia’s isolation became the Münsterwald Bridge over the Vistula: built shortly before the war for a cost of 9 million marks, it became a bridge to nowhere when control of the river was given to Poland. Poland immediately shut the border crossing at Münsterwald and destroyed the bridge to prevent traffic to East Prussia. In the age of air travel, Königsberg found itself even cut off by air: throughout the 1920s, German planes were forbidden to fly over the corridor, meaning that planes from Königsberg to Berlin had to fly over the Baltic Sea, and the much-demanded direct connection from Königsberg to

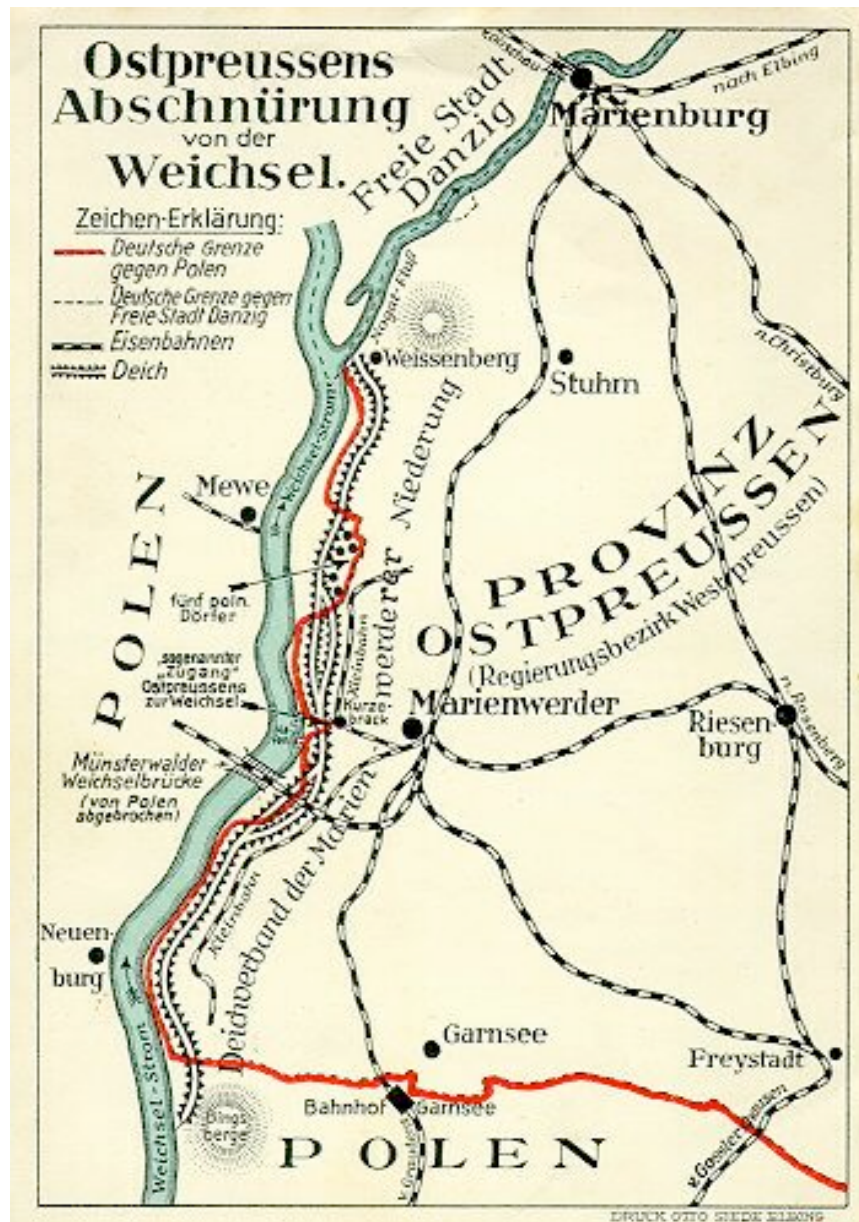
¹² Blanke, *Polish-Speaking Germans*, 183, 197. In July 1920, for example, around 2000 Polish soldiers sought refuge in Masuria, and some smaller Red Army units advanced as far into East Prussia as Soldau, where they were even welcomed as liberators by a substantial part of the German and Masurian population. In September 1920, however, the situation reversed, and 50,000 Red Army soldiers sought refuge in Masuria, blocked by the Polish offensive.

¹³ T. Hunt Tooley, *National identity and Weimar Germany: Upper Silesia and the Eastern Border, 1918-1922* (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 36-7.

¹⁴ Fritz *Gause*, *Die Geschichte der Stadt Königsberg*, vol. 3 (Graz, Austria: Böhlau, 1965), 18. *Gause*, writing in 1960s, did not disguise his disdain for radical left revolutionary movements and blamed them not only for the thwarting parliamentary politics in the fragile Königsberg democracy, but also leading to the rise of the Nazis in response to the socialist threat.

¹⁵ Siehr, “Ostpreussische Wirtschaftsprobleme,” 455-6.

Breslau and the industrial regions of Upper Silesia remained impossible. German nationalist groups pointed to this “strangulation” of East Prussia as the greatest injustice of Versailles’.¹⁶



“East Prussia’s Strangulation from the Vistula”: Postcard of the German-Polish border, suggesting that Poland intentionally tried to isolate East Prussia, Elbing, c. 1920.¹⁷

¹⁶ Elizabeth Harvey, “Pilgrimages to the ‘Bleeding Border’: Gender and Rituals of Nationalist Protest in Germany, 1919-39,” *Women’s History Review* 9, no. 2 (2000), 218 [201-229]; Siehr, “Ostpreussische Wirtschaftsprobleme,” 458.

¹⁷ Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin, PK 96/843, <http://www.dhm.de/lemo/objekte/pict/96004777/index.html>. Accessed 10 August 2013.

Over the course of the next two decades, most East Prussians continued to feel threatened by living in an exclave, even as they grew into a new identity that was primarily dependent on that status. Germans provided a variety of economic, historical, linguistic, and geopolitical arguments for restoring the province's contiguity with the rest of Germany, while many Polish groups insisted that its continued existence was a threat to Poland. Each side had its favorite charts and graphs citing population statistics and economic factors, and both sides cited ancient texts to bolster their authority. Citing Ptolemy, Poles might claim that "at the dawn of history all territory East of the Elbe was inhabited by Slavonic tribes," while Germans could argue with equal fervor that "in the beginning of historical times, no Poles lived in either East Prussia or West Prussia." These arguments for historical and ancestral rights were as adamant as they were unprovable, and neither side could agree on a standard for determining East Prussia's natural inheritance.¹⁸

East Prussia's status as amputee gained it infamy across Germany. Although travel to Königsberg and East Prussia plummeted after the creation of the corridor (despite the fact that Germans were traveling within the country more than ever before),¹⁹ travel connected specifically to East Prussia's exclave status increased dramatically. The irony was not lost on spectators at the time, as East Prussia's *Oberpräsident*, Ernst Siehr, lamented in 1929:

The interest in how this unique political and economic experiment works in practice has become lively both in Germany and abroad, and East Prussia has become suddenly, very much despite its will and desire, a land that is visited by countless economists and politicians from home and abroad, and whose problems are discussed amply in discussions and publications in the public sphere.²⁰

Dozens of German associations held annual meetings in Königsberg, and nationalist organizations offered guided tours of the "bleeding border" to show the traces of the violence done to the German nation. According to one estimate, 400,000 young people crossed the Polish Corridor to travel to East Prussia in 1930 alone.²¹ In 1935, for example, thirty young women in the League of German Girls (*Bund deutscher Mädel*) took a day trip along the border near Marienwerder as part of their training as nationalist borderland kindergarten teachers. As their guide, an official from the Reich Youth Leadership, commented,

¹⁸ William Terry, "The Most Dangerous Spot in Europe," *The North American Review* 234, no. 2 (August 1932), 161 [159-169].

¹⁹ Peter Fritzsche, "Historical Time and Future Experience in Postwar Germany," in *Ordnungen in der Krise. Zur politischen Kulturgeschichte Deutschlands, 1900-1933*, Wolfgang Hardtwig, ed. (München: Oldenburg, 2007), 157. See also Rudy Koshar, *German Travel Cultures* (New York: Berg, 2000). As Koshar notes, German railways recorded more than a six-fold increase in Sunday return tickets from the prewar period to 1929. Germans were traveling out of the urge to "Get to Know Germany" (the motto of the popular *Deutschland-Bildhefte* picture books), including the varying local customs and divergent regional landscapes.

²⁰ Siehr, "Ostpreussische Wirtschaftsprobleme," 450. Siehr was one of the primary formulators of East Prussia's special economic status in the 1920s. His presentation of the economic situation was well-received by Berlin, but funds were not available at the time to carry out his prescriptions. See Christian Rohrer, *Nationalsozialistische Macht in Ostpreussen* (Munich: Martin Meidenbauer, 2006), 52.

²¹ Fritzsche, "Historical Time," 157; Harvey, "Pilgimages," 213.

we stopped at the main border sites, showed the girls the insanity of the border and the historic edifices of the Teutonic Order. Here they stood amazed—many were experiencing the border for the first time. For some this excursion had been decisive and I had moreover the chance of getting to know the girls, for the value of a person is revealed in the border experience.²²

These excursions reminded visitors not only of the ancient Germanness of the territory, but also the fundamental influence it had, they argued, on the development of the rest of Germany.

East Prussia presented itself throughout the 1920s as a martyr for the defense of the homeland, and its vulnerability became symbolic of the vulnerability of all of Germany after the war. As *Oberpräsident* Siehr wrote in 1929, East Prussia had “fulfilled its historical mission to be the bulwark of the German Reich in the East,” but had paid the price for it: hundreds of civilians had been killed or deported to Russia, and “unspeakable suffering came over a large part of the province.”²³ Yet even as East Prussia had become a martyr for Germany, it remained, even in its vulnerability, a bulwark against the rising tide of the East.²⁴

It is clear that East Prussia, and not only in economic relations, has a much larger significance for the German Reich than it did before the war[.] [B]ut also one must see clearly that if East Prussia could no longer have stood as the bulwark and defense for all of Germany, then all of Germany would have been lost and the whole 700-year-long cultural project [*Kulturarbeit*] of the German people in the East would have been in vain. Any hope for an eventual reasonable, economically-grounded border placement in the East would have had to have been abandoned.

“The Oder [River] would become Germany’s eastern border,” Siehr concluded ominously. “Try to imagine whether Berlin, lying unprotected so close to that border, would be able to maintain its position as the capital of the Reich.”²⁵

Inside Königsberg, this deep-rooted and inalienable Germanness of both the East Prussian landscape and its people was emphasized through a series of *Heimat* publications, novels, stories, poetry and prose, children’s books, cookbooks, and travel guides; meanwhile historians, political scientists, and economists wrote to confirm East Prussia’s ancient inheritance and its continuing importance in German politics, economy, and culture. But in emphasizing the integral German identity of Königsberg and East Prussia, these efforts sometimes revealed the precarious basis for these assertions. Herbert Crüger, a communist party (KPD) activist from Berlin who was sent to East Prussia to agitate among the small farmers in Masuria in the early 1930s, started to question these declarations of essential Germanness soon after his arrival:

²² Hanne Albrecht, “Bericht über den staatlichen Sonderkursus für Grenzkindergärtnerinnen,” 7 February 1936. BA-Berlin, 49.01, 10575/94, quoted in Harvey, “Pilgrimages,” 201-2.

²³ Siehr, “Ostpreussische Wirtschaftsprobleme,” 454, 467.

²⁴ Harvey, “Pilgrimages,” 209. See Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies Volume 1: Women, Floods, Bodies, History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987). Theweleit depicts this heroic defense provocatively as a gendered struggle of the Fatherland against the red-feminine Slavic deluge.

²⁵ Siehr, “Ostpreussische Wirtschaftsprobleme,” 467.

The better I got to know the Gumbinnen region [eastern East Prussia], the more questionable this “ancient German character” that everyone was talking about, seemed to me. The place names came almost exclusively from Lithuanian origins: Karcziamupchen, Uszupönen, Wilpischen; some place names had already been Germanized, and so the signs of the city of Marggrabowa and the Oletzko region had been changed to Treuburg. The farmers mostly have names like Schlaugat, Nugat, etc., barely Germanized by dropping the Lithuanian ending -as or -is. The regional newspaper from Gumbinnen still had the subtitle “Prussian-Lithuanian Newspaper.”²⁶

In the late 1920s, there was a widespread although not entirely comprehensive campaign to give East Prussian cities with questionable linguistic provenance Germanized names. Marggrabowa/Oletzko, as Crüger mentioned, was renamed Treuburg (“Faithful Mountain”). Despite the city’s significant Polish-speaking population, it had the highest percentage of votes for East Prussia in the 1920 plebiscite. The new name was a recognition of Marggrabowa’s (now Treuburg’s) loyalty. East Prussians, as Crüger did not recognize at the time, saw themselves as a unique combination of marginality (with their the mixed inheritance and borderland status) and true Germanness (suggested by tradition, voting, and pure will).

Being an exclave meant economic isolation—from former producers and consumers, from trading markets and networks, from raw materials and industrial and consumer goods. East Prussian politicians, economists, and public figures blamed Versailles for the failure of the province’s economy to recover after the war.

East Prussia had the largest area dedicated to agriculture in the Reich except for Bavaria. In the late 1920s, 61 percent of East Prussians lived in rural communities with a population less than 2000 (compared to 36 percent in the Reich), and in 1925, 55.7 percent of East Prussians worked on the land (compared to 30.5 percent in the Reich).²⁷ Before the war, East Prussia had been a powerful producer of poultry and livestock, including cattle, sheep, pigs, and chickens, and was especially famous for horse breeding. From 1909 to 1913, for example, three-quarters of all the young horses for the German Army came from East Prussia. East Prussia was also a large producer of grains and dairy, including rye, wheat, oats, potatoes, butter, cheese, and eggs.²⁸ East Prussian agriculture suffered greatly after the war, however, due partly to competition with growing world markets and the deflation of the German economy. East Prussian farmers were especially hurt by this development because they had more preexisting debt, poorer soil, and a shorter growing season than farmers in Central and Western Germany. Despite tariff supports and subsidies, prices paid to German farmers fell by an average of 36 percent between 1925 and 1932. The number of bankrupt-

²⁶ Herbert Crüger, *Verschwiegene Zeiten: Vom geheimen Apparat der KPD ins Gefängnis der Staatssicherheit* (Berlin: LinksDruck Verlags-GmbH, 1990), 53.

²⁷ *Statistisches Jahrbuch Deutsches Reich 1928* (Berlin, 1928), 25; *Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Deutsche Reich 1931* (Berlin, 1931), 19; Rohrer, *Nationalsozialistische Macht in Ostpreußen*, 42; Dieter Hertz-Eichenrode, *Politik und Landwirtschaft in Ostpreußen, 1919-1930* (Cologne and Opladen, Germany: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1969), 101-2; Siehr, “Ostpreussische Wirtschaftsprobleme,” 466. The percentage was even higher after the economic collapse: by 1933, 57 percent of East Prussians lived or worked on farms.

²⁸ Siehr, “Ostpreussische Wirtschaftsprobleme,” 452.

cies and forced farm auctions grew more dramatically in East Prussia than in any other region, and across the province the “crisis of agriculture” became a continual topic of discussion.²⁹

While the rural economy of East Prussia was dependent on agriculture, its capital had flourished on commerce. Königsberg had played a prominent role in facilitating Baltic Sea trade between East and West and between the coast and inland areas of East Central Europe. Trade agreements had allowed the Königsberg port to compete with the Russian Baltic ports, and a full three-quarters of the sea trade through Königsberg was made up of goods of Russian origin or goods processed with Russian materials. Grains, legumes (especially lentils and peas), wood, oil products, hemp, flax, and wool came in large quantities from Russia, while imports of herring, salt, fertilizer, machinery, and specialty industrial products traveled over Königsberg’s port in the other direction. East Prussia’s agricultural economy was intertwined with Russian trade, as the livestock industry depended on cheap imports of Russian grains as fodder. After the war, Königsberg saw its trade wither as the Russian markets collapsed, as its inland trade network was truncated by the corridor, and as other goods were first diverted to Danzig, and then to the competing Polish port of Gdynia. Although gradually improving before 1929, imports and exports at the Königsberg port remained significantly below prewar levels: The total import of goods by train, sea, and canal was 3,393,000 tons in 1913, down by almost half to 1,856,000 tons in 1924. By 1927, imports increased to 2,470,000 tons, but remained almost a million tons below prewar levels.³⁰

Industry in Königsberg and across the province played a less important, but still not insignificant role in the economy, and suffered likewise from East Prussia’s isolation. The distance from the main economic centers of the Reich, and especially from natural gas, mineral, coal, and iron supplies, had delayed the development of heavy industry, and into the twentieth century, the province lagged far behind industrial centers of the Reich. The trend continued after the war, and in 1928, less than half as many East Prussians made their living in industry or artisanal trades as the Reich average.³¹ Industries were primarily concentrated in Königsberg (population 280,000), but also in nearby Elbing (68,000) and Tilsit (51,000). Only in a few niche industries were there strong production capabilities, and those were generally connected to agriculture, particularly woodcutting, paper manufacturing, and distilling.³² The wood processing industry was especially well developed, including four large-scale cellulose paper factories (two in Königsberg, and two along the Memel River, in Tilsit and Ragnit). Machine-building industries were more limited, focusing pri-

²⁹ Bessel, “Eastern Germany,” 206; Rohrer, *Nationalsozialistische Macht*, 44.

³⁰ Bessel, “Eastern Germany,” 204; Siehr, “Ostpreussische Wirtschaftsprobleme,” 452-3, 461.

³¹ Siehr, “Ostpreussische Wirtschaftsprobleme,” 450; Rohrer, *Nationalsozialistische Macht*, 42; *Statistisches Jahrbuch Deutsches Reich 1928*, 25. In 1928, 19 percent of East Prussians made a living in industry or artisanal trades (compared to the Reich average of 41 percent).

³² Rohrer, *Nationalsozialistische Macht*, 42; *Statistisches Jahrbuch Deutsches Reich 1928*, 25; Bessel, “Eastern Germany,” 205; Hans-Jürgen Schuch, “150 Jahre Schichau-Werke. Aus der Geschichte des größten nordostdeutschen Industrieunternehmens (1837-1987),” in Bernhart Jähnig and Hans Jürgen Schuch, eds., *Elbing 1237-1987. Beiträge zum Elbing-Kolloquium im November 1987 in Berlin* (Münster: Nicolaus-Copernicus-Verlag, 1991), 201-12; Friedrich Richter, “Wirtschaftsprobleme Ostpreußens,” in Bernhart Jähnig and Silke Spieler, eds., *Das Königsberger Gebiet im Schnittpunkt deutscher Geschichte und in seinen europäischen Bezügen* (Bonn: Kulturstiftung der deutschen Vertriebenen, 1993), 47-9.

marily on agricultural machinery, but there were also a few larger factories that produced for export, including the shipyards, machinery, and locomotive factory of Schichau-Elbing, the shipyard and machine factory union in Königsberg, the train car factory Steinfurt in Königsberg, and an automobile and tractor factory Komnick in Elbing.³³ The grain milling industry was also well developed, processing imported grains from Russia, mixed with East Prussian grain. East Prussia's most famous export, however, was amber, which could be found almost nowhere else in the world except for the Baltic Shores of the Samland Peninsula. Although amber had great significance and symbolic value in the German and world economy, its production was limited and it offered employment for only a small workforce. Likewise, attempts to scale production of rich deposits of peat and lime had not succeeded entirely, particularly after the war, because East Prussia's isolation from German economic centers made freight costs higher, forcing all East Prussian industries to slash prices to remain competitive.³⁴ In the late 1920s, the larger factories in East Prussia required state aid from the Prussian government and the Reich in order to stay afloat, and in May 1929, the Schichau Works became one of a few factories in Königsberg taken over by the Prussian state.³⁵

While hardship was felt everywhere in the 1920s, Königsbergers were justified in claiming that their lot was, on the whole, worse than elsewhere in Germany. Because of high transport costs, poor distribution networks, and the lack of a prosperous mass market, prices of consumer goods remained higher than elsewhere, and even the price of agricultural produce was not significantly cheaper than in central and western Germany.³⁶ Königsbergers made lower wages than Germans in other large cities, with tax receipts falling at a full 70 percent below the Reich average. But despite low incomes, the cost of living of Königsberg was significantly higher than elsewhere because of East Prussia's isolation, making Königsberg one of the most expensive places in Germany to live.³⁷

Most economists and politicians in Königsberg blamed the war for the failure of the economy. They pointed to its consequences, including East Prussia's isolation, the hostile neighbor Poland, and the collapse of Russian trade markets, to explain the postwar hardships. They painted a rosy picture of East Prussia's prewar days by deemphasizing East Prussia's history of industrial underdevelopment and longterm structural shifts in agricultural markets and focusing on the growth of the economy in the few years immediately preceding the war. If not for the destruction of the war and the damaging impact of outside forces on East Prussian business, they claimed, East Prussia would have become the economic and cultural center of the German East.³⁸

The corridor was wildly unpopular in Germany, and with the exception of the Communists (KPD), all the major political parties in the Weimar Republic favored some form of border revision.³⁹ East Prussia's exclave status gave politics in the region a particu-

³³ Hertz-Eichenrode, *Politik*, 124.

³⁴ Siehr, "Ostpreussische Wirtschaftsprobleme," 450-3.

³⁵ Schach, "Schichau-Werke," 208-9; Hertz-Eichenrode, *Politik*, 124-130.

³⁶ Bessel, "Eastern Germany," 209; *Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Deutsche Reich 1932* (Berlin, 1932), 253-5.

³⁷ Bessel, "Eastern Germany," 209.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Stefan Wolff, *The German Question Since 1919: An Analysis with Key Documents* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2003), 33.

larly nationalist tone, as politicians and political parties focused their campaigns throughout the 1920s on bringing aid to East Prussia's agriculture, strengthening the borders against foreign attack, and revising the terms of Versailles to reinstate East Prussia's contiguity with the rest of Germany.⁴⁰ While religion and social class continued to influence voting patterns in East Prussia, just as in central and western Germany, East Prussia's isolation played an important role in the political discourse and the outcome in 1933.⁴¹ The separation of East Prussia from the Reich through the corridor created a siege mentality not only in the new enclave but also in Germany as a whole. Nationalists warned that East Prussian borderland areas were becoming depopulated, and that the remaining population there was subject to creeping Polish influence. The defense of East Prussian borders meant the firm cultural and political education of its vulnerable inhabitants, or else the sickness of Polish contamination might spread to the body of the Reich. In order to rescue the vulnerable borderlands from encroachment, nationalists demanded agricultural settlement programs to repopulate the areas, state subsidies to encourage the population to remain, and travel programs to educate youth on the inalienable Germanness of the territory.⁴²

In the 1920s, politicians and government officials introduced a series of aid programs to bring relief to East Prussia's failing economy. including the East Prussia Program (*Ostpreußenprogramm*) in 1922, the Immediate Program (*Sofort Programm*) and the Border Program (*Grenzprogramm*) in 1926, an East Prussian Relief Program (*Ostpreußenhilfe*) in 1928, and the Eastern Relief Law (*Osthilfegesetz*) in 1931.⁴³ These aid programs were little more than stopgap measures, however, and did little to address the deep structural problems in East Prussian agriculture already present before the war. Frustration about the failure of these efforts to bring noticeable improvement and the impression that large landowners were receiving more relief than small farmers led to resentment by ordinary East Prussians and increasing distrust toward the major political parties. The political fallout of these campaigns led many East Prussians to search for more radical solutions, just as alternative political movements were gaining more popularity across Germany.⁴⁴

As the world economic crisis took its toll on the Königsberg economy, the city's unemployed were shuffled into emergency public works, including finishing the construction of new green spaces at the former city walls and building of new public parks. The cultural life of the city continued, with theater performances, concerts, lectures, balls, and festivals. But as Fritz Gause, Königsberg's emigre scribe, wrote decades later, "one could feel the thunderstorm brewing on the horizon."⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Bessel, "Eastern Germany," 213.

⁴¹ Ibid., 214. Bessel points out that the social and economic bases for political support for the Weimar Republic were especially weak in East Prussia. Although many East Prussians voted for the conservative nationalist DNVP because of East Prussia's isolation, many also did so because the party already best represented their religious and social affiliations.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Rohrer, *Nationalsozialistische Macht*, 44-5, 52.

⁴⁴ Bessel, "Eastern Germany," 212.

⁴⁵ Gause, *Geschichte*, vol. 3, 117.

A New Solution for Old Problems

The young farmer Willi Neuhöfer was one of almost 700,000 East Prussians who voted for Hitler in 1933. For most farmers, the economic hardship after the war meant that everyday life was a struggle for basic subsistence. Any unexpected expense could mean the death of a farm, and Neuhöfer remembered how one farm “came under the hammer” when the farmer lost his horse and could no longer pay. In the best case scenario, a farmer might be allowed to stay on the farm while working to pay the back taxes, but sometimes farmers were forcibly evicted and left with no means to make a living. In the wake of the economic crisis, Neuhöfer remembered, he and his fellow farmers looked for radical political solutions to help East Prussian farmers, and by the early 1930s, the answer seemed clear.

Yes, we voted for Hitler. We hoped for more security for ourselves and an improvement of the catastrophic economic situation [...]. We had 32 parties to choose from, but for us there was only one choice: a party that promised us security and a path out of economic misery. The thought that this party would bring about a horrible war did not occur to us back then.

Neuhöfer’s story shares familiar qualities with other East Prussian memoirs after the war—the insistence that very local concerns, not big ideology, led East Prussians to vote for the Nazis, that the Nazis seemed to be the only party capable of saving East Prussia from economic collapse or foreign incursion, and that no one suspected the radical violence and destruction that was to come.¹

While rural East Prussians had historically voted for conservative and nationalist parties (particularly the German National People's Party, the DNVP), Königsberg had long been a socialist town, an island of red politics in a sea of black. The Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) received an average of 50 percent of the vote from 1890 until after the First World War, well above the Reich average. Several famous SPD leaders made their start in Königsberg before heading to Berlin, including the Prussian Minister President Otto Braun and the SPD Chairman Hugo Haase, and they were influential in both shaping the

¹ Willi Neuhöfer, “Die ‘goldenen’ zwanziger Jahren in Masuren,” in *Neidenburger Heimatbrief* 107 (1996), 48-50, quoted in Bohdan Koziello-Poklewski, “Die NSDAP in Ostpreußen. Gesellschaftliche, politische und wirtschaftliche Bedingungen ihrer Entwicklung,” in Christian Pletzing, ed., *Vorposten des Reichs? Ostpreußen 1933-1945* (Munich: Martin Meidenbauer, 2006), 15-16.

political climate of Königsberg and the national character of their party. The collapse of the monarchy led many more Königsbergers to turn to the left, and the SPD won almost twice as many votes for the Weimar National Assembly as any other party, even after a violent uprising in the city during the German Revolution in 1918-1919, when soldiers and sailors occupied the Königsberg Castle for months, organizing workers' councils and demanding the creation of a socialist republic. The close encounter with socialism in Königsberg was not enough to frighten voters away, and the democratic SPD party continued to enjoy the strongest showing in the city until 1920.²

The creation of the Polish Corridor, however, did what the threat of socialist revolution could not. Once East Prussia became 'surrounded by enemies,' support for the SPD dropped by half, as Königsbergers fled to the German nationalist DNVP, the party that had established itself as the most strident opponent of Versailles.³ But even as the majority of voters sought conservative and nationalist answers to the problem of exclave throughout the 1920s, up to July 1932, Königsberg remained a city in the left-democratic Prussian state, led by the Social Democrat Königsberger Otto Braun as Minister President. Both of the highest officials in the land, the Königsberg Mayor Hans Lohmeyer, and the East Prussian *Oberpräsident* Ernst Siehr, also came from left-liberal parties, and the two Police Presidents to serve in Königsberg during Weimar, Josef Lübbring and Hans Brandt, were committed members of the SPD.⁴

The fledgling Nazi party remained a small but vocal party in the fringe of Königsberg's political life during most of the 1920s. The NSDAP's history began in 1921, when the young Königsberg veteran soldier Waldemar Magunia joined the party while stationed in Munich. Magunia was a master baker from the Steindamm neighborhood to the northwest of the old city center, and his bakery became the center of Nazi activities for the tiny Königsberg party cell he founded. Magunia never managed to gain more than a handful of recruits, however, and the Prussian Ministry of the Interior soon banned party activities entirely. After that ban was lifted in December 1924, the resurrected party remained small, but became much more vocal—and more violent. A few weeks after the reinstatement, Hitler's de facto deputy, Hermann Esser, spoke at the Nazis' first public gathering in the City Hall, and on Ascension Day the same year, the small paramilitary SA held their first rally at the Vierbrüderkrug tavern. A year later, Joseph Goebbels delivered an anti-Communist diatribe ("Lenin and Hitler") at the Comic Opera, leading to the first major brawl between Königsberg's Nazis and Communists. The Nazis escalated their agitation, setting off a bomb at a performance of "Der fröhliche Weinberg," a Carl Zuckmeyer's popular Berlin-debuted

² Gause, *Die Geschichte*, vol. 3, 24-5; Jürgen Manthey, *Königsberg: Geschichte einer Weltbürgerrepublik* (Munich: Hanser, 2005), 542. Reichstag election results for the SPD: 1890: 49.3 percent, 1893: 45.22 percent, 1898: 52.1 percent, 1903: 49.5 percent, 1912: 51.7 percent. The early strength of the Social Democrats becomes clear first when comparing to the results in the Reich as a whole. In the 1874 elections, shortly after the founding of the party, the Social Democrats received 20.2 percent of the vote in Königsberg, but 6.8 percent in general; in 1877, they received 21 percent compared to 9.1 percent in the Reich as a whole.

³ Rohrer, *Nationalsozialistische Macht*, 37. From 1920 to 1928, the DNVP led in East Prussia, with 31 to 39 percent of the vote. The SPD, which had upwards of 46.1 percent of the vote in 1919, saw its vote decrease by half but remained in second place, with its strongest representation in Königsberg. This radical shift from the SPD to the DNVP differed from the rest of Prussia, where the SPD, Catholic Center Party, and liberal DDP held the government almost without interruption, led by the SPD's Otto Braun.

⁴ Manthey, *Königsberg*, 566.

comedy, which had ruffled feathers for its mockery of war veterans and right-radical German nationalists, and staged several other public demonstrations.⁵

These early party meetings already featured the now familiar tenets of national Nazi ideology. As the Königsberg police reported, warnings that the “international Jewish market capital is a great danger to the German people,” and calls to “clean the German government out of the swamp of international Jewry and the market.”⁶ In the early days, the Königsberg Nazis’ message stuck to the buzzwords of the general Nazi worldview in the 1920s: the international banking crisis, the failure of democracy, the lies of socialism, the economic, social, and racial threat posed to the German nation from all sides, and the role of international Jewry in preventing German growth. The Nazis remained a party far on the margins, but their basic tenets, if not their tactics, shared much in common with the reigning conservative nationalist party, the DNVP. Indeed, during Goebbels’ 1926 speech at the Comic Opera, a DNVP representative took the stage to affirm the similar goals for which both parties were fighting.

I speak to you as a German, because I am a German man. [...] I am pleased to listen to a man like Dr. Goebbels today. Capitalism will be fought by the Nazis with justice. It should not be eradicated, however, but led by the state. I am a farmer and sympathetic to nationalism [*an Nationalismus gewöhnt*], and agree with everything Dr. Goebbels has said. I hope that soon the hour will come when we are all German and nationalist.⁷

Over half of the audience cheered in agreement, although not all were sympathetic. Around four hundred of the 1,000 members in the crowd were from the Communist KPD and its paramilitary and had come to watch their party chairman, Hans Kollwitz, debate with Goebbels.⁸

The commonality of purpose did little to convince DNVP voters to opt for the NSDAP, however, and the small Königsberg *Ortsgruppe* (local party cell), already weak, lost more members in 1926.⁹ Only 60 party members showed up for a city-wide meeting in March 1926, prompting futile criticism by the baker Magunia of the “great lack of discipline” among party members. Borrowing a strategy popularized by the Communists, Magunia demanded active self-criticism among party members, proposing weekly meetings in which “all misconduct by members will be brought up for discussion and sharply censured.” The will to discipline had little effect, however, and the party continued to perform abysmally at the polls. The nadir came during the Reichstag elections in May 1928, when only 0.8 percent of voters in the province chose the NSDAP. The party had performed poorly across Germany (2.6 percent Reich average), but East Prussia was the only electoral district where the Nazis earned less than 1 percent. The Nazis suffered especially humiliating defeats in Königsberg and other eastern German cities, where leftist working-class par-

⁵ Gause, *Geschichte*, vol. 3, 111.

⁶ GStPK Rep. 10, Tit. 36, Nr. 28, p. 3, 4 May 1925.

⁷ GStPK Rep. 10, Tit. 36, Nr. 28, p. 37, 20 February 1926.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁹ GStPK Rep. 10, Tit. 36, Nr. 28, p. 124, 24 January 1927.

ties, including the democratic SPD and Communist KPD, offered a urban, class-based alternative to the agrarian nationalist DNVP.¹⁰

The Königsberg *Ortsgruppe* already in 1927 had recognized that their local failure might be a structural problem, when Hans-Albert Hohenfeldt, the party leader in Danzig (then affiliated with the NSDAP in Königsberg), noted that “the National Socialist German Workers Party can not win many members in the cities; the force of our efforts must be in the countryside [...].”¹¹ In the wake of the disastrous 1928 election, Hitler directed the entire party temporarily to abandon the battle for urban workers and to focus instead on building a strong party base in rural areas. He instructed regional party leaders to act as ‘little Führers’ who would exercise significant influence over local propaganda efforts. Rather than broadcast the same message in Breslau as in Bavaria, now local party leaders could abandon ideological rigidity and tailor their message to local concerns. For Königsberg Nazis, this new path seemed finally to have potential to sway stubborn voters. As one party member explained in a meeting in April 1927, building a strong national socialist party should not be difficult, “since East Prussia is for the most part [already] oriented toward nationalism,” and the party need only to appeal to the rural voters who would be most receptive to it. Other parts of the Reich, the speaker explained, had much greater battles to fight—the industrial regions and Berlin were in the hands of the left, and the Catholic areas in the South would seem equally difficult to conquer—yet some how the Nazis had made greater inroads in those places than in East Prussia, where a very nationalist, rural, and Protestant population had failed to find common currency with the Nazis.¹² Now the Königsberg party was ready to take their message to the people.

This shift in tactic coincided with the arrival of a new regional leader, or *Gauleiter*, for East Prussia. East Prussia’s first *Gauleiter*, Bruno Scherwitz, had been booted in August 1927 for poor performance, and his successor, Erich Koch, arrived in September 1928 to revive the failing party. Koch, born in 1896 in the Ruhr Valley town of Eberfeld (now in Wuppertal), was an “old warrior” whose politics became radicalized by his experience as a soldier. Koch first met Hitler while stationed in Munich with the *Freikorps* Ehrhardt, then worked as a railway clerk in his native Ruhr, where he was imprisoned several times by French authorities for taking part in revolts against the French occupation. After an unsuccessful bid to become *Gauleiter* there, Koch was appointed to East Prussia in September 1928.¹³

Koch arrived to find a party in disarray. There were only 80 party members in Königsberg, and 249 in the entire province. Koch, a man of enthusiasm and as eager to prove himself as a “little Führer” traveled tirelessly across East Prussia, holding party rallies, talking to local residents, and building regional party cells. Within a year, Koch had already delivered 723 speeches, and his fame as a speaker grew beyond Königsberg. Within four months of Koch’s arrival, party membership quadrupled, and Koch began to create subsidiary organizations, including the National Socialist Women’s League and the Hitler

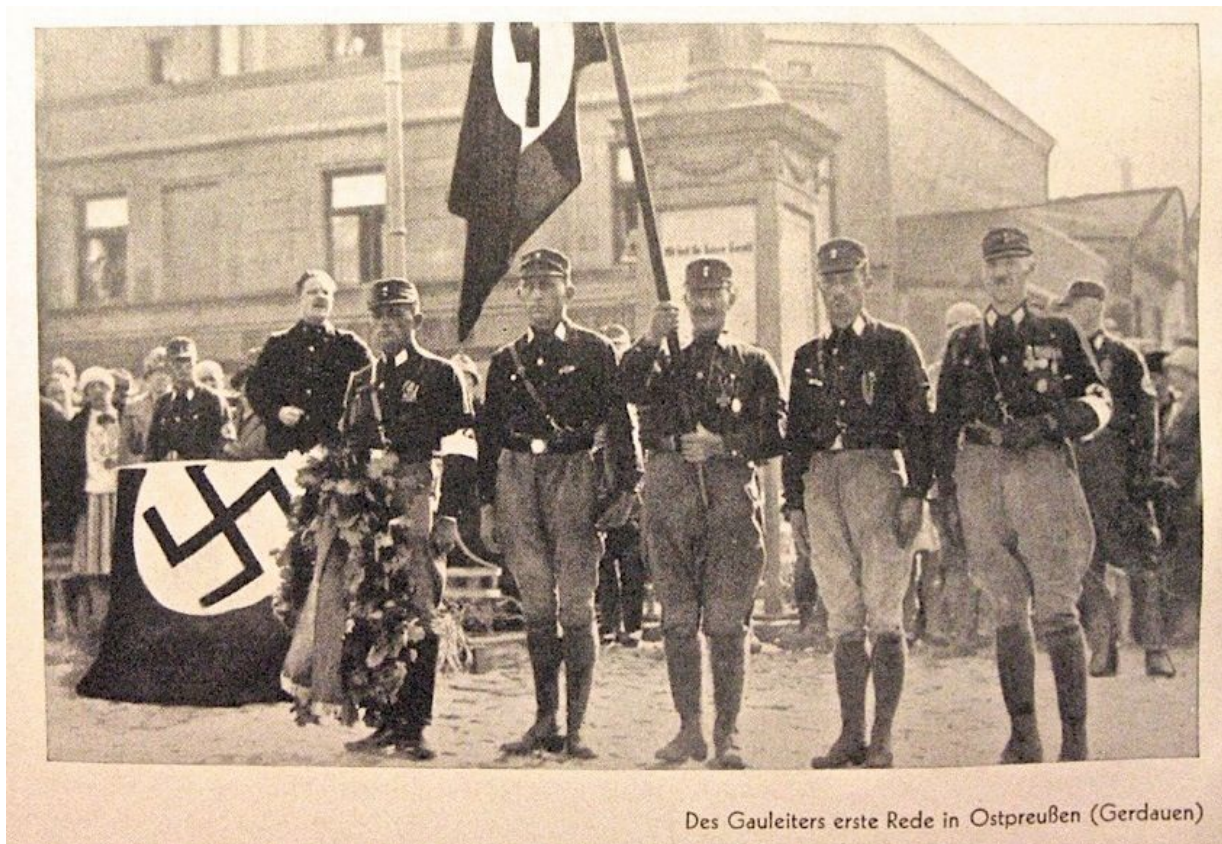
¹⁰ Kozięło-Poklewski, “Die NSDAP,” 18.

¹¹ GStPK Rep. 10, Tit. 36, Nr. 28, p. 129, 13 April 1927.

¹² *Ibid.*, 130.

¹³ Robert S. Wistrich, “Erich Koch,” in *Who’s Who in Nazi Germany* (New York: Macmillan, 1982), 142.

Youth, in order to attract more members. Soon he became one of the most sought-after speakers in the NSDAP and was invited to speak in cities across the Reich.¹⁴



*The First Speech by the Gauleiter in East Prussia (Gerdauen).*¹⁵

Koch's successful resurrection of the NSDAP, due in part to his great drive and charisma, also coincides with the Nazis' new-found success across Germany. Deteriorating conditions in Weimar during the late 1920s led to an increased sense of disillusionment among voters and the radicalization of political rhetoric, just as the Nazis learned to tailor their message to local concerns. The party first gained prominence on the national scene during the 1929 debates surrounding the much-despised Young Plan, the US government's proposed amendment to the 1924 Dawes Plan dictating the terms of German reparations. The DNVP and other nationalist parties attacked the proposal as shameful and called for a coalition to draft a "Liberty Law" (*Freiheitsgesetz*) to renounce all reparations and war guilt and to reinstate prewar borders. The DNVP joined forces with the NSDAP to agitate for the

¹⁴ Rohrer, *Nationalsozialistische Macht*, 75-8, 99; Koziello-Poklewski, "Die NSDAP," 18-20. That number remained very small compared to 3300 members in Bavaria, the first stronghold of the NSDAP, already by August 1921; Peter D. Stachura, "The Political Strategy of the Nazi Party, 1919-1933," *German Studies Review* 3, no. 2 (May, 1980), 264 [261-288]; *10 Jahre Ostpreußen* (Königsberg, Germany: Ostdeutsche Verlagsanstalt und Druckerei, 1938), 14.

¹⁵ *10 Jahre Gau Ostpreußen*, c. 1928.

law, but when the campaign fell apart, Hitler was able to disentangle himself and blame the DNVP for the failure. The tactic worked, and the Nazis' popularity across Germany increased dramatically, particularly in East Prussia. The Nazis won 4.3 percent of the votes in 1929 to the East Prussian Provincial Landtag, or four mandates (compared to the DNVP's 27 and the SPD's 27). The NSDAP was still a distant outlier, but five times as many people voted for the Nazis as in the previous year.¹⁶

Back in Königsberg, Koch's NSDAP used its new presence to argue that it was the only party that had the courage to fight for the interests of East Prussia. Local party members and visiting national speakers began to foreground East Prussia in their propaganda, downplaying the standard party attacks on international Jewry and world capitalism, while focusing on the injustices of Versailles and the failure of the German government in Berlin to save the East Prussian economy. Heinrich Himmler came to Königsberg in January 1929, and likewise put a local spin on a speech he gave in the Königsberg City Hall, entitled, "The Battle to the Death in Agriculture—East Prussia's Fatal Struggle."

East Prussia is separated from the Reich and surrounded by enemies in a sea whose tumultuous waves crash against this island, just as the waves of the North Sea upon Helgoland. East Prussia is not favored in Berlin because it does not fit into the current system. All of the men from Berlin will swear to you with raised hands that they will do everything for East Prussia. Why, then, do they not prevent Poland from subverting East Prussia, or let German agriculture go into the ground, or let German soil be bought off by Poland and auctioned off? [...] East Prussia will be depopulated of Germans because they cannot maintain their farms. The soil will lay barren and the farm workers will have to emigrate because they will starve here. The old owners get thrown to the dogs and the new owners will have it even worse. The big city entices the farm workers away, and then one day the Poles come to the League of Nations and explain that there is a Polish minority here. When a few hundred are here, they then say, 'we have a sacred right to bring over our relatives.' Here there is suffering and need, and that is only a piece of the larger German need, of the larger German misery. We do not want to take away your courage; we are only showing you the danger.¹⁷

The Nazis demanded large-scale assistance for East Prussian agriculture beyond the ineffectual programs in Berlin, and also called for the elimination of forced foreclosures on farms (the farmer Willi Neuhöfer's greatest fear), and the reduction of taxes while the province was recovering from depression. In response, DNVP voters fled to the Nazis. Koch's party added to the familiar conservative, xenophobic, and antisemitic tenets of the DNVP a new enthusiasm and call for action.¹⁸

¹⁶ Rohrer, *Nationalsozialistische Macht*, 96-7, 101-3.

¹⁷ GStPK Rep. 10, Tit. 36, Nr. 28, p. 216-7, 22 January 1929.

¹⁸ Kozięło-Poklewski, "Die NSDAP," 19-20; Stachura, "The Political Strategy," 283. The party particularly attracted artisans, small businessmen, salaried white collar workers, employees, lower-grade civil servants, small farmers, pensioners, and fixed income groups—all of whom suffered economically during the 1920s and looked to Hitler to deal with their "enemies" (Jews, Marxists, liberals) and to restore their material and social status to pre-1914 levels.

On 5 July 1932, at the height of the economic crisis, *Gauleiter* Koch broadcast a speech on the Königsberg Rundfunk radio on “The Nationalist Will for the Self-Determination of East Prussia.”¹⁹ The *Reichsverband Deutscher Rundfunkteilnehmer* planned to broadcast the speech over Berlin airwaves as well, but voiced concern that “As we’ve heard, Königsberg itself has voiced reservations against the manuscript” for its radical tone. Koch described the “deadly danger” the province found itself in, a battle not only for national self-determination (adopting the language of Versailles) and but also for sheer physical survival. A book had recently appeared, Koch said, with the title, *Warning! Here is the Eastern Mark Radio Station! Polish Troops Have Crossed the East Prussian Border!* Reading on, he described the horror scenario of every German living “on the other side of the corridor.”

There lies East Prussia, ripped away from its Motherland [*Mutterboden*]; there two-and-a-quarter million German brothers are fighting in a heroic battle for their *national* self-determination against the Polish flood, a hard and bloody [*opferreichen*] battle for their *economic* national self-determination against misery and hardship.²⁰

Koch styled his speech not only for a Königsberg audience but also for broadcast across the Reich, quoting textbook statistics about East Prussia’s population, demography, and economy that would have been already familiar to locals. (In Berlin, Koch’s speech was vetted by the German Foreign Office and allowed to be aired with small changes: anti-Polish and chauvinistic passages were toned down slightly, while Koch’s discussion of the agricultural situation, in which he pushed the Nazis’ new radical policies against German big business and state foreign trade monopolies, passed through the censors unfiltered.) Koch also used a series of impressive statistics, combining sometimes incomprehensible figures with emotional appeals “not to forget that behind these dry statistics is hidden the horrific misery of hundreds of thousands of Germans, the desperate struggle for their own patch of soil [*Scholle*], for each bit of soil fertilized by the blood of the heroes of Tannenberg.” Koch blamed the economic crisis of trade and agriculture on East Prussia’s exclave status, arguing that the economic misery was significantly more dire than in the Reich. But the larger cause, he explained, was the capitalist system: the politics of free trade and global markets forced agricultural prices to match the global prices, forcing German agriculture to compete unfairly. Eastern Germany, with its “older and poorer soils, and with its unfavorable climate,” could not hope to compete against unfair pressures of globalization.²¹ Attempts to level the competition through customs and tariffs ultimately failed because the German industry remained dependent on foreign agricultural lands, and inside Germany, German workers could not be expected to pay higher domestic prices while earning lower globalized wages. The Nazis advocated not another patch for a failing system, but a complete transformation of the structures of capitalist economic policy

because without the resolution of this social and economic problem, the resolution of the national question, the victory in the national struggle is not pos-

¹⁹ BA-Berlin R55/1273, p. 234, 2 July 1932. See also Florian Cebulla, *Rundfunk und Ländliche Gesellschaft 1924-1945* (Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004), 129-130.

²⁰ Erich Koch, transcript of “Der nationale Wille zur Selbstbehauptung Ostpreussens,” broadcast on Königsberg Rundfunk, 5 July 1932. BA-Berlin R55/1273, p. 235.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 236-7.

sible. According to the National Socialist view that is naturally true for the entire Reich but applies especially strongly for our East Prussia. Because no corner of German soil is as endangered by enemy incursion as East Prussia.

By connecting East Prussia's special suffering to the structural problems of capitalism, Koch tied his own local version of National Socialism into the economic platform of the Nazi worldview.²²

Thanks to the party's new strategy, the Nazi movement rapidly gained new converts across the Reich, and nowhere more so than in East Prussia. Koch noted with special satisfaction in January 1929 that "our ideas are being met with approval especially among the farmers."²³ Young voters were particularly drawn to the Nazis, including farmers' sons, merchants, and craftsmen who lost their job security in the wake of the world economic crisis, and also migrant workers, who returned in floods to East Prussia when industrial jobs in the Reich dried up.²⁴ The neighborhoods in Königsberg that absorbed the dispossessed migrant workers became Nazi strongholds. There were also a number of bank employees, students, and a relatively high number of bakers, due to Königsberg party founder Magunia's lasting influence.²⁵ Nazi crowds increased in numbers, and by May 1929, 3,000-3,500 people came to the Stadthalle for Adolf Hitler's visit.²⁶ The Nazis advertised the speech in advance, spreading word that "all of Königsberg should be covered with signs of the swastika flag." Apartment owners were instructed to hang flags from their windows to show Königsberg's solidarity, and flags were on sale in the Französischestraße for a low price.²⁷ The Nazis used flags and mass spectacle to claim ownership of the city before they had actually claimed it. Hitler's visit was a wild success, and as enthusiasm for the movement grew, Königsberg's Nazis finally got their first official foot into the government, when, in November 1929, Koch, Magunia, and Ferdinand Großherr (Koch's second in command) became the first Nazis to win seats in Königsberg's city parliament.²⁸

In two years, NSDAP went from being the weakest party in East Prussia to the region with the strongest showing for the Nazis in all of Germany. In the Reichstag elections of September 1930, the NSDAP received 22.8 percent (compared to only 19.6 percent for the DNVP, and 21.1 percent for the SPD, now in second place). East Prussian border districts showed especially strong support for the Nazis, while Catholic areas showed the lowest (Warmia and Shtum voted less than 10 percent for the NSDAP). Support grew stronger with each election, and by July 1932, the Nazis won 47.1 percent in the Reichstag elections, nearly

²² Ibid., 236-7, 239.

²³ Bessel, "Eastern Germany, 214."

²⁴ Ibid., 210; Koziello-Poklewski, "Die NSDAP," 23; *Statistisches Handbuch für die Provinz Ostpreußen* (Grenzlandverlag G. Boettcher, Leipzig 1938), 64. Between 1925 and 1933 East Prussia experienced a net migration loss of 94,792 people, despite the reversal of migration patterns after 1929. In 1929, 20,542 people left East Prussia for Central Germany, but by 1930, the number fell to 4,119, and by 1931, 3,870 people actually returned to East Prussia, because there were no more jobs in the industrial centers.

²⁵ Gause, *Geschichte*, vol. 3, 113.

²⁶ GStPK Rep. 10, Tit. 36, Nr. 28, p. 326, 27 May 1929.

²⁷ GStPK Rep. 10, Tit. 36, Nr. 28, p. 341-2, 8 April 1929.

²⁸ Gause, *Geschichte* vol. 3, 113. Großherr, born 1898 in Leipa in German Bohemia, was a trade representative for the J. A. Fugger Liquor Works, the *Ortsgruppe* Leader of the Steindamm neighborhood, and after 1933 became the second-in-command to *Gauleiter* Koch.

an absolute majority.²⁹ Even in Königsberg, where the party had previously found no support, the NSDAP won 25.1 percent (surpassing 21.6 percent for the KPD, 21.1 percent for the SPD, and only 6.6 percent of voters remaining with the formerly strong DNVP).³⁰ In one sense, 42 percent of Königsbergers had voted for parties on the left, an increase from much of the 1920s as voters fled the center toward more radical solutions, but the Nazis had proven that they could wrestle their way to the forefront and had achieved a powerful victory. The Nazis were now dictating the terms of the debate.

* * *

In 1932, politics dominated the city scene more than at any other time in Königsberg's history. In the wake of the world economic depression, the number of unemployed continued to climb, and young industrial workers returned in floods from the Reich back to East Prussia, in search of work. Most of them, although previously from rural towns and villages, landed in Königsberg, and the city took on the character of a halfway house, as temporary camps were set up across the city. Königsberg's annual trade fair at the Ostmesse (the city's greatest attempt to establish economic relevance after the war) was a depressing failure; attendance was so low that long rows of empty exhibition spaces had to be swiftly covered up with picturesque scenes of youth hostels, depictions of East Prussian village life, an art exhibition, and a full pavilion organized by the office of cultural affairs.

Königsberg's streets became battlegrounds for politics, as Nazi and Communist militias divided up the city terrain. Fistfights, vandalism, and skirmishes became common occurrence in the old town, as Koch led SA units in battles against Communist paramilitary groups, particularly at the Homeless Shelter on Hindenburgstraße (a red stronghold) and a communist community on Schleiermacherstraße in the Hufen district, known by locals as "little Moscow."³¹ Nazi bicycle brigades rode through the city, intimidating unsympathetic government officials and breaking Jewish shop windows. In the two years before the seizure of power, the Nazis alone killed six people, and dozens more were injured.³² The conflict escalated not only on the streets but also on the stage: the SA in the southern suburb of

²⁹ Koziello-Poklewski, "Die NSDAP," 23-4. In the first round of the Reich presidential elections on 13 March 1932, Hitler received 34.5 percent of the votes in East Prussia, increasing to 43.8 percent in the second round. Support grew stronger with each success: the NSDAP got 45.6 percent of the votes to the Prussian Landtag on 24 April 1932, increasing to 47.1 percent for the Reichstag elections on 31 July 1932.

³⁰ *Königsberger Hartungsche Zeitung*, 15 September 1930. Andreas Kossert, *Masuren. Ostpreußens vergessener Süden* (Munich: Siedler, 2001), 294, 298; Koziello-Poklewski, "Die NSDAP," 21; Bessel, "Eastern Germany," 215-7. The DNVP began to lose popularity gradually because of the perception that the big estate holders were in a better position and were getting better access to relief and aid funds, funds which were managed by the DNVP-dominated agricultural organizations. The DNVP's Reichstag share declined over the course of the 1920s, as East Prussian voters became convinced that the party was no longer representing the needs of poorer farmers: from 38.7 percent (7 December 1924), to 31.4 percent (20 May 1928), down to 19.5 percent (14 September 1930), and finally as low as 9.4 percent (31 July 1932). All of the eastern Prussian border territories voted at a higher rate for the NSDAP than the national average of 18.3 percent (with the exception of largely Catholic Upper Silesia).

³¹ *Gause, Geschichte* vol. 3, 113, 116.

³² Ralf Meindl, *Ostpreußens Gauleiter: Erich Koch: Eine politische Biographie* (Osnabrück, Germany: Fibre, 2007), 124.

Ponarth screened the film "How the Commune threatens our SA" while the KPD's International League of Victims of War and Work put together a summer festival including not only films, but also a drama, "Sentenced to Death." The NSDAP tried to stage Goebbels' "Die Blutsaat" ("The Blood Seed"), but the production never made it to the stage. The SPD made its political theater debut with "At the Men's Club" at the Trade Union House.

Groups on all sides of the political spectrum rallied for and against the preservation Weimar. In the summer and fall of 1932, national leaders came to fight for the hearts and minds of Königsbergers; Hitler, Chancellor Heinrich Brüning, Prince August Wilhelm, the Stahlhelm founder Franz Seldte, and the SPD chairman Otto Wels all agitated crowds in the Haus der Technik, while the pro-democratic Iron Front countered with a celebration of the German Revolution on 9 November. The Nazis staged a large parade of SA on 17 July 1932 for Hitler at the Ostmesse, accompanied by crowds of 25,000 at Walter-Simon-Platz. A week later, the Iron Front coalition countered with its own even larger demonstration at the Ostmesse (35,000), directed against not only the Nazis but also in protest of the recent appointment of Franz von Papen as Chancellor. (By that time, Papen had also replaced East Prussia's liberal democratic *Oberpräsident* Ernst Siehr with the conservative functionary Wilhelm Kutscher). The Left launched its own attacks, including an interruption of a meeting of the city government on 14 December 1932, when a group of communists broke into "The Internationale."³³

After the Reichstag elections of July 1932, East Prussia became one of the national centers of Nazi street terror during the so-called "revolt against the communist terror in Königsberg." The SA launched raids on communist strongholds, seizing control of the Kalt-hof district in the far east of the city (the neighborhood housing several military barracks), where they set several buildings ablaze. (Meanwhile, an attack on the Trade Union House backfired.) That same night, the shop windows of Jewish businesses were shattered, gas stations were set in flames, and riots broke out in the streets. Koch and the SA organized assassination attempts against several prominent Königsbergers, including the Regierungspräsident Max von Bahrfeldt, the Reichstag representative Walter Schütz, the chief editor of the *Volkszeitung*, Otto Wyrigatsch, and the city representative Gustav Sauff. Wyrigatsch and Bahrfeld were wounded, and Sauff was murdered in his bed. (Schütz survived only because the bullet meant for him hit a member of his house staff instead.) In the wake of the attacks, some of the assassins escaped the country, while others were arrested and sentenced. The SA leader Kurt Burow and five of his associates were arrested for the assassination attempts, only to walk free by Christmas.³⁴

Thomas Mann, who experienced the reverberations of the street violence from not far away at his Baltic Sea retreat in Nidden, wrote an impassioned critique for the *Berliner Tageblatt* a week later, on 8 August 1932.

Will the bloody days of pillage [*Schandtagen*] in Königsberg make the adorers of this emotional movement that calls itself National Socialism—even the pastors, professors, lecturers, and literary figures who follow it twaddlingly—finally open their eyes to the true nature of this national disease, this jumble of hysteria and musty [*vermuffter*] romanticism, and its megaphone-

³³ Gause, *Geschichte*, vol. 3, 115-6.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 116.

Germandom, which is the caricature and degradation of everything that is German?³⁵

Many Königsbergers were rattled by the Nazi street violence, but, to Mann's disappointment, most of them did not "open their eyes" to the nature of the disease. Despite a lower turnout for the Nazis in the next election, the party came back with an unprecedented showing by January 1933 to win an absolute majority in East Prussia. By that time, 27,527 East Prussians had joined the party. Within two years, that number tripled to 86,281.³⁶ Voters who had previously been leery of the NSDAP were captivated by the Nazis' grand promises for change, which seemed to offer more potential than their rivals' worn-out slogans. As the politician Alexander Prince of Dohna-Schlobitten later recalled,

Just as my wife and I voted in July 1932 for the German nationalists [DNVP], after some hesitation, we voted for Hitler in the elections of 6 November that same year. We, too, succumbed to the mistaken belief that the political and economic situation would stabilize if the NSDAP took over the government.³⁷

Dohna-Schlobitten's belief soon came to an ironic realization. After the victory in January 1933, the Reichstag fire in Berlin provoked the complete takeover of the government, and new elections were called on 5 March 1933. Arguing that the Communists were planning a putsch against the government, the Nazis gained support to pass an Enabling Act that granted emergency powers to Hitler. Civil liberties were suspended, and the communist party was banned and its members arrested.

Hitler came to Königsberg on the eve of that election, on what he called the "day of the awakening nation." Surrounded by cheering crowds, he led a torchlight procession through the city, thanking President Hindenburg for liberating East Prussia from Russia at the Battle of Tannenberg. Hitler told Königsbergers that the Nazis wanted "to make a fresh beginning with the truth," and called for the will to power to transform the nation through its own strength. "Hold your heads up high and proud once again," he told his followers cut off from the Reich; "Now you are no longer enslaved and unfree; now you are free again!"³⁸ Radio stations across Germany broadcast Hitler's message from Königsberg, which echoed through loudspeakers across the city. The next day, Königsbergers went to vote to confirm Hitler's rule. Wilhelm Matull, then a young editor for the SPD-affiliated *Königsberger Volkszeitung*, found his polling place littered with SA members, both to intimidate and to inspire potential voters. Helga Gerhardi, a child at the time, remembered seeing that those who voted "yes" to Hitler received a small pin with the words "ja" formed out of wire (although those who voted "nein" received the same pin regardless). East Prussian voters expressed their unprecedented support that day—56.5 percent for Hitler, the highest result in the Reich and a full 12.6 percent above the national average.³⁹

³⁵ Thomas Mann, *Berliner Tageblatt*, 8 August 1932, quoted in Hans Bürgin and Hans Otto Meyer, eds., *Thomas Mann. Eine Chronik Seines Lebens* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1965), 99.

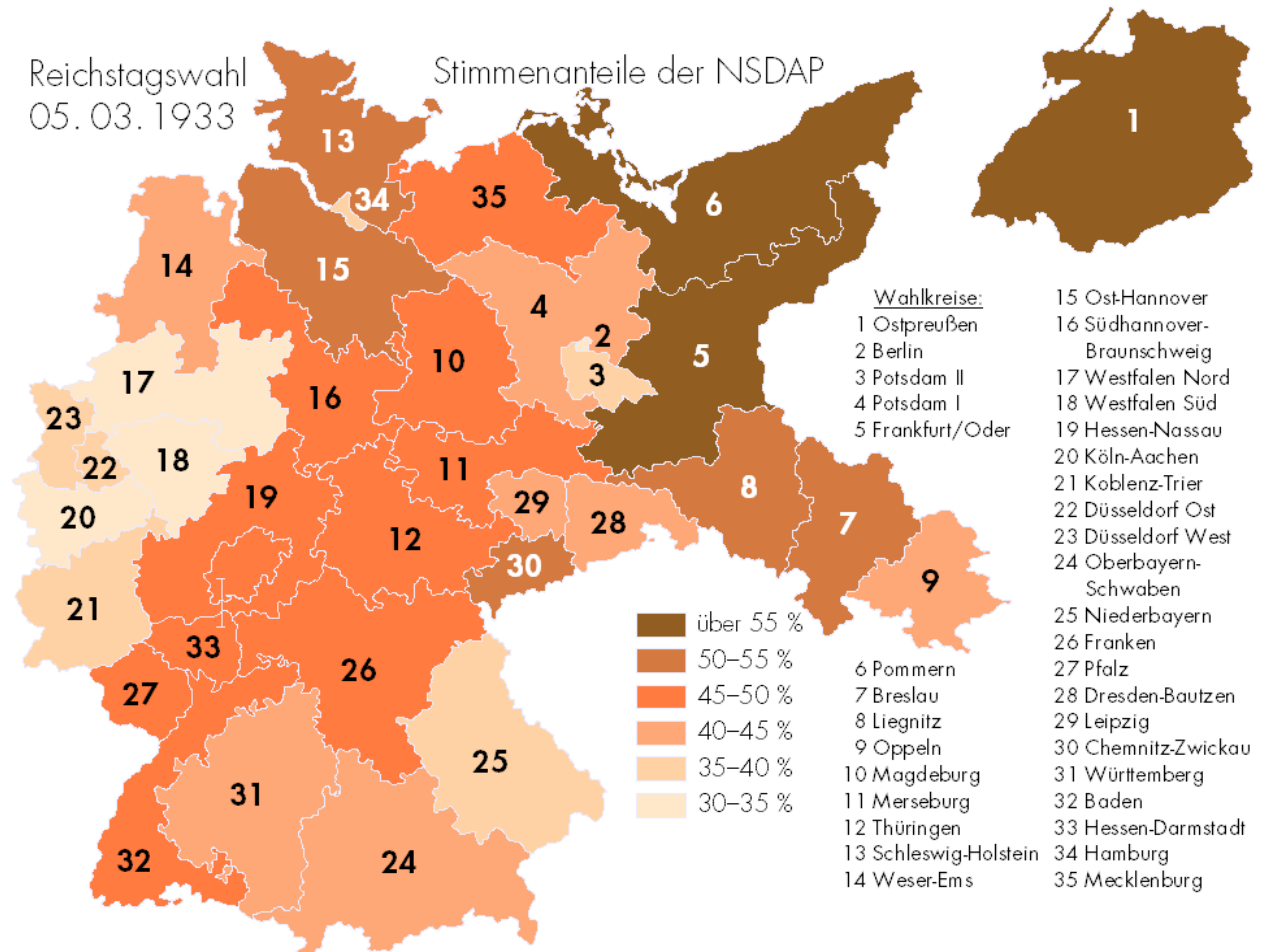
³⁶ Koziello-Poklewski, "Die NSDAP," 23-4.

³⁷ Fürst Alexander zu Dohna-Schlobitten, *Erinnerungen eines alten Ostpreußen* (Berlin: Siedler, 1989), 170.

³⁸ quoted in Isabel Denny, *The Fall of Hitler's Fortress City: The Battle for Königsberg, 1945* (London: Greenhill Books, 2007), 57.

³⁹ Meindl, *Ostpreußens Gauleiter*, 147.

Hitler, now possessing the right to rule by decree, became a dictator. The Weimar Republic had fallen, and the Thousand Year Reich in Königsberg had begun.



Election Results for the Reichstag elections from 5 March 1933. East Prussia (Election District 1) had the highest percentage vote for the Nazis, and was one of only three districts with over 55 percent. All three districts bordered the Polish Corridor.

The Movement Becomes the State

In 1928, National Socialism in Königsberg was a revolutionary movement on the radical fringe. Four years later, the Nazis had become the strongest force in the country, and nowhere stronger than in East Prussia.

Yet Koch and his party, despite having earned seats in both the Reichstag and the city parliament, remained outsiders. The Nazis were the greatest threat to stability and public order in the city, and Mayor Hans Lohmeyer attempted to block Koch's growing influence at every turn. At the same time, the Police President, Hans Brandt, fought against the party's influence, limiting the distribution of Nazi pamphlets, curbing the number and size of Nazi gatherings, and regularly infiltrating Nazi groups to gather information for the Ministry of the Interior. For Brandt, the battle against Koch was part of a larger battle for public order; in 1928 he wrote an impassioned denunciation of the rise of anti-Semitism, *Der Staat und die Juden*, and called for new protections to guarantee a pluralistic German society.¹ Koch, in return, mocked the police and city government, announcing at a party gathering in November 1928, that they—once again—had managed to meet “despite much harassment from the Police Presidium.” (The police stenographer, taking notes in the audience, dutifully added the jibe to his report.)² In 1929, Brandt's successor in the Police Presidium, Dr. Gerhard Titze, and *Regierungspräsident* Max von Bahrfeldt attempted to ban the Königsberg party entirely but soon ran into difficulties gathering evidence for prosecution under Prussian state law. The case was dropped when the police were forced to admit that a local ban in Königsberg would be futile if the movement continued to operate elsewhere in Prussia.³

The Nazis thrived on being antagonistic outsiders. They had earned their popularity—and their notoriety—as opponents not only of the local government, but also of the Weimar Republic, the capitalist system, and parliamentary democracy. Even as Koch and his deputies won seats in local and national elections, the Nazis sought to dismantle the system that had embraced them. They denounced representative politics and called for an entirely

¹ Hans Brandt, *Der Staat und die Juden* (Königsberg, Germany: Hartung, 1928). Brandt served as Police President from 1924-1928, but then appointed to the *Landrat* administration in Peine, in Lower Saxony.

² GStPK Rep 10, Tit. 36, Nr. 28, p. 167, 23 November 1938.

³ GStPK Rep. 10, Tit. 36, Nr. 28, p. 316-7, 24 May 1929.

new form of government, a totalizing regime that would sweep away the divide between the state and the German people. The National Socialist revolution, they promised, would bring about a government free from the pettiness of politics, conflict, debate, and pluralism. The state, led by Hitler, would operate unhindered with the strength and unity of purpose to restore the greatness of the German nation.

National Socialism allowed for only one truth, and, in 1933, the dictatorship of that truth came to power in Königsberg. The National Socialism went from being a revolutionary movement in opposition to the state to becoming the state itself, and *Gauleiter* Koch became the most influential man in the city. Koch already held the highest office within the Nazi party, and now his *Gauleitung* (the regional administrative apparatus for the party) became the leading organization in the new revolutionary fusion of party and state. Before 1933, the *Gauleitung* had been responsible for the internal business of the party—organizing party activities, recruitment, and membership. After the seizure of power, the *Gauleitung* became a powerful party apparatus whose job it was to provide ideological guidance to the state and local administration. Unlike some other *Gauleiter*, Koch had no ambitions to advance beyond his regional post and earn a position in Berlin; instead he preferred to rule in East Prussia, where he could oversee the creation of his own vision of the Third Reich. In this sense, Koch was not the typical zealous bureaucrat “working toward the Führer.” While Koch consistently demonstrated his loyalty to Hitler, he also took advantage of the trust that Hitler extended to him from Berlin to exercise his autonomy at home.

Organizationally speaking, the Nazi Party was very young when it took over the state. During the massive influx of new members in the early 1930s, hierarchical and various party agencies proliferated, merged, and expanded, only assuming their final shape on the eve of the seizure of power. The *Gauleitung*, with its offices in Königsberg, acted as the supreme party administration for the province; under the *Gauleitung* were several *Kreisleitungen* (district party administrations, corresponding geographically to the various *LandKreisen* (state administrative districts in East Prussia); within the *Kreisleitungen* were several *Ortsgruppen* (local party groups), which operated in individual towns and villages; and within the *Ortsgruppen* were various administrative subdivisions, including neighborhood party cells. Auxiliary organizations, most of them established personally by Koch, were affiliated with the *Gauleitung* administration and addressed all spheres of German society. These included both the administrative arms for Nazi community groups such as the Hitler Youth and *NS-Frauenschaft* (National Socialist Women’s League), *NSD-Studentenbund* (National Socialist German Students’ League), and *NSD Dozentenbund* (National Socialist German University Teachers’ League) and administrative units for implementing *Gauleitung* policy, including the *NSBO Deutsche Arbeitsfront* (National Socialist Factory Cell Organization and German Labor Front), *Hauptstelle Handwerk und Handel* (Headquarters for Industry and Trade), *Amt für Volkswohlfahrt* (Office for the People’s Welfare), *Amt für Kriegsoffer* (Office for War Victims), *Rassenpolitisches Amt* (Racial Political Office), *Amt für Technik* (Office for Technology), *Amt für Agrarpolitik* (Office for Agrarian Politics), and others.



"The Gauleiter greets the Führer on East Prussian Soil."⁴

Like the *Gauleitung* itself, its members were young and many of them only recent party converts in 1933. Over half of the 25 administrators of the *Gauleitung* were born after 1900; only a third had been members before Koch's arrival in late 1928, and only slightly more than half had joined before the victorious September 1930 elections.⁵ But they were not entirely unprepared for the task: around 44 percent of the *Gauleitung* did have previous careers in administration, and, unlike the base of party support, they came overwhelmingly

⁴ *10 Jahre Gau Ostpreußen* (Königsberg, Germany: Ostdeutsche Verlagsanstalt und Druckerei, 1938).

⁵ Meindl, *Ostpreußens Gauleiter*, 87. In January 1930, a little over a year after the arrival of the new *Gauleiter*, Koch had bragged to Munich that his party had 8334 members, 5748 SA, and 211 *Ortsgruppen*. By January 1933, that number had swelled to 27,526 party members and over twice the number of *Ortsgruppen*.

from the middle classes: 25 percent had been self-employed, only one had previously been a worker, and one a farmer.⁶

Koch filled the central positions of the *Gauleitung* with his closest followers, appointing his allies according to their professional expertise: Alfred Lau, the Chief Editor of the *Preußische Zeitung* (the main party organ), became the *Gau* Press Supervisor, for example, while Koch's lawyer Günther Vollmer led the National Socialist Jurists' League, and the baker and SA-leader Waldemar Magunia (famous as Königsberg's first party member) became Leader of the "Militant League for the Commercial Middle Class." Ferdinand Großherr became the *Gau* Manager and second-in-command Deputy *Gauleiter*. (His predecessor, Georg Heidrich, was dismissed for financial misdealing and rumors of an affair with Koch's wife.)⁷

Over the course of 1933, as the *Gauleitung* assumed control over affairs of the state, the Nazi party members moved into governmental positions. The offices of the party and of the provincial and city administrations were clustered around a small area of town, allowing for frequent contact between party and state. The *Gauleitung* moved into the Castle Lake at Gr. Schloßteich 7, where the highest party offices were located, including the office of the Deputy *Gauleiter*, *Organisationsleiter* (Organizational Leader), *Personalamtsleiter* (Chief of Staff), *Schulungsleiter* (Training Officer), *Gaugeschäftsführer* (*Gau* Manager), *Gauinspekteur* (*Gau* Inspector), and *Gaugericht* (*Gau* Chief Justice). Other offices were located nearby, most of them in buildings already used for government administration before the seizure of power. The Press Office moved into the building of the Reichssender Königsberg (formerly the independent radio station, the Königsberg Rundfunk, which had been saved from financial ruin by the city in 1929) on Adolf-Hitler-Str. 29, formerly the Hansaring. (Lau, the head of the Press Office, also assumed control of the Rundfunk by 1935.) Various subsidiary arms of the *Gauleitung* were also a short distance away, including the German Labor Front in the "House of Labor" on Vorderroßgarten 61-62, the German Student League on Paradeplatz 7 near the university, the *Amt für Kommunalpolitik Deutscher Gemeindetag* (German Office for Communal Municipal Government) inside the City Hall on Adolf Hitler Str. 3/7, and the Racial Political Office at the Hygiene Institute (headed by the university professor Dr. Bachmann).⁸

* * *

Now that the movement had seized power, the time had come to transform the state. How would National Socialism bring about the Third Reich? What would it mean in practice for a revolution to become the government? The Nazis in Königsberg imagined a radical transformation that would refashion the German community, and their first focus was the radical restructuring of the state. They envisioned the implementation of a National Socialism tailored specifically for Königsberg and East Prussia, a combination of ideology and

⁶ Rohrer, *Nationalsozialistische Macht*, 236. Outside Königsberg, members of the *Kreisleitungen* were even younger on average than the *Gauleitung* administrators and had joined the party even later, and a larger percentage of them had a background in agriculture.

⁷ Meindl, *Ostpreußens Gauleiter*, 91-2.

⁸ BA-Berlin NS26/2281, no date [after 1934].

practice that owed as much to national inspiration from Hitler as it did to the adaptation of Berlin's grand designs to Königsberg's local conditions.

The origins of the East Prussian Revolution came from the men of the so-called Königsberg Circle, a group of young politicians, economists, and administrators who studied the problems of postwar Germany in the hope of finding a particular Königsberg solution. The men of the Königsberg Circle had joined forces in the late 1920s independently of the NSDAP, although most of its members sympathized with its goals and later joined the party. After 1933, the Circle included several prominent Nazi administrators, including the central *Gauleitung* members Ferdinand Großherr and Paul Dargel, and the political editor of the *Preußische Zeitung*, Hans-Bernhard von Grünberg, who later also became the Rector of the University of Königsberg. Other members included Kurt Angermann, who had worked as an Assessor in a *Landrat* office, Dr. Hermann Bethke, a Pomeranian who was, according to the historian Fritz Gause, "as immoderate in work as in leisure," and held a number of high-ranking positions in the party,⁹ Dr. Klaus von der Groeben (Schulenburg's successor in the *Landrat*), and the historian Weber-Krohse, who for a short time was also editor of the party's *Preußische Zeitung*. Some of the young officers in the *Reichswehr* Infantry Regiment I were also connected to the Circle, including Felix Steiner, later a General in the Waffen-SS.¹⁰

The Königsberg Circle added a "respectable" component to the party and offered a sense of continuity after 1933: many of its members had been involved in planning the reconstruction of the economy and infrastructure of East Prussia since the 1920s. With the exception of Großherr and Dargel, the members of the Königsberg circle came from conservative aristocratic or educated bourgeois backgrounds, and they identified less with the vulgar mass agitation and spectacle of the NSDAP or its racial ideological components than with its promise to bring about a local version of a "national socialism," wedding their own ideals with the left-wing Nazi ideology of early party leader Gregor Straßer. These Königsberg Circle intellectuals, unlike the party administrators who had worked their way up the ranks through their personal loyalty to Koch, felt no innate loyalty to the *Gauleiter* himself, but ultimately allied themselves with Koch as the administrator who could carry out their grand plans for East Prussia.¹¹

The members of the Königsberg Circle saw themselves as a vanguard and Königsberg (in Grünberg's words) as the "school of revolution," in which the future "lifeways [*Lebensformen*] of the nation" would first take shape. As an agrarian exclave in the German East, Königsberg and East Prussia were not afterthoughts in the radical restructuring of society that the Nazis had promised, but rather—because of its isolation and the relative

⁹ Gause, *Geschichte*, vol. 3, 117.

¹⁰ Felix Steiner, *Die Freiwilligen: Idee und Opfergang* (Göttingen, Germany: Plesse, 1958). Steiner, born in Stalupönen, was a Great War veteran and a *Freikorps* leader in Memel, after the war. He made his later fame as one of the most innovative commanders of the Waffen-SS, chosen by Himmler to oversee the creation of the Nordic SS-Division *Wiking*, and served as the commander of the III (Germanic) SS Panzer Corps from 1943. In January 1945, Steiner had a fateful return to Memel when his Panzer Corps were trapped in the Courland Pocket, but he was transferred by Hitler at the last minute out of the pocket on 28 January 1945 to command the 11th SS Panzer Army with the Army Group Vistula in the Battle of Berlin. After the war he was declared not guilty of war crimes, despite having been a prominent party member and SS member.

¹¹ Meindl, *Ostpreußens Gauleiter*, 113; Ralf Meindl, "Erich Koch—*Gauleiter* von Ostpreussen," in Pletzing, *Vorposten des Reichs*, 33-4.

backwardness of the economy—the petrie dish for Nazi experimentation. East Prussia, still untainted by Western global capitalism and degeneration, would serve as the template for the transformation of the rest of the Reich.¹²

The Königsberg Circle’s vision of National Socialism adhered to many of the general tenets of its Berlin counterpart, including the fundamental pillars of Nazi ideology: radical German nationalism, racism and anti-Semitism, anti-Marxism and anti-Bolshevism, rejection of democracy and the leadership cult, social Darwinism, the revision of Versailles borders, and an expansionist politics in the East to create “living space” for the German people. Koch and his theorists, however, focused initially less on anti-Semitism and the racial components of National Socialism, and more on proposing solutions to East Prussia’s economic woes, combatting the threat of incursion by Poland, and stopping the tide of the Bolshevik revolution. Koch and the Königsberg Circle were not the only creators of their own flavor of National Socialism; other *Gaue* and *Gauleiter* also developed their own ideological programs to influence their standing in the hierarchy of the Third Reich, but the Königsberg contingent stood out for the intensity of its local preoccupations.¹³

This vision of a specifically Königsberg revolution arose out of the intellectual legacies of pan-Germanism and the traditions of Prussian, or “North German” Socialism as espoused by writers and propagandists such as Oswald Spengler and the left-wing Nazi proponent of a “national socialism,” Gregor Straßer. The Königsberg worldview contrasted the cultural values of the Roman Catholic Mediterranean with those they identified with the Baltic Sea realm—Protestantism, Prussia, socialism, and Hitler—which they formed into a complete mythos for East Prussia. The Prussian socialist revolution was construed not as a form of “fascism” (which they saw as foreign), but as a form of socialism that arose out of early northern Protestantism (embodied earlier by the Teutonic Knights) and developed in a continuous line from Johannes Hus and Martin Luther through the “kings of Prussian socialism” (Friedrich Wilhelm I and Friedrich II), onward to Adolf Hitler.¹⁴

How would this new revolution transform the state? The most impassioned and eloquent theorist of the Königsberg Circle was Fritz-Dietlof Count von der Schulenburg, a civil servant in the Königsberg *Oberpräsidium* from 1932. Schulenburg was a Prussian aristocrat from a military and diplomatic family, and he remained greatly influenced throughout his life by the traditions of the Prussian state. Schulenburg became most famous for his later role in the German resistance during the war; long before Claus Schenk von Stauffenberg became the leader of the 20 July 1944 plot against Hitler, Schulenburg was the driving force behind its organization. But in 1933, Schulenburg was a fervent and idealistic National Socialist with bold ideas about how to transform the German state and its people in the spirit of the revolutionary movement. Schulenburg, along with other prominent theorists in the

¹² Meindl, *Ostpreußens Gauleiter*, 179-180.

¹³ Ibid. Meanwhile, other *Gaue* oriented themselves more closely toward the racial-biological elements of National Socialism, as was the case with the Main Franconian *Gauleiter* Dr. Otto Hellmuth, for example, whose plans focused on carrying out the systematic racial examination of the population under his command.

¹⁴ Meindl, *Ostpreußens Gauleiter*, 177-8; Rohrer, *Nationalsozialistische Macht*, 300-1. The most complete articulation of this East Prussian National Socialism came from the historian Otto Weber-Krohse, who had drafted most of Koch’s early programmatic speeches, which he published under Koch’s name in 1934 as *Aufbau im Osten*. The book offered a developmental fantasy for East Prussia that was far removed from the actual geopolitical and economic situation in the city.

Königsberg Circle, identified as a “conservative revolutionary” and incorporated elements of neo-conservative philosophy into his thought: rejection of the destructive influences of individualism and urban way of life, the idealization of rural living conditions, distrust of the growth of large industrial companies and the urge to restore small and medium-sized business in their place. He was particularly invested in issues concerning agrarian debt and land reform in East Prussia, and his efforts to end class divisions and to bring about social justice as a Prussian civil servant in the Ruhr had earned him the nickname “the Red Count.” In the Königsberg Circle, Schulenburg became the strongest proponent of the “North German” or “Prussian socialism,” as popularized by Gregor and Otto Straßer. Like other members of the Königsberg Circle, he theorized nationally and practiced locally, hoping that Königsberg would become the model for a greater German national renewal.¹⁵

Members of the Königsberg Circle each had their own special projects, and Schulenburg’s was the radical reformation of the state. Schulenburg argued that the first and most important step in restoring Germany’s greatness and fostering the national community was to refashion the governmental bureaucracy; a truly Nazi state, as imagined by Schulenburg, would serve as the foundation for “policies that would revolutionize all spheres of life.” According to Schulenburg, the inefficacy of Weimar governmental structure led to the rise of opportunism, vested interests, and a parliamentary system that promoted conflict. In its place, Schulenburg hoped to create a well-oiled system that built upon the “Prussian idea of the state.” At the center of Schulenburg’s plan was the complete streamlining of all state institutions, in order to eliminate overlapping jurisdictions or conflicts in the chain of command, thereby creating an enlightened, rational bureaucracy that was capable of transforming the directives of the *Führer* into governmental practice. The Party would serve only as the temporary manifestation of the spirit of the movement; ultimately, the civil servants would owe their loyalty to the governmental institutions in which they served. The Party, Schulenburg argued, would trim its ranks to form a lean, ideological guardianship assuring that state institutions remained imbued with the spirit of National Socialism. At heart, Schulenburg wished to recreate the well-ordered Police state, and saw the Nazi party as its catalyst.¹⁶

Yet as eager as Schulenburg was to introduce these reforms, he had serious reservations about the Nazis actually assuming command. The enthusiasm of the German people had energized the movement, but the Party had grown too quickly, he argued in 1932, and its ranks were filled with opportunists, careerists, and masses of disenfranchised thugs who pushed the party toward mob violence. The Nazi movement needed to use its newfound prominence to cleanse its ranks from within, tighten the leadership at all levels, and secure absolute dedication and ideological consistency. Schulenburg was interested in maintaining the purity of the idea rather than diving too quickly into the political process, because he had doubts that the potential of movement would be able to be maintained if the party too took charge.¹⁷

But the seizure of power came soon thereafter, and Schulenburg was forced to shift his strategy: transform the Party from within, even as the Party was transforming the state.

¹⁵ Hans Mommsen, *Alternatives to Hitler: German Resistance under the Third Reich*, trans. by Angus McGeoch (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003), 154-7.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Schulenburg, already an insider in Königsberg government, eagerly accepted the role of personal consultant to *Gauleiter* Koch, seeing in Koch the embodiment of the leadership qualities needed to reform East Prussia. For the next year, Schulenburg dedicated himself to the task, and led the campaigns to purge the city and provincial government of opposition and fill the positions with loyal party members. Schulenburg imagined this work to be in the greater interest of the German state and attempted to create a Nazi meritocracy, while opposing any introduction of nepotism or patronage, which he had harshly criticized during Weimar. Schulenburg's work coincided with similar projects at the national level, including proposals by the Reich Ministry of the Interior for the horizontal integration of the branches of the administration. According to such plans, virtually all governmental departments (except the Foreign Office, the military high command, specialized technical departments, and the Justice Administration) would be incorporated into a unified system. This powerful centralization in Berlin would be balanced, in Schulenburg's plans, by increasing the power of the localities. Schulenburg hoped to create a structure that would reduce the potentially negative influence of ministerial bureaucracy unconnected to its constituency by giving intermediate authorities greater autonomy and control. These plans called for the fusion of parallel administrations at all levels, for example, the roles of *Kreisleiter* (the chief district party official) and *Landrat* (chief district governmental official) into one position. Efficiency, discipline, and harmony would be ensured by the implementation of the *Führerprinzip*, not in party affairs, but within civil service. These plans corresponded with early plans by the Party apparatus to place all of state administration under its direct authority, which Schulenburg supported enthusiastically, seeing this incorporation as the first step toward the creation of a new orderly Nazi bureaucracy.¹⁸

Already by the summer of 1933, however, Schulenburg was becoming disillusioned with the new regime's dedication to carrying out his envisioned reforms. Plans to fundamentally restructure governmental institutions from the ground up were shelved as the new Nazi state became more interested in exercising its power than reforming the state. As was the case across Germany, Nazi bureaucracy in Königsberg, despite Schulenburg's plans, became based on personal offices and connections over formal structures of command, and overlapping jurisdictions and confusions of hierarchy became permanently imbedded into the bureaucracy. Newly appointed officials worked to expand their jurisdictions against competing organizations, compounded by Koch's policy of appointing his loyal followers to multiple offices, some within the *Gauleitung* and others in the state administration. Paul Dargel, for example, served as both the *Organisationsleiter* and *Schulungsleiter*; Dr. Hans-Bernhard von Grünberg served as both the head of the NSD-Dozentenbund (University Teachers League) and the *Abteilung Heimstätten* (Department for Homesteads) in the DAF (German Labor Front); Dr. Edwin Sett functioned as head of the *Amt für Volksgesundheit/NSD-Ärztebund* (Office for People's Welfare/National Socialist German Doctors' League) and head of the Health Department of the DAF; Paul Gillgasch served as the head of *Abteilung Propaganda* for both the main DAF organization and its child organization, the KdF.

While new organizations proliferated inside the party, the basic structures of the state and city government remained similar to the Prussian system during Weimar. The complete structural reconstitution of governmental institutions was dropped; in most cases,

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 165, 170-1.

the same offices continued to exist in their old locations and with their old jurisdictions, but now they would be serving the directives of the Party. The highest office in East Prussia, the *Oberpräsident*, remained, as did the several *Regierungspräsidenten* and, below them, the *Landrat*. Although Schulenburg and his team were active in purging the government of opposition, many former agencies and staff members remained the same. In early 1933, the majority of city and provincial administrators had served since the early 1920s and had been members of the conservative German National People's Party (DNVP). In contrast to the young, enthusiastic Nazi *Gauleitung*, city and provincial administrators after 1933 were on average 10 years older, most of them born before 1890. Many of these technocrats who had not been members of parties or organizations hostile to the Nazi movement were allowed to keep their posts, provided that they pledged allegiance to the new government. Those who remained, however, came under pressure to join the party; the fact that the majority of the Königsberg city government joined only in 1933 speaks to the continuity and flexibility of the new Nazi regime's staffing policies.¹⁹ A good personal relationship with Koch became the most important criterion for holding office, even over party membership. Anton Kerschesteiner, the President of the *Landesarbeitsamt* (Regional Labor Office) from 1934 to 1944, for example, never formally joined the party; he was the son-in-law of the former Bavarian Minister President Gustav Ritter von Kahr, who had been murdered in Dachau in 1934 as punishment for his role in thwarting Hitler's 1923 Beer Hall Putsch.²⁰ Despite calls for the radical sweeping away of the old regime, only about half of the province's *Regierungspräsidenten* were replaced, making East Prussia second only to Saxony in fewest number of replacements. One important replacement was the Königsberg *Regierungspräsident*, Hermann Bethke, a close associate of Koch's and member of the Königsberg Circle. At the district level, there were more casualties: 25 of 38 *Landrat* officials were replaced with Nazi party members in 1933; additional replacements in 1934 and again in 1937-38 allowed Koch to staff the entire district-level administration at his personal discretion.²¹

The few attempts to fuse party and state organizations ultimately created more complexity, as they were grafted on top of the existing structure without systematically replacing it. Schulenburg was horrified by this growth of Party influence within the state, even as other Party leaders complained that the opposite was the case, and that recalcitrant state institutions were preventing the radical transformations the Nazis were advocating. An increasing number of areas were overseen by special administrative bodies popping up in the cracks between Party and state, and the most senior positions in the civil service were becoming subject to the personal power struggles of the party leadership. The Nazi government as it emerged in Königsberg bore little relation to Schulenburg's visions of Prussian governmental efficiency, and his calls for reform were now falling on deaf ears. The leaders of the movement had now become the state and were more interested in wielding the power of their positions than carrying out any kind of long-term structural reform from within.

The worst example of this dualism turned out to be one that Schulenburg himself had originally advocated: the fusion of the two positions of highest authority, the *Oberpräsident* and *Gauleiter*. In June 1933, Koch, already the most powerful man in the province, be-

¹⁹ Rohrer, *Nationalsozialistische Macht*, 250.

²⁰ Gause, *Geschichte*, vol. 3, 124.

²¹ Rohrer, *Nationalsozialistische Macht*, 251.

came *Oberpräsident*, the highest state authority in East Prussia. Koch earned the position in part because of Schulenburg's lobbying to Göring on his behalf. Now fusing the two most powerful offices in East Prussia, *Gauleiter* Koch began to style himself as the *Ostpreußenführer*, the absolute leader of party and state. Although Schulenburg had originally advocated that kind of streamlining, the result was that Koch became known (especially by his detractors) as a "*Gau King*," with no rivals or limits. Fusing the offices of *Gauleiter* and *Oberpräsident* ultimately meant the triumph of personal rule over efficient bureaucratic institutions.

Schulenburg began to distance himself from Koch, but still hoped to influence the nature of Koch's rule by reminding him about what Schulenburg saw to be the essence of the Nazi movement. Writing in July 1933, shortly after Koch's appointment as *Oberpräsident*, Schulenburg emphasized how East Prussia had a mission, as "historical Prussian territory," to reestablish "once and for all the Prussian lifestyle and struggle and toil." But, as Schulenburg issued the thinly-veiled warning to Koch, "there are areas where even we National Socialists have departed very far from that." His appeals fell on deaf ears, and sensing that he could no longer carry out his planned reforms in Königsberg, Schulenburg escaped Koch's immediate influence in 1934 by appointing himself *Landrat* of the Fischhausen, the seaside region on the Samland Peninsula next to Königsberg. From there, he hoped to institute his reforms on the local level, unimpeded by the bureaucracy and party politics in the capital.

* * *

Back in Königsberg, Koch worked to consolidate his rule, showing no tolerance for opposition and pushing out anyone who failed to show support for the Nazi revolution. Early on, Schulenburg himself spearheaded the efforts to remove opposition from the government, but soon the momentum became Koch's, and purges turned into months of street terror. Communists, socialists, and members of bourgeois liberal parties lost their jobs, along with anyone Koch took a personal dislike to. Using publicized scandal, legal proceedings, financial blackmail, and other "squeezing" techniques, Koch managed to eliminate all open opposition by 1934. Administrators who lost their jobs went into voluntary or forced exile, which sometimes meant leaving for other countries in Europe or just leaving East Prussia (as in the case of the former President of the *Landgesellschaft* (Land Society) Wilhelm Freiherr von Gayl, who left Königsberg for Potsdam, where he remained until his death in 1945).²²

One of the primary targets of Koch's defamation campaign in 1933 was the reigning *Oberbürgermeister* (Mayor) Hans Lohmeyer. Koch had come in frequent conflict with Lohmeyer before the seizure of power, and Koch's order of business in early March 1933 was to suspend the mayor and subject him to a disciplinary hearing (which had less to do with his professional service than with the questionable ethics of his recent divorce and second marriage to the actress Gerde Müller-Scherchen). Lohmeyer's successor, appointed in May, was the long-standing *Oberpräsidium* administrator Dr. Helmut Will, who was not an old warrior of the Nazi party, but rather a seasoned administrator who had earned respect for rescuing Königsberg's banks in the economic crisis. Koch granted Will his dream position, and in return, Will agreed to join the party and provided Koch with well-established contacts in the

²² Gause, *Geschichte*, vol. 3, 125.

Prussian Ministry of the Interior. Whereas other *Gauleiter* came in conflict frequently with the *Oberbürgermeister* in their capital cities, Koch and Will cooperated smoothly, and Will became one of only a few *Oberbürgermeister* to retain his position for the entire Nazi reign.²³

The President of the Chamber of Industry and Trade, Willi Ostermeyer, was another city official forcibly removed from office, in his case for refusing to replace the Chamber of Commerce flag at the Stock Market with the Nazi swastika. Ostermeyer's successor, Heinrich Kübarth, was the Director of the Dresdner Bank and a long-time associate of Koch, although he joined the party only shortly before his appointment. But while the two men had a history of good relations, Kübarth began to disagree with Koch's influence over the business operations of the Chamber, and Koch expelled him, too. Kübarth left Königsberg, and Koch prevented any government agency from doing business with the Dresdner Bank so long as he remained in charge there.

Koch ran into other obstacles with staffing the new Nazi government in Königsberg; among the most difficult positions to fill was also the most important and potentially volatile: the Police President. The previous Weimar Police President, Berner (July 1932–November 1933) was dismissed, as Hugo Linck, a Königsberg minister and opponent of Koch, later commented, "because it was unbearable for him always to have to go on apology visits to different consulates in town because foreigners on the streets had been beaten up during parades for not waving party flags and giving the Hitler greeting,"²⁴ whereas his short-lived successor, the SA-Leader and Reichstag member Adolf Kob, attempted to compete with Koch for power. Only in 1934, with the appointment of another SA-Leader, Heinrich Schoene, had Koch found a Police President willing fully to accept Koch's influence over police affairs.

After replacing city government, Koch turned his attention to other organizations. The Nazi Party aimed to eliminate the distinction between party, state, and society, and that meant that all institutions in Königsberg must either be created by the Party, come under its jurisdiction, or be disbanded. Among the first to go were the trade unions (well-known hotbeds of communist activity), which were incorporated into the National Socialist Labor Front in May 1933, their headquarters transformed into a Nazi "House of Labor." The old political Militant Leagues besides the Stahlhelm were dissolved and banned, and even the Stahlhelm organizations, at first allowed to remain independent, were assimilated into the party structure by 1935. Christian and secular youth groups at first became subsidiary groups within the Hitler Youth and League of German Girls, only to be dissolved into the larger group soon thereafter.²⁵

The party launched similar attacks on the press. All socialist publications were banned immediately, but several non-socialist papers remained, including the conservative *Königsberger Allgemeine Zeitung*, which remained the most widely-read and influential newspaper in the city ("hardly any other German newspaper managed to reach so many strata of society to such an extent"),²⁶ and the independent *Königsberger Tageblatt*.²⁷ The lib-

²³ Meindl, *Ostpreußens Gauleiter*, 154; Rohrer, *Nationalsozialistische Macht*, 253f.

²⁴ Hugo Linck, *Der Kirchenkampf in Ostpreußen 1933-1945* (Munich: Gräfe und Unzer Verlag, 1968), 100, 243.

²⁵ Gause, *Geschichte*, vol. 3, 121-2.

²⁶ Emil Popp: *Zur Geschichte des Königsberger Studententums 1900-1945* (Würzburg, Germany: Holzner-Verlag, 1955), 46.

²⁷ Rohrer, *Nationalsozialistische Macht*, 277-8.

eral *Hartung'sche Zeitung*, which had been in continuous publication since 1640 and had been known for its critical eye toward any government in power, was forced to release its final edition on 31 December 1933.²⁸ Within a year of Nazi rule, Königsberg no longer had a free press, and remaining newspapers came increasingly under direct supervision (and in many cases, outright ownership) of the party.

But the most dramatic transformation of life in the city followed the Nazis' battle for control against organized opposition. Despite the overwhelming election turnout in March of 1933, the new government's hold on power remained tenuous. The Nazis' popularity had peaked back in July 1932, but frightened by the bloody street battles and disappointed by the party's obstinate behavior in the Reichstag, 113,793 East Prussian voters had switched from NSDAP to other parties between July and November 1932.²⁹ Even the nationalist presses in Königsberg had begun to distance themselves from the party in the final months before the Nazi takeover, and many NSDAP members rescinded their membership. The *Gauleitung* recognized that "the acts of terror that were carried out systematically across the province [in July 1932] turned the population away from us, both because of their lack of success and because of the childish manner of their implementation"³⁰ and when voters returned their support in early 1933, Koch worked swiftly to eliminate opposition to keep public opinion sympathetic to the new regime. In the media, the Nazis continued their attacks on left-radical parties, especially the KPD and the democratic socialist SPD, but also the bourgeois liberal and conservative parties, including the DDP and DNVP.³¹

Into March, various opposition fronts continued to hold demonstrations to challenge the new regime; a week after the Nazis held a mass demonstration in the House of Technology on 7 February to celebrate a victorious torchlight procession from Berlin, the KPD answered with a march of 6,000, which was disbanded by police soon after it began. A new "Militant League Black-White-Red" (an opposition alliance composed of the conservative agrarian DNVP, the Stahlhelm—then operating as the paramilitary wing of the DNVP—and the agrarian Landbund Party) gathered under the Stahlhelm founder Fritz Seldte (who had by then been appointed the *Reichsminister* for Labor in Hitler's cabinet, but had not yet joined the party), and the leftist pro-democratic Iron Front marched (for the last time) on 27 February on the Trommelplatz. After the enactment of emergency measures in March 1933, all independent public gatherings were prohibited. Planned meetings of the KPD and SPD at the House of Technology in March in the days before Hitler's visit to Königsberg were banned, and independent groups of any kind were no longer allowed to gather.³² In practice, that did not only mean demonstrations by leftist opposition parties, but also independent public gatherings by otherwise sympathetic groups, including seemingly innocuous club meetings, such as a lecture evening by the Tannenburg League on "The Significance of our German Festivals, Songs, Legends, and Fairytales for the Present and for the Education of the German National Consciousness." The meeting was permitted at the time to members and specially invited guests, but the police, now operating under Nazi directives, discovered that a local bookstore was advertising that tickets for the lecture

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 296-7.

²⁹ Kozięło-Poklewski, "Die NSDAP," 17.

³⁰ GStdPK XX NA Rep. 204, Bd. 7d, p. 111-16, 6 November 1932.

³¹ Rohrer, *Nationalsozialistische Macht*, 140.

³² BA-Berlin R58/1562, p. 25-6, 15 March 1933.

could also be bought from members or in the bookstore on Münzstraße. The police followed up on the violation and prevented the group from advertising again.³³

Hundreds of political opponents were arrested, and beatings, vandalism, and political murders became commonplace. The city and provincial police, now commanded by Koch, joined SS and SA squads to target opposition leaders from the socialist parties (SPD and KPD) and from oppositional Catholic groups.³⁴ The Königsberg City Jail could not hold all of the internees, and so the new government transformed the soldiers' barracks at Fort Quednau outside the city into East Prussia's first concentration camp.³⁵ (Quednau gained infamy as the only concentration camp in East Prussia before the start of the Second World War. It was open only as a transitional camp in 1933, and was closed a few months later.)

Just as in the Reichstag, the Communists were stripped of their mandates in the city parliament, and a ban on the Social Democrats followed soon thereafter. (The SPD's former headquarters, the Otto Braun House on the Dritte Fließstraße, became another kind of brown house: the new headquarters for the SA.) By March 22, Communist Party members had given up their public offices, and the organization went underground.³⁶ Their presence continued to be a threat, however, and for the next several years, the Königsberg police reported on underground communist activities and confiscated pamphlets, propaganda materials, writing instruments, and weapons. During the first year of Nazi rule in Königsberg, communist cells were raided continuously, illegal meetings were infiltrated, and Communist Party members were arrested. The Polizeipräsident in Königsberg reported as early as 30 January 1933, that 60,000 copies of a communist flyer ("A Unified Front of Action Now!") were intercepted from the Lenin House on Unterhaberberg 92. The printer of the "traitorous contents" was Walter Schütz of Stägemannstraße 69, a Königsberg native and metalworker by trade, and also a Reichstag member from the KPD. Schütz protested the ban of the Communist Party and called for a general strike against the establishment of dictatorship.

It's a matter of life and death. The exploiting class is throwing the fascist declaration of war in your face. Hitler is a dictator Chancellor; Papen is his Deputy, appointed by Hindenburg, the Candidate of the Iron Front! [...] Papen/Hitler's program is the "Eradication of Communism." Communism is you, the working people, you the working woman, you the working middle class, you the plundered farmer. The ban on the Communist Party is an assault on you! A criminal and a traitor is anyone who now preaches a "wait and see" attitude A criminal and a traitor to the working masses is anyone who speaks about "financial ruin" [*Abwirtschaften*]. Social Democratic and Christian class comrades, join into a unified front of action! The capitulation politics of the SPD's leader only aids the bloody fascism!

Schütz protested the ban of the party, and encouraged workers to show their might. In response, the police pushed to have tried him for treason.³⁷

³³ BA-Berlin R58/1563, p. 66, 4 July 1933.

³⁴ Rohrer, *Nationalsozialistische Macht*, 232.

³⁵ Meindl, *Ostpreußens Gauleiter*, 147.

³⁶ BA-Berlin R58/1562, p. 28, 22 March 1933.

³⁷ BA-Berlin R58/1562, p. 4, 6, 31 January 1933.

After 14 February, the Police President took on supplementary *Hilfspolizei* from the SA Group *Ostland*, the *SS-Standarte* 18, and the *Stahlhelm Fühlung* to carry out actions against the Communists. The earliest measures against the KPD, however, were hindered by a mass outbreak of influenza in the city, during which up to fifty percent of the political police fell sick, and out of 1,500 *Schutzpolizei*, up to 200 officers and administrators were ill. Even so, over 125 searches were carried out during the month of February, and tens of thousands of pamphlets, weapons, and munitions were seized. The KPD's newspaper was banned immediately, followed soon thereafter the newspapers of the SPD. In the week before the March elections, actions against the KPD increased, aided by *Hilfspolizei*. In that week alone, 113 were arrested and 297 apartments searched. So many materials were confiscated that it was impossible to count them all, over 6,000 kilograms, and in addition, "6 typewriters, three reproduction machines, a lot of ammunition," but, at that time, relatively few weapons.³⁸

The police's efforts continued into the summer of 1933, including numerous confiscations and arrests at the bookseller Stiehlke at the North Train Station (they had been selling the banned publication *Der Montag Morgen*), at Georgstraße 27, Bülowstrasse 34a, Gerlachstrasse 94d and 96a (where a stockpile weapons and munitions were uncovered), Karlstrasse 19 (a contraband bicycle was confiscated from the known communist worker Richard Mirwald), Friedmannstrasse 1 (another bicycle confiscated from the communist mason Fritz Heske), and Castle Sillginen near the town of Gerdauen (where a stockpile of cash, gold coins, and various weapons were uncovered, along with brochures and pamphlets).³⁹

After the summer of 1933, confiscations and interrogations decreased as the remaining opposition went underground. In the second half of June 1933, 94 people were arrested in the city, and arrests gradually declined until there were only seven arrests by October 1933.⁴⁰ On 20 November 1933, the new Königsberg head of the KPD, Walter Koelicker, who had been tasked with rebuilding the party underground, was arrested, and the police reported to the Gestapo that the movement had crumbled.⁴¹ Communist party activities continued underground throughout the 1930s, however, and remained a constant threat to full Nazi control.

While the Communists and leftist opposition parties were the main targets of the Nazi oppression in 1933, other enemies of National Socialism also suffered persecution in the summer of 1933: Jews and free masons, politicians and trade unionists, Social Democrats, Center Party loyalists, and even members of the German Nationalist People's Party who refused to assimilate (now labeled "reactionaries"). Nazi mobs broke Jewish shop windows and stormed the houses of the Free Masons on the Hintertragheim Street, damaging the property and plundering valuable furniture; the building was taken over and housed new Nazi offices. Members of the Free Masons, many of them prominent in Königsberg society and culture, were defamed and lost their positions.⁴² The party banned media coverage of the raid on Masonic lodges (fearing backlash from a violence-weary public) but openly publicized the book burning of 10 May 1933, led by the Nazi Student Leader

³⁸ BA-Berlin R58/1562, p. 24-6, 15 March 1933.

³⁹ BA-Berlin R58/1563, p. 64-6, 4 July 1933.

⁴⁰ BA-Berlin R58/1563, p. 66-106, February to October 1933.

⁴¹ BA-Berlin R58/1562, p. 130, 5 December 1933.

⁴² *Gause, Geschichte*, vol. 3, 120.

Horst Krutschina, in which books by Jewish authors and other enemies of the people were set aflame on the Trommelplatz near the Albertina.⁴³

Many of the newly disenfranchised chose to emigrate. Otto Wyrigatsch, one of those injured during the Nazi uprising in July 1932, left for Denmark, where he died soon after. Some communists and fellow travelers left Königsberg for the east, only to fall victim to Stalin's purges a few years later.

* * *

On 6 July 1933, Hitler declared victory in the Nazi revolution. The foundation of the Nazi state, he explained, was now in place, and the Thousand Year Reich could now grow from its roots. In Königsberg, no fewer than 23 demonstrations, including seven torchlight processions and seven propaganda marches, were held to celebrate the "mission accomplished." Several prominent leaders from Berlin came to bestow their blessing on the easternmost city in the Nazi Empire, among them Himmler (who greeted SS guards on 3 May) and Baldur von Schirach (who came to congratulate the Hitler Youth). All of the organizations of the *Gauleitung* including the Militant League for German Culture, the National Socialist War Victims Benefit, and the Nazi Women's League, held their own demonstrations in celebration. The largest spectacle was held the following year on "Day of National Labor" (1 May) in the fields of the Zögerhof estate, far outside the city, but the size of the crowd (over 100,000) was overwhelming and the event poorly organized, leading the *Gauleitung* to scale back its future celebrations to curb complaints by frustrated marchers.⁴⁴

On the surface, the revolution had succeeded. The new leaders had moved into their headquarters, the former government had been uprooted or forced into submission, the opposition had been eliminated, and the boundaries between party, state, and society had been blurred. The landscape had begun to change, too. Street names that had celebrated the city's former heroes now bore the names of the new ones: Hansaplatz became Adolf-Hitler-Straße; Königsallee became Hermann-Göring-Straße. *Gauleiter* Koch, too, became a celebrated father of the revolution (more for his potential accomplishments than what he had achieved thus far). In May 1933 he became an honorary citizen of Königsberg (Hitler had earned the distinction in April), and the Walter-Simon-Platz, named originally after the Jewish banker who had financed its construction, became Erich-Koch-Platz. Already memorialized in brick and stone by 1933, East Prussia's *Gauleiter* and *Oberpräsident* now had to prove himself worthy of his monument.

⁴³ Ibid., 121. Königsberg's art museums, on the other hand, did not suffer the same fate as those in Berlin—no displays of "degenerate" art—and the collections remained intact until the end of the war.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

Reshaping Königsberg

The National Socialists set out to transform the face of the city, and the first order of business was to rewrite the city's symbols according to Nazi mythology. On the most basic level, that meant the removal of all Jewish monuments, plaques, and street names; the busts of Jewish local notables, including Jacoby and Stettiner, were immediately removed to storage. Walter-Simon-Platz became Erich-Koch-Platz, and Jacobystraße and Michellystraße returned to their former names, Enge Pforte and Salzwiese. New names were also distributed throughout the city, celebrating the young fathers of the new revolution. A bronze memorial was erected for Fritz Tschierse, the SA member fatally stabbed in early 1933 during clashes with the communists, and the famous Gesekusplatz next to the castle was renamed in his honor. The youth leader Horst Wessel's name graced a park in the southern part of the city, and the "Victims of the Uprising" got their own street. New leaders earned new street names: the Hansaring took on Hitler's name, Göring got the Königsallee, and the Sammitter Allee went to General Litzmann. The noble Königstaße became the Straße der SA, and the House of Technology next to the *Ostmesse* became the Schlageterhaus, after Albert Leo Schlageter, the *Freikorps* volunteer who became a martyr in the struggle against French occupation forces. The Stahlhelm founder Franz Seldte, then not entirely in good graces, was given a small, untraveled side street near the cemetery. Most schools, however, kept their former names, with the exception of the Friedrich-Ebert-School: the most beautiful and modern public school in the city became the Adolf-Hitler-School.¹

More dramatic changes in the cityscape were planned, corresponding to the monumental urge in Nazi architecture to create large public buildings and stadiums and public spaces to host mass demonstrations and spectacles. In accordance with the law of 4 October 1937 on the "Reconfiguration of German cities," the government in Königsberg created a new city plan, which Hitler signed into law on 17 July 1940. Plans for Königsberg had barely been decided on before the funding to realize them was diverted to the war.²

Koch and his affiliates intended Königsberg and East Prussia to be local manifestations of larger transformations taking place across Germany. That meant first the transfor-

¹ Gause, *Geschichte*, vol. 3, 130.

² *Ibid.*

mation of the government from inside, as Count von der Schulenburg and his Königsberg Circle associates had planned in the period of the takeover. The purpose of restructuring was to streamline decision-making and eliminate vested interests, waste, and inefficiencies. The Nazi version of the modern welfare state would provide the German national community, the *Volksgemeinschaft*, with work, housing, and municipal services. The state could not be rebuilt instantly from scratch, however, and the Nazi revolutionaries now required the cooperation, at least temporarily, of professional bureaucrats experienced in the business of running city and provincial affairs.

The most pressing task in 1933 was the resurrection of the economy, still suffering from the global economic depression and from East Prussia's precarious position as an exclave. The first indications of economic improvement became apparent already by mid-1932, even before the takeover, but the mood among everyday Königsbergers remained pessimistic.³ The new Nazi government made bold, highly-publicized efforts to transform the economy, turning their attention to the elimination of hyperinflation, the eradication of unemployment, and the increased production of consumer goods. As before the takeover, the members of the Königsberg Circle took the lead in developing local economic policy. Hermann Bethke, formerly the President of the Agricultural Chamber of Commerce (*Landwirtschaftskammer*) and now Koch's Vice President in the East Prussian *Oberpräsidium*, and Hans-Bernhard von Grünberg, the director of the Institute for East German Economy (*Institut für ostdeutsche Wirtschaft*) at the university and editor of the NSDAP organ, the *Preußische Zeitung*, issued a comprehensive text, *Entschuldung und Neubau der deutschen Wirtschaft* in 1932. Beginning immediately after the seizure of power, several new organizations and committees within both the party hierarchy and state began to put these plans into action, creating a central planning organization (*Landesplanungstelle*) to coordinate them. The culmination came in the form of the July 1933 "East Prussia Plan" (soon renamed the "Erich Koch Plan"), which focused primarily on expanding East Prussia's industry and trade, creating incentives for settlement, diversifying the region's fragile economy, strengthening industry and agriculture, and decreasing vulnerability to future economic swings. In particular, the plan called for a policy to bring 1.5 million new settlers to cut off out-migration and build a stronger home market for industrial and consumer goods. In April 1934, Koch positioned the new plan to potential supporters in Berlin by asserting that it would bring about the complete reorientation of East Prussia's economy and politics, bringing about a revived "Eastern orientation" that would place East Prussia—and Germany—at the center of an Eastern European economic nexus.⁴

The battle against unemployment became the first nationwide project of the new government, and in Königsberg, Koch combined relentless enthusiasm with local innovation to tackle the problem. The Nazi government consolidated decentralized employment services, which had formerly been operated by various private organizations (the Stahl-

³ Rohrer, *Nationalsozialistische Macht*, 262.

⁴ Hermann Bethke and Hans Bernhard von Grünberg, *Entschuldung und Neubau der deutschen Wirtschaft* (Berlin: R. Hobbing, 1932); Rohrer, *Nationalsozialistische Macht*, 265-8. Although published in Koch's name, the book mentioned nothing about the NSDAP, even at the height of the party's electoral successes. Bethke and Grünberg wanted to present a developmental program that rose above party divisions, even as they assumed that the NSDAP in power would be responsible for the program's implementation. Organizations were created within the *Gauleitung* and the *Oberpräsidium* to facilitate.

helm, for example, had its own), into a unified Reich Labor Service (*Reichsarbeitsdienst*). The German Workers' Front (*Deutsche Arbeiter Front*, or DAF) and National Socialist People's Welfare (*Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt*, or NSV) grew to be the two largest organizations in East Prussia, as elsewhere in the Reich, and these organizations oversaw most aspects of Nazi society: work, leisure, and social welfare.⁵

Beginning in the spring of 1933, Koch began a public "Battle of Labor" (*Arbeitsschlacht*) to engage the unemployed in state projects. Teams of emergency work brigades were assembled for road building and other infrastructural improvements, and the *Völkische Beobachter* reported daily of the triumphs in the battle against unemployment, declaring that the former "Poorhouse of Prussia" had now become the vanguard of employment in the Reich.⁶ The high point came in October 1933, when around 58,000 workers and 6000 volunteers were called up, and over 30,000 were employed in agriculture to bring in the harvest.⁷ The results were spectacular; after years of depression and the government's seeming inability to intervene, Koch boasted that the Nazis had single-handedly defeated unemployment, and he made headlines in the late summer of 1933 by reporting to Hitler that East Prussia had become the first territory to do so.⁸ Although most of the Reich Labor Service's employment projects were located in the countryside, primarily in agriculture and transportation, there were also three labor camps established inside Königsberg to house and employ itinerant young workers who had returned from layoffs in industrial regions of the Reich. Ultimately these urban labor camps proved to be less efficient than the new regime envisioned, due to the massive social costs of running them (room, board, sanitation, among other concerns). Labor Camps proved more successful elsewhere in East Prussia, however, particularly in Masuria, where they did much to alleviate the social tensions brought about by high unemployment in the region.⁹ Full employment became the greatest indicator of the regime's success. Official statistics had reported that there were only 72,000 unemployed in East Prussia in the middle of July 1933, compared to 133,000 the previous winter, and that the number sunk to only 35,000 by the end of July 1933. The Nazis' critics soon pointed out that the numbers seemed too good to be true, however: as a secret communist report from Königsberg in 1933 pointed out, most of the numbers came from the seasonal harvest. (Less convincingly, the report claimed that the number of new summer jobs was actually *lower* than in previous years.)¹⁰

Having promised the total end of unemployment, the regime now had to find ways to keep workers consistently employed, or risk losing the regime's greatest claim to success. Particularly in agricultural regions outside the city, seasonal fluctuations posed continual threats. As the head of Municipal Affairs (*Kommunalpolitik*) Klimmek reported in July 1935,

⁵ Rohrer, *Nationalsozialistische Macht*, 241-3. The DAF in East Prussia, corresponding to the demography of the province, had proportionately more farmers and fewer workers than the Reich average.

⁶ *Völkischer Beobachter* July / August 1933, cited in Meindl, "Erich Koch," 34.

⁷ Rohrer, *Nationalsozialistische Macht*, 266.

⁸ Meindl, "Erich Koch," 34.

⁹ Gause, *Geschichte*, vol. 3, 130. The original three camps in Königsberg served different populations: the first, in the old Lizen Train Station, handled young unemployed Germans; the second, on the Palästrasportplatz, was run by the Student Work Service (half of its clients were students); and the third, a "Maiden Camp" (*Maidenlager*) for women, was also run by the Student Work Service, under the direction of a Ms. Valendy.

¹⁰ BA-Berlin R58/1562, p. 1, 31 July 1933.

hard frosts in the winter of that year had forced mass layoffs of emergency temporary workers, “so that the mood of the workers was pessimistic [*gedrückt*].” Spring thaws had allowed these temp workers to be shifted to new construction projects in housing and infrastructure, but the threat of unemployment meant that the regime constantly had to come up with new projects to prevent unrest.¹¹ But along with struggles to employ excess workers, there were also occasional labor shortages, particularly in the countryside, and already in August 1935, many farmers worried that the institution of the military draft would lead to even further labor shortages on farms.¹² Meanwhile, the government carried out programs against moonlighting and clandestine employment, in an attempt to limit the number of people who received unemployment benefits. By 1935, the Welfare Office (*Wohlfahrtsamt*) had fined 838 workers illegally claiming benefits; from 1933 to 1935, the number dropped each year as more Königsbergers were channeled into official work.¹³ Despite plans to eliminate outmigration completely, industrial workers continued to leave East Prussia “for the west,” although by 1935, reports about migration came mostly from already industrialized areas, such as Elbing, and not from smaller towns or primarily agricultural regions.¹⁴

The Nazi regime also improved working conditions through the “Beauty of Labor” program, in affiliation with Strength through Joy (*Kraft durch Freude*) and the DAF. A number of projects focused on providing better lighting, factory floor renovations, gathering spaces for off-duty workers, and the beautification of workplace outdoor spaces. From 1933 to 1938, the program claimed to have carried out 347 architectural renovations of industrial spaces, the creation or maintenance of 284 green spaces, 740 improved workspaces, improved natural lighting in 370 spaces, installation of artificial lighting in 738; wash rooms in 341 work places, and changing rooms in 183; installation of common rooms in 408 and canteens in 52; creation of recreation centers in 38; the creation and renovation of company and factory housing, and the the establishment of sports parks and playgrounds.¹⁵

By 1935-6, the regime shifted the focus to public construction and housing.¹⁶ The Office for Municipal Affairs was responsible for overseeing municipal services in Königsberg, overseeing not only housing construction and other public services, but also the daily upkeep of city services.

City Council Member Max Klimmek, as the Director of the *Gau* Office for Municipal Affairs called for a fundamental shift in Königsberg’s land policy to meet new housing demands, a position clarified by the Königsberg advocate Syndikus Straatman in 1936. The Königsberg Office for Municipal Affairs understood that meeting the needs of individuals was fundamental to assuring the good of the collective, and the struggle to provide individual families with housing was the first step to bring about the promise of national community.¹⁷ Private housing construction was rarely sufficient, due to continuing financial

¹¹ BA-Berlin NS25/314, p. 156, 16 July 1935.

¹² BA-Berlin NS25/314, p. 160, 5 August 1945.

¹³ BA-Berlin NS25/314, 156, 16 July 1935.

¹⁴ BA-Berlin NS25/314, 160, 5 August 1935.

¹⁵ [Waldemar] Magunia, “Die DAF. betreut 500000 schaffende Ostpreußen,” *10 Jahre Gau Ostpreußen*, 60.

¹⁶ BA-Berlin NS25/314, 165, 11 November 1935.

¹⁷ Klimmek, Introduction to Georg Klemt, *Die Boden- und Siedlungspolitik der Stadt Königsberg Pr.: Ein Beitrag zur Boden- und Siedlungspolitik deutscher Städte* (Königsberg, Germany: Ost-Europa-Verlag, 1936), v; BA-Berlin NS25/314, 29, 11 March 1936.

difficulties, to address the extreme housing demand, and a centrally-organized housing construction program was created in 1933 to make up for insufficient housing construction from the private sector, although local governments across the province were simultaneously encouraging private construction to address shortages.¹⁸ For the year of 1935, the housing construction program planned to create 10,000 new dwellings, and ultimately over-fulfilled the plan, building 13,000; an additional 10,000 were planned for 1936. In villages and small settlements, construction efforts focused on smaller dwellings as the most expedient means to relieve the housing shortage; that year 30 million Reichsmarks were appointed for the construction of 686 single family-homes for agricultural workers; each new home was also given four acres of land. Medium-sized homes (4 to 4.5 rooms each) were added to the plan in 1936, along with service homes.¹⁹

Despite the remarkable early progress in housing construction, problems often arose when potential tenants did not want to live in the way in which city and provincial planners directed them. In other cases, there was a shortage of raw materials for construction, particularly bricks, but by 1936, the Office for Municipal Affairs could report once again that production had finally ramped up to meet demand, although skilled labor shortages persisted throughout the 1930s.²⁰ At the same time, housing construction became a primary means of securing continuing employment for emergency temporary workers who lost their jobs during the winters between the harvest and first planting, by pulling workers out of “emergency” status into housing construction, along with the construction of the East Prussian stretch of the Autobahn from Heiligenbeil through Zinten to Preussisch Eylau—the ambitiously political decision to create a Königsberg-Berlin Autobahn route, despite the Polish Corridor.²¹

One of the greatest challenges for the Office of Municipal Affairs, particularly in the realm of housing and construction, was to balance the urge to provide for the social welfare of individual Germans, on the one hand, and preserve the character of a city, on the other. “The truth is,” as Syndikus Straatmann warned,

in one year of construction, a whole row of apartments can be put up to alleviate the housing shortage to a considerable degree; in one year of construction, however, a whole city can be spoiled, the systematic economic development of a community hindered, the traffic flow disrupted, finances thrown out of balance, and, in spite of newly met residential demand, rents can be driven up. Such individual mistakes become impossible or very difficult to rectify.

Examples of this kind of short-sighted planning were “sadly overabundant,” but less frequent in cities with a “conscious tradition.”²² A well-planned, committed city planning policy demanded not only forward-thinking, but also dedication to backward-thinking, i.e. the study of a given city’s past and special character, particularly for a city such as Königsberg. Straatmann defended the need for local studies, or *Heimatkunde*, to take into account its in-

¹⁸ BA-Berlin NS25/314, 155, 16 July 1935.

¹⁹ Straatmann, “Die Boden,” 20-1.

²⁰ BA-Berlin NS25/314, 165, 11 November 1935.

²¹ BA-Berlin NS25/314, 156, 16 July 1935.

²² Straatmann, “Die Boden,” 22.

dividual developmental context, going so far as to argue that the study of a city's past "is a moral obligation in itself" because communities without tradition were poor, and despite having their own soil, were nonetheless "homeless." A 1935 volume edited by Georg Klimt, on the Nazis' land and settlement policies in Königsberg, *Die Boden- und Siedlungspolitik der Stadt Königsberg Pr.*, expanded on Straatmann's point by discussing the role played by historical traditions in city planning and ways in which they necessarily influenced future development.²³

Despite ever grander plans to transform the city while maintaining the character of its historical context and organic development, this philosophy of city planning was never realized due to constant problems financing these projects throughout the 1930s. The promise to provide services to the community and bring about tangible evidence of national renewal forced officials to attempt to downplay or cover up the problems while searching for longer-term solutions, and the reality of stagnating economic growth grew increasingly distant from the presentation of exponential rates of productivity. The emergency economic measures established in early 1933, including tax breaks, special incentives, and relief aid, were at first wildly successful at creating a *levée en masse* to relieve employment problems and bolster the sagging economy, but those measures became unsustainable already by 1935. Attempts to scale them back prompted backlash from Königsberg residents and, in particular, from members of rural communities who had come to depend on the subsidies.²⁴ The Office for Municipal Affairs wrote to its national headquarters in Munich in March 1936 about massive disappointment among local leaders in towns and villages over the curtailment of tax breaks. While these local leaders understood, in theory, the necessity to balance the budget for East Prussia as a whole, those communities that had been more successful at running their affairs were not willing to take on the burdens of those who had not done as well. Although these towns had agreed from the outset to the principle of the "common destiny [*Schicksalverbundenheit*] of communities" within administrative districts, they soon rejected the proposition that their community of fate would require them to foot the bill for neighboring towns' projects.²⁵ Nazi officials attempted to alleviate the situation by relaying the local leaders' demands for extensions and temporary exemptions to the tax breaks, but Munich rejected the appeal. "From a National Socialist standpoint," the letter explained, "this kind of development must be opposed" so that less prosperous communities could be raised to a "common level of civilization" [*Kulturniveau*]. East Prussian towns, it seemed, were ready to receive funding, but not to make sacrifices for the benefit of the *Volksgemeinschaft*.²⁶

As plans for city construction projects became grander over the course of the 1930s, funding became tighter. With the onset of the war in 1939, the city and province continued business as usual, editing expansive plans for the redesign of the city, which finally passed muster with Berlin and were published in July 1941 in *Preußische Zeitung*, only weeks after the invasion of the Soviet Union. The war had already begun to draw resources, however,

²³ Klimt, ed., *Die Boden*. The book had been ordered by the *Oberpräsidium's* Central Planning Organization, and was meant to be the first of similar books for each major East Prussian city (although funds dried up before the project could be completed), and the book was only written for Königsberg.

²⁴ BA-Berlin NS25/314, 155, 16 July 1935.

²⁵ BA-Berlin NS 25/314, 11-12, 21 February 1936.

²⁶ BA-Berlin NS25/314, 14-15, 14 March 1936.

and the funding for these mandates from Berlin and for Königsberg's own new designs dried up just as construction was slated to begin. In the spring of 1941, the office of the mayor corresponded with the Reich Labor Ministry and Prussian Ministry of the Interior, requesting first 10 million Reichsmarks, and then an additional 20 million, for various city construction projects, as well as for housing construction, citing an "exceptional housing shortage" (even after the mass construction in the mid-1930s), which necessitated the construction of 37,000 new dwellings in Königsberg. Arguing that these projects were larger than routine construction or maintenance, the city insisted that it could not finance them itself and pleaded for additional funding from Berlin. Meanwhile, prisoners of war (at that time, primarily French, Belgians, and Poles) were being used to repair Königsberg's streets, sidewalks, and squares, but even with forced labor, the city was short two-thirds the necessary funds to pay for architectural planning and construction.²⁷ The *Reichsminister* for Labor Ebel responded that even construction projects for the war effort were delayed because of labor shortages, so Königsberg's parks and squares would have to wait.²⁸

Koch intervened personally in October of 1941 with a letter to *Reichsminister* of the Interior Frick. Koch tried to use his good graces with Hitler, reminding Frick that "the Führer had approved" Koch's requests to expand Königsberg and that plans had already been drawn up. In order to secure the construction loans, Koch appealed to Königsberg's special character, particularly the "great assignment Königsberg will have to fill in the future Eastern realm."²⁹ The invasion of the Soviet Union gave Koch and Mayor Will new ammunition in the long-waged battle to secure funding for city projects. In his correspondence, Mayor Will insisted that it was necessary for Königsberg to continue an active land purchasing policy even during the war, arguing that Königsberg's situation was unique and in no way comparable to the requests for funding made by other cities. Will's argument of Königsberg victimhood and exceptionalism used the familiar lines: the city's martyrdom during the Napoleonic Wars, the economic isolation of exclave and the extraordinary budget crunch that resulted from it, and the continuing dearth during Weimar, at a time when other German city budgets grew significantly. Königsberg had been, therefore, "completely unprepared" for the duties it was assigned after the seizure of power, and since 1939, Königsberg had once again become a military region. With the Polish Corridor reopened, Königsberg's economic hinterland had been reopened. The city now had a decisive role to play in the Reich's interest in developing the economy of the German East and with the Baltic and Ukrainian areas of influence. Even after Will made his impassioned plea by casting Königsberg's development in terms of "the interests of the Reich," the desired loan of 10 million Reichsmarks was rejected by the Ministry of the Interior in 1942. Considering Königsberg's special needs, the Ministry of the Interior offered a more modest loan of 3 Million Reichsmarks, with Koch and Will ultimately accepted.³⁰

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²⁷ RGVA-OA 720.4.53.48-9, 17 January 1941.

²⁸ RGVA-OA 720.4.53.71, 2 July 1941.

²⁹ RGVA-OA 720.4.53.88-9, 20 October 1941.

³⁰ RGVA-OA 720.4.53.112-13, 5 March 1942.

Koch and his new regime ran into several obstacles, both among a hesitant populace, many of whom had a different idea of German national renewal and the meaning it would have for their individual lives, and among party members, who challenged Koch's leadership by appealing either to a different source of truth (the Führer), or attempting to carve out autonomy and power against horizontal organizations. Koch cultivated an image of absolute power, but much of it came from above, that is, from his close personal relationships with the party leadership in Berlin, including Hermann Göring and (early on, especially) Gregor Straßer, the leader of the left-wing "socialist" branch of the party, who was Koch's friend and personal mentor.³¹ Koch was more than simply a conduit for propaganda from Berlin, however. Once he took office in Königsberg, he lost interest in Reich politics, preferring to focus his energies on transforming East Prussia, where he was the absolute authority.³² In Königsberg, Koch attempted to create his own revolution that would not only parallel the national Nazi revolution, but would serve as the vanguard for the rest of Germany's leap into the Thousand Year Reich.

In practice, the scope of Koch's control was limited by structural obstacles, by the limits of personal loyalty, and by the practical impossibility of overseeing all the affairs of government and everyday life of citizens. Koch spent a fair amount of his time in Berlin lobbying for East Prussia or socializing with party higher ups; because of frequent stress and ill health, however, he retreated from Königsberg for long periods on therapeutic spa visits. These frequent absences sometimes distanced Koch from the daily business of government, although his closest subordinates seem not to have jockeyed for control in his absence. Even with frequent support from Berlin, Koch found himself in constant power struggles with Goebbels, Göring, Himmler, Darré, and Rosenberg, as well as with the East Prussian SA and the Reich Ministry of the Interior. Even when he did not win individual battles, he managed to consolidate his position and continue to expand his power.³³

But Koch's power was not limitless, and the inertia of the old system frequently blocked his personal will and the plans of the party. In 1933, the new regime hoped to use the justice system to try political opponents in order to give the veneer of credibility to the seizure of power, only to end up with a number of failed prosecutions leaving political opponents in their former positions. In the case of the former mayor, Hans Lohmeyer, the only successful block to his return was the fact that the post had already been filled during his leave of absence.³⁴

Tensions were also rife within the ranks. The party gave the outer appearance of solidarity required for a revolutionary movement, but inside the ranks there were constant squabbles, tensions, and jockeying for power. These struggles had started during the radical growth years on the eve of the takeover. Tensions that emerged were both personal and structural, and the fault lines they created continued after 1933.³⁵ Koch had been successful at creating party organizations under his purview and staffing the administration with his

³¹ Straßer came into conflict with Hitler starting in the fall of 1932, leaving office by December of that year over ideological and political conflicts. After Straßer's resignation, Koch pledged his loyalty to Hitler but remained in personal contact with Straßer until his death during the Night of Long Knives (the Röhm Putsch) in 1934.

³² Meindl, *Ostpreußens Gauleiter*, 174.

³³ Meindl, "Erich Koch," 36.

³⁴ RGVA-OA 720.4.53.88-9, 20 October 1941.

³⁵ Rohrer, *Nationalsozialistische Macht*, 157-8.

loyal followers, but competing power centers emerged before the takeover of power, both in Danzig (where Koch had been *Gauleiter* until he lost control, resulting in the formation of a separate *Gau* for Danzig in 1930), and closer to home in Insterburg, where another party member managed to form his own competing center of power separate from Koch's influence before Koch ultimately succeeded by dissolving the group entirely and expelling his rival.³⁶ In response, Koch focused on fostering vertical integration, with the goal of putting every organization under his direct control.³⁷ The strongest criterion for appointing party leaders became trust, belief, and loyalty to the Führer, which was considered more important than adherence to formal rules. This direct dedication to the Führer, however, could later bring about conflicts when local and regional party officials were supposed to remain subordinate to *Gauleiter* Koch. Despite Koch's efforts to convince them, Nazi party members were not always certain that Koch was the infallible conduit of Hitler's policies in East Prussia.

New members entered the party in the early 1930s with more enthusiasm about German renewal than formal education about party ideology, and as a result, they felt less loyalty to Koch and his vision of rule. In 1934, several reports emerged about politically subversive speeches within Nazi party cells, showing that the faithful were not always in agreement about their leaders, nor firm in their faith in the revolution. The *Kreis* Farm Leader Danielczyk in Johannsburg in a meeting in July 1934, for example, distinguished Hitler's goals from what he saw as Koch's disappointing leadership: "Yes, we have a Führer, but we can't take part in the politics of *Gauleiter* Koch, because the plan he has for East Prussia isn't feasible." Meanwhile, the *Kreis* Farm Leader Haedge in Sensburg in April 1934 denounced Koch as a Bolshevik, and he cried out to the audience in anger, "And I will stand by that [statement that] Koch is the biggest Bolshevik!"³⁸ Rumors also flew at the time that Koch intended to make his own fiefdom out of East Prussia and that Koch hoped to rule in 'Bolshevik style.'³⁹ The Farm Leaders in the predominantly Catholic areas of Rastenburg, Strum, Heilsberg, and Braunsberg began spreading the hopeful rumors that Koch was being recalled as *Oberpräsident*.⁴⁰ Even the Führer himself was not immune. The community Farm Leader Böhnke in Alt-Seckenburg told farmers that Adolf Hitler was no better than the rest of them, and "if we had communism here, it wouldn't be so bad, and maybe would even have been better."⁴¹

³⁶ Meindl, *Ostpreußens Gauleiter*, 97-8. The Insterburg group was led by Dr. Georg Usadel, an enthusiastic party member who had joined only in 1929 and resented Koch's strictly hierarchical leadership style. Koch tried to force Usadel from the party in May 1931, but Usadel launched a counter-offensive and even won his own seat in the Reichstag. Facing opposition from the entire Insterburg Ortsgruppe, Koch finally asserted his power by dissolving the group entirely and refounding it from scratch. Unlike the Danzig opposition, which was operating at a distance outside the Reich, the Insterburg group ultimately failed to threaten Koch because the *Gauleiter* maintained the strong support of Hitler and the party elite, while their own influence did not extend far beyond the small town of Insterburg. Usadel, conceding, managed to repair his relations with Koch enough to remain in the party and gain a position in Berlin from April 1933.

³⁷ Rohrer, *Nationalsozialistische Macht*, 163.

³⁸ "Zersetzung der Staatsautorität," Olsztyn 389/2, 61.

³⁹ Rohrer, *Nationalsozialistische Macht*, 270.

⁴⁰ "Zersetzung der Staatsautorität," Olsztyn 389/2, 61.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

The structural source of these conflicts was the relationship between Koch and the auxiliary organizations of the party, particularly agricultural organizations, which developed independently of his control. Unable to assert complete influence, Koch showed them little interest and preferred to form new organizations under his own command. Koch remained particularly cool toward other semi-autonomous organizations in the first years, also, including the SS, which remained a group with elite status and the character of a closed order. Koch did not use the SS for its prescribed purpose—to guard the higher party leaders—and instead created his own protection force from the ranks of the SA. Before 1933, the SS played almost no role in party life in East Prussia (although Koch did maintain good relations with the SS-Leaders Werner Lorenz and Hans Adolf Prützmann, who later became his most important connections to the SS).⁴²

Koch's relationship to the SA was even more complicated. The SA in East Prussia was relatively weak early on, with only 643 men in the entire province as late as October 1929, but grew rapidly to 3,390 men by the end of 1930, 4m450 by mid-1931 and despite measures against it, 11,000 by the end of that year. By the middle of 1938, the number of men in SA Group *Ostland* had grown to 60,000.⁴³ The SA had been a violent mass organization of Nazi support, but before the takeover, its ranks were notoriously heterogenous, including many former conservatives and even erstwhile socialists; in 1930, even a few hidden communist party cells were discovered inside the SA.⁴⁴ The SA was the only NSDAP organization that existed before Koch's arrival, and its leaders consistently posed threats to the new *Gauleiter's* rule. Koch fought frequently with the SA-Leader Litzmann, becoming open enemies by 1932. The atmosphere became so poisonous that in some places the SA refused to support Koch's rule until Koch forced Litzmann out of East Prussia in late 1933. Koch cooperated much better with his successor, Heinrich Schoene, but questions continued to arise about the importance and function of the SA in the Nazi regime, as the SA attempted to strengthen its power in the new state. The party leadership considered the SA to be a subordinate helper organization under its control, while the SA envisioned itself as an autonomous commando organization and the primary instrument of the National Socialist revolution.⁴⁵ After the first months of 1933, when the SA led the street terror against opposition groups, Hitler became concerned about the public's reaction to the violence, and he curbed the power of the SA by transferring the monopoly on violence away from the rowdy paramilitary organization toward the more regimented security organs, including the police, SS, and the military. The culmination came in 1934 during the "Night of Long Knives," Hitler's targeted purge against the SA and other sources of opposition within the party, including Gregor Straßer, Koch's personal friend and former mentor. There were relatively few victims in East Prussia in comparison to elsewhere in Germany, however. The new SA

⁴² Meindl, *Ostpreußens Gauleiter*, 99.

⁴³ [Heinrich] Schoene, "Ostlands SA," in *10 Jahre Gau Ostpreußen*, 27-9; GStPK HA XX, Rep. 1, Tit. 36, Nr. 30, p. 109, 145, 192. Königsberg SA members were young on average: in mid-1931, 28.4 percent were under the age of 20, 56.6 percent were between 20 and 30, 11 percent were between 30 and 40, and only 4 percent over the age of 40. About a third of them were farmers or sons of farmers; almost a third were artisans; about 17 percent were shop employees, 12 percent were industrial workers, 4 percent officials and administrative employees. Only 3 percent of them were students.

⁴⁴ Gause, *Geschichte*, vol. 3, 114.

⁴⁵ Meindl, *Ostpreußens Gauleiter*, 99-101.

Leader Schoene was briefly imprisoned but later released and reinstated and even became the Königsberg Police President the same year.⁴⁶ After the subordination of the SA in 1934, there were fewer open conflicts in Königsberg, but Koch continued his policy of assigning SA leaders to dual appointments in the party administration and police, in order to guarantee their loyalty.⁴⁷

The *Gauleitung* enforced not only the vertical hierarchy of the *Führerprinzip* onto the auxiliary organizations of the party, but also the flow of information, in order to ensure that no communities of opposition could form around alternative news sources. Even after the forced closure of openly oppositional newspapers by the end of 1933, there were still struggles for control over the dissemination of information. In 1934, the rural-focused *Ostpreußische Zeitung* caused troubles when members of the paper's editorial staff were revealed to have previously "stood in the reactionary camp and had strongly fought against the NSDAP and its leaders," but attempts to eliminate the paper ran up against outcry among the rural population, who had identified the *Ostpreußische Zeitung* as their representative newspaper. Conflicts with farm leaders became more serious in 1934, escalated by a Treuburg local newspaper mistakenly reporting unrest within the party leading to Koch's recall. The news leak became fuel not only for regional unrest, but also international news, as the case was used abroad to show dissatisfaction with Nazi rule.⁴⁸ As a result, the *Ostpreußische Zeitung* was banned entirely, and newspapers were increasingly censored and consolidated throughout the 1930s. At the same time, party-originated newspapers and magazines proliferated; the *Preußische Zeitung* grew to a publication of 57,340 as of Jan. 1935, making it the largest party newspaper in the province; smaller regional newspapers had circulations under 10,000, most of them as inserts into the *Preußische Zeitung*.⁴⁹ Even political organizations within the party struggled to maintain autonomy, and ended up meeting fates similar to that of the *Ostpreußische Zeitung*. Even before the SA purges of 1934, the SA came into conflict with the *Gauleitung* when it fought to keep its own newspaper, but ultimately in November 1933, the *Preußische Zeitung* was declared the only official newspaper also for the SS and SA.⁵⁰

The biggest and longest lasting obstacle to the *Gauleitung* carrying out its vision for the province came from the countryside. True to its campaign promises, the new regime

⁴⁶ Rohrer, *Nationalsozialistische Macht*, 238.

⁴⁷ Rohrer, *Nationalsozialistische Macht*, 285.

⁴⁸ GStPK Rep 10, Tit. 36, Nr. 40 Regierungsvizepräsident Angermann, "Politische Lage im Regierungsbezirk," 5 December 1933, 42; Rohrer, *Nationalsozialistische Macht*, 292-3. In December 1933, Nazi officials reported that the agricultural-political editor of the *Ostpreußische Zeitung* had even been a former member of the pro-democratic *Schwarze Front*.

⁴⁹ BA-Berlin NS22/726, 1935; BA-Berlin NS22/726, no date [after January 1935]. Party-issued newspapers in 1935 included the *Preußische Zeitung* (57,340 copies), with inserts for specific regions, including Rastenburg/Angerburg, Gumbinnen, and Masuria; the *Weichsel-Wacht* in Marienwerder (3,375 copies); the *Ostpreußisches Tageblatt* in Insterburg (6,060 copies), the *Tilsiter Zeitung* (5,000 copies), and the *Westpreußische Zeitung* in Elbing (the second largest, with 9,775 copies). Nazi magazines included the *Kraft durch Freude* monthly (30,000), the NS-Lehrbund's *Der ostpreußische Erzieher* weekly (11,500), *Der Aufbau* monthly (36,000), and *Der Arbeitsdank* monthly (5,000). Other Nazi official papers included monthly magazines put out by auxiliary organizations of the party, including the monthly "Der Aufbau" with 36,000 copies and the monthly "Kraft durch Freude" with 30,000; most of these monthlies were founded only after the takeover, in 1934.

⁵⁰ Rohrer, *Nationalsozialistische Macht*, 276.

made the resuscitation of East Prussian agriculture a top priority, both economically and ideologically. Some of the first measures introduced in the spring of 1933 included tax breaks and regulations to protect farms from forced foreclosures. While these measures were well-received, especially compared to the poor outcome of the various rural relief measures developed under Weimar, as the scope of Koch's further plans became more widely known, tensions mounted from all sides. In the early days, Koch had great ambitions for the restructuring of agriculture, born out of his still lingering ideals of the left-wing national socialism of Gregor Straßer. Specifically, the *Gauleitung* envisioned, at least in the first year of rule, a new rural East Prussia that was decidedly collectivist, prioritizing the needs of small farmers and farm workers over the aristocratic owners of large estates. Koch's early ideology emphasized class struggle, including the battle between small farmers and estate owners. Tensions between the *Gauleitung* in Königsberg and agricultural interests revealed the first tensions in what would become a defining problem in Nazi rule in East Prussia throughout the 1930s: the difficulty negotiating National Socialism's celebration of individuality and private property and initiative on the one hand, and the imperative to provide, first and foremost, for the welfare of the collective, on the other.⁵¹ Conservatives, many of whom had only recently shifted loyalties to the NSDAP on the eve of the takeover, responded with accusations that Koch's plans for the countryside amounted to a Soviet-style collectivization of agriculture. Koch's agrarian plans had none of the tactical flexibility called for by Hitler, and he made more enemies than friends.⁵²

There emerged a total lack of cooperation between the administration and agricultural interests, which made it virtually impossible for the administration to undertake any projects in the interest of improving rural life and economy. In December 1933, the Regierungs Vice President Angermann reported that the political situation in the Königsberg district had become tense from "constant tensions" between farmers and the political organization. The Nazis had rejected the cities in favor of the countryside, but immediately after the seizure of power, farmers began to reject the Nazis' plans to convert the countryside for service to the nation. East Prussian farmers who had voted so enthusiastically for Hitler were the first to become disillusioned and became the most ardent (although ultimately ineffective) opponents of the regime already by the summer of 1933. In turn, the government in Königsberg was put in the difficult position of having to alienate its former support base for what they argued would be its own good; in order to improve the lives of rural Germans for the future, their input and ability to organize into "reactionary camps" needed to be eliminated.⁵³ In particular, there were conflicts between various agricultural organizations, some of which were led by staunch 'old warriors' of the party, and others which quickly became bastions for old conservative nationalist interests, quickly branded as "reactionaries"

⁵¹ Rohrer, *Nationalsozialistische Macht*, 269-270.

⁵² Meindl, *Ostpreußens Gauleiter*, 104.

⁵³ GStPK Rep 10, Tit. 36, Nr. 40, p. 41-2, 5 December 1933.

by the new regime.⁵⁴ Once again, the solution was to eliminate opposition by restaffing the organization with loyal party members who owed their positions directly to Koch and were willing to accept the directives of the Political Organization.⁵⁵ A pervading problem, however, remained finding enough true believers to fill those positions.

Sometimes, organized opposition came as a result of popular outbursts. The *Landrat* in Heiligenbeil reported in the summer of 1934 that the farmer Gottfried Knorr of Lichtenfeld went door to door to collect signatures against the local party leader and community representative Teubner. Knorr was arrested for “disturbing public safety and order,” and the people who had signed his petition were further investigated. A group of townspeople gathered in protest, demanding Knorr’s release and planning a mob to free him by force. The Gendarmerie was called in, while a mob of 70 people surrounded Teubner’s house demanding the key, or else they would rush the jail. Teubner refused, and the mob broke the door hinge and freed Knorr. The mob marched to the Market Square, and the leader congratulated the crowd for their efforts.⁵⁶ But these protests, uprisings, and oppositions ultimately led to more difficulties for the farmers than for the state.⁵⁷ In the meantime, Koch and the leadership were forced to secure their victory through purges to guarantee that “the leadership of agriculture everywhere is place in the hands of impeccable National Socialist men.”⁵⁸

By the end of 1933, Hitler had already been informed about the continuing conflicts between Koch and agricultural leaders, as well as Koch’s recently resolved bitter conflict with the SA-Leader Litzmann. Party leaders in both Königsberg and Berlin recognized that the conflict in East Prussia revealed vulnerability of the *Führerprinzip* because as long as the hierarchy of leadership remained vague, tensions and difficulties would constantly reappear. The Head of the German Labor Front, Robert Ley, wrote to Hitler in December 1933 about the deeper structural sources for Koch’s struggles with auxiliary and competing organizations in agriculture, arguing that East Prussia, in many ways, was a case study for

⁵⁴ GStPK Rep 10, Tit. 36, Nr. 40, 44, 8 May 1934. Originally, the NSL, with more committed old warriors of the party, had stood against the LBO (*Landesbauernschaftorganization*), which represented an “outspoken reactionary tendency,” which ultimately led to the successful disintegration of the LBO. But by winter of 1933, the picture had changed entirely. A large part of the rural population, particularly those from large estates, bound themselves to the LBO’s position, and had begun a battle of “often hateful form” against the Political Organization and against Koch personally, to the point that the regime could no longer find any paths to cooperation with the LBO at all. Unfortunately, most of the *Kreis* farm leaders had been previous members of the LBO, meaning that open opposition was coming even from within the chain of command. The *Kreis* Farm Leader in Preußisch Eylau, Schleth, for example, was expelled for slandering *Gauleiter* Koch, and in several places, there had been public gatherings to discuss anger against the party, and some Farm Leaders even suggested policies contrary to National Socialism and recommended persons for leadership positions who had been documented opponents of the Nazi leadership. *Kreis* Rastenburg was among the “strongest bulwarks of the reaction,” and even among party members, strong opposition and indignation led to a large percentage of farmers leaving a meeting in disgust. Likewise, the Reichsnährstand (organization for food production) acted locally to cultivate dissatisfaction with Koch’s rule, fostering continual uncertainty among the population throughout 1934.

⁵⁵ GStPK Rep 10, Tit. 36, Nr. 40, p. 44, 8 May 1934.

⁵⁶ GStPK Rep 10, Tit. 36, Nr. 40, p. 49-50, 20 June 1934.

⁵⁷ GStPK Rep 10, Tit. 36, Nr. 40, p. 40, 5 December 1933.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 42-3.

organizational problems across the Reich.⁵⁹ Koch and the *Gauleitung* were forced to scale back their plans as they continued to negotiate with the countryside. Still, by 1938, the *Gauleitung* could brag—at least on paper—about spectacular successes. According to official statistics, milk production climbed from 800,912,000 kilograms per year to 1,088,000,000; butter production climbed from 17,000 tons to 24000 from 1934 to 1936; egg production rose from 66,418,555 to 95,761,976 from 1934 to 1937, and similar gains were made in meat and vegetable production.⁶⁰ But most of those growth rates were the natural return of the economy from the worldwide depression, aided but not entirely caused by the *Gauleitung's* intervention.

Tensions between Koch and his associates and between the *Gauleitung* and the populace came to a head in 1935, during the so called *Oberpräsident* Crisis, when Koch was forced on a leave of absence by Göring in November 1935 to be investigated for alleged abuses of power. During the crisis, Koch, who had more power than any other *Gauleiter*, emerged both as powerless to the decision-makers above him at the same time he remained widely influential. The *Oberpräsident* crisis revealed the tensions of power and authority in Koch's rule over Königsberg. After a month, Koch was reinstated on 22 December 1935 by Hitler's personal decision.⁶¹

* * *

Thursday, 16 June, to Sunday, 19 June, 1938, on the eve of war, the Nazi party threw a magnificent celebration of its accomplishments in power. This "Ten Year Anniversary" celebrated not the party's humble beginnings (in 1922), or its lackluster resurrection (1925), or the appointment of Bruno Schwerwitz as East Prussia's First *Gauleiter* (1926), but Erich Koch's fateful arrival in East Prussia in September 1928. The festival offered a retrospective on ten years of Koch's leadership and five years of National Socialist rule and served as a celebration of the Nazi Revolution, purposely scheduled on the occasion of Koch's 42nd birthday.

The event opened with a special production of Wagner's "Rienzi" in the Königsberg Opera. The main events included meetings of all the major *Gau* organizations, including the NS-Student League, the Office for Technology, the Office for Municipal Affairs, the SS, the NS-Dozent's League, the Reich League for Physical Activities, the Office for Agrarian Policy, the *Gau* Press Office, the Office for National Welfare, the Chamber of Labor, the Education Office, the *Gau* Propaganda Organization, the Bureaucratic Officials' Office, the Office for Educators, the *Gau* Business Leadership, and countless others. The monumental scale of the festival meant that every Nazi organization would participate, and every individual would become part of the collective: 1200 German women performing their choreographed moves in the stadium; 500 German men demonstrating their prowess on the field; 2000 SA men singing "The Farmers Wanted to Be Free...", "We are the Storm Columns," and "Only Freedom Is Our Life" in chorus; 500 girls dancing to children's songs, 300 girls dancing the Rhinelander, 300 girls and women dancing the waltz; 1500 men and maidens of the Reich

⁵⁹ BA-Berlin NS22/268, p. 1-6, December 1933.

⁶⁰ Erich Spickschen, "Das ostpreußische Bauerntum," *10 Jahre Gau Ostpreußen*, 67.

⁶¹ Rohrer, *Nationalsozialistische Macht*, 11.

Labor Service marching in the Stadium. The largest was the mass demonstration of 70,000 party members, beginning on Erich-Koch-Platz and marching through the city.

The keynote speakers were the *Gauleiter* himself and the Head of the German Labor Front Ley (who only five years before had secretly criticized Koch's leadership in his letter to Hitler), who opened the Strength Through Joy People's Festival, while the famous conductor Paul Lincke played with an orchestra. The evening variety show included Cilly Feindt, the famous German Horseback rider, a Cervantes theater troupe, 4 Albanis, the Famous Clowns; 10 Romans performing gladiatorial feats; trapeze artists and divers, and even elephants and lions.⁶²

A special anniversary volume, *10 Jahre Gau Ostpreußen*, was published simultaneously as a history of Nazi rule in Königsberg, with retrospectives on party history and plans for new developments. The book served as a hagiography of Erich Koch, the saint who had struggled in the darkest hours for the cause, but never lost his trust in the *Führer*. His party, weak and victimized in its early days, fell prey to the lies and "economic oppression and open terror" of its enemies. As leader of the movement, Koch suffered the worst terror of the state and the police, measures against the party in 1930, and even the brief imprisonment along with 800 SA men when trying to hold a ritual mourning ceremony for a fallen comrade.⁶³ But rays of hope shone through, even in those dark early hours: Hitler's first visit to Königsberg in May 1929 and the march of 1600 men; his second in September 1930, and four visits in 1932. Even on the eve of the seizure of power it seemed that the Nazis would be vanquished: The SA and SS were banned in April 1932 and their headquarters raided; the *Preußische Zeitung*, already forced to publish under restrictions, was censored.⁶⁴ Yet various party organizations, dedicated to the cause and loyal to Koch and to Hitler, rose above their suffering, persevered, and grew into a powerful force to save Germany from its enemies. Koch and his party emerged victorious, and, having eliminated those who opposed them, set out to transform East Prussia. Within a few months, Koch could announce the end of unemployment (five years later, still the most tangible marker of success), proving that the Nazis were the only group able to provide the answers to East Prussia's problems.

Waldemar Magunia, the former baker and Königsberg's first party member, now Königsberg representative for the German Labor Front, was one of the few authors in the anniversary volume who could report on concrete accomplishments because the end of unemployment had been the first great success of the new regime and remained its primary bragging right. In many cases, what was celebrated was the dramatic growth of the organizations of the party and their inclusion of a broad spectrum of German East Prussians in the radical transformation of society. Magunia, like the other authors, put more emphasis on expressing continued enthusiasm, dedication, and singularity of purpose to build the great German nation than on the scope of accomplishments themselves. The celebration glossed over obstacles and conflicts within the party and omitted the names of previous officials who had been instrumental in the party's founding but had since fallen from grace. The triumph over obstacles had succeeded by 1933; from then on, all that remained was the eternal present: the grateful unity of the German people, ever-improving economy and living

⁶² *10 Jahre Gau Ostpreußen*, 48-9.

⁶³ Schoene, "Ostlands SA," *10 Jahre Gau Ostpreußen*, 28.

⁶⁴ *10 Jahre Gau Ostpreußen*, 14-18.

standards. The party's self-presentation focused on how the Nazi Party worked for the benefit of the German people, even if that benefit was sometimes not much more than the feeling of unity of belonging to that community.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Magunia, "Die DAF," *10 Jahre Gau Ostpreußen*, 56-7.

Part II: Invasion

The Tragedy of Humanism

On Saturday morning, 8 July 1944, the *Reichsminister* for Science, Education, and National Culture, Dr. Bernhard Rust, spoke to a full crowd of attendees in the Königsberg City Hall. Rust, the Reich's leading ideologue on National Socialist education, had traveled from Berlin especially for the occasion, but his speech focused not on practical pedagogical matters or the goals and spirit of Nazi education but on a subject that was of more immediate concern to his audience: the war in the East. "On the Eastern Front, it is not just two armies, two nations, and two states that are pitted against one another," he proclaimed with no small sense of foreboding, "but two worlds."

It is therefore not just a battle of soldiers and people but of two spiritual worlds and therefore all spiritual strengths must be called up as never before, to be willing and ready to take up the battle of the worthy against the unworthy, the spiritual against the spiritless, the human against the inhuman and finally end this battle on the fields of spiritual conflict.¹

But despite Rust's apocalyptic call to battle, by Summer 1944 many Königsbergers had begun to suspect that victory in this "spiritual conflict" was impossible. After the disastrous defeat at Stalingrad, the Eastern Front had been moving steadily westward toward the Reich. Hitler's renewed attempt to end a two-front war had led the *Wehrmacht* to shift its resources to the Western Front, leaving defenses in the East further weakened. The battle lines were moving rapidly toward German territory, and by July the front lines were already in Belarus, Eastern Poland, and Latvia, rapidly approaching the border to East Prussia.

Yet Rust's speech, despite its ominous tone, came on the occasion of what was otherwise supposed to be the city's most jubilant, festive celebration of the decade: the 400th anniversary of the Albertus-University. Founded in 1544 and imbibing from its early days "the spirit of the Protestant Reformation,"² the Albertina was the intellectual center of the

¹ "Acht neue Lehrstühle für die Albertina," GStPK I Rep. 76, Nr. 882, p. 22, 9 July 1944, reprinted in Friedrich Richter, *450 Jahre Albertus-Universität zu Königsberg/Pr., 1544-1944-1994* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1994), 82.

² Bernhard von Grünberg, "Erbe und Verpflichtete der Albertus-Universität," *Preußische Zeitung*, 6 July 1944, reprinted in Richter, *450 Jahre*, 56.

city and, with its oldest buildings nestled in the narrow cobblestone streets of the Kneiphof Island, its geographic center as well.

The university's jubilees had grown over the centuries into grand festivals that played an important part in the city's attempts at self-definition. The last great anniversary, the three-hundredth, had taken place during Prussia's *Vormärz* period and had been a spectacular affair with rowdy banquets, speeches, lectures, and a series of commemorative publications. Staged in the context of European-wide ascendancy of conservatism and censorship, the anniversary became the opportunity for Königsberg's liberal-democratic reformers, banned from other forms of political participation, to depict the university's traditions as a reflection of their own ideals and to broadcast their hopes for German unification.³ The four-hundredth anniversary, in that tradition, was destined to be an even grander affair: the university's first great celebration after its rebirth in the spirit of National Socialist ideology, a new opportunity for self-presentation after the academic purges of the mid-1930s (initiated by *Reichsminister* Rust himself), and a chance for the city and the university to assert their central role in the creation of the thousand-year Reich.

Planning for the event had begun before the war with proposals for large-scale renovations and the creation of several new institutes; funding for these projects had been promised by Berlin but as the fronts bogged down in the East, the money never appeared. By 1942, as austerity replaced the heady days of Blitzkrieg, the university's academic senate considered postponing the anniversary altogether. It was in this context that University Rector Bernhard von Grünberg wrote *Reichsminister* Rust in June 1942 with the sheepish request to continue small-scale preparations (including the printing of a new university history written by Professor Götz von Selle), although it would be impossible to *Gauge*, Grünberg admitted, "whether the war [would] be over by 1944."⁴ The corpulent *Reichsminister* Rust, a "pasty-faced" character with shifty eyes and a twitchy mustache, who seemed "indescribably sad and appeared to find concentration difficult," was universally recognized as no friend to higher education (being generally suspicious of non-party scholarship and having once declared that the sole purpose of education should be "to create good Nazi leaders").⁵ But Rust was generally sympathetic to Grünberg's request but replied that few, if any, funds

³ The city's elite formed an alternative festival organizing committee (parallel to the government's officially appointed one) and scripted the celebrations to depict the university traditions as an image of the reality that they hoped to achieve. The event did much to reverse the prevailing atmosphere of cynicism at the time and served as a springboard for Königsberg's role in the revolutions of 1848. See Magdalena Niedzielska, "Die Rolle des Vereinswesen im Prozeß der Gestaltung der Öffentlichkeit im Vormärz," in Bernd Sösemann, ed., *Kommunikation und Medien in Preußen vom 16. bis zum 19. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2002), 354. For more about the 300th anniversary of the Albertina, see Ludwig Metzel, *Die dritte Säkularfeier der Universität zu Königsberg* (Königsberg, Germany: Universitäts-Buchhandlung, 1844); August Witt, *Die dritte Jubelfeier der Albertus-Universität zu Königsberg* (Königsberg, Germany: T. Theile, 1844); Alexander Jung, *Die große Nationalfeier des dritten Universitäts-Jubiläum* (Königsberg, Germany, Tag & Koch, 1844).

⁴ Grünberg commissioned Götz von Selle in 1939 to write the authoritative 400-year history of the university, to be completed in 1943 in time for publication in 1944. Grünberg wrote Rust in June 1942 with the modest request for funds to purchase printing paper for the book. If the war were still underway, Grünberg wrote, the festival would necessarily be postponed until after the final victory. Letter from Rector of the Albertus-Universität von Grünberg to the *Reichsminister* für Wissenschaft, Erziehung und Volksbildung, 9 June 1942. Reprinted in Friedrich Richter, *450 Jahre*, 22.

⁵ Gregor Ziemer, *Education for Death: The Making of the Nazi* (London: Oxford University Press, 1941), 12, 174.

would be available. Later budget cuts (including the so-called *Stop-Erlass* of February 1943) made funding for the anniversary seem a complete impossibility, and as the event drew near, Grünberg and the academic senate decided, given both the budget constraints and the solemn atmosphere of the time, to mark the event quietly with a somber evening vigil at the Kant mausoleum.⁶

Then, only a few weeks before the anniversary, *Reichsminister* Rust wrote unexpectedly with an excited declaration of support, promising not only a lavish celebration but also the long-ago promised funds for the university's renovations and new institutes.⁷ The impressive list—larger than anyone could have anticipated, and joined by matching gifts from the city and provincial donors—included 500,000 RM for the establishment of a Kant Institute and a scholarship fund worth 25,000 RM per year; 1,000,000 RM for various research and study programs; and eight new professorships, including three in the agricultural faculty, two in music education, one in philosophy, one in medicine, and one in orthopedic medicine.⁸

After a few days of hurried preparations, the solemn gathering around Kant's tomb grew into a full three-day event, complete with keynote speakers, ceremonial processions, symphonic fanfares, and the bestowal of honorary awards. The celebrations kicked off with an evening concert on Thursday, 6 July 1944. Friday's keynote speech, "Two Worlds—Two Currency Systems," given by Reichsbank President and *Reichsminister* for Economic Affairs Walther Funk (a native East Prussian, and newly-declared honorary member of the university), was a stock reminder about the dangers that American financial capital posed to European peace and stability.⁹ Other events of the weekend included lectures by professors Theodor Schieder ("Bismarck's Spiritual Influence"), Reinhold Horneffer ("Natural Rights, Positivism, and the New Jurisprudence"), and the philosopher Eduard Baumgarten (a special lecture on the philosophical systems of Kant and Clausewitz). *Reichsminister* Rust and Rector von Grünberg also gave speeches, focusing (much like Funk had) on Germany's role in the global economy. A special demonstration of physical prowess followed at the Stadtgarten sports field and, as originally planned, but with less solemnity and more fanfare, a procession at Kant's tomb (where the quotes in the epigraph were read to a solemn audience). But for many of the city's residents, the highlights of the weekend were the musical and theatrical programs, which included Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and his (only) op-

⁶ Report by Carl Jahnke in "Rundbrief der Gemeinnützigen Gesellschaft Albertinum in Göttingen," (Göttingen, Germany, 1992), quoted in Richter, *450 Jahre*, 361.

⁷ Letter from the Curator of the Albertus-University Friedrich Hoffmann to *Reichsminister* for Science, Education, and National Culture Rust, 19 June 1944, GStA I Rep. 76 Nr. 882, reprinted in Richter, *450 Jahre*, 26. The university's curator, Friedrich Hoffmann, replied to Rust's request with a ten-page list of desires for the anniversary but made clear that the list contained no new projects (which "the university would not request from the Minister given the current circumstances,") but only those already promised by Berlin before the war. Hoffman had held the position of curator since before the Nazi takeover and had refused to join the party. He was no friend of Rust, who had once tried—unsuccessfully—to have him forced into retirement and replaced with a party functionary. For more detail, see Götz von Selle, *Geschichte der Albertus-Universität zu Königsberg in Preußen* (Würzburg, Germany: Holzner Verlag, 1956), 361.

⁸ Richter, *450 Jahre*, 63-4.

⁹ "Zwei Welten—zwei Währungspläne," *Preußische Zeitung*, 8 July 1944, reprinted in Richter, *450 Jahre*, 67-9. Funk was born in Danzkehen, *Kreis* Stallüponen, East Prussia.

era, *Fidelio*, Schiller's *Maria Stuart*, and an afternoon of music by composers from East Prussia.

But the “most symbolically important event,” as the press declared, came on the final afternoon of the festival: at the groundbreaking of the new Institute for Music Education, *Gauleiter* Koch unveiled a sculpted bust of the Führer for display in the university’s assembly hall. The monumental head of Hitler, carved from solid marble, was flanked, a few inches lower, by those of the university’s two great academic forefathers (and great East Prussians)—Kant and Copernicus.¹⁰ The three heads represented the unity of knowledge in National Socialism: academic scholarship, with Kant representing the philosophical sciences and Copernicus the natural sciences, and, embodied in the oversized head of the Führer, “heroic reality.” Hitler's masculine profile, reported the *Königsberger Tageblatt*, displayed the “calm, confidence, clarity, and strength” that should be symbolic of the spirit of the university.¹¹

The will to achieve “heroic reality” was a common theme that the speakers returned to throughout the weekend: the struggle to transcend all boundaries to achieve the seemingly unachievable. The cult of the heroic had, of course, long been a central theme in Nazi ideology, but in the Summer of 1944, such calls emphasized the need for heroism against all odds: not the easy heroism of the effortlessly victorious, but the heroism of those who must create their own victory when even history seems to be against them: a Nietzschean will to power as the ultimate denial of fate.

The speakers all emphasized the powerful role that the Albertina and the city of Königsberg played in this struggle. *Reichsminister* Rust celebrated the determination of German universities (and the Albertina in particular) as institutions of “total scholarship” that had continued to spread the ideals of National Socialism despite the terror of the bombing raids.¹² Rust (among others) also spoke of the “lonely outpost character” of Königsberg and its university, 430 kilometers from Posen, and a full 600 kilometers from Breslau and Berlin. That isolation, they argued, made the “German spiritual mission” more deeply felt than in other German lands: born into the atmosphere of “austerity and clear sobriety” created by the Protestant Reformation, Königsberg and the Albertina were uniquely suited for the heroic requirements of the final battle.

The Reformation played a key role in the formation of this austere heroic character; as the great German contribution to Western Civilization, it had, as Grünberg explained, “rooted the German people fully in reality” and called on them to be aware of their difficult

¹⁰ Nicolaus Copernicus was technically not a native East Prussian: he had been born in Torun, in Royal Prussia, which had just been ceded from the Teutonic Order at the end of the Thirty Years’ War to become part of the Kingdom of Poland. He was, however, the economic administrator for Allenstein (Olsztyn, also in the Kingdom of Poland at the time, but later in East Prussia) and consulted Königsberg’s Duke Albrecht on monetary reform. Debates about his nationality (Polish or German) are as inconclusive as they are tedious; in any case, the Third Reich—and East Prussia—claimed him as a German.

¹¹ “Akademische Gesellschaft für Musikerziehung gegründet,” *Königsberger Tageblatt*, 10 July 1944, printed in Richter, *450 Jahre*, 89.

¹² “Der Festakt zum Jubiläum der Albertus-Universität,” *Königsberger Allgemeine Zeitung*, 9 July 1944, printed in Richter, *450 Jahre*, 76.

duty, “*though devils all the world should fill.*”¹³ This line, from the well-known hymn, “A Mighty Fortress is Our God,” called on the “fighting spirit” of Luther, brought directly, they claimed, from Wittenberg to Königsberg. From a “people of romantics,” Germans had become “a nation that stands in the final decisive battle against the reign of demons.” For four hundred years, the spiritual inheritance of the Reformation, “together with the spirit of the Prussian state,” had been preserved in Königsberg.¹⁴ Grünberg called not on God, but on Königsberg to be the “mighty fortress” of the German nation. The city, born in a time of austerity and duty, had become the purest representation of German civilization, not despite its outpost character but because of it. The defense of Königsberg from the reign of demons would be the battle for the fate of German civilization as a whole.

For the speakers at the university anniversary, the will to the heroism manifest itself in two distinct archetypes, which they identified as particularly representative of both the Albertina and Königsberg: the *soldier* and the *scholar*. Two sides of the German ideal, they had found their greatest expression in the inhabitants of East Prussia.

The anniversary itself, eschewing the “wine and beer joyousness” typical of peacetime academic festivals, had chosen the ascetic style of the soldier for its expression, for it was, as Grünberg reminded his audience, “Mars, the God of War, who ruled the hour.”¹⁵ Of course, it was no surprise that a majority of the speakers identified the *soldier* as Königsberg’s fitting expression. Official party ideology had extolled the strength and spontaneity of the Aryan barbarian, the Nietzschean “blonde beast” who pillaged and maimed, who was free from the slave morality imposed by Judeo-Christian ethics—the superman who was truly beyond good and evil. But the imagery of Königsberg soldier focused not on the spontaneous warrior that had been a dominant strain of some earlier Nazi propaganda, but on the image of the soldier who was dutiful, disciplined, and dedicated to the defense of the nation. This soldier, they explained, was the true East Prussian ideal: the Teutonic knight who founded the city seven hundred years before, the Prussian officer who so loyally served the state in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the devoted patriot who drove out the Russians from Tannenberg in the Great War. Under National Socialism, the soldierly ideal had become the basis for the purification of German blood and culture, and East Prussia gladly took up the sword to fight. The ideal soldier of 1944 was the soldier of duty.

The *soldier* was but one side of the archetype of Königsberg civilization; the other one (and perhaps more apposite to the Albertina’s anniversary) was the *scholar*. The university, then, owed its glory not only to the soldier with his toughness, determination, and sense of duty, but also to the scholar, the independent thinker who cast off the chains of medieval scholasticism, embraced Luther’s reformation, established the rich foundations of German humanism, and gave the world its philosophical foundations for centuries to come. Kant, Königsberg’s native son, was the natural reference point for the *scholar*. If the university had first established the traditions German humanism by rejecting the dogma of scholasticism, then Kant rose to even greater heights as the great hero of the German Enlightenment, the symbol for reason, rationality, progress, and the embrace of the universal. Kant the scholar

¹³ Bernhard von Grünberg, “Erbe und Verpfichte der Albertus-Universität,” *Preußische Zeitung*, 6 July 1944, reprinted in Richter, *450 Jahre*, 56.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Bernhard von Grünberg, “Erbe und Verpfichte der Albertus-Universität,” *Preußische Zeitung*, 6 July 1944, reprinted in Richter, *450 Jahre*, 56.

had transformed the old philosophy of systems into a new system of philosophy for the modern age and had remained throughout his life a native East Prussian, so true to his homeland that he never once left it. Kant stood as one of the great pillars of Königsberg civilization, and together with that other great pillar, the Protestant Reformation, the two formed the foundation for German civilization as a whole.

But then again, Kant was not the most likely representative of the Third Reich's version of German civilization. The universalist claims of Kant's ethical system seemed to conflict directly with the particularist, race-based philosophy of National Socialism. Whereas Kant's ethics valued means over ends to the point that means became ends themselves, Nazism sought a new ethical system that broke free from means-based morality (which it dismissed as rigid and bourgeois) in favor of an action-based morality oriented toward goals, whatever the cost.¹⁶ And was not the archetype of the *soldier* the antithesis of the *scholar* in any case? Did the unquestioning obedience and duty of the *soldier* not clash directly with the free-thinking autonomy of the *scholar*?

The speakers sought to reconcile these tensions by highlighting their long cohabitation and unexpected commonalities, an advantage of Königsberg civilization in particular. Germany had, as Professor Klausning (the Rector from the University of Prague) wrote in his greeting to the Albertina, always recognized in Königsberg "the close bond between military tradition and scholarship." Indeed, it was from this land that the Teutonic Knights had ridden into battle "together with weapon and book," and it was in this land that the glory of German scholarship would grow and blossom for all times. "Let the symbols of all scholarship," Klausning declared, "be the German sword and the German book!"¹⁷

The philosopher Eduard Baumgarten presented a lecture on the "two great Prussians of philosophy," Kant and Carl von Clausewitz, whose "intellectual brilliance radiated from Königsberg."¹⁸ Baumgarten showed how they, too, were manifestations of German civilization's unity of the sword and the book. Kant's system of ethics was not in opposition to the soldier's ethics of Clausewitz, but rather a preliminary foundation for it. While Kant's Categorical Imperative had focused on the individual, with its "origins in the idea of human freedom," Clausewitz focused on Man not as an individual "but as part of the collective." In the modern day, Baumgarten continued, one could not simply choose between these two philosophical systems; instead, one must synthesize them, combining the best elements of both: the pure rationality and individualist ethics of Kant with the soldier's ethics of Clausewitz, whose understanding had always been "oriented toward the needs of the nation."

¹⁶ While Kant was no favorite among National Socialist theorists (who found much more useful material in Nietzsche's work), Hans Sluga has shown that some strains of neo-Kantianism survived into the Third Reich and could even be adapted for seemingly contradictory purposes. See Hans Sluga, "Metadiscourse: German Philosophy and National Socialism," *Social Research* 56, no. 4 (Winter 1989): 797-799 [795-818]. Hans Heyse, the former Rector of the Albertina from 1933 to 1936, held the Immanuel Kant chair at the University and was the editor of *Kantstudien* from 1935, in which he described his task as helping the new will break through in the problems of philosophy.

¹⁷ Professor and Rector Klausning, "Gruß der deutschen Universitäten," *Königsberger Allgemeine Zeitung*, 8 July 1944, reprinted in Richter, *450 Jahre*, 77.

¹⁸ "Kant-Clausewitz" [Report on Eduard Baumgarten's speech], *Preußische Zeitung*, no date, reprinted in Richter, *450 Jahre*, 84.

But it was Professor Hans Alfred Grunsky, a prominent Nazi theorist and philosopher from Ludwig-Maximilian University in Munich, who made these “needs of the nation” most explicit. In a *Königsberger Tageblatt* article printed during the anniversary, “What Does the Categorical Imperative Tell Us Today,” Grunsky drew a connection between Kant’s concept of duty and the contemporary obligation of every German to defend the Reich. Beginning with historical precedent, he cites Frederick the Great, who dedicated his life to Prussia as “the first servant of the state,” and Kant’s own example of Socrates, who refused to leave his prison, even though he had been wrongfully sentenced to death: “he wanted to preserve the laws that he understood to be the foundation of all community order and under whose protection he had lived without harm.” These two examples, Socrates and Frederick the Great, showed the power of heroic duty, the obligation on which all moral action was based. This duty, Grunsky explained, was an internal “must,” a rule enforced not only by external law, but by the individual from within himself. “Today,” Grunsky continued, the categorical imperative was demonstrated by every woman who protected her family for the sake of her husband fighting on the front, and by every man who followed the “ancient law to go to war when the Volk is in danger.”¹⁹ The dutiful German man did not go off to fight because there was state law that he must do so or because he feared punishment if he did not, but because he felt that obligation within himself, an absolute necessity to defend the nation from harm.

Rector von Grünberg’s address adopted a more world-historical approach to addressing the tensions between the two heroic forms, tracing the origins and development of Königsberg—and German—civilization as a whole. Drawing on a loose conglomeration of Nietzsche, economic theory (Grünberg’s own area of expertise), and race science, Grünberg argued that although culture emerged directly from racial foundations (as developments in Nazi biological science had shown), the cultural forms produced by each race developed not only through evolution, but also through the processes of historical development. Nietzsche had described this process of cultural “becoming” in *The Birth of Tragedy*, identifying its source (within Greek culture) as the product of interplay between the *Apollonian* and the *Dionysian* forms. Returning to the leitmotif of the festival, Grünberg explained that the cultural forms of the Dionysian and the Apollonian found their particular German manifestations “in the forms of the Heroic and the Creative”—the *soldier* and the *scholar*. These forms, which could already be seen in the Middle Ages in the archetypes of the farmer, the knight, and the cleric, had since developed into the current German cultural forms.

One of the important historical influences on the formation of cultural forms, Grünberg argued, was the economy, and the most beneficial influence on the development of the German character was the agricultural mode of production. Agriculture had created the farmer and his everyday-heroic strength and determination, and agriculture created the affluence that had in turn allowed the creative forces in society to develop and flourish. This constant interplay between the two forces led to the heroic and creative endeavors of the German people (the *soldierly* and the *scholarly*) and elevated their culture to new heights. But just as economic foundations had contributed to the development of the German racial seed, so, too, had they played an important role in the proliferation of “degenerate cultures” (those which Nietzsche had identified with “decadence”). While German agriculture had

¹⁹ Hans Alfred Grunsky, “Was sagt uns heute der kategorische Imperativ?” *Königsberger Tageblatt*, 2 July 1944, reprinted in Richter, *450 Jahre*, 94.

produced great wealth at the beginning of the modern period, the degenerate types, the *traders*, now threatened these great achievements through the establishment of finance capitalism and the technologies of mass production. Amassing ever-greater sums of money and building up ever-larger enterprises, this money economy produced the greatest threat to German culture—the flight from the countryside to the large cities, which led to the creation of masses [*Vermassung*] and bleeding-out of all of the productive forces of German culture. The heroic and creative forces in society were forced to kneel down before the traders. The only way to overcome this threat to the German nation, Grünberg concluded, was to band together under the leadership of the party, guided by the Führer, to preserve the foundations of German culture from its enemies.

In some ways, Grünberg's speech was part of the standard iteration of the *Führerprinzip*, the assertion that the only way to overcome the combined threats of global capitalism and Bolshevism was to unite the Volk under the leadership of the party, which alone could secure victory against the dangers that surrounded it. But read another way, Grünberg's speech subtly betrays the hidden subtext of anniversary, present amidst all of the bravado, plans for the future, and predictions of triumph: the recognition that victory on the battlefield was impossible, and that the end times were approaching.

Both the archetype of the *soldier* (cast either as primal force, spontaneity and Aryan barbarity or as duty, discipline, and Prussian honor) and the *scholar* (as "total scholarship" in service of the Reich) were part of the Nazi definition of Germanness, but the Nietzschean articulation—calling for the triumph of the will, the breaking of boundaries, and the destruction of the old world to create the new—had been the more prominent formulation in the Third Reich's attempt to bring about the "new man" in the 1930s. By the time of the Albertina's anniversary in 1944, this Nietzschean formulation had undergone a dramatic change—away from positive calls for creative destruction to an emphasis on national self-realization through *sacrifice* and *necessary suffering*.²⁰ Grünberg's speech echoed the greater turn in official Nazi rhetoric from using the optimistic Nietzsche of the *Übermensch* to the cynical but hopeful Nietzsche, the poet of interminable suffering, whose strength was not to break through the barriers to a new world of his own creation but the power to bear infinite suffering in this one. Thus, the Königsberg that asserted itself as the epitome of German civilization was also the Königsberg that asserted itself as the willing martyr, ready to crucify itself out of duty to Germany.

The anniversary presented Königsberg as the bearer of German civilization, in complete opposition to Bolshevism, which was threatening to devour the city and everything for which it stood. And as the enemy was swiftly approaching, *Reichsminister* Rust reminded his audience why sacrifice was necessary, and why capitulation would not spare the German people from horror. In this final, decisive phase of the war, Germany was forced "not only to fight for our Reich, for freedom, and for life," but also for "our inner world," to protect it from the "deadly threat of Bolshevism." Bolshevism was not just another enemy army—it was a cruel, dominating ideology on the path to "subjugate the world itself." Disguising itself under the veil of "progress" by making clever promises

²⁰ As the wartime situation became more desperate on the Eastern Front in 1944, celebrations increasingly incorporated Nietzschean visions of apocalyptic struggle, and Nietzsche's command to "love your destiny," i.e. to be prepared for sacrifice, became a leitmotif for total war. See Steven E. Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany: 1890-1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 246.

about civil society and religious tolerance, European society had been wooed by the lies of Bolshevism. Whereas the Soviets had elevated the dogma of Marxism as their only basis for truth, going so far as to name Lenin and Stalin “the first representatives of Bolshevik science,” German civilization (and particularly the Albertina, that “400-year-old site of scholarship”) based its culture on not one truth, but many: the values of “God, Nation, and Individuality [*Persönlichkeit*].” By reinserting God and individuality into the formulation of German culture, Rust shifted away from the Nazis’ previous elevation of the nation (at the expense of the individual) to emphasize the common bond between German culture and Western European civilization as a whole. In the defense against Bolshevism, Germany was Europe’s last hope for salvation. All anniversaries are opportunities for self-presentation, and the four-hundredth anniversary of the Albertina—the university’s first and last anniversary in the Thousand Year Reich, and the final anniversary of its existence—was about Königsberg asserting its role as the epitome of German civilization and its greatest defender against Bolshevism.

A decade after the anniversary, however, Götz von Selle, the author of the commemorative history of the university, wrote that the anniversary had been a complete sham, nothing more than a farcical parade of Nazi bureaucrats and functionaries. From the moment of *Reichsminister* Rust’s involvement, the celebrations had been taken out of the hands of the university. “The party wanted their festival,” wrote Selle, and they orchestrated it as a thinly-disguised conduit for Nazi propaganda. *Reichsminister* Funk’s keynote on world currency systems, which Selle offered as proof of the charade, had been a woefully irrelevant diatribe, delivered “with a great display of propagandistic force,” about the war aims of the American economy; Rector Grünberg’s speech likewise had focused almost exclusively on the economy; and *Reichsminister* Rust in his attack on the spiritual world of Bolshevism made only a “marginal connection” to the Albertina. The actual occasion of the anniversary, Selle lamented, “almost did not come into discussion.”²¹

Selle recast the public memory of the anniversary to fit a new Cold War consensus (that real Germany had been held captive by party buffoons). Had, as Selle claimed, the speakers just been actors on a stage? Had they written their own lines, or were they reciting a script? If the party had controlled the event, where did the university’s professors fit in? Had they repeated the standard formulations, or had one version of Königsberg quietly but desperately asserted itself against another? And how would it be possible to tell the difference? All of the speakers seemed to agree that Königsberg was the epitome of German civilization because of its Eastern location and its tumultuous history. But ultimately the professors of the Albertina asserted a vision of Königsberg in subtle opposition to Nazi version. They offered themselves up as the martyrs for the German people, but only for the cause they had chosen for themselves.

Summer semester 1944 was the last full term of the university. In the weeks following, hardly before the banners and bunting had been taken down, summer semester classes at the Albertina were suspended and university professors and students were sent across the province along with civil servants, shopkeepers, workers, and brigades of Hitler Youth

²¹ Selle, *Geschichte*, 361.

to dig trenches and build rudimentary fortifications, part of *Gauleiter* Koch's ambitious scheme to erect an impenetrable *Ostwall* against the barbarian invasion.²²

In late August 1944, British planes flew over Königsberg, dropping phosphorous bombs that destroyed over fifty percent of the buildings in the city, including ninety percent of the Altstadt and the entire Kneiphof Island (where most of the university buildings had been located), the opera house, the state library, and the stock exchange. The main university building on Paradeplatz were destroyed, along with the curatorial building, several clinics and the natural sciences institute.²³ The New Auditorium, which housed the busts of Copernicus, Kant, and the Führer, was also heavily damaged: the the head of Hitler had fallen to the ground and shattered, and the 'solid marble pedestal' it had rested upon was revealed to have been made of slate. The bronze busts of Kant and Copernicus, as the university's last professors later remarked, survived the attack undamaged.²⁴

In the fall of 1944, most of the institutes were closed down except for the medical facilities, which were converted to military hospitals for wounded soldiers from the front. The opulent gifts promised by *Reichsminister* Rust during the anniversary ceremonies never materialized. The new Institute for Music Education was never built, nor the Institute for Orthopedic Medicine or the Kant Institute, nor were the eight new professorships ever established. The university closed its doors for good in late January 1945, and the administration fled first to Flensburg, then to Greifswald, and finally to Göttingen, where, after the war, the university was formally dissolved.²⁵

The surviving faculty of the Albertina, provided they successfully underwent denazification, took positions at Göttingen and other universities. Rector von Grünberg chose not to flee with the rest of the administration and joined the *Wehrmacht* in February 1945. He was captured by the Red Army in Poland and became a prisoner of war. In 1949, he was sentenced by a military tribunal to 8 years imprisonment along with five doctors on the accusation that he had smuggled banned books into the camp for Neo-Fascist meetings. (Later it was revealed that these books were philosophical texts that had come from the camp's own library, and Grünberg was subsequently released in 1950.) Although not allowed to hold any university post after the war, he wrote prolifically until his death in 1975.²⁶

Rector Klausung of Prague, who had congratulated the Albertina on behalf of all German universities, and who had called so passionately for the unification of German sword and German book, committed suicide in August 1944. His son had just been sentenced for taking part in the plot to assassinate Hitler.

²² Selle, *Geschichte*, 361; Herta Schöning and Hans-Georg Tautorat, *Ostpreußische Trägodie 1944/45: Dokumentation des Schicksals einer deutschen Provinz und ihrer Bevölkerung* (Leer, Germany: Rautenberg, 1985), 12; Meindl, "Erich Koch," 37. This *Ostwall* was not the same as the similarly titled *Ostwall* fortifications constructed along the Oder-Warthe-Bogen line. The formal title for the East Prussian *Ostwall* was the *Ostpreußenschutzstellung*.

²³ Selle, *Geschichte*, 362; Schöning and Tautorat, *Trägodie*, 12.

²⁴ Selle, *Geschichte*, 362.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 363.

²⁶ Richter, *450 Jahre*, 81.

Incursion

In the weeks following the university anniversary, hardly before the banners and bunting had been taken down, summer semester classes at the Albertina were suspended and university professors and students were sent across the province along with civil servants, shopkeepers, workers, and brigades of Hitler Youth to dig trenches and build rudimentary fortifications, part of *Gauleiter* Koch's ambitious scheme to erect an impenetrable barrier, an *Ostwall* (Eastern Wall), against the barbarian invasion.¹ While the *Ostwall's* ostensible purpose was to secure the Reich's borders from enemy invaders, its construction also signaled a larger shift in party relations with German citizens. The relative isolation of the home front during the first couple of years, part of Hitler's strategy to bolster public support by waging a war that offered only rewards with no sacrifice, ended with Goebbels' declaration of "total war" in early 1943, when the entire economy and productive forces of the nation were redirected to the war effort.

But the first effects of total war came to Königsberg only in Summer 1944 with the building of the *Ostwall*—the levée en masse of East Prussian civilians for the war effort and the first of what would be many total projects during the war. Farmers, not exempt from the draft, had to abandon their crops, leaving *Wehrmacht* soldiers to help women and children with the harvest. Anyone who failed to volunteer or revealed "defeatist" cynicism was threatened with harsh punishment.²

Although the city had been mostly spared up to that point, Königsberg had not been totally isolated from the destruction of the war. In late June 1941, a few Soviet planes had dropped bombs in the neighborhood of the Zoo (in the area around Hornstraße, Glückstraße and Tiergartenstraße) with only insignificant damage. A couple of other attacks by Soviet planes in Fall 1941 and Spring 1943 did minor damage, but remarkably the Soviet air force did not attack again before January 1945, despite the fact that their air bases were less than 100 kilometers from Königsberg.³ Until very late in the war, the air raids on Königsberg had been minor compared to the destruction that the cities farther west had faced.

In late August 1944, British bombers flew over Königsberg, dropping phosphorous bombs that engulfed the city in flames. On 26–27 August 1944, the British air force attacked Königsberg with 200 planes; this first attack focused exclusively on the area around the Marunenhof between Cranzer Allee and Herzog-Albrecht-Allee, in the south around the area

¹ Selle, *Geschichte*, 361; Schöning and Tautorat, *Die ostpreußische Tragödie*, 13; Meindl, "Erich Koch," 37.

² Schöning and Tautorat, *Die ostpreußische Tragödie*, 13-14.

³ Otto Lasch, *So fiel Königsberg: Kampf und Untergang von Ostpreussens Hauptstadt* (Munich: Gräfe und Unzer Verlag, 1958), 25.

of the Wallring. With only a few exceptions, the attacks were focused not on the center of the city but on the military administration buildings, depots, and barracks. On the night of 29-30 August, however, the attack was carried out at a much larger scale, with around 660 British bombers. This time the bombers targeted the city center and heavily residential areas, setting the whole town ablaze.⁴ Around 3,500 people died in these two raids, and 160,000 were left homeless.⁵



*East Prussian volunteers construct Erich Koch's Ostwall, July 1944.*⁶

Erhard Schulz, at the time a child in a small town in the northeastern part of the province, recalled hearing that many people caught fire during the raids and had to jump into the Pregel River and the Schloßteich (castle pond) to put out the flames. But the flames died down only as long as the victims stayed in the water; as soon as they reemerged, the phosphorus would start burning again. The adults who burned to death, Schulz wrote, “shrunk

⁴ Lasch, *So fiel Königsberg*, 25.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 26. Schöning and Tautorat list 4200 dead and 200,000 homeless, Schöning and Tautorat, *Tragodie*, 12; Guido Knopp and Stefan Brauberger list up to 5000 dead but only 150,000 homeless. Guido Knopp and Stefan Brauberger, “Die Schlacht um Ostpreußen,” in Guido Knopp, *Der Sturm: Kriegsende im Osten* (Berlin: Econ, 2004), 17.

⁶ Photographer unknown,

<http://photochronograph.ru/2013/05/01/osvobozhdenie-kenigsberga-i-vostochnoj-prussii/>, accessed 14 August 2013.

to the size of a baby. The thought of such a terrible devilish thing made us children shudder.”⁷

Over fifty percent of the buildings in the city were damaged or destroyed; including ninety percent of the Altstadt and the entire Kneiphof Island (where most of the university buildings had been located), the opera house, the state library, and the stock exchange. The main university building on Paradeplatz collapsed as did the curatorial building, several clinics and the natural sciences institute.⁸ The New Auditorium, including the hall that contained the busts of Copernicus, Kant, and the Führer, was also heavily damaged. The head of Hitler (the calm, clear strength of National Socialist “heroic reality”) had fallen to the ground and shattered. The ‘solid marble pedestal’ it had rested upon had crumbled, and was revealed to have been made of slate. The bronze busts of Kant and Copernicus survived undamaged.⁹

Many of the important industries and municipal utilities in town were spared: the Gas and Electricity Works, Poseidon, the Kohlenimport, the Reichsbahn bridge, the Karow Mill and Granary, Steinfurt Train Car Factory, the Cellulose Paper Plant, the Schichau ship-building yards, and the Königsberg Harbor with the majority of its warehouses and silos continued to run, as did the train stations. Several of the armaments factories continued to produce munitions for the front, including, notably, Schichau, which produced mine-searching boats. POWs and foreign laborers made up a large part of the workforce in all of these factories.¹⁰

Gauleiter Koch’s *Ostwall* had proven completely useless at repelling attacks from the air, and soon turned out to be equally ineffective at keeping out invaders on land. As the front lines moved closer and the *Wehrmacht* ceded more territory to the Red Army, *Ostwall* became porous and refugees from the Baltic region began flooding into the heart of East Prussia. Not all of those refugees were German, as Marion Gräfin von Dönhoff noted upon their first arrival to her family’s eighteenth-century castle estate at Friedrichstein, just a few miles east of Königsberg.

The first were White Russian peasants with small horses and light carts carrying a few meager belongings and babies, the rest of the family accompanying the carts on foot. The head of the family, with his tall fur hat, walked in front of the cart or next to the horse, holding the reins. A little later came the Lithuanians, then the people from the Memel region, and finally the first group from the easternmost border areas of East Prussia.¹¹

Closer to the border, the burden of housing the refugees from the Memel created tensions among the local population; Erhard Schulz’s father worried that “the feed for our own cattle might become scarce under these circumstances.” But those first human refugees proved to be nothing compared to the herds of cattle that followed them. Thousands of cows were driven across the river into the province, trudging along the same route. “The grass on such

⁷ Erhard Schulz, *Childhood in East Prussia and Flight in 1944/45: Recollections*, trans. Ortrun Schulz (Norderstedt, Germany: Books on Demand, 2003), 93.

⁸ Selle, *Geschichte*, 362; Schöning and Tautorat, *Tragodie*, 12.

⁹ Selle, *Geschichte*, 362.

¹⁰ Lasch, *So fiel Königsberg*, 26.

¹¹ Dönhoff, *Before the Storm*, 178.

paddocks and along the roads was eaten up within one day," Schulz remembered. The cows did not have enough to eat, and soon began bellowing out in hunger. Within weeks, Schulz and his family would follow the cattle on those same paths.¹²

Confident in the strength of his great wall, *Gauleiter* Koch had forbidden Germans from evacuating the area, except for those few civilians living directly on the border.¹³ Erhard Schulz's family had made evacuation preparations in secret, since "even the preparations for an escape could be persecuted [sic] as defeatism." But because they lived near the border, they were fortunate enough to get permission to flee a few days before the Soviets arrived, although, of course, "the word 'flight' wasn't used."

'A German doesn't flee.' Officially, it was talked of clearance. [...] As in fall 1914, in World War I, a victorious battle had been fought in East Prussia and the Russians had been driven out of German territory. It would be like that now, too. Therefore we just had to clear our homeland for a short while. Soon we would be able to come back.¹⁴

Schulz's family was allowed to depart on 12 October 1944. They packed only their most essential possessions, and buried their fine china and silverware in the garden. But there was of course, one other necessary precaution to take before departing, as young Schulz discovered when he noticed "a strikingly lighter spot on the wallpaper."

On this spot had hung the Hitler-portrait. Mom told me later that she had taken it off the wall before our departure and hidden [it] in the fireplace of the oven. It would be better the Russians didn't find the picture, if they came to Rehwalde after all. It could annoy them and then they would shoot at it and damage the wall.¹⁵

Schulz's family evacuated to Königsberg, along with thousands of other families. For farmers on the far eastern border of the province, Königsberg seemed like a distant dream. Schulz's mother had been to Königsberg once as a child to visit distant relatives, and that trip had surely been "the longest journey in her life." The "life rhythm of the farm population" before fall of 1944 had been governed by nature and the daily chores on the farm.¹⁶ His mother's childhood visit had surely been by train—now they were making that journey on foot.

* * *

On 16 October 1944, the Soviets crossed into German territory for the first time and cut 50 kilometers deep into the heart of East Prussia.¹⁷ When the invasion began, those who

¹² Schulz, *Childhood*, 97.

¹³ Wolfgang Wünsche, "Die Rote Armee in Ostpreußen 1944/45," introduction to Bernhard Fisch, *Nemmersdorf: Was tatsächlich geschah* (Berlin: Edition Ost, 1997), 14.

¹⁴ Schulz, *Childhood*, 99, 103.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 99, 104-105.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 105.

¹⁷ Günter Wegmann, ed, "Das Oberkommando der Wehrmacht gibt bekannt...": *Der deutsche Wehrmachtbericht*, Band 3 (Osnabrück, Germany: Biblio Verlag, 1982), 302 [22 October 1944], 304 [23 October 1944]; AA, B11/674: Abgetrennte Ostgebiete. "Zur Lage in Ostpreussen," 2 [p. 106], February 1953.

had not been given permission to leave started to flee spontaneously and thousands of civilians found themselves tangled among disheveled columns of retreating German soldiers and the advancing Red Army brigades.¹⁸ The fall invasion lasted only a couple of weeks before the *Wehrmacht* managed to push the Red Army back beyond the German borders, but the brief encounter with the Red Army left a strong impression on the German consciousness.¹⁹ The episode was immortalized in the wartime propaganda and postwar memory through the story of Nemmersdorf, a small village southwest of the town of Gumbinnen, which was engulfed in the battle and held briefly by the Soviets before being recaptured. The town fell on 20 October 1944, and after the Germans recaptured Nemmersdorf, reports began to emerge about the traces of a massacre of the civilian population there.²⁰

The *Völkischer Beobachter* (the NSDAP party organ) was the first to report the story, five days later, on 27 October. “*The fury of the Soviet Beasts—terrible crimes in Nemmersdorf—On the trail of murder in the re-liberated areas of East Prussia*” read the headline of the article, which proceeded to describe the scene in great detail. Inside the village, *Wehrmacht* troops had found the gruesome traces of mass murder

Four women, four children, and a man lay in a bridge tunnel, which had been converted into a bomb shelter. They were individually shot with a gun at close range as they left the tunnel. An old man was found a few meters away, hunched on his knees with his hands covering his face. The body had been shot in the back of the head.

In a plundered apartment a woman sat on the sofa, with a blanket still covering her legs. She was clearly surprised by the murdering bandits in this position and was killed through a gun shot to the head. In the bedroom of another house one found a 19-year-old girl lying on the floor with her head leaned against the wall. The girl had been raped and then killed by a gunshot wound in the mouth. In the corner of the same room an old woman lay with her skull split open, murdered by a rifle shot at close range. By the table, the husband of the woman lay on the floor. His body also showed a gunshot wound to the back of the neck. In the neighboring houses, the bodies of other men and women were also found.

“After two days of bloody Bolshevik rule,” the *Völkischer Beobachter* concluded, “Nemmersdorf has become a village of death, a village of silence.”²¹

Goebbels took every opportunity to publicize the events at Nemmersdorf as a preview of the so-called Soviet “friendship of the peoples” and “universal liberation of humanity.” Even though they promised leniency and liberation for those who welcomed them, Goebbels warned that they would bring only revenge and violence, aimed at every German, indeed every European in their wake. In every country, there were men who claim that “what the Germans say about Bolshevik terror is exaggerated—that the Soviets would

¹⁸ Schöning and Tautorat, *Tragodie*, 24.

¹⁹ Wünsche, “Die Rote Armee,” 9.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 9. The Soviet 11th Guards-Army broke the farthest into East Prussia from 20-22 October 1944 around the area of Gumbinnen. As Dieckert and Großmann recalled, the deep breakthrough at Nemmersdorf, just southwest of Gumbinnen, marked the high point of the Soviet offensive.

²¹ *Völkischer Beobachter*, 27 October 1944, reprinted in Fisch, *Nemmersdorf*, 46.

be interested in protecting German civilians.” The Soviets’ brief entrance of German territory showed that no consideration would be given to innocent civilians, no exceptions for those who surrendered without a fight: all of the Bolshevik promises, Goebbels explained, were opportunistic lies, and the Germans who failed to heed the warnings—“those criminally blind fools,” who after years of war still underestimated the threat that communism posed to European civilization—“had only to look to Nemmersdorf in East Prussia” to see the true face of Bolshevism.²²



German soldiers investigate the massacre at Nemmersdorf, October 1944.

As the story developed, it became increasingly difficult to separate the facts from their presentation, and details about what happened at Nemmersdorf grew more ornate as new evidence and testimonies emerged. Multiple eyewitnesses corroborated each others' interpretations and introduced previously unmentioned details into the emerging canon. The stories of the witnesses (including *Wehrmacht* soldiers, *Volkssturm* members, war reporters, doctors from the international medical commission, local officials, and an Insterburg nurse whose family lived in Nemmersdorf) seemed to coalesce around a few main assertions and a few common themes: that “Nemmersdorf” stood for atrocity, outside the conventions of modern warfare; that the massacre had been brutal, methodical, and planned; that it had not been the result of individual excesses, but had been encouraged by the Red Army command; that the violence had been directed against innocent civilians, par-

²² *Ibid.*, 50.

ticularly against German women; and that the dead of Nemmersdorf were the first martyrs in the Soviet assault on European civilization.

As the story about the atrocity at Nemmersdorf spread, many Königsbergers could not help but develop the pervasive fear that, as Michael Geyer put it, “a nation that had committed otherwise unspoken atrocities could not but expect retaliation.”²³ The newspapers were careful, then, to assure the German public that what had happened in Nemmersdorf was in no way “justified” revenge for the *Wehrmacht*’s treatment of civilians in the Soviet Union. The media consistently maintained that the *Wehrmacht*’s behavior had been civil, denied that there had been excesses on the part of German soldiers, and presented testimonies to put the crimes of Nemmersdorf into context. As one photo reporter put it, “I have been a soldier for four years and have seen many horrible scenes on the battlefield. The sight of the murdered German *Volksgenossen* in Nemmersdorf has shaken me the deepest.”²⁴

The massacre, they argued, had not been the result of spontaneous excesses by individual Red Army soldiers who had acted independently and unsupervised by the chain of command. Rather, it was, as countless testimonies explained, “a methodical procedure,” and the position of the murdered bodies showed “that they were not killed trying to flee during a battle, but instead were forced by the murdering beasts to get down on their knees before being shot in the back of the head.”²⁵ Several Bolshevik prisoners had allegedly revealed during interrogation that their commanders had given the troops “a completely free hand with the civilian population” and also “the right to kill and plunder any property of German residents.” And this violence, excessive in brutality and methodical in execution, had been directed entirely at innocent civilians, all of whom had surrendered willingly—as their fatal wounds revealed. Women, even elderly women, had been raped; children had been forced to watch or had been raped themselves:

In the middle of the village, two women and a child lay near a bridge. The younger woman still held the child by the hand. She was raped by the Bolshevik savages and then killed through a stab in the chest. The bodies of the child and the older women showed shots to the head. At the edge of the village, more women and a child had been killed. One of these women had also been raped. Off behind some bushes was found the body of a girl of approximately fifteen, who had been shot through with several bullets. On two farmsteads farther away from the village, another two women were found raped and shot to death.²⁶

The newspaper reports all included graphic descriptions of the wounds of the victims. Photographs were often paired with the reports to convince anyone who doubted the veracity of the horrors described: overturned wagons with their contents littered on the road; the bodies of women and children lined up in a field, blood smeared on their faces,

²³ Michael Geyer, “Endkampf 1918 and 1945: German Nationalism, Annihilation and Self-Destruction” in Alf Lüdke and Bernd Weisbrod, eds., *No Man’s Land of Violence: Extreme Wars in the 20th Century* (Göttingen, Germany: Wallstein, 2006), 57.

²⁴ *Völkischer Beobachter*, 2 November 1944, reprinted in Fisch, *Nemmersdorf*, 55.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 27 October 1944, reprinted in Fisch, *Nemmersdorf*, 45-7.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 45-7.

legs twisted, and skirts lifted to show their torn undergarments; the glassy-eyed stare of an infant still wrapped in its swaddling clothes, blood dripping from its nose. The newspapers focused in particular on the violence against women, “crimes [that] belong to the darkest chapters of sexual pathology,”²⁷ as a reminder to fathers, brothers, and sons on the front that the Bolshevik predator would violate the German woman if they did not fight to the death to keep the enemy off German soil.

“The German woman” stood not only for the physical body of each woman raped and murdered, but also for the symbolic body of the German nation. And even more generally, the fate of the German woman represented (in the vein of *Reichsminister* Rust’s warning at the university anniversary) that of European civilization as a whole. The rape and plunder of the Bolsheviks was designed to obliterate the wealth and prosperity of Germany and the rest of Europe and drag them down to the Bolsheviks’ accustomed level of poverty. In Nemmersdorf, the destruction had not been the result of street battles, but of an ideological campaign of devastation. In particular, the Bolsheviks had delighted in desecrating the church (which they used as a barracks), leaving behind the litter from their stay: military equipment, especially gas masks, covered the ground; they smashed the altar to pieces, and, most pointedly, “the hands had been hacked off the Virgin Mary, the statue wantonly destroyed.”²⁸

The atrocity at Nemmersdorf made the international headlines in Europe and the world, and did accomplish the propaganda ministry’s goal of frightening Germans at home and on the front lines into continuing the war at any cost. But the publicity campaign did not entirely have the desired effect: many Germans had already come to distrust any information in the newspapers as a distortion of reality, and dismissed Nemmersdorf as fantasy propaganda—a stage production concocted by the Nazis as a scare tactic. Others—the majority—decided to leave their homes as soon as possible. Near the borders, a desperate panic broke out, and new, uncontrolled attempts at flight began, so that finally the *Gau* administration had to consent (with the pressure of the military) to evacuate a 30-kilometer strip along the front lines.²⁹

While many people who had grown weary of the war had rejected Nemmersdorf as nothing more than a Goebbels media show, the later experience of the Soviet invasion and postwar occupation led Germans and the Western Allies to reevaluate their doubts and accept the stories of atrocity as canon. Countess Marion von Dönhoff was among those who did not believe the news reports at the time, attributing them to the typical desperate news spin of the Nazis as they lost support for the war (she herself had been indirectly involved in the July plot against Hitler). “Since we automatically assumed that everything the government printed or broadcast was a lie,” she wrote in her memoirs two decades later, “my initial reaction was that these pictures from Nemmersdorf were faked.” But later she became convinced that the stories about Nemmersdorf had been real:

Women had indeed been stripped naked and nailed to barn doors, and twelve-year-old girls had indeed been raped; sixty-two women and children

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 2 November 1944, reprinted in Fisch, *Nemmersdorf*, 55.

²⁸ Fisch, *Nemmersdorf*, 102.

²⁹ Knopp and Brauburger, “Die Schlacht,” 22.

had been found murdered in their homes, and the pictures of dead women with torn clothes lying in the streets and on compost heaps were not faked.³⁰

Several witnesses emerged in the immediate postwar period to corroborate the wartime press on the event, adding elaborate details about what had happened there. Because there had been no survivors, determining what happened inside the town during the Red Army occupation was virtually impossible, and so the testimonies came primarily from those who first entered the town on the heels of the Red Army's retreat.

Yet after examining the evidence, one is left with conflicting impressions of the nature and scope of the events. Two postwar testimonies in particular (those of Königsberg *Volkssturm* member Karl Potrek and the Gumbinnen *Kreis* Farm Leader Fritz Feller) did much to confirm the established version of events, but upon further investigation, even they seem to add subtle ambiguities and contradictions. The first news reports claimed that 26 German civilians had died at Nemmersdorf, but later upgraded the tally after the reported discovery of new bodies to 61; Potrek claimed to have counted 72 (the West German government seems to have accepted this number as accurate). The original news reports explained that *some* of the women "show signs of rape," but by the postwar period, *all* of the women, from children to the elderly, had been confirmed as having been violated, as proven by the same international medical commission (whose records have never been found). Various reports name multiple men who had been among the dead, but Potrek insists that there had been only a single man (the 74-year-old father of the Insterburg nurse), perhaps to emphasize the violence against helpless German women. Although most of the reports insist that not a single Soviet soldier had died in Nemmersdorf (to emphasize that the German dead had not died in battle), Feller recalls seeing the "Asiatic facial traits" of fallen Soviet soldiers on the streets.³¹

One witness, Bernhard Fisch, came to question whether an atrocity at Nemmersdorf had taken place at all. Eighteen-year-old Fisch had been drafted in summer 1944 into an all-East Prussian Reserve Officer Candidate platoon, which was deployed to the front on 20 October from their training base in nearby Insterburg. After a few days without rations, Fisch set out alone on a hunt for food and entered Nemmersdorf on the 25th or 26th—three or four days after the Soviets had supposedly left the town. He found the town abandoned and all of the store shelves empty—not a single crumb to eat. But "it was not possible that this was the work of the Russians. It would have looked different if the enemy had ravaged here." Indeed, there was no indication that there had even been a battle: "[n]o ruins, no shell holes, no weapons lying around, no dead bodies. The street was still and undisturbed."³² Fisch only heard about supposed atrocities at Nemmersdorf from the newsreels over a week later—no news or rumors had spread among the military recruits or their instructors—and was surprised to see the footage of the destruction.

Quiet about his experience for over 50 years (most of which he spent as a Russian language teacher in the GDR), he published his own recollections and the results of his investigation in 1997 as *Nemmersdorf: Was tatsächlich geschah* [*Nemmersdorf: What Actually Happened*]. Mining through newspapers, archival documents, *Wehrmacht* and Red Army reports, and postwar testimonies, Fisch concludes (although not as conclusively as the book title

³⁰ Dönhoff, *Before the Storm*, 182-3.

³¹ Fisch, *Nemmersdorf*, 68.

³² *Ibid.*, 28.

promises) that the Red Army probably did in fact commit violence against German civilians in Nemmersdorf (even though that assertion conflicts with his own memory of an undisturbed village scene), but that the nature and scale of the events had been vastly inflated by Goebbels' Propaganda Ministry. Later witnesses, as Fisch recounts, stepped forward to describe how the photographs had been manipulated (bodies rearranged, skirts lifted to give the impression of sexual transgression), and how some of the photographs supposedly taken in Nemmersdorf had in fact been taken elsewhere. Although the press reported no survivors at the time, one woman later came forward as the lone survivor; she and the other villagers had been hiding in a bunker when the Red Army arrived. She testified that although the Red Army soldiers did shoot everyone they found, they had not committed the atrocities that the press and later witnesses had claimed. She had been shot in the head but survived, and despite her wounds, she insists that the soldiers had behaved civilly.

In the end, it seems reasonable to conclude that about two dozen German civilians died in Nemmersdorf.³³ Regardless of whether the propaganda in the newspapers had been contrived, the images of Nemmersdorf succeeded in putting the fear of the enemy into the hearts and minds of Germans and helped create an "involuntary German community" in solidarity against the enemy.³⁴ As Michael Geyer argues, "individuals and groups felt that they were in the same boat and knew with remarkable precision who was not. They were never more German, more part of a community of fate, than in the mushrooming fantasies of the enemy's revenge which propaganda enhanced so cunningly."³⁵ Nemmersdorf offered Germans a powerful glimpse into the world of the future, a dystopic dreamworld of Soviet occupation that informed the way Königsbergers would later narrate their own experiences under Soviet rule.

* * *

Once the Red Army retreated behind the border, East Prussians reverted for the time being to their old routines. Cynics admitted in resignation that the Red Army's brief incursion was only a preview of what was to come, but many people in the province clung to Goebbels' assurances that the worst was over. Christmas in East Prussia assumed almost a mystical quality in the postwar memoirs and would be remembered for some as a final moment of the blissful naiveté of youth, and for others as the last moment of willful oblivion. Felicitas Lieberoth-Leden, the daughter of an estate manager at Falkenau (not far from Deutsch Eylau) remembered that the mood during the holidays was joyous and festive. The tradition at the manor was for the staff (from the parlor maid to the coachman) to celebrate the holiday dinner with the estate owners. Despite the shortages in the war, there was a rich spread of food for the table (although only a few dim candles lit the dining room). As they enjoyed their feast, none of them thought that the end was near, "that we were spending our last Christmas here, that we would have to leave behind our homeland."³⁶ Hans Graf von Lehndorff on the other hand, recalled less sympathetically how the population in In-

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Michael Geyer, "Endkampf," 57.

³⁵ Geyer, "Endkampf," 57.

³⁶ quoted in Knopp and Brauburger, "Die Schlacht," 25.

sterburg celebrated Christmas obstinately, “almost as in peacetime.”³⁷ The traditional feasts were arranged in Königsberg and throughout the province, and, as Lehndorff later mocked, “even hunting parties were organized.” Käthe Hielscher, a girl at the time, remembered how on New Years Eve, following the usual festive radio program, the voices of Hitler and Goebbels addressed the nation at midnight. “It is five minutes before twelve—Germans! Believe in victory!”³⁸ Hielscher and her family had already left their home in Insterburg to live with her extended family in the Ponarth suburb in Königsberg. Upon hearing the words of Goebbels, Hieschler’s mother was cynical, but her aunt still believed.

On 26 December 1944, *Generaloberst* Heinz Guderian warned the Führer that the Soviets had planned a great offensive for mid-January. Himmler dismissed the rumors as overblown; he was “convinced firmly that nothing will happen in the East.”³⁹ Hitler laughed off the warnings as “the greatest bluff since Genghis Khan” and refused to commit more troops to the Eastern Front. “I can still lose ground there,” he explained, “but not in the West. The East must help itself!”⁴⁰ But two weeks later, as Lehndorff lamented, “all was over.” The Russians had lain in wait just beyond the border for months, and “now they came upon us with a vengeance.”⁴¹

The Red Army’s winter offensive, as Guderian had predicted, began on 13 January. This time, the aim of the offensive was not to attack Königsberg directly but to isolate East Prussia from the rest of the Eastern Front by cutting through the German Second Army in southern East Prussia and attacking Marienburg, Elbing, and Danzig. The goal was to create a corridor to the Baltic Sea and create a pocket out of Königsberg and the Samland Peninsula by slicing through the German Third Panzer Army.⁴²

Just as Stalin had during Operation Barbarossa, Hitler ordered the *Wehrmacht* to take “not a single step back.” *Gauleiter* and *Reichsminister* for Defense Koch had promised the Führer personally to thwart the Russian advance and had spent the previous months busy-ing himself (despite the protests of the frontline commanders) with the construction of additional fortifications of his own design, including such “dilettante inventions” (as they were later derided) as the *Koch-Töpfe* (“frying pans,” a pun on Koch’s name), a system of half-submerged concrete turrets for German machine gunners. Unfortunately, these anti-tank blocks, as the *Ostwall* before them, proved no match for the Soviet tanks, which simply rolled over them, crushing the soldiers inside.⁴³ But even if Koch’s system of “mouse traps” had not been so ill-conceived, the *Wehrmacht* would still have been helpless to stop the Soviet advance; the German Army Group Center was outnumbered 4 to 1, with half a million German soldiers against the 2.2 million of the Red Army.⁴⁴ By 20 January, only a week into

³⁷ Count Hans von Lehndorff, *Token of a Covenant: Diary of an East Prussian Surgeon, 1945-47*, trans. Elizabeth Mayer (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1964), 5.

³⁸ Käthe Hielscher, *Als Ostpreußin in russischer Kriegsgefangenschaft* (Berlin: Frieling, 1998), 60, 62.

³⁹ quoted in Knopp and Brauburger, “Die Schlacht,” 25.

⁴⁰ quoted in *ibid.*, 13, 25.

⁴¹ Lehndorff, *Token*, 5.

⁴² Lasch, *So fiel Königsberg*, 32.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁴⁴ Knopp and Brauburger, “Die Schlacht,” 16.

the offensive, the Russians had stormed halfway through the province, all the way to Insterburg and Allenstein.⁴⁵

Lieutenant General Friedrich Hoßbach, the Commander in Chief of the German Fourth Army in East Prussia since July 1944, had advocated since the end of August for the evacuation of the civilian population in the eastern half of the province, but Koch continued to denounce such suggestions until well after January invasion had begun.⁴⁶ Lieutenant General Otto Lasch, then the commander of Königsberg Military District I (*Wehrkreis I*), met with the Adjutant of the Führer, General Burgdorff, on 20 January to secure evacuation for the civilian population around the areas of Lyck, Lötzen, and Johannsburg, but to no avail.

Civilians were prevented from fleeing, but as the Soviets pushed their offensive into the area around Tannenberg, arrangements were made to remove the sarcophagi of Field Marshall von Hindenburg and his wife from the World War I Tannenberg memorial. Hitler was appalled at such pessimism and screamed that in no way did the Tannenberg memorial need to be evacuated, because "East Prussia will be held." But only an hour later he called from his military headquarters and ordered that the evacuation be carried out. Hindenburg and his wife were transported to Pillau under the supervision of their son, the General Lieutenant Oskar von Hindenburg, and shipped to safety in the Reich.⁴⁷ The roads out of East Prussia, it seemed, were open only to the dead.

Once the invasion seemed unstoppable, however, Koch granted East Prussians eleventh-hour permission to leave their villages. The resulting evacuations were spontaneous, almost entirely uncoordinated, and came too late for the majority of the population to flee in time. The refugees fled from the southern and southeastern parts of the province toward the northwest, hoping to escape over the Frisches Haff. Those fleeing from the northeastern parts of the province (the area around the Memel and Curonian Spit) ended their journey in Königsberg, some taking the land route from Labiau, some escaping by boat from the town of Memel to the western coast of the Samland Peninsula, hoping to find further passage from there.⁴⁸

Alexander Prince Dohne-Schlobitten rode through the forests around the Castle Schlobitten to take final stock of his ancestral estate. Later he wrote that "almost no one could believe or wanted to believe then that we soon would have to give up our former lives entirely." Dohne-Schlobitten had been in the *Wehrmacht*, but had been given a dishonorable discharge and sent back to East Prussia for protesting the execution of US prisoners. In Summer 1944, he had almost been forced to join the farmers dispatched to build the *Ost-wall* before the *Kreis* farm leader had convinced the party that he would be of more use on his farm. Although he had no faith in the party in 1945, Dohne-Schlobitten had voted for the Nazis in 1932 (as had so many other East Prussian landed nobility) as a national-conservative who rejected Versailles and the Polish Corridor and as a staunch opponent of

⁴⁵ Lasch, *So fiel Königsberg*, 32.

⁴⁶ Knopp and Brauburger, "Die Schlacht," 19.

⁴⁷ Lasch, *So fiel Königsberg*, 34. The coffins of Hindenburg and his wife were found on 27 April 1945 by US troops in an abandoned mine shaft near Marburg. Will Lang, "The Case of the Distinguished Corpses," *LIFE*, 6 March, 1950, 65.

⁴⁸ Schöning and Tautorat, *Tragodie*, 40.

communism. (The great hero of the German resistance, Claus Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg, too, had once supported Hitler.)⁴⁹

On 19 January, Lehndorff's hospital in Insterburg was ordered to evacuate, just a day before the Soviets' arrival. The patients and most of the nurses were sent westward to Pomerania, where they were to be boarded in private houses in the countryside.⁵⁰ Lehndorff himself found passage on a Red Cross truck heading for Königsberg. Men of the *Volkssturm*, armed with hunting rifles, stood watching the truck as it left. They drove slowly out of the "burning, firelit town" avoiding the debris of walls and the dangling wires overhead. On the road out of Insterburg, they passed no military vehicles traveling to defend the city, "nowhere even the slightest sign of any intention to defend East Prussia on this side. It was like driving through a no man's land already."⁵¹

Many of the refugees began to lose hope that they would escape before the arrival of the Red Army and began to doubt their decision to flee. The villagers from Marion von Dönhoff's estate were on their trek for a few days, poorly prepared for the weather and already running out of food, when they began to rethink their options. "If we're to end up in Russian hands," explained one of the estate employees, Mr. Klatt, "then let it be at home." They all agreed that the Russians would surely execute Dönhoff as the aristocratic owner of an estate, whereas they themselves would "simply go on milking cows and threshing grain, [but] for the Russians." Too tired to continue forward and rationalizing their desperation, many refugees adopted an unexpected part of Nazi propaganda's depiction of Bolshevism—the vulgar elevation of class over race—for their own use as a sign that German workers and peasants would be spared the wrath of Soviet vengeance. The estate workers turned back toward home, while Dönhoff continued westward on horseback. As Dönhoff later lamented, "[n]either they nor I had any inkling how mistaken we were to think that nothing would happen to the workers."⁵²

One of Dönhoff's secretaries, Miss Markowski, "a passionate believer in the Führer who had greeted every victory bulletin with undisguised joy," did not join the land trek to the west, and instead headed to Danzig to secure passage on a refugee ship.⁵³ She joined tens of thousands of other refugees in the port of Gotenhafen, where she boarded the *Wilhelm Gustloff*, a *Kraft-durch-Freude* cruise liner converted for mass civilian transport. The *Gustloff* was an impressive ship, 208.5 meters long and 56 meters tall, and had earned its title as the "Dream Ship of the Nazis," carrying thousands of Germans each year to vacation destinations along the Baltic Sea.⁵⁴ On 25 January 1945, the *Gustloff* started loading refugees (including Miss Markowski), who squeezed into the ship with as many of their personal possessions as they could carry. The ship departed on 30 January. Less than a day later, it was torpedoed by a Soviet S-13 submarine. The ship sank into the Baltic and thousands of refugees found themselves in the freezing water. Most of them lasted only a few minut-

⁴⁹ Knopp and Brauburger, "Die Schlacht," 15.

⁵⁰ Lehndorff, *Token*, 6 [19 January 1945].

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 10-11 [20 January 1945].

⁵² Dönhoff, *Before the Storm*, 190.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 188.

⁵⁴ Guido Knopp, *Der Untergang der "Gustloff": Wie es wirklich war* (Munich: Econ Ullstein, 2002), 36.

es—of the 9,000 people on the ship, only nine survived.⁵⁵ Half of those who died were children. The sinking of the *Gustloff* drew international media attention and was soon offered as more evidence of the Soviet disregard for the international conventions of warfare (for the attack on a civilian ship carrying non-combatants). Alexander Marinesco, the submarine's captain, was cast as a hardened war criminal, although he had always maintained that he was only fulfilling his war assignment (to sink ships off the coast of East Prussia) and he had honored his duty. Later it turned out that the *Gustloff* had not only been transporting civilians; the ship had been armed, and there were several German soldiers among the passengers.⁵⁶

The journey of the East Prussian refugees did not end once they reached Germany; those who did not have relatives in the West lived for years in improvised displaced persons camps. One of the largest of these camps was Oksböl in Denmark, a common destination for refugees from the Baltics. The Oksböl camp became the sixth largest "city" in Denmark, with 35,000 refugees, more than 13,000 of them children.⁵⁷ Almost one thousand died; the outskirts of the camp were lined with long rows of whitewashed wooden crosses marking the resting places of the dead.⁵⁸ The poet Agnes Miegel lived there for a year and a half before relocating to Lower Saxony, and her experiences there returned in many of her later works. Her 1949 poem "Wagen an Wagen" (translated either as "Wagon after Wagon," or "Dare to Venture") reflected on the hardships the refugees faced as they first made their trek toward the Reich.

Of the 2.6 million prewar residents of East Prussia, about half a million evacuated in the fall of 1944. In January 1945, on the eve of the mass evacuations, there were about half a million civilians in Königsberg and on the Samland Peninsula;⁵⁹ about 250,000 of them evacuated by rail or on foot. Another 450,000 fled to Danzig across the frozen Frisches Haff, 200,000 escaped over the Frische Nehrung, and around 450,000 left Pillau by sea. By Forstreuter's calculations, those totals leave about half a million East Prussians unaccounted for. Of them, 200,000 had been soldiers in the *Wehrmacht*. The other 300,000 were civilians who died in flight, were imprisoned or murdered, or committed suicide. Almost twenty percent of all of the population of East Prussia—soldiers and civilians—perished as a result of the war, compared to 8 to 10 percent of Germany as a whole.⁶⁰

Wehrmacht commanders spared no opportunity to put the blame for the refugee tragedies on Koch. Baron Bernd Freytag von Loringhoven, the final Adjutant to Colonel-General Guderian, later testified that the officers found it "unbearable" that the population had not been given the possibility to evacuate in time, and that the blame for the tragedy fell especially on *Gauleiter* Erich Koch.⁶¹ The Baron, born in Livonia (then in the Russian Empire) and descendant of the Teutonic Knights, may have felt particular sympathy with the East Prussian population; he had studied law at the University of Königsberg for a year

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 59, 105, 138. The ship registered 7956 registered passengers on 29 January 1945, not including last-minute additions and crew.

⁵⁶ Knopp, *Der Untergang*, 132.

⁵⁷ Schöning and Tautorat, *Tragodie*, 68.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 70.

⁵⁹ Lasch, *So fiel Königsberg*, 33.

⁶⁰ Schöning and Tautorat, *Tragodie*, 62.

⁶¹ quoted in Knopp and Brauburger, "Die Schlacht," 19.

in 1933, until the Nazis made party membership a requirement to practice the profession. (He then entered the army, which had no such requirement, and ultimately became the man responsible for presenting Hitler with maps and daily reports in the bunker in Berlin.)⁶²

⁶² Douglas Martin, "Baron Freitag von Loringhoven" [Obituary], *New York Times*, 1 April 2007. <<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/01/world/europe/01loringhoven.html>>, accessed 18 October 2009.

The City Under Siege

As the enemy overtook villages less than one hundred kilometers away from Königsberg, inside the city, some residents still refused to believe that the end was near. Convinced of the power of German military might (or perhaps of the futility of pessimism), some Königsbergers at the time seemed not to dwell on the advance of the Red Army; on the contrary, as Hans von Lehndorff lamented in his diary in early 1945, they “hardly think of it at all.” Lehndorff, a local aristocrat and a medical doctor, had not supported Hitler; his mother had been arrested for inquiring into the health of a detained Lutheran minister, and his cousin, Heinrich von Lehndorff, had been involved in the 1944 attempt on Hitler’s life. But to Lehndorff, it seemed that most of the population remained passive, even supportive of the Third Reich and Hitler’s war in the East. “The Führer,” he wrote in 1945, with no small degree of sarcasm, “has planned everything up to now, and must have some definite reason for allowing the Russians to penetrate so far into the country.”¹

Lehndorff’s frustration with the willful oblivion of the civilian population did not mirror the description in the secret reports of the Sicherheitsdienst der SS. Across Germany, one report noted in mid-January 1945, bombing raids “have demolished what remains of normal life to such a degree that it is felt by everyone,” and that the entire population, even in cities isolated from the front lines, was “suffering gravely from the bombing terror.”

Tens of thousands of men at the front remain without news of whether their relatives, their wives and children, are still alive and where they are. They do not know whether they have been killed by bombs long ago or have been massacred by the Soviets. Hundreds of thousands of women have no news of their husbands and sons, who are somewhere out at the front; they are preoccupied constantly with the thought that they are no longer among the living. The urge of relatives and families to come together should the most extreme

¹ Count Hans von Lehndorff, *East Prussian Diary: A Journal of Faith, 1945-1947* (London: Oswald Wolff, 1963), 29 [early 1945].

misfortune befall Germany is omnipresent; people who belong together want to endure suffering together at least then.²

Any “otherwise extraneous excuse” could be used to “justify drinking up that last bottle which originally was being saved for the victory celebration, for the end of the blackouts, for the return of a husband or a son.”³

Lehndorff’s insistence that Königsbergers seemed not to comprehend the gravity of the situation seemed to be contradicted by his own experience. The parents of Doktora, Lehndorff’s assistant physician, lived in the Juditten suburb and could not decide whether to leave the city in the last days of January or to commit suicide (they were afraid of being forcibly separated after thirty years of marriage). The temptation to end it all was felt throughout the city, as Lehndorff wrote on 28 January 1945.

Wherever you listen, you hear people talking of cyanide which seems to be available in any amount you wish. The question of whether or not you should resort to it is not at all debated; only the necessary amount is discussed, and this in a casual nonchalant way as people might talk about food.⁴

Later that evening, Lehndorff and Doktora found the couple dead in their beds, laid out by their elder daughter, who had since left on her journey westward. As Lehndorff and Doktora left the home of her parents for the last time, a woman rushed to them screaming, “Come quickly, my husband has poisoned himself with gas!”⁵

Within two weeks of the beginning of their Winter Offensive, the Red Army had reached the outskirts of Königsberg. Up to that point, the party had prohibited evacuation, but on 27 January, the *Gau* administration commanded that the population of the city leave immediately. The result was a flood of people into the streets, all attempting to flee westward to Pillau. A few ships were still available in the Königsberg harbor to be loaded with passengers, but they could in no way support the thousands of civilians waiting to leave.⁶ The city’s administrators and elite party members fled, and thousands of civilians (some Königsbergers, some refugees from farther east) attempted to escape by train, by boat, and by foot. “Naturally, [Koch] got himself to safety in time,” Baron Freytag von Loringhoven noted.⁷ Koch packed up his things in haste and transported them to his Friedrichsberg Estate on 25 January.

The Albertina had operated on a truncated schedule in the last months of 1944, offering only the most essential courses; many of the labs and research facilities had already closed down for lack of funds and resources, and those professors who had not been already drafted into the *Wehrmacht* had already left the city for the western part of the Reich. The university closed its doors on 28 January, when its Curator, Friedrich Hoffmann, and

² BA-MA Freiburg, RW 44, Nr. 1/II, 16 January 1945, reprinted in Heinz Boberach, ed., *Meldungen aus dem Reich. Die geheimen Lageberichte des Sicherheitsdienstes der SS 1938-1945*, vol. 17 (Herrsching, Germany: Pawlak, 1984), 6734-40, quotation from 6737, quoted in Richard Bessel, “The War to End All Wars: The Shock of Violence in 1945 and its Aftermath in Germany,” Lüdke and Weisbrod, eds., *No Man’s Land*, 71.

³ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁴ Lehndorff, *Token*, 22-3 [28 January 1945].

⁵ *Ibid.*, 23 [28 January 1945].

⁶ Lasch, *So fiel Königsberg*, 36-7.

⁷ cited in Knopp and Brauburger, “Die Schlacht,” 19.

the rest of the administration fled to Greifswald. A few lectures did continue afterwards—the final lecture in the university’s history was given by the Slavacist K. H. Meyer, fittingly, on Dostoevsky. Meyer, his colleagues later reported, chose to stay on in Königsberg, believing that his knowledge of Russian would make him useful to the new occupiers of the city. He disappeared sometime after April 1945, never to be heard from again.⁸

The area around the Königsberg main train station was packed with refugees from the already-occupied areas of East Prussia. One refugee waiting to leave town told Lehndorff that she did not know where she was going or how they would get to the Reich. But then she added, to Lehndorff’s surprise, that “[o]ur Führer will never permit the Russians to get us; he’d rather gas us first.”⁹ The mass of refugees began to move their wagons again after a few days along the old Pillau highway. But in Pillau, the overcrowded ships were lying in the harbor, unable to leave because of the danger of mines. Patients from several evacuated hospitals in Königsberg were among those aboard the ships trapped in the harbor, but Lehndorff, as a doctor, had chosen to stay in Königsberg to help with the remaining civilian patients and the endless stream of wounded from the fronts.¹⁰ The first to flee (especially those with party connections) managed to secure safe passage, but the Soviets’ surprise breakthrough on 29-30 January at Metgethen (a village a few kilometers to the west of Königsberg) cut off the city from its land-bridge to Pillau, and the East Prussian capital was surrounded. Annaliese Kreutz and her family lived near the Seepothen train station, around 10 kilometers south of the city, and tried to board a train to take them into Königsberg, from where they hoped to find a ship or other safe passage. The trains, overpacked, left without them, but returned shortly when they discovered that the route to Königsberg had been blocked. The refugees could hear the “grumbling of the front”¹¹ behind them, and “automobiles, people, and horses stretched out westward in an unbroken column like a black snake in the white snow.”¹² No one among the refugees knew that one path, squeezed along the southern tip of the Frisches Haff through Heiligenbeil, would still be clear for a few more days; by the time they discovered it, it was already too late.¹³

Lehndorff bemoaned the fact that there seemed to be no intention on the part of the Supreme Command to treat Königsberg differently from any other town to be surrendered to the enemy; it “rather annoy[ed]” him to see his colleagues obeying orders so readily; as the medical faculty of the university clinics prepared to evacuate (as holder of high military ranks), he could not help but think of the seven [sic] new professorial chairs (many of them in the medical faculty) founded “with such arrogance” only six months before on the occasion of the university anniversary. Now it seemed to Lehndorff that “for a thousand wounded only one physician will be left behind to hand them over to the enemy.” Lehndorff volunteered to take control of one of the military hospitals that had been left without

⁸ Selle, *Geschichte*, 362.

⁹ Lehndorff, *Token*, 15 [23 January 1945].

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, [24 January 1945].

¹¹ Anneliese Kreutz, *Das grosse Sterben in Königsberg, 1945-47* (Kiel, Germany: Arndt, 1988), 8.

¹² *Ibid.*, 8-9.

¹³ Schöning and Tautorat, *Tragodie*, 56. The Germans would not succeed in reconnecting Königsberg with the Frisches Haff again until 22 February after extensive battle, but a Soviet counter-offensive soon cut off the city for good.

any medical supervision, and claimed to “accept the job gladly as a gift of God.”¹⁴ Female nurses were discharged and ordered to leave town that night “with a warning against the dangers threatening them at the hands of the Russians,” but the nurses in Lehndorff’s team disregarded the order and stayed on to take care of the wounded during the surrender of the city.¹⁵

From 22 to 25 January, the fate of Königsberg itself was in limbo, and it seemed to some as if the city would be surrendered without much resistance. By 26 January, Russian artillery had started firing on the town and several high-ranking staff and administrators were given orders to leave. But just one day later, on 27 January 1945, Hitler declared Königsberg a “Fortress City” to be held at all costs. General-Lieutenant Otto Lasch, the commander of the Königsberg Military District since October 1944, was promoted to the rank of General and given command of the fortress. Although Lasch himself was born in Upper Silesia, he spent most of his life in East Prussia as a police officer in Lyck and Sensburg, and as Battalion commander of Infantry Regiment 3 in Osterode; Lasch’s wife was from East Prussia and both his children were born there.¹⁶ Lasch recalled his reservations about being taken from the front to serve as Königsberg’s commander; although he hardly knew *Gauleiter* Koch personally, during his peacetime career in East Prussia he had come to know Koch for his reputation as a “fanatical National Socialist.” It was also no reassurance that Koch had already dismissed the previous two Military District commanders “because they had, in his opinion, not worked sufficiently in the spirit of National Socialism.”¹⁷

Lasch was given 30,000-35,000 troops, mainly from the First East Prussian Infantry Division, and 8,000 *Volksgrenadiere* to defend the city.¹⁸ In addition, the city was equipped with an elaborate system of arcane fortifications, including a ring of twelve forts built in 1874-1882.¹⁹ Besides a few supplementary forts constructed during the First World War, these antiquated fortifications formed the main defense of the city. It was only in conjunction with an additional system of fortifications of the Deime Line (along the Deime River, halfway between Königsberg and Insterburg) and the Heilsberg Triangle (a pre-existing line of defenses in Heilsberg to the south of the city) that Königsberg could be considered a “fortress” in the modern sense.²⁰

In an unwitting rejoinder to *Reichsminister* Rust’s insistence that the German people founded their civilization not on the dogmatic “single truth” of the Soviets (Marxism) but on three higher, interconnected truths (God, Nation, and Individuality), *Gauleiter* Koch reported to Hitler back in Fall 1944 that “there is only one belief [*Glauben*] in East Prussia, and that belief is in the Führer.” Koch promised Hitler that “if necessary,” every man, woman,

¹⁴ Lehndorff, *Token*, 18-19 [26 January 1945].

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, [27 January 1945].

¹⁶ Lasch, *So fiel Königsberg*, 7. Lasch in his memoirs (and in later memory pieces) tries to assert his connection to the province to defend himself against accusations of having been indifferent to the suffering of the civilian population there. See Otto Lasch, “Jägerland Ostpreussen,” in *Ein Blick Zurück: Erinnerungen an Kindheit und Jugend an Leben und Wirken in Ostpreussen*, ed. Martin August Borrmann (Munich: Gräfe und Unzer Verlag, 1961), 143-158.

¹⁷ Lasch, *So fiel Königsberg*, 24.

¹⁸ Schöning and Tautorat, *Tragodie*, 56.

¹⁹ Lasch, *So fiel Königsberg*, 13.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 13.

and child would defend East Prussia “with their bare hands.”²¹ That promise was first realized with Hitler’s creation of the *Volkssturm*, a Germany-wide network of people’s militias, in late September 1944.²² It was during the brief invasion of Germany’s borders in Fall 1944 that the *Volkssturm* was first called up, announced symbolically in Königsberg on 18 October 1944 (on the highly symbolic anniversary of the Battle of Leipzig) with *Gauleiter* Koch and Reichsführer SS Heinrich Himmler standing side by side.²³ General Lasch later accused the *Gauleiter* of using *Volkssturm* “as a means of strengthening his own position.”²⁴

All men aged 16-60 who were capable of bearing arms were called to defend the province, but by that time, there were very few able-bodied men left who had not already been drafted into the *Wehrmacht*.²⁵ The members of the *Volkssturm* were given uniforms and a weapon, and sent out, as General Lasch later recalled, “to defend their homeland with the most primitive of means.”²⁶ For many of the recruits (especially the youngest ones), the only weapon available was a *Panzerfaust*, a single-shot handheld rocket launcher that could be aimed at enemy tanks.

As more *Wehrmacht* soldiers and *Volkssturm* members fell in battle, Hitler ordered up older and younger recruits to serve. By mid-January 1945, as Dönhoff was preparing to evacuate her village of Quittainen, the mayor of town ordered all remaining male civilians to report for duty immediately. Except for a handful of men working in medical or other essential fields, the order “could only have been intended for men over sixty and the disabled.”

A pall fell over the village. Accompanied by their tearful wives, the men came limping in—lame Marx and half-blind Kather and old Hinz. The mayor handed them Italian rifles and eighteen cartridges each; that’s all there was. And then they went out into the freezing night to await their uncertain fate.²⁷

Many of the older men called into *Volkssturm* were defending East Prussia for the second time; they had been soldiers during the Russian invasion at Tannenberg in 1914.

With the establishment of Fortress Königsberg, recruitment into the *Volkssturm* increased dramatically with younger adolescents and older retirees joining with each successive draft. The Hitler Youth also called up its members for active military service to assist *Volkssturm* members or regular *Wehrmacht* soldiers by building trenches and barriers and gathering supplies. A placard from 9 February 1945, a little over a week after the city fell under siege, called for all Königsberg men, women, and children to stand “shoulder to shoulder” with the soldiers of the *Wehrmacht* and the *Volkssturm* to build an “indestructible fortress” to protect the city until the German army could defeat the Soviets once and for all. The *Kreisleiter* drafted every resident of the city for “fortress service” for four hours a day.

²¹ quoted in Knopp and Brauburger, “Die Schlacht,” 20.

²² quoted in Schöning and Tautorat, *Tragodie*, 16.

²³ Meindl, “Erich Koch,” 37-8.

²⁴ Lasch, *So fiel Königsberg*, 29.

²⁵ Isabel Denny, *The Fall of Hitler’s Fortress City: The Battle for Königsberg, 1945* (London: Greenhill Books, 2007), 169.

²⁶ Lasch, *So fiel Königsberg*, 30.

²⁷ Dönhoff, *Before the Storm*, 178-9.

“From the ruins of our city,” the *Kreisleiter* declared, “we want to build barricades and points of defense, from which every Bolshevik onslaught will be smothered in blood.”²⁸

Propaganda posters began appearing throughout the city with heightened anti-Russian rhetoric to convince the Königsbergers of the necessity of continuing the defense. One such poster, “Hate and Revenge,” began to appear on several trees and street corners throughout town in late January. Lehndorff recalled seeing the poster as one long defamation of the Russians, “full of obscene expressions” and ending with a summons to use all possible means to destroy the enemy. Lehndorff decided to complain to the commandant of the fortress, who had taken up quarters at the main post office. Lehndorff got into an argument with the major keeping the gate, who barred his entry. Despite Lehndorff’s protests, the Major explained that the Hate-and- Revenge poster seemed to have met with general approval in town. “Can you think of any other way?” asked the major in a quite friendly and rather helpless tone.²⁹ Unable to see the commandant, Lehndorff wrote him a hurried plea on the back of a temperature chart:

Herr General, what do you hope to gain from the appeal we have found put up everywhere with your signature appended? Königsberg is not just any sort of town; it has a great history. Would it not be better to honor the truth which probably we all must soon acknowledge before the throne of God? You can no longer catch anyone with ‘Heil Hitler,’ least of all the poor soldiers who are now hiding in their foxholes. ‘Kyrie Eleison’ seems to me the only war cry left us. Many desperate situations have been saved by it before.³⁰

Lehndorff appealed to the history of Königsberg in search of another image of the German nation under siege. In this case, not anti-Russian propaganda, not the desperate unity of the Volk, but the Christian tradition. Lehndorff understood that the letter would probably never reach its addressee, although “it greatly relieved my mind to get all this down on paper.”³¹

Despite the restrictions, the drafts, and the fear of invasion, the little rhythms of everyday life persisted. Civilian institutions and factories (those not already destroyed in the bombing) continued to work virtually till the end of the siege (Lehndorff noted with frustration that no one seemed to notice the siege: “streetcars are running as usual, and people are having their hair cut and going to the movies.”)³² Even after the infrastructure collapsed and some transportation and communication networks were disrupted, newspapers and radio programs continued to broadcast to those who could read and listen, civilian authorities directed residents to clean the rubble from the streets and rebuild the damaged factories. Places of employment provided improvised housing for their workers, effectively

²⁸ “Königsberger Männer und Frauen!” [Placard] 9 February 1945, reprinted in Schöning and Tautorat, *Tragodie*, 50.

²⁹ Lehndorff, *Token*, 31 [sometime after 30 January 1945]. Lehndorff does not mention the commander by name, but it is probably General Lasch, unless the event took place before 27 January 1945, when General Schittig was briefly appointed to defend the city.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 32 [sometime after 30 January 1945].

³¹ *Ibid.*, 32 [sometime after 30 January 1945].

³² *Ibid.*, *Token*, 16 [23 January 1945].

keeping them at their jobs.³³ The obstinate persistence of everyday life helped soothe the minds of worried civilians and gave some of them a glimmer of hope. For Lehndorff, that triggered the perpetual frustration that most people seemed to be convinced that the Führer's strategy was in accordance with a definite plan. The fact that Königsberg had become a "small remote island" surrounded by the Russians (who had by that time already reached the Oder) seemed—at least in Lehndorff's estimation—to be a distant reality to most of the town's inhabitants. "This is confirmed to us everyday in a partly ghastly, partly humorous way," he wrote. The reopening of the banks a few weeks into the siege, for instance, seemed to spread a wave of reassurance, and the "possibility of paying money in again and drawing it out is evidently proof for the people that things cannot be so bad after all."³⁴

The persistence of old structures in the midst of collapse became especially apparent to Lehndorff during his tenure at the military hospital, where he volunteered as a surgeon after fleeing to Königsberg from Insterburg in mid-January. Despite the bombing raids, the lack of supplies, and the overcrowded hospitals, Lehndorff's superiors insisted that he be drafted officially into the military if he wanted to work as a surgeon among the soldiers. Despite his protests, Lehndorff was appointed to the rank of second lieutenant with three weeks' reimbursement in March 1945 (although his military basic training was generously postponed until after the war). From the "point of view of maintenance," Lehndorff was told by the supervising General, he would be better off in the army; Lehndorff assured him "that we would probably be unable to put forward claims for maintenance to the Russians." But his reality check seemed to "fall on deaf ears," and Lehndorff submitted to his fate. Fortunately, that General was suddenly recalled by headquarters; his successor informed Lehndorff that everything could go on as before. But in order to conform to "the demands of the paper warfare," Lehndorff would need to be listed officially as a "consulting surgeon."³⁵

Some of the dance halls and cafes in town had been shut down for lack of resources (or fear of loose lips), although some of the institutions of leisure continued to reassure nervous minds and create the opportunity not only for happy diversions but also for propagandistic inspiration. The city's cinemas, in particular, ran a continuous stream of new productions and classic favorites throughout the spring, in addition to the usual *Wochen-schau* news reels. Although many of the films were light-hearted romantic comedies (the great crowd pleasers of Nazi cinema), a number of them underscored the regime's message to continue the fight at all costs. One such film was director Veit Harlan's masterpiece, *Kolberg* (filmed in 1943-44, but not released until 30 January 1945), which dealt with the heroic defense of the Baltic German city of Kolberg during the Napoleonic wars in 1806-1807. Civilian battalions banded together, even though their city had been destroyed and many of the townspeople had perished, to defeat the French and secure the Peace of Tilsit. Goebbels had picked this film as his own personal project and had film reels parachuted into be-

³³ Geyer, "Endkampf," 62. Michael Geyer provides an good general discussion of this obstinate persistence of everyday life despite the shared knowledge of impending defeat.

³⁴ Lehndorff, *Token*, 51-2 [around March 1945].

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 41-2 [early February 1945].

sieged towns in the east (including Königsberg and the real, once-again-besieged Kolberg) for special showings.³⁶

Sometime in February 1945, the wounded soldiers at Lehndorff's military hospital were treated to a special afternoon coordinated by a visiting NSFO (a National Socialist Public Relations Officer) that included speeches on the military situation, a "prancing cafe violinist in uniform" who played the latest sentimental hit tunes, and a special screening of *Kolberg* in the theater. But because "it was bound to consist of the most vulgar mass propaganda," Lehndorff and his fellow doctors excused themselves, blaming their heavy work duties.³⁷ In an ironic turn of fate, the Russians reportedly showed the film in the Eastern Zone after the war as anti-Western propaganda.³⁸

The events of Fall 1944—first the building of the *Ostwall* (or the "dubious Erich-Koch-Wall," as General Lasch later derided it),³⁹ the physical destruction of the city through bombing, the brief breach of the border at Nemmersdorf—signaled the beginning of so-called siege mentality inside the walls of the province. By Winter 1945, the Nazis could not sway the war-weary people who had gradually come to distance themselves from the goals of the regime and who had learned to treat much of the Nazi interpretation of events on the front with suspicion. Realizing that they could no longer count on the active support of their citizens, the party issued explicit orders to secure civilian's active participation in the defense of their homeland and focused their propaganda on the disastrous consequences if Germans did not continue to fight. The calling up of the *Volkssturm* and the introduction of mandatory service inside besieged Königsberg involved every German citizen in the war effort as had never been the case before. Fortress Königsberg brought about the tragic realization of the Nazi dream of the complete mobilization of its population for the goals of the state.

But as military drafts and civilian mobilizations proved not to be enough to turn the tide of the Soviet advance, the regime shifted to harder tactics of integration. A decree by the Reich Ministry of Justice from 15 February 1945 authorized the establishment of summary courts-martial (*fliegende Feldgerichte*, or "flying courts-martial") aimed at individuals deemed guilty of cowardice, shirking their duty, undermining the war effort, or acting in a self-interested fashion. As German cities were declared fortress towns (the "cornerstones of the battle for Germany" to be defended "to the last bullet"), *Wehrmacht* soldiers and civilian defenders found themselves under attack from the inside, as well.

The number of soldiers sentenced to death in the regular military court system in the last four months of the war is estimated at around 4,000, while the number of those executed by these summary courts-martial is probably around 6,000 to 7,000.⁴⁰ Convictions for defeatism (*Wehrkraftzersetzung*) skyrocketed during second half of war, and around 300,000

³⁶ David Stewart Hull, "Forbidden Fruit: The Harvest of the German Cinema, 1939-1945," *Film Quarterly* 14, no. 4 (Summer 1961) 21-2 [16-30].

³⁷ Lehndorff, *Token*, 44-5 [late February 1945].

³⁸ Hull, "Forbidden Fruit" 21-2.

³⁹ Lasch, *So fiel Königsberg*, 26.

⁴⁰ Manfred Messerschmidt and Fritz Wüllner, *Die Wehrmachtjustiz im Dienste des Nationalsozialismus. Zerstörung eine Legende* (Baden-Baden, Germany: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 1987), 77-81, 305-14; Manfred Messerschmidt, "Deutsche Militärgerichtsbarkeit im Zweiten Weltkrieg," in Hans-Jochen Vogel, Helmut Simon, Adalbert Podlech, eds., *Die Freiheit des Andern* (Baden-Baden, Germany: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 1981).

Germans were killed by the regime. Police intimidated foreign laborers, deserters, and all “defeatists.” Anyone displaying a white flag of surrender was to be shot immediately, and German newspapers filled their pages with reports of courts marshals and death sentences for looters.⁴¹ In this last phase of war, fear of getting killed by these roving death squads was permanent and real.⁴²

As Richard Bessel has remarked, a typical headline of the last issue of the *Stargarder Tageblatt* from 17-18 February 1945 could serve as an epitaph for the Third Reich itself: “On Adolf-Hitler-Square, the hanged are swinging in the wind.”⁴³

* * *

Königsberg was encircled for over two months. By early April, the Soviets had moved well beyond East Prussia to Pomerania, Brandenburg, and the outskirts of Berlin.⁴⁴ But even though the *Wehrmacht* could no longer resist the Soviet advance and the Luftwaffe could offer no help, the population of Königsberg still had to entrust its fate to the defenders of the Fortress. The city was surrounded on all sides by the Red Army, but Nazi rhetoric guaranteed the inevitable triumph of the Reich, promising the imminent release of “wonder weapons” and attributing the dire situation to Hitler’s cunning military strategy. According to Lehndorff, a Nazi Public Relations Officer “pestered” the workers at his hospital

with a shameless lecture on the military situation [...]. Hundreds of German tanks, so he declared, had just arrived in Pillau. These were about to advance, with the help of the new weapons, and join a second lot of tanks, now on their way from Breslau in the rear of the Russians, somewhere in Warsaw. This was the Führer’s long-cherished plan—to let the Russians in, the more surely to destroy them.⁴⁵

At the time, this intransigent resistance appeared to the Allies to be “the product of an unflagging German spirit of war.” But the Security Service opinion polls of the German civilian population point to their deep war-weariness, as did the coup attempt of July 1944 (which seemed to reflect a broader trend within the military and administrative elites). Germans, as Geyer argues, “desperately wanted to survive.” But the puzzle for Geyer and for a whole generation of historians remains: why did people who wanted to survive fight and kill so desperately and so ferociously in the last moments of the war, when all hope was lost?⁴⁶

General Lasch later claimed that he had continued to defend Fortress Königsberg in order to protect the civilians from the vengeance of the Red Army and to create the possibility to transport them to safety.⁴⁷ Lasch’s forces and the nearby Fourth Army managed to break through to Pillau in February, a few weeks after the initial encirclement of the city, but

⁴¹ Bessel, “The War,” 76.

⁴² Geyer, “Endkampf,” 61.

⁴³ Bessel, “The War,” 76.

⁴⁴ Lasch, *So fiel Königsberg*, 81.

⁴⁵ Lehndorff, *Token*, 32-3 [February 1945].

⁴⁶ Geyer, “Endkampf,” 40.

⁴⁷ Lasch, *So fiel Königsberg*, 82.

there were not enough transport ships for all the civilians. Many refugees hurried out of Königsberg to an interim camp in Peyse (a town on the Frisches Haff halfway between Königsberg and Pillau), but the barracks were so overcrowded that soon there were food shortages, and most of the women and children decided to return to Königsberg and their own apartments, where at least they had something to eat. Lasch was supposed to prevent their return to Königsberg, but he allowed them to come back to the city, knowing that they would have better care there. Königsberg was cut off from the Samland for good on 13 March by a Soviet offensive that severed the major route to Pillau.⁴⁸ (One small road to Pillau remained connected until the first day of the final siege.)⁴⁹

On Good Friday, 30 March, the Soviets dropped leaflets that said, Lehndorff recalled, “that we may celebrate Easter, but that all would be up with us after that.”⁵⁰ In the first week of April, the police and SS relocated most of the residents of Königsberg from their apartment buildings and makeshift dwellings into cellars and bomb shelters in the center of town.⁵¹ Lehndorff, as a medical doctor, was given a pass allowing him to move about unhindered through the city’s fortifications, and he took in the sight of the altered landscape. A number of barricades and barriers had been built from the wreckage.

[I]n times past the whole place might have almost been called a fortress. The area between Castle Pond and the university has become completely unrecognizable. The debris has been mostly removed, and you have to wind your way up and down the narrow paths between high piles of brick. Every now and then the region comes under heavy gunfire; you have the definite feeling of approaching the end. At night the Russian radio stations are blaring from the outskirts of the town; between intervals of music they appeal to the population to surrender unconditionally.⁵²

Lehndorff’s medical colleagues at the Samaritan Hospital were busying themselves learning Russian words of welcome; they had propped up a photograph of Churchill on the dining room table.⁵³ Käthe Hielscher’s family moved from their apartment in the southern suburb of Ponarth in early April, escorted by a team of SS men. As the Soviets first approached the cellar during the final days of the siege, Hielscher’s aunt ripped the NSDAP badge from her blouse and threw it away. Young Hielscher, who belonged to the *Bund Deutscher Mädel* (as almost every other German girl her age), forgot to do the same for her own badge.⁵⁴

Gauleiter Koch had first left Königsberg at the end of January. During the siege, he sent his personal reports to the Führer through *Kreisleiter* Wagner inside the fortress; as Lasch later insisted, Koch hoped to fool Hitler into thinking that he remained in Königsberg to defend the city from attack. Indeed, even though he had abandoned the city himself, Koch still acted as “Reich Commissar for Defense” and ordered the population to construct additional fortifications in town, including barricades in the center of the city, the grand ex-

⁴⁸ Ibid., 79.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 94.

⁵⁰ Lehndorff, *Token*, 60 [30 March 1945].

⁵¹ Lasch, *So fiel Königsberg*, 86.

⁵² Lehndorff, *Token*, 58 [late March 1945].

⁵³ Lehndorff, *Token*, 57 [late March 1945].

⁵⁴ Hielscher, *Als Ostpreußin*, 66-73.

pansion of the *Gau* Administration building into a 'Koch Bunker,' and the establishment of a take-off strip for airplanes on the Paradeplatz. The demolition of entire blocks of houses for the runway demanded the unending work by the civilian population, foreign laborers, and the camp inmates from Stutthof. Koch occasionally came back to the city in order to check on the progress of his schemes, but he never appeared during the day, as Lasch explained, "afraid of showing himself to the Königsberg population, whom he had in a cowardly way left in the lurch."⁵⁵ Koch left the city for the last time in March and headed for Pillau, where he escaped by plane in late April. He hid for four years under the pseudonym "Rolf Berger" until being apprehended by the British in Hamburg. Turned over to Poland for justice, he died in 1986 at the age of 90 in a prison in Barczewo (formerly Wartenburg in East Prussia).⁵⁶

The final siege began on 6 April. Around 30 Soviet divisions and two air fleets began a day-long attack on the city. The Germans were drastically outnumbered; about one-third of the entire Soviet air force was assembled, but there was not a single German fighter plane. Against the 30 Soviet divisions (around 250,000 soldiers), there were only about four newly-formed German divisions and the *Volkssturm*, about 35,000 men altogether. The Soviets had been recently supplied by the US with Sherman tanks and new American-style planes, and an entire French air force echelon assisted in the final battle. On the first evening of the siege, Lehndorff heard a wounded soldier call out from the floor of the hospital operating room. A soldier declared in the purest East Prussian dialect, "now they'll conquer us all right, but never in *spirit!*"⁵⁷

On the second day of the siege, 7 April, the massive artillery fire and air raids began again, and the Red Army succeeded in breaking through the western suburbs of Amalienau and Juditten and the northwest bank of the Pregel.⁵⁸ The southern suburbs, Kalgen and Ponarth, were attacked next, and there was a major battle around the main train station. By the afternoon of 8 April, the Soviets were encroaching on the city center from all directions. Lasch had one more conversation with General Friedrich-Wilhelm Müller (who was commanding the remains of the Fourth Army on the Samland Front to the west of the city); Müller told him that the Fortress must be held at all costs, and that it was his duty to hold it until the last man. The *Wehrmacht* would be supplied with all of the remaining munitions for the final battle. The party called (without consultation with Lasch) for the entire population to collect at half past midnight on the main road to the west. The order was spread by word of mouth, and that night the assembled civilian population marched arm and arm across the road. The Soviets discovered them almost at once and began attacking the entire area with heavy artillery fire. Several of the officers were killed or wounded; the civilians and soldiers, now without leadership, fled back into the city.⁵⁹

By the morning of 9 April, as General Lasch conceded, "the tactical situation in Königsberg [...] was hopeless." The entire city south of the Pregel River had been surrounded, and the western suburbs (Hufen, Tiergarten, Kosse, Laak, Juditten, and Amalienau) had fallen into enemy hands. Outside the city, the Soviets had already penetrated

⁵⁵ Lasch, *So fiel Königsberg*, 77-8.

⁵⁶ Schöning and Tautorat, *Tragodie*, 50.

⁵⁷ Lehndorff, *Token*, 65 [6 April 1945].

⁵⁸ Lasch, *So fiel Königsberg*, 87.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 92-6.

deep into Pomerania, Brandenburg, and Silesia, while the British and Americans had crossed the Rhine and stood at the gates of Hannover. Lasch “understood that it was now necessary to surrender the fortress to a brutal enemy who knew no mercy.” Although Lasch would later claim that he decided to end the battle to save the lives of the civilians and soldiers inside the fortress and to bring an end to the meaningless war, he really had no choice. By the evening of 9 April, there were only seven tiny isolated pockets of resistance—around Lasch’s Bunker by the new university buildings; on the decimated Kneiphof island; and around the old fortification towers (including the Wrangel-Turm, Dohna-Turm, and Bastion Sternwarte that had formerly made up the city’s Ringstrasse).⁶⁰ In the rest of the town, people had already hung their white flags from the windows. Lasch’s bunker in the Paradeplatz held up until that morning, when it finally began to fill with water. He shared his decision to surrender the same day, promised by the Soviets’ Marshal Vasilevskii an honorable capitulation. He left his bunker for the last time on the evening of 9 April.

On the morning of 10 April, Lasch and his cohort were marched out of the bunker and catalogued for transport. Despite earlier promises that they would be allowed to take a suitcase with them, they were stripped of all of their luggage and possessions at a railway station not far from Königsberg. Lasch gave an “energetic plea” to Marshal Vasilevskii, who did order that the captured German command be given back their luggage. But by then it was too late, and Lasch and his colleagues went into a decade of imprisonment with only the clothes on their backs.⁶¹

Back in the remains of the Reich, Lasch was sentenced to death by Hitler for cowardice; his family was to be apprehended and shot as punishment. (A German officer in the Danish prison where Lasch’s family was held, however, spared their lives.) In the Soviet Union, Lasch was sentenced to 25 years of labor for the supposed atrocities committed by soldiers of his East Prussian Division. It was a “sheer political act of revenge,” Lasch later wrote: never had he or his soldiers committed any atrocities; nor had they ever been in those villages where the atrocities supposedly took place. Lasch spent the next eleven years in various prisons and work camps near Moscow, Leningrad, Karabas in Central Asia, Vorkuta on the Arctic Sea, Asbest in the Urals, and in Stalingrad. Lasch returned to Germany late in the fall of 1955.⁶²

The East Prussian story was only one part of Germany’s tragedy in the Second World War. The final year of the war was the absolute deadliest; from Summer 1944 to April 1945, military casualties averaged more than 400,000 per month. More German soldiers were killed in action between July 1944 and May 1945 than in the entire previous five years of the war.⁶³ January and February 1945 were the bloodiest months of the entire war, with over 450,000 dead in January alone.⁶⁴ The casualty rates in these last months of the war were just as high for civilians as for soldiers. The number of wounded was even greater, at a time when military and civilian hospitals (including the swollen military hospital of Lehn-dorff’s) were in a state of collapse.⁶⁵ Out of the 38 German divisions that took part from

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 104, 106-107.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 117.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 118-9.

⁶³ Geyer, “Endkampf,” 37.

⁶⁴ Bessel, “The War,” 73.

⁶⁵ Bessel, “The War,” 73.

January to April 1945 in the battle for East Prussia, two-thirds were destroyed, and around 350,000 soldiers were injured, killed, or taken prisoner.⁶⁶ Inside Königsberg itself, the population on the eve of the siege was about 165,000—with around 90,000 to 130,000 civilians (Lasch figured about 110,000), 30,000-35,000 *Wehrmacht* members, 8,000 *Volkssturm* men, and around 15,000 foreign laborers. Many of them perished in the fighting, but the exact number will never be determined.

The Allies also suffered some of their largest casualties in the last months of the war, but that was primarily because the Germans continued to fight in the face of certain defeat. As Geyer points out, “because Germans fought in the face of their own destruction, Europe turned into a vast zone of death with Germans in the role of tenacious fighters, vicious murderers, and hapless victims.”⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Knopp and Brauburger, “Die Schlacht,” 16.

⁶⁷ Geyer, “Endkampf,” 38-9.

The Border Between Civilization and Barbarism

After 1933, official Soviet propagandists at first refrained from blaming the German people for fascism.¹ Following the standard Marxist class analysis, they argued that the Nazi elite and big business were responsible for Hitler's rise to power, but that German workers and peasants were potential allies of the Soviet Union. Attacks against National Socialism increased during the 1930s and focused not only on the imperialist designs of the Hitler clique, but also increasingly on the intellectual and moral corruption of the German people under the Nazis. After the Molotov-Ribbentrop Non-Aggression Pact of August 1939, however, these attacks all but disappeared from the Soviet press, to be replaced by caricatures of Anglo-American imperialists.²

After the Nazi invasion, many Soviets seemed to hold on to the old stereotypes of the Germans as poets, Protestants, and primary partners in Lenin's always-forthcoming world revolution. Ilya Ehrenburg lamented that in the first months of the war, he was horrified to see that Red Army soldiers "did not feel any real hatred for the German army," and even "felt a certain respect" for the Germans, "born of esteem for the outward signs of culture."³ Ehrenburg had heard more than a few soldiers use their Soviet internationalist education unwittingly to undermine Red Army morale by saying that it was the capitalists and landlords who had driven the soldiers into battle against the Soviets. Many believed that German soldiers must have been misled by the Nazis, and that the bulk of the rank and file only went to battle because they were afraid of getting shot.⁴ Daniil Granin, then a 22-year-old member of a hastily-constructed militia, recalled that he "didn't associate the Germans with the fascists and the soldiers who had invaded our country." He and his fellow soldiers tried to awaken the class consciousness of a German prisoner by reciting the names of history's great Germans: "Marx, Engels, Thälmann, Clara Zetkin, Liebknecht, even Beethoven." Recalling a recent showing of the 1931 film *Sniper* (in which a Tsarist soldier of the

¹ Detlev Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany: Conformity, Opposition, and Racism in Everyday Life* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1987), 28.

² Katerina Clark, "Ehrenburg and Grossman: Two Cosmopolitan Jewish Writers Reflect on Nazi Germany at War," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 10, no. 3 (Summer 2009): 613 [607-28].

³ quoted in Joshua Rubenstein, *Tangled Loyalties* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), 190.

⁴ Ilya Ehrenburg, *The War: 1941-1945* (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1964), 26.

Great War discovered that a German soldier he'd killed was a fellow steelworker), Granin offered up an enthusiastic "Workers of the world, unite!" to the prisoner, who simply laughed: "'You will all be destroyed.'"⁵

Soviet propagandists responded by recasting the war not as a struggle for communism but as a "great patriotic war" to defend the motherland against the barbarian invaders. Already by the late 1930s, Stalin had directed the rebirth of the celebration of the Great Russian nation by resuscitating the pantheon of prerevolutionary Russian military heroes (Alexander Nevsky, Minin and Pozharsky, Ivan Susanin, Peter the Great, Alexander Suvorov, Mikhail Kutuzov); after the outbreak of the war, the resurrection of Russian nationalism proceeded even more rapidly as a response to the flagging morale of the Soviet troops.⁶ At the same time, the Soviet Union's official war correspondents and propagandists responded by reviving the larger condemnations of German fascism. To many Soviet citizens in 1941, according to Anatol Goldberg, 'fascism' was "merely a dogmatic term of abuse which had been banned for nearly two years, a ban they had accepted on the grounds that 'Stalin knew best.'"⁷ Now it was time for the Soviet leadership, propagandists, and war correspondents to tell the Soviet people what fascism was really about.

By far the most influential of these propagandists was Ilya Ehrenburg, a regular columnist for the Red Army's main newspaper, *Krasnaia Zvezda* [Red Star]. During the war, Ehrenburg wrote over two thousand articles (almost 450 of them in *Krasnaia Zvezda* alone)⁸ and was read and quoted by more Red Army soldiers than any other war correspondent.⁹ Ehrenburg was an unlikely candidate for the job: he was an intellectual, a cosmopolitan (i.e. Jewish), a Parisian (Ehrenburg spent most of the time since the revolution abroad), and even an erstwhile anti-communist,¹⁰ but Stalin appreciated his passion and fire and his dedicated anti-fascism. Although he had little in common with the ordinary worker or peasant at the front, Ehrenburg managed to find words that went straight to the Russian soldier's heart. An anecdote at the time held that soldiers would rip up the old newspapers on the front to use as cigarette rolling paper, except for Ehrenburg's articles, which they preserved to read and share.¹¹ Ehrenburg was by far the most famous war-correspondent in the Soviet Union; he was also, next to Stalin, the most infamous Soviet figure in Nazi propaganda. During the war, Goebbels seized the opportunity to depict Ehrenburg as the smarmy cosmopolitan, the aggressive Judeo-Bolshevik who called for the destruction of the German people. After the war, German civilians, refugees, politicians, and historians looked to Ilya Ehrenburg's words to explain the Soviet troops' violence against German civilians in 1945.

Ehrenburg made it his goal to show the Soviet people "the true face of the fascist soldier" by revealing the barbarism of Nazi Germany. He cast the war as a contest between two worldviews and two cultural systems to determine the future course of Europe, argu-

⁵ Daniil Granin, "Prekrasnaia Uta," *Neozhidannoe utro* (Leningrad: Lenizdat, 1987), 195-7.

⁶ Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Dana, "Patriotic Plays in Soviet Russia," *Russian Review* 1, no. 1 (November 1941), 65 [65-73].

⁷ Anatol Goldberg, *Ilya Ehrenburg: Writing Politics, and the Art of Survival* (London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1984), 192.

⁸ Rubenstein, *Tangled Loyalties*, 191.

⁹ Clark, "Ehrenburg and Grossman," 608; Goldberg, *Ilya Ehrenburg*, 190.

¹⁰ Rubenstein, *Tangled Loyalties*, 189.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 193.

ing that it was a battle between civilization and barbarism and focusing on the violence and inhumanity of the Nazis, their bastardized racial theories, and their rejection of humanism and European culture.¹² Blaming the soldiers' early underestimation of their German enemy on Soviet education of the 1920s and 1930s, according to which "every Soviet schoolboy" had been taught that cultural achievement was measured "in mileage of railway lines, numbers of cars, or the existence of a technically advanced industry, the spread of education and of social hygiene,"¹³ Ehrenburg responded by redefining the terms of "civilization" based on Soviet (and cosmopolitan, European) virtues. In his essays, he argued that civilization was not measured by (German) technical or material achievement but by (Soviet) humanism and morality: he showed Soviet soldiers how Soviet victories the battlefield were due to Soviet moral superiority over the barbarism of the German people under the Nazis.¹⁴

Ehrenburg contrasted the pedantry and superficiality of the Germans with the depth of the mythical Russian soul. He derided the Germans as people who wouldn't dare "throw matches on the floor or trample the grass in a public square" back home, yet gladly razed foreign cities to the ground.¹⁵ Publishing excerpts from several captured diaries, Ehrenburg revealed the petty cruelty of the typical German in the occupied territories. Attempting to undermine the soldiers' assumptions that "culture" meant material abundance, Ehrenburg argued that German standard of living was based on both cruelty and shallowness, manifest in the German obsession with earthly possessions. The pockets of "every German soldier are an entire chancellery" of useless junk and papers, Ehrenburg revealed: letters from former lovers and distant relatives, irrelevant paperwork (one man went off to battle toting sixty-two letters from his lawyer), and even the addresses of Parisian brothels.¹⁶ The Germans soldiers came to the Soviet Union as rapacious looters and pillagers, and thought of the entire campaign as a shopping spree for their wives back home.

[T]he war is a department store: their husbands went shopping. [...] A crusade for a mop. Heroic battles for twine [...] They've burned, destroyed, devoured, dismantled, and, their luck run out, they've died for a broom.¹⁷

While the Red Army soldiers were fighting for honor and the defense of their homeland, the Germans were scrambling for "a pair of stolen boots."¹⁸

German greed went hand-in-hand with sexual depravity. Ehrenburg showed how self-satisfied Germans took advantage of all of the luxuries their positions afforded them. As one Nazi letter-writer allegedly told a friend,

Old Otto is doing splendidly. He is now a commandant [...] He arranges marriages, and even makes gifts of vodka and matches for the wedding. But in return for this he has the right of the first night. This sounds like a fairy tale...

¹² Katerina Clark, "Ehrenburg and Grossman," 607.

¹³ Ehrenburg, *The War*, 26.

¹⁴ Clark, "Ehrenburg and Grossman," 609.

¹⁵ Il'ia Erenburg, "Opravdanie nenavisti," *Voina: aprel' 1942-mart 1943* (Moscow: Voennoe Izdatel'stvo, 2002), 5-6.

¹⁶ Idem., "Kogda oni obezoruzheny," *Voina: iun' 1941-aprel' 1942* (Moscow: Ogiz, 1942), 71.

¹⁷ Idem., "Shelk i vshi," *Voina: iun' 1941-aprel' 1942*, 114-115.

¹⁸ Ibid, "Po dva arshina," 53.

Some “Otto from Saxony or Prussia,” Ehrenburg wrote, “rapes Ukrainian girls at will, for he is tsar and god in the village.”¹⁹ In the article “Gretchen,” Ehrenburg explored these contradictions between Fritz’s theories of exclusive racial supremacy and his impure sexual practices. Looking through soldiers’ wallets, he found that

in one half there’ll be naked girls and the addresses of bordellos, in the other (Fritz is accurate, he doesn’t mix them up) a photograph of a blond-haired German woman with round porcelain eyes. [...] On the surface Gretchen is a harmless, fair-haired damsel. In fact she’s a real shark....”²⁰

These Gretchens were in many ways worse than their Fritz boyfriends and brothers. German women, Ehrenburg explained, were “cowardly and selfish bitches” who would “lie down with the first comer” and now that the tables had turned, they had become “animals [*samki*] who scream because the hour of retribution is approaching.”²¹ Based on stories of German women having sexual relations with their foreign workers, Ehrenburg declared that “all of Germany has become a brothel.”²² By contrast, Ehrenburg praised “the purity of the Russian woman,” while Soviet soldiers were so modest that upon the sight of male buttocks in a photograph, they averted their eyes.²³

If the archetypical German was technologically savvy and morally depraved, then the archetypical Soviet was the dedicated worker and peaceful peasant, the virtuous defender of the foundations of European culture. In creating the Soviet hero from the German counter-example, Ehrenburg fused his cosmopolitan humanism with the goals of the communist revolution and projected those values onto the ordinary soldiers of the Red Army. Unlike the Germans who bombed and pillaged and burned entire cities to the ground, Red Army soldiers “will never kill German children,” and would never “burn down Goethe’s house in Weimar or the library of Marburg.”²⁴ In March 1944, Ehrenburg explained the origins of this Soviet virtue in “Our Humanism”:

The Russian people more sharply and fully than others have recognized the value of man [...] Foreigners call Russian literature the most humane literature [...] In songs, folk tales, and legends the nation repeated what is expressed in the slogan ‘The soul is not a neighbor—you can’t avoid it.’ Our nation was soulful and conscientious.²⁵

Soviet virtue, Ehrenburg revealed, did not originate in the dedicated study of Marxism-Leninism, loyalty to the leadership of the communist party, or the international solidarity of the working class, but in the innate goodness of the ordinary Russian.

¹⁹ Ehrenburg, “Remember the Ukraine,” [20 July 1943], reprinted in Ilya Ehrenburg, *We Will Not Forget* (Washington : Embassy of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, 1944).

²⁰ Ehrenburg, “Gretchen,” *Voyna: april’ 1942-mart 1943*, 49-50.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 52, 54.

²² *Idem.*, “Vavilon,” *Voyna: april’ 1942-mart 1943*, 32.

²³ *Idem.*, “Gretchen,” *Voyna: april’ 1942-mart 1943*, 54; Ehrenburg, “Kogda oni obezoruzheny,” *Voyna: iun’ 1941-april’ 1942*, 71.

²⁴ Ehrenburg, “The Justification of Hatred,” [Summer 1942], reprinted in *The War*, 28.

²⁵ Ehrenburg, “Nash gumanizm,” *Voyna* (Moskva: Astrel’, 2004), 589-91.

Precisely because of this great humanity of the Soviet people, Ehrenburg told the soldiers to hate the Germans. In the article "Kill," written in the fall of 1942, Ehrenburg warned the Germans that the Soviets were "remembering everything."

Now we understand the Germans are not human. Now the word "German" has become the most terrible curse. Let us not speak. Let us not be indignant. Let us kill. [...] If you do not kill a German, a German will kill you. He will carry away your family, and torture them in his damned Germany. [...] If you have killed one German, kill another. There is nothing jollier for us than German corpses.²⁶

If, in 1942, Ehrenburg incited the soldiers to kill the Germans to defend themselves and their families, by 1944, he told them to kill the Germans as payback for the crimes they had already committed. The Red Army's mission was no longer defense but retribution not only for the sake of the Soviet peoples, but for all of Europe.

Let them expect no mercy. The conscience of nations will condemn those who attempt to defend the child-murderers. Our magnanimity demands punishment suited to the crime. The Germans have ostracized themselves from the family of nations. Those who slay children are not human beings. [...] Misery and woe have cemented the brotherhood of nations, and all nations demand with one voice: Death to the Germans!²⁷ [...]

Yet even as he told the Soviet soldiers to "kill the German" and to avenge the suffering of the Soviet people, he attributed to them a sense of heroic justice that demanded no violent retribution. The Soviets were supposed to kill the Germans, but "[i]t is not of vengeance that our soldiers dream," because "[v]engeance is repayment in the same coin, a retort in the same language."²⁸ But Red Army soldiers had "no common language" with the fascists. They hated the fascists "because we love people, children, land, the trees, horses, smiles, books, the warmth of a friendly hand, because we love life."²⁹ The Soviets were "protecting Man from the fascists, his past and future, his dignity, his right to be unique, complicated, and great."³⁰ Red Army soldiers would be "hailed by all the mothers of the world" and celebrated by thinkers and artists, as "the protectors of true humanism." If anywhere a seed were to sprout, "from which in a hundred years a mighty tree" would grow, if ever a schoolboy were to become the next Shakespeare or Tolstoy, it was only because "the Red Army is defeating death, trampling fascism, killing the German sociopaths. The blood on the soldier's bayonet is the dawn of happiness, the salvation of man."³¹

The Red Army came to Germany on a sacred mission to liberate and to punish and to be the representatives of European civilization. As Ehrenburg concluded in May 1944, "Our love is too abundant to forgive this. We are the conscience of the world."³²

²⁶ Idem., "Ubei!" *Krasnaia Zvezda*, October 12, 1942.

²⁷ Ehrenburg, "Army of Life," [May 1944] reprinted in *We Will Not Forget*, 54.

²⁸ Idem., "The Justification of Hatred," Summer 1942, cited in *The War*, 28.

²⁹ Ehrenburg, "O nenavisti," *Voina (iun' 1941-aprel' 1942)*, 182.

³⁰ Idem., "Nash gumanizm," 590.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 591.

³² Ehrenburg, "Army of Life," [May 1944] in *We Will Not Forget*, 54.

* * *

The archetypal evil German of the Soviet press gave poignant expression to the corruption of the Nazi state and its citizens, but these descriptions did little to explain the *origins* of Germany's fall from grace. Before the war, the Soviet press created a composite evil Nazi to play the part of barbarian but focused on the recent capitalist-imperialist origins of German fascism to condemn big business monopolies and the "Hitler clique." After 1941, Ehrenburg and others increasingly condemned all Germans to that role but still maintained that the slide to barbarism had been a recent one. But over the course of the war, the earlier distinction between "good" German high culture (Heine, Goethe, Marx) and Nazi barbarism (Hitler, Goering, Goebbels) became flattened as the war correspondents focused on showing the penetration of Nazi ideology—bastardized racial theory, greed, violence, moral depravity—into the lives of ordinary German people.

As the Soviet troops approached the borders of Germany in the summer of 1944, more articles appeared in the press about the deeper historical origins of Nazism, and war correspondents and propagandists began to supplement the standard economic explanation for the rise of fascism with investigations of the *longue durée* of the Nazi rise to power. How was it, they asked, that a country with a developed working class and a strong communist movement could become so suddenly and spontaneously anti-Bolshevik? How could a country with such advanced cultural development descend into a culture built on violence?³³

The Soviet propagandists and war correspondents found the answer by looking into the ancient roots of the state of Prussia. Combining some long-standing European stereotypes about Prussian militarism with Nazi propagandists' own insistence on Prussia's special mission in the East, the Soviet press created an imagery of East Prussia that looked surprisingly like the Nazis' own self-image, with the moral values reversed. Given the rise of Great Russian nationalism in the late 1930s, attacks against the Prussian tradition might not seem surprising, yet in the Soviet context, the marriage of the state of Prussia to the darkest chapters of German history was far from pre-ordained. Indeed, it was originally the Western Allies (above all, the British) and not the Soviets who pointed their finger at Prussia when identifying the roots of National Socialism.³⁴ Likewise, in their depiction of the German enemy, the great war propagandists, even Ehrenburg, portrayed Nazi Germany as a fallen civilization, but maintained that the slide to barbarism had been a recent one. Ehrenburg hated "the Germans," but refused to link the entirety of Germany's cultural tradition with Nazism. The Nazis, he explained,

³³ Clark, "Ehrenburg and Grossman," 608.

³⁴ Anti-Prussian sentiment had long found its strongest formulation in Britain ever since Prussia had superceded France as the UK's "Enemy Number 1" in the nineteenth century. After 1945, however, anti-Prussia rhetoric soon waned in the Allied press. By 1947, British and American newspapers paid very little attention to the symbolic dismantling of the Prussian state; the *New York Times* and *Times of London* gave it only a minor mention, and the other major newspapers failed to cover it at all. But anti-Prussia discourse grew dramatically in the same period in the Soviet Union, used both as justification for the annexation of East Prussia and a tool in the developing Cold War (by claiming that *West* Germany had inherited the dangerous genealogy of the Prussian state). See T.C.W. Blanning, "The Death and Transfiguration of Prussia," *The Historical Journal* 29, no. 2 (1986), 433-459.

have no cultural inheritance. They took from the past only the technology, which they've turned to the destruction of people. They took from the past only superstitions, instruments of torture, and the darkness of the plague years. What connection is there between a Hitlerite vagabond and Goethe? Between an SS man and Schiller? Between the apoplectic *Führer* and Kant? They strangled the cultural heritage in 1933.³⁵

But as the Red Army neared the borders of Germany, anti-Prussian rhetoric began to appear with increasing frequency in the press, and East Prussia came to stand for Prussia as a whole. The war correspondents prepared the troops for their mission by depicting East Prussia as one of the most fascist parts of Germany; to invade East Prussia meant to enter "the lair of the fascist beast." As P.A. Pirogov, a veteran of the East Prussian campaign, noted, "as the front drew closer to the borders of Germany, the propaganda of hate not only of the German army, not only of the German people, but even of the German land itself took on a more and more monstrous character."³⁶ Ehrenburg explained in his later memoirs how East Prussia's peculiar history had made it particularly susceptible to fascism by pointing out that "for a very long time East Prussia has been regarded as the most reactionary part of Germany." The lack of industry in the region meant that there were few progressive forces; instead, the landowners and well-to-do peasants, suspicious of any liberal measures, voted for Hindenburg "and later shouted 'Heil Hitler!'"³⁷

The work of one historian, Nikolai Pavlovich Gratsianskii, in particular, became central to the Soviet articulation of the myth of East Prussia's origins. The most complete expression of his position came immediately after the war, in the form of a September 1945 lecture, "Königsberg—Stronghold of German Aggression" in the main hall of Moscow's All-Union Lecture Bureau (and later published and distributed widely by the *Pravda* publishing house).³⁸ Gratsianskii narrates the entire course of Königsberg history as a singular drive to the East to oppress the Slavic and Baltic peoples, to live off their bounty, and to fight against the forces of progress. Gratsianskii explained how the territory had been raided by the Teutonic Knights in the thirteenth century, how the knights had conquered and subjugated the ancestral (non-German) Prussian population, and how they had raped and pillaged the peaceful Poles and Lithuanians from their newly-formed base in Königsberg. The Hohen-

³⁵ Ehrenburg, "Ikh ispravil mogila," *Voina: aprel' 1942-mart 1943*, 11.

³⁶ P.A. Pirogov, "Vospominanii o sluzhbe v armii i o begstve..." manuscript, HIA, Nicolaevsky, box 249-9, Series 193, p. 9.

³⁷ Ehrenburg, *The War*, 164.

³⁸ N. P. Gratsianskii, *Königsberg: Stenogramma publichnoi lektzii* (Moscow: All-Union Lecture Bureau of the Committee for Higher Education Affairs of the People's Commissariat of the USSR, 1945). Lecture read 19 September 1945 in the All-Union Lecture Bureau hall in Moscow. Gratsianskii's lecture was first and clearest articulation of the developing myth of Prussia in the Soviet Union in the immediate postwar period. The lecture was delivered one month after the conclusion of the Potsdam Conference, during which Königsberg and the northern third of East Prussia were ceded to the Soviet Union, pending final confirmation of the region's status in a future peace treaty (which never materialized). Later development of the myth came from another Moscow historian, Arkadii Samsonovich Erusalimskii, who delivered a similarly prominent lecture in February 1947, after the incorporation of East Prussia to the USSR as Kaliningrad Oblast and immediately following the formal abolition of the Prussian state. See A. S. Erusalimskii, *Likvidatsiia prusskogo gosudarstva: Stenogramma publichnoi lektzii* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo "Pravda," 1947).

zollerns transformed the Teutonic Knights into estate owners (“pig-headed and greedy Prussian Junkers,”), and these new Junkers became the eternal “bearers of Prussianness,” and carried with them “all of the darkest sides of German history.” Gratsianskii’s history of East Prussia is a teleological account of the deep cultural and historical roots of fascism. By looking at the Teutonic origins of Königsberg, Gratsianskii shows how the essence of fascism was present already in the thirteenth century and was transmitted through blood and soil directly from Königsberg to Hitler.³⁹

Interestingly, just as Prussia became an aggressive force against national self-determination in Gratsianskii’s account, Imperial Russia shone as a beacon of peace and stability. Gratsianskii’s argument has a lot in common with contemporary Western European and American wartime scholarship on Prussia,⁴⁰ but whereas the British and French had originally stereotyped both Prussia *and* pre-revolutionary Russia as authoritarian, expansionist, and backward, Gratsianskii depicted Prussia’s imperial designs and *Realpolitik* in a kind of a-historical vacuum. Unlike the Allies, Gratsianskii depicted the history of Prussia in terms of a singular obsession with the East: imperial expansion and racism against the peaceful Slavs was instilled by the Teutonic Knights and perpetuated by their Junker descendants and in the institution of the Prussian state.

In the last months of the war, Prussia was transformed from being an exemplar of fascism to being its progenitor. The Soviet myth of East Prussia asserted that East Prussia was the birthplace and incubator of fascism, that the Teutonic raids were an early precedent for fascist crimes, and that Königsberg and East Prussia, as much as Berlin, were the bearers of the legacy of Prussianness as a whole. On the eve of the Red Army’s first incursion into Germany, it was Königsberg, as much as Berlin, that stood for the crimes of fascism.

³⁹ N. P. Gratsianskii, *Kenigsberg*.

⁴⁰ Gratsianskii’s argument may seem to be purely propagandistic, but except for the additional focus on anti-Slavic racism, the formulation actually has a lot in common with the interpretation of the prominent German-American historian Hans Rosenberg. It is probable that Gratsianskii, who did speak French, English, and German, read Rosenberg’s similarly-themed articles on the Junkers in the 1943-1944 *American Historical Review*, which became some of the founding texts of the *Sonderweg* thesis in postwar German historiography. See Hans Rosenberg, “The Rise of the Junkers in Brandenburg-Prussia: 1410-1653: Part I,” *The American Historical Review* 49, no. 1 (October 1943), 1-22; Rosenberg, “The Rise of the Junkers in Brandenburg-Prussia: 1410-1563: Part II,” *The American Historical Review* 49, no. 2 (January 1944), 228-242.

Sacred Revenge

“My previous happy mood is gone,” wrote Yuri Uspenskii, a Soviet officer in the 39th Guard Army, just before he first entered East Prussia in January 1945.

Sarina is near death, and my friends aren't writing. The war has been raging for more than three years, millions of people have died, and millions must suffer agonizing torment. Mother is dead, I was not with her, haven't seen her and wrote her very little, but she wrote me more often. Father, whom I've hardly seen, has fallen. My sister doesn't write what's going on with her. My grandmother and aunt are living terribly, and I am not doing anything to help them.¹

In the final months before the invasion, Red Army soldiers saw previews of what awaited them in East Prussia. Frontline newspapers wrote about the liberation of the first Nazi concentration camps, especially Majdanek, and shared stories of the horrors of German slavery from forced laborers who had fled in the *Wehrmacht's* retreat.² In Vilnius, Uspenskii saw the newsreels of liberated civilians in Belgrade and was struck by the scene: Gaunt faces smiling back at Red Army tanks, emaciated bodies who were grateful to be alive but still felt the grip of death around them. Uspenskii felt a righteous anger well inside of him, and he asked himself how Soviet soldiers could possibly respond to the cruelty and suffering that the Nazis had brought into the world. “What great responsibility must the fomenters of this war, Hitler and his consorts, bear?”

What kind of terrible punishment must they receive! It is a crime to love war and to exalt it in song. No, it is already a crime even to say a good word about

¹ Peter Gosztony, ed. [Jurij Uspenskij], “Die Tagebuchaufzeichnungen eines russischen Artillerieoffiziers in Deutschland im Frühjahr 1945,” *Wehrwissenschaftliche Rundschau: Zeitschrift für die europäische Sicherheit*, 9 (September 1969), 514 [12 January 1945, near Vilnius]. Uspenskii's diary was the first published document to describe the violence against civilians in East Prussia from a Red Army soldier's perspective.

² Konstantin Simonov, “Lager' unichtozheniia,” *Krasnaia Zvezda*, 10-11 August 1944; “O čëm govorit liublinskii lager' unichtozheniia,” *Krasnaia Zvezda*, 12 August 1944; Lieutenant-Colonel G. Ivashchenko, “Vstrecha na frontovoi doroge,” *Krasnaia Zvezda*, 5 October 1944.

war. No utterance of a word, no note of music, not a single brushstroke of color should be allowed for the glorification of war!³

Uspenskii felt the righteous desire to avenge the suffering the Nazis caused to his family, his homeland, and all of the victims scattered across the continent. But how would the Soviets, as self-proclaimed defenders of European civilization, deliver a punishment fitting to the crime? As the Red Army marched to the borders of East Prussia, the Soviet regime and the press called upon soldiers to avenge themselves, just as Uspenskii had in his diary. The newspaper of the Third Belorussian Front, *Krasnoarmeiskaia Pravda*, and the front newspapers of the individual armies, including *Boevaia trevoga* (11th Guards Army), *Unichtozhim vraga* (5th Army) and *Stalinskii udar* (28th Army) all published countless reports of the atrocities of the *Wehrmacht* on Soviet territory to prepare soldiers to carry out this “sacred revenge.” On 16 October 1944, the eve of the first invasion into East Prussia, *Krasnoarmeiskaia Pravda* issued the final call to arms:

Remember, soldier! There in Germany the German is hiding, the one who murdered your child, raped your wives, brides, and sisters, the one who shot your mother and father, the one who burned down your hearth. Go with unquenchable hatred for the enemy! Your sacred duty is, for the sake of virtue and in the name of the memory of those murdered by the fascist criminals, to go into the lair of the beast and punish the fascist criminals. The blood of our comrades fallen in battle, the agony of the murdered, the groans of those buried alive, the unquenchable tears of mothers call you to unsparing revenge.

A few days later, the Red Army crossed into East Prussia—into Germany for the first time. The time had come for Red Army soldiers to destroy in the name of peace all those who glorified the war.

For Red Army soldiers, this act of crossing the border into Germany became a spiritual experience. Anatolii Genatulin’s novelized memoir, *Vot konchitsia voina* [*The War is Over*], captures the horror and the euphoria of that moment, as well as the political significance that soldiers attached to it. The hero of the story, the soldier Talgat Gainullin, made his first brief crossing of the border near the East Prussian town of Goldap in October 1944. Fighting their way westward, through the “streams of people’s blood,” the destruction of their homeland, Gainullin described the “ashes of villages, the smoky ruins of cities [...] soldiers’ graves and unburied human bones” that had accompanied their march toward Germany. Gainullin remembered his excitement when the troops neared the border to East Prussia, because they “already grew to believe that the war would soon end.” Soldiers wrote letters to their mothers, wives, and girlfriends with “words of life, words of hope: ‘the war is over...’” They could not have imagined then that seven more months of battle still lay before them.⁴

Others attached similarly powerful meaning the act of crossing into Germany. Nikolai Inozemtsev, a commander of a reconnaissance team (and later an important Kremlin economist and political figure), was one of the first to cross the border on a bright, sunny morning in January 1945. He and his fellow scouts stopped the car, arranged themselves in a line, and shot a salvo into the air: “That alone gave wings to the advancing army, causing

³ Uspenskij, “Tagebuchaufzeichnungen,” 514 [13 January 1945].

⁴ Anatolii Genatulin, *Vot konchitsia voina. Povesti i rasskazy* (Moscow: Pravda, 1988), 111.

us to forget about all of our exhaustion and troubles.”⁵ When Ehrenburg first entered East Prussia in February 1945, the thought of Soviet troops moving into the heart of Germany made his “head swim.” He had written so much about that day when the Nazis were marching on the Volga, but now he was “driving along a good smooth road bordered by lime-trees; I saw an old castle, a town hall, shops with German signboards, and could hardly believe it: was it possible that we were in Germany?” For others, penetrating the border brought a more visceral elation. Lev Kopelev, the later Soviet dissident who served as a propagandist and German interpreter during the war, decided to celebrate the occasion “in an appropriate fashion” by urinating to mark the territory. “It seemed humorous to us,” he remembered, “standing in a row by a ditch, solemnizing our entry onto enemy soil.”⁶



Soldiers from the Third Belorussian Front pose at the East Prussian border.⁷

⁵ Nikolai Inozemtsev, *Frontovoi Dnevnik* (Moscow: Nauka, 2005), 208 [sometime after 14 January].

⁶ Kopelev, *No Jail for Thought*, ed. and trans. Anthony Austin (London: Secker and Warburg, 1977), 37.

⁷ Photographer unknown,

<http://photochronograph.ru/2013/05/01/osvobozhdenie-kenigsberga-i-vostochnoj-prussii/>, (accessed 14 August 2013).

It was the first experience outside the Soviet Union for most of these soldiers, and the landscape seemed wild and exotic. The poet David Samoilov could already feel the creeping “German influence” within a few kilometers of the border: “The signs in the stores, the German -sounding ‘r’ of the Poznan Poles, names, the manner of saying ‘ja’ instead of ‘tak.’”⁸ Uspenskii noted how he and his men “observed the East Prussian landscape” with wonder in the first days of the invasion: “Streets lined with trees, villages with tile roof houses, fields fenced with barbed wire to protect against cattle [...]”⁹ Others (especially in the later canonical Soviet memoirs that emerged during the Brezhnev era), described East Prussia as orderly but sinister, dark, and grey. Passing through Allenstein for the first time, Genatulin’s hero Gainullin noted that “it was the first European, or rather, first German city in my life.” Allenstein “didn’t look like any towns” that Gainullin had seen before, such as Leningrad or Belostok:

It was a dark, high-rise city with solid walls of grim grey buildings and narrow cobblestone streets. The houses were like cliffs, or rather, they seemed to have been carved out of dark, massive cliffs not so much for housing, but for decorating the city (turrets, cornices, balconies, columns, sculptures, gargoyles).¹⁰

These soldiers emphasized the seemingly contradictory dual nature of East Prussia in the Soviet imaginary: a landscape that seemed to be modern, geometrical, and rational at the same time as it was oppressively dense, dark, and medieval. More than the German landscape in general, East Prussia, in particular, seemed to confirm the stories of Nazi-Teutonic oppression. In late April 1945, Inozemtsev wrote to his father that Stettin, deeper into Germany, was much more “picturesque and joyful” than East Prussia: “there everything is too grey, stern, and unwelcoming.”¹¹

Commentators at the time, however, focused more on the visible wealth of East Prussia, sharing Uspenskii’s thought that “Finally we’ve come to a wealthy land!”¹² Within a few kilometers of the border, Inozemtsev’s scouts indulged in their first luxuries. Finding a large store of food hidden in the woods (“canned food of all kinds, cheese, biscuits, sausage, beer—in general, anything you could ask for”), the men laughed heartily: “Prussia has been waiting for us, it’s very hospitable, there’s nothing to complain about.” They ate and drank their fill of French champagne, Danish cheese, Bulgarian preserves, and Dutch chocolate.¹³ But for many of the soldiers, indulging in these luxuries only added to their frustration: if the Germans had it so good already, why did they need to invade the Soviet Union? As one Russian sentry told the American journalist Alexander Werth in Berlin: “They lived well, the parasites. Great big farms in East Prussia, and pretty posh houses in the towns that hadn’t been burned out or bombed to hell. And look at these datchas here! Why did these people who were living so well have to invade us?”¹⁴

⁸ David Samoilov [David Samoilovich Kaufman], *Podennye zapisi*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Vremia, 2002), 209 [7 February 1945].

⁹ Uspenskij, “Tagebuchaufzeichnungen,” 517 [23 January 1945, near Insterburg].

¹⁰ Genatulin, *Vot konchitsia voina*, 117.

¹¹ Letter from Inozemtsev to Nikolai Inozemtsev (his father), 27 April 1945, reprinted in *Frontovoi Dnevnik*, 353.

¹² Uspenskij, “Tagebuchaufzeichnungen,” 518 [23 January 1945].

¹³ Inozemtsev, *Frontovoi Dnevnik*, 208 [after 14 January, 1945].

¹⁴ Alexander Werth, *Russia at War* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1964), 983.

East Prussia had become a symbol in Soviet propaganda of fascism and Prussian militarism; it was also the first place for the troops to express their rage and frustration about the previous four years of war. In October 1944, *Krasnaia Zvezda* announced that East Prussia was the “homestead of the German military clique” and the “most important foothold of Hitler’s fascism,”¹⁵ and in February 1945, a report in *Izvestiia* celebrated its downfall. It was “so pleasant to see the sight of a dead Prussian in his own country”:

The war has come back into the country that has brought it about. Now it will be tight for the dead Prussians squeezed in the German trenches: One corpse goes cold on top of the other. Black snow. Ash. [...] In our hearts, the June Sunday in 1941, the burning of Minsk, the children’s blood in the dusty streets. German bombs on the masses of refugees. Now we have driven the war that the Germans started back into their own lair.¹⁶

Despite the *Wehrmacht*’s rapid retreat, the Red Army still had to fight heavy battles in individual towns and villages, and mine explosions, arson, and machine gun fire from street fights left many of East Prussia’s settlements in ruins. Uspenskii first crossed into East Prussia at the border town of Eydtkuhnen to find “a half-destroyed little town” full of soldiers and cargo trucks; nearby Stallupönen was also completely destroyed. Later in Gumbinnen, a similar picture, but Uspenskii also heard rumors “that it was our soldiers who set the fires.”¹⁷ After the *Wehrmacht*’s retreat from around Heiligenbeil, as Pomerants later recalled, “then the fires started.”

The Slavs were shooting with their machine guns at the crystal china that wasn’t possible to stuff into their bags. And then they set everything on fire. It wasn’t directed against the Germans—there were no Germans in the city. There were some Soviet rear units who were stuffing their bags with trophies. And so the soldiers’ hatred turned against those who were profiting from the war. Destroy everything. The fires were spreading so fast that the rear units were forced to move from one place to another several times. The flames bursting out of control, senselessly and ruthlessly. If you think about it, it said a great deal, but I did not want to think about it.¹⁸

Kopelev first ventured into East Prussia with a band of German POW graduates from his antifascist reeducation school to act as “Commissars of Panic,” posing as German soldiers and spreading rumors about the Soviet advance. In Gross Koslau and Klein Koslau, some of the first villages they encountered, the houses were burning. When Kopelev asked whether there had been a battle or whether the Germans had mined the town, the soldiers looked confused and said that they had just done it themselves as a matter of course.¹⁹

¹⁵ *Krasnaia Zvezda*, 24 October 1944.

¹⁶ *Izvestiia*, 1 February 1945. This quote from *Izvestiia* uses “German” and “Prussian” interchangeably. By Spring 1945, Prussia had already been established as particularly fascist, and East Prussia, due in part to its unfortunate eponymy, became identified with Prussia as a whole. But in the final months of the war, Prussians, were just an exceptionally fascist type of German, and Germany remained the enemy to defeat.

¹⁷ Uspenskij, “Tagebuchaufzeichnungen,” 517 [23 January 1945].

¹⁸ Pomerants, *Zapiski gadkogo utenka* (Moscow: Moskovskii Rabochii, 1998), 197.

¹⁹ Kopelev, *No Jail*, 37.

Evgenii Plimak, a young sergeant major and translator, also recalled that the soldiers set the towns on fire without receiving any direct orders, only the shared conviction that now the German cities should burn in retribution.²⁰ Uspenskii wrote how one could see increasingly “destroyed German trucks and the corpses of German soldiers” as his troops passed through the cities; the unending columns of German POWs and captured machinery created an “ominous” picture for the Germans, but for the Red Army soldiers it was “magnificent.” “That is the payback for everything that the Germans have done to us. Now its cities will be destroyed, and its people are experiencing what that means: war!”²¹ Noting how several houses had been set fire by the soldiers, Uspenskii, the diarist who had called for a punishment fitting for the crime, was reminded of the old Russian saying: “What goes around, comes around! The Germans did it in 1941 and 1942, and in 1945 the echo is coming back.”²²

While many of the soldiers were taking revenge by destroying German cities and property, they also took the opportunity to collect as many goods as they could to send back to their families at home. Shipping packages of trophies home became official policy on 26 December 1944, just weeks before the invasion of East Prussia. Soldiers were allowed to collect up to five kilograms of goods per month, officers ten kilograms, and generals sixteen, which in effect served as unofficial permission to loot.²³ Lev Polonskii remembered that for some soldiers, the collection of trophies became an obsession. For most of the war, Polonskii explained, material goods had lost their meaning for most soldiers, who were just happy to stay alive. But after years of asceticism on the front, they ignored the warnings of the newspapers and political commissars not to be diverted by the riches of the West; both officers and regular soldiers eager to explore, as the historian Norman Naimark writes, “the strange and delicious world of bourgeois decadence.”²⁴

While Kopelev, the idealist and committed humanist, sunk into despair seeing the wasteful arson and destruction, his comrade Aleksandr Beliaev, ever practical, recognized the opportunity and began issuing commands and entering the most prosperous-looking homes to see what could be collected—a tapestry from a burning house, a mahogany grandfather clock, a piano, and all of the bed linens that could be carried.²⁵ Rostislav Zhidkov, another soldier who fought around Königsberg, remembered that food was a more valuable prize than material goods, but he did manage to collect some memorable, if impractical, trophies, including a few paintings, a black wooden table, an armchair, and some champagne. But his efforts mostly went to waste: in the battles around Königsberg, the pic-

²⁰ Evgenii Plimak, *Na voine i posle voini. Zapiski veterana* (Moscow: Ves' Mir, 2005), 35.

²¹ Uspenskii, “Tagebuchaufzeichnungen,” 517-18 [around 23 January 1945].

²² *Ibid.*, 519.

²³ Prikaz 281, no. 0409, 26 December 1944, reprinted in *Russkii arkhiv: Velikaia Otechestvennaia: Prikazy Narodnogo komissara oborony SSSR (1943-1945 gg)*, vol. 13 (2-3), (Moscow: Terra, 1997), 344-7.

²⁴ Lev Markovich Polonskii, interview by Grigorii Koifman, http://www.iremember.ru/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=430&Itemid=22, published 21 January 2007 (accessed 13 August 2013); Norman Naimark, *The Russians in Germany: a History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945-1949* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1995), 69.

²⁵ Kopelev, *No Jail*, 39.

tures caught fire, leaving only the frames, and the furniture ended up destroyed in the battle.²⁶

Others were less zealous. Polonskii himself claimed only to have taken a few watches and a couple of cameras; at one train station, he was even offered free transport of a whole wagon's worth of goods by a sympathetic officer, but he turned it down, not out of modesty or morality, he explained, but because had no home to send anything to: the Germans had destroyed his house, and his father, mother, and brother were all engaged elsewhere in the war.²⁷ After a friend asked Inozemtsev whether he would send something home, Inozemtsev recalled the exchange in his diary: "Remember, how I always had bad luck, when I dressed in all new clothes and especially in captured ones? It seems to me now somehow, that it's better not to try to send anything, or else it'll end poorly." His friend tried to talk him out of the nonsense, but Inozemtsev refused.²⁸ Another soldier, Vladimir Spindler, had not bothered to collect any goods to ship, and so his scouts took the initiative to send various items to his home address on his behalf. But their efforts to help were in vain: months later, his mother wrote, "What is this stuff you sent me? First of all, the shoes are size 38, and no one here wears those. I thought there might be something valuable, but there wasn't..."²⁹

In the burning villages of Gross Koslau and Klein Koslau, a moustached soldier approached Kopelev, with "a kind of indolent bitterness" and said, "'The word is: 'This is Germany. So smash, burn, and have your revenge.' But where do we spend the night afterward? Where do we put the wounded?'" Another soldier lamented, "'All that stuff going to waste. Back home, where I come from, everyone's naked and barefoot these days. And here we are, burning without rhyme or reason.'"³⁰ Grigorii Pomerants, then an infantryman and later a well-known Soviet philosopher and cultural theorist, recalled a junior-lieutenant Tovmasian, an old communist "who preserved some of the rigorism of the first years of the revolution": he was the "only righteous one among his command" and left Germany the same way he came: in a motor car, with only the possessions he had brought with him. The rest of the officers, corrupted by the promise of material gain, "dragged wagons of booty" behind them. The commander of his division took five or six trucks worth of cameras and various trifles, and a few wagons of furniture.³¹

Despite all of these signs of abundance in East Prussia, to the soldiers who crossed the border, the province seemed ominously empty and devoid of life. By early March, the First Belorussian Front reported that most settlements they had crossed on their march were empty, with only small numbers of inhabitants, "mainly the elderly, children, and

²⁶ Rostislav Ivanovich Zhidkov, interview by Artem Drabkin, <http://iremember.ru/gmch-katiushi/zhidkov-rostislav-ivanovich.html>, published 22 July 2006 (accessed 13 August 2013).

²⁷ Polonskii interview.

²⁸ Inozemtsev, *Frontovoi Dnevnik*, 211.

²⁹ Vladimir Mikhailovich Spindler, interview by Bair Irincheev, http://www.iremember.ru/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=34&Itemid=2, published 13 July 2006 (accessed 13 August 2013).

³⁰ Kopelev, *No Jail*, 37.

³¹ Pomerants, *Zapiski*, 95.

women."³² The Germans living near the borders had fled before the invasion, leaving their houses and most of the belongings left behind, wandering herds of abandoned livestock, hungry cows moaning to be milked. Isaak Kobylanskii, a veteran of both the Battle of Stalingrad and the Siege of Königsberg, remembered that besides finding a few dozen unkempt POWs calling out greetings in French, all of the villages on his initial drive through the province were empty. He remembered seeing only one German civilian in those first weeks, an old invalid who told him the woods where they were standing had once been the hunting grounds of Herman Göring.³³

The first evidence of Germans that many Red Army soldiers remembered encountering in East Prussia were corpses. In Wehlau, Uspenskii noted how "Everywhere smoke and the corpses of Germans. On the street one sees many abandoned German guns and dead bodies in the gutter."³⁴ Genatulin's hero recalled passing by long columns of German soldiers' remains, but after years on the front, "They were already a familiar sight—I was indifferent to them."³⁵ The first German Pomerants saw in October 1944 was the body of a teenage girl, naked and strewn atop of trash heap. He was moved by the sight, but at the time "didn't begin to think and try to figure out who had done it: them (the source of universal evil) or us?"³⁶

When Red Army soldiers finally came in contact with large numbers of civilians during their advance, they carried out their revenge, or, as Ehrenburg had put it, the "punishment suited to the crime." It is impossible to determine the total number of German women raped by Soviet soldiers in the last days of the war and the first months of occupation. The figures cited by different scholars vary from 20,000 to one million, with a conservative estimate of around 100,000 different women having been raped in Berlin (some more than once), and up to 1.9 million German women in all of Germany.³⁷ East Prussia, as the first German territory the soldiers entered and a place where so many of these refugees were intercepted during their flight, suffered some of the worst of the violence. In many villages, Soviet troops raped every female between the ages of 12 and 80 before looting and burning villages to the ground; a village captured on 26 February 1945, for example, was systematically plundered and virtually all the women were raped, and "the screams of help from the tortured could be heard day and night." Twenty-five to thirty women were left pregnant, and around one hundred contracted a venereal disease.³⁸

An NKVD report from March 1945 noted cases of mass rape and suicide in the Baltic seaside town of Cranz. One resident, Wilhelm Schedereiter [Russ. *Shedereiter*] explained during filtration that on the night of 12 February, "several soldiers raided his apartment and began to rape all of the women, little girls, and old women. His daughter, Getrude, who was raped multiple times, said that the Germans who have fallen behind Red Army lines expect famine, epidemics, and NKVD repression soon to come." Another resident, Ernst Horling [Russ. *Khorling*] reported that on 8 February, his wife was raped by a group of Red

³² GARF 9401.2.93.335, 8 March 1945.

³³ Isaak Kobylanskii, *Priamoi navodkoi po vragu* (Moscow: Iauza, Eksmo, 2005), 188.

³⁴ Uspenskij, "Tagebuchaufzeichnungen," 519.

³⁵ Genatulin, *Vot konchitsia voina*, 117.

³⁶ Pomerants, *Zapisi*, 188-9.

³⁷ Atina Grossman, "Berlin 1945: War and Rape 'Liberators Take Liberties,'" *October* 72 (Spring 1995), 42-63.

³⁸ Naimark, *The Russians*, 74.

Army soldiers and officers. He claimed that “previously he had not believed the German propaganda, but that the Red Army soldiers’ treatment of the German population had proven it right.”³⁹

In the village of Schpaleiten [Russ. *Shpaleiten*], NKVD soldiers of the 43rd Army collected reports from several German women who had been raped repeatedly by soldiers. One of them, Emma Korn, reported the following:

Before their retreat, the German Army command recommended that we evacuate to Königsberg, explaining that the “Red Asiatics” would carry out unimaginable atrocities against the German population. According to the advice of German soldiers, [however], we did not evacuate and stayed in the village of Shpaleiten. On February 3rd of this year, the advance units of the Red Army came into our village, the soldiers broke into our basement and, pointing their weapons at us, ordered me and two other women to go into the courtyard. In the yard, twelve soldiers took turns raping me, and the other soldiers did the same with my roommates. That same night, six drunken soldiers broke into the basement and raped us in front of the children. On February 5th, three soldiers came, and on February 6th, 8 drunken soldiers, who also raped and beat us. Influenced by the German propaganda that the Red Army would humiliate the Germans [*izdevaetsia nad nemtsami*] and seeing it actually come true [*i uvidev deistvitel’noe izdevatel’stvo nad nami*], we decided to end our lives by committing suicide, and so on February 8th we slashed the veins on ours and our children’s right hands...⁴⁰

Jonas Wilkas, a Nazi party member in Cranz, claimed that a “significant proportion” of the German population did not believe the German propaganda about Red Army atrocities, but now a large number of them had decided to kill themselves rather than suffer the wrath. From 18 to 19 February alone, 18 cases of suicide were reported.⁴¹ Some of the arrested reported rumors among the Germans that the women were being collected in order to be sterilized—a mirror of Nazi policies reflected onto the invading enemy.⁴²

One of the most famous and chilling portrayals of revenge comes from Alexander Solzhenitsyn, who immortalized the orgy of violence in his poem *Prussian Nights*.

Zweiundzwanzig, Höringstrasse
 It’s not been burned, just looted, rifled.
 A moaning, by the walls half muffled:
 The mother’s wounded, still alive.
 The little daughter’s on the mattress,
 Dead. How many have been on it
 A platoon, a company perhaps?
 Reduced to the simple words:
 DO NOT FORGET! DO NOT FORGIVE!
 BLOOD FOR BLOOD and tooth for tooth!

³⁹ GARF 9401.2.94.87, 11(14?) March 1945.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

A girl's been turned into a woman.
A woman turned into a corpse.⁴³

Many other former soldiers recalled bedside encounters with women who had been attacked; Pomerants recalled entering an apartment in the town of Forst and finding an elderly woman lying in bed.

"Are you sick?" "Yes," she says, "your soldiers, seven of them, raped me and then shoved a bottle up there, so now it hurts to walk." She said this matter-of-factly [*bezzlobno*]. It seemed that she was more surprised than offended by what had happened. She was around 60 years old.⁴⁴

In another house, Kopelev found a woman with a fur hat, covered with blankets and quilts. Her eyes were closed and she moaned hoarsely. He raised the covers and found blood on the sheets—she had been stabbed in the breast and the stomach with a makeshift dagger, "the kind our men make from the Plexiglas off of downed aircraft." Kopelev's partner Beliaev entered the room, took one look and said, "'Let's go. Nothing worthwhile here.'"⁴⁵

The scare propaganda of Goebbels about Ehrenburg's German blondes seemed to have become a reality. This irony was entirely lost on the soldiers; after a week of witnessing the destruction in East Prussia, Samoilov wrote in his diary that "Hitler managed to convince Germany that the arrival of the Russians would bring about their complete destruction. I must say, our soldiers are not trying to counter that conviction."⁴⁶ In February 1945, Inozemtsev wrote his father that "East Prussia [...] will never forget 1945—the year of the invasion by the Russian Army, the army of avengers!"⁴⁷

During the Cold War, many Western scholars (particularly in West Germany) focused on the ideological functions of Ehrenburg's 'propaganda of hate' to explain Red Army violence against German civilians. These explanations combined the totalizing features of "Bolshevik ideology" with Ehrenburg's propaganda of hatred to argue that the violence was incited from above, thus pinning responsibility on Red Army commanders, on

⁴³ A. Solzhenitsyn, *Prusskie Nochi* (Paris: YMCA Press, 1974), 25; translation adapted in part from Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *Prussian Nights*, trans. Robert Conquest (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1977), 7.

⁴⁴ Pomerants, *Zapiski*, 198.

⁴⁵ Kopelev, *No Jail*, 41.

⁴⁶ Samoilov, *Podennye zapisi*, vol. 1, 210 [10 February 1945].

⁴⁷ Letter from Nikolai Inozemtsev to Nikolai Inozemtsev (his father), 8 February 1945, reprinted in Inozemtsev, *Frontovoi Dnevnik*, 349.

Stalin, and ultimately on corrupted “Bolshevik ideology.”⁴⁸ By arguing that the excesses were actually central to military policy, they sought to discredit the communist project and the Soviet Union’s liberation mission in the war. Yet despite Ehrenburg’s calls to “kill the Germans,” official Soviet policy toward the troops’ behavior varied according to division and command, and there seems to be no high-level directive instructing the troops to terrorize civilians. There is little evidence that Soviet commanders purposely used violence in East Prussia as an example for the rest of Germany to surrender, and Soviet officers at the time were surprised by the intensity of the terror following the invasion.⁴⁹

Susan Brownmiller argues that armies of liberation often have a different attitude toward local women than armies of conquest (and subsequently show them more respect), which helps explain why Soviet soldiers only engaged in sporadic rape against Polish or Bulgarian women but widespread rape against Germans. But although rape was a generally a less common feature in Slavic-speaking countries (assuming either a rhetoric of liberation, pan-Slavic brotherhood, or merely the morality of mutual intelligibility), there were also reports of rape in Serbian Yugoslavia and Poland, countries allied with the Soviet Union. Shortly after the end of the war, the new Polish authorities in a formerly East Prussian area reported “mass incidents” that were causing the new Polish settlers and their families to go back to their former homes; in some regions, up to forty percent of the new settlers left. And in some cases, Red Army members did not hold back against their own fellow citizens—women and girls coming out of German forced labor in Silesia, for example, were rerouted into work camps there and raped by entire companies of soldiers.⁵⁰ When the Yugoslav communist Milovan Djilas complained that Soviet soldiers were raping Serbian women, Stalin reportedly replied, “Can’t he understand it if a soldier who has crossed thousands of kilometers through blood and fire and death has fun with a woman or takes some trifle?”⁵¹

In late summer 1944, Marshal Vasilevskii noted the “significant growth” of cases of venereal disease, particularly on the liberated territory of Romania, which he blamed on wide-spread “prostitution,” both individual and in brothels. From that point, all soldiers and officers in the army were required to undergo monthly medical inspections to stop the

⁴⁸ See Bernhard Fisch, “Ostpreußen 1944/45. Mythen und Realitäten,” in Christian Pletzing, ed, *Vorposten*. Fisch has written about this prominent role of Ehrenburg in the German press, and describes how most of the German discourse revolves around three of Ehrenburg’s texts: the leaflet “Kill!”, an untitled leaflet (with the keyword “racial pride”), and the general collected hate propaganda in the frontline newspapers. According to Fisch, the first two flyers (“Kill!” and “racial pride”) have attained almost a mystical value in the German discourse, becoming necessary citations in any discussions of the origins of Red Army violence. The American historian Alfred M. de Zayas was the first to deal with the Russian leaflet, “Kill!” in a 1977 book, but since then, both German and American authors have incorporated it into own arguments. The second flyer (“racial pride”) was reported only after the war by certain German authors to have been found on the bodies of fallen Russian soldiers; Fisch, “Ostpreußen,” 233, quoting Jürgen Thorwald, *Es begann an der Weichsel—Das Ende an der Elbe* (Stuttgart : Munich: Knauer, 1979), 101. The original utterance of this command seems to be traceable back to General Otto Lasch’s memoir, *So fiel Königsberg*, and Jürgen Thorwald’s early postwar novel, *Es begann an der Weichsel*, but a 1959 commission to determine the flyer’s provenance determined that it probably never existed, and the text was struck from subsequent editions of Thorwald’s work.

⁴⁹ Naimark, *The Russians*, 72.

⁵⁰ Fisch, “Ostpreußen,” 218; Pawel N. Knyshevski, *Moskaus Beute* (Munich and Landsberg: Lech 1994), 29-31.

⁵¹ Milovan Djilas, *Conversations with Stalin*, trans. Michael Petrovich (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1962), 88-9.

spread of disease.⁵² For the soldiers who marched into East Prussia from Belorussia and the Baltic countries, however, rape and violence had not been as widespread a problem before their entrance into Germany. Monthly medical reports for the rear of the Third Belorussian Front, for example, noted only isolated cases of venereal disease throughout the summer of 1944, but the rate of reported venereal disease increased dramatically after the troops crossed into Germany.⁵³ Although rape had been more than an uncommon occurrence during the Red Army's westward advance, it was in East Prussia that most soldiers took out their revenge.

The military turned a mostly blind eye to the first wave of violence in East Prussia, although soldiers were expressly prohibited, even early on, from mishandling civilians.⁵⁴ Several military reports at the time complained about how many soldiers were using their weapons against civilians, including women and invalids, pointing out that "in most cases, the perpetrators were drunk." Some of these reports complained that the commanders did not take action against these excesses, and that the political apparatus either was not able control the plundering and drunkenness (or in some cases did not try at all). Already in late October 1944, for example, NKVD border guards reported with concern that two men "dressed in Red Army uniforms" returned from East Prussia to Lithuania to sell pilfered goods to the local population and threatened them with violence. Shortly thereafter, on 3 November 1944, NKVD border guards were alerted to search one Senior Sergeant Sidorov and a Red Army soldier Demidov, who had reportedly abandoned their ranks, got drunk, "raped a woman, killed two local residents and wounded a third, and disappeared in an unknown direction."⁵⁵ At least one order commanded that "these disgraceful incidents" be stopped immediately, and that those involved be held responsible with "iron discipline." Similar military sanctions were published in *Krasnaia Zvezda* as early as December 1944.⁵⁶ At the beginning of the January offensive, Stalin supposedly issued an order demanding "that no violent acts against the German civilian population be permitted."⁵⁷ On 22 January 1945, Order No. 6 was issued to the troops of the Second Belorussian Front, signed by Rokossovskii, concerning the discipline of the troops in East Prussia;⁵⁸ other documents suggest that organs of political education and military justice continued to condemn loot-

⁵² TsAMO 4.11.78.56-60, reprinted in *Russkii arkhiv: Velikaia Otehestvennaia: Prikazy Narodnogo komissara oborony SSSR (1943-1945 gg)*, vol. 13 (2-3), (Moscow: Terra, 1997), 304.

⁵³ RGVA 32941.1.90.226, 21-30 January 1944. For example, before crossing into the Memel territory (then considered a part of East Prussia), the 31st Pogranpolk of the NKVD reported only three official cases of gonorrhea: one from contact with an "unknown woman," one from a maid (*domraboitnitsa*), and one chronic case that had resisted treatment. After treatment, the report promised that they would be subject to disciplinary action.

⁵⁴ BA-Freiburg, RH 2-2681, Bl. 23, 23 October 1944; BA-Freiburg, B. Arch./Kelling RH 2-2681, 31 October 1944; *Krasnaia Zvezda* 22 December 1944; Fisch, "Ostproußen," 220, 225.

⁵⁵ RGVA 32941.1.46.85, 08 November 1944.

⁵⁶ BA-Freiburg, B.Arch./Kelling RH 2-2681, 31 October 1944; BA-Freiburg, RH 2-2681, Bl. 23, 23 October 1944; *Krasnaia Zvezda* 22 December 1944; Fisch, "Ostproußen," 220.

⁵⁷ A. A. Gretschko, I. V. Parot'kin, *Die Befreiungsmision der Sowjetstreitkräfte im zweiten Weltkrieg* (Berlin: Militärverlag der DDR, 1973), 437.

⁵⁸ BA-Freiburg, RH 2-2470, Bl. 77, 22 January 1945.

ing, plundering, arson, and mass drinking.⁵⁹ Above all, frequent complaints appeared about the soldiers' "refusal to fulfill orders."⁶⁰

Much of the concern from the official Soviet military perspective was with the material and tactical costs of the soldiers' excesses. Widespread drunkenness led to violence not only against civilians, but also among the soldiers themselves. The *Wehrmacht's* known tactic of poisoning stores of food and drink did little to deter the soldiers from trusting that captured foods and alcohol were safe. Already in October 1944, the 43rd Army reported 22 poisonings alone, and military commanders issued a categorical ban against drinking captured liquids without proper testing.⁶¹ But despite early bans, incidences of poisoning continued to occur. According to SMERSH reports from 21 October 1944, fifteen Red Army soldiers were poisoned in Schaugsten (*Kreis* Darkehmen) from drinking poisoned liquor (twelve of them died); a report from 21 February 1945 noted that fifteen soldiers were poisoned drinking captured alcohol in the city of Friedland.⁶² Frequent orders were issued to remind soldiers of the risks of drinking captured alcohol, but poisonings continued to occur throughout the spring of 1945.⁶³

The threat of sexually transmitted diseases increased dramatically once the mass rape of German women began, and the rapid spread of chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis threatened the mobility of the troops. As Krysov recalled,

There were these rapes, and it's so shameful you don't want to talk about it. We had this Zhora Grachev, a Muscovite, the commander of our tank destroyers. When we entered Gross Ottenham [Russ. *Grosottenkhagen*], he stayed there to get some fuel and ammunition. But the troops had already left, and there was this sergeant with three hundred German women. Zhora chose the most beautiful one and led her into the house. He did his thing there, but three days later it began to drip [*u nego zakapalo*]. So the regimental doctor rescued him and said that it was an old infection that had reappeared, or else it would be to the penal battalion for him. There was this order, that if you contracted a disease, then you'd be sent to the penal battalion. That made touching German women dangerous.⁶⁴

Krysov himself claimed that he could not rape them "for moral reasons."⁶⁵

Besides the immediate tactical complications stemming from poor discipline, the Soviet leadership saw increasingly that the continued mishandling of the German civilian population ultimately encouraged German soldiers to continue to fight, costing ever more

⁵⁹ BA-Freiburg, RH 2-2470, Bl. 59, January 1945, BA-Freiburg, B.Arch./Kelling, RH 2-2470, Bl. 79, 25 January, 1945.

⁶⁰ Fisch, "Ostpreußen," 220.

⁶¹ RGVA 32941.1.39.176, 14 January–31 December 1944.

⁶² RGVA 32941.1.46.75, 29 October 1944; RGVA 386801.3.4.

⁶³ RGVA 38680.1.3.8 A full ban on using captured food was issued in February 1945 after a whole stockpile of poisoned food was found in Zinten [Russ. Tsinten]. Several isolated cases of poisoning were reported in and around Königsberg in March 1945: RGVA 38680.1.3.86, 11 April 1945.

⁶⁴ Vasilii Semenovich Krysov, interview by Aleksandr Brovtsin, <http://iremember.ru/samokhodchiki/krisov-vasilii-semenovich.html>, published 17 July 2006 (accessed 13 August 2013).

⁶⁵ Krysov interview.

Soviet lives and materials. Among the remaining German population, there were fears “that the Red Army will exterminate everyone, as a result of which there have been cases of suicide.” The report listed anecdotal evidence from Brandenburg (already beyond East Prussia), including cases of slit wrists and collective suicides (successful and unsuccessful); in the town of Soldin (now Myślibórz in Poland), SMERSH agents uncovered 35 cases of suicide, which they attributed, perhaps in partial rationalization, to “mostly members of fascist organizations.” Interrogated civilians explained that Nazi party members were especially prone to committing suicide because, while they had been guaranteed evacuation, the Red Army’s rapid advance meant that they had not been able to leave in time. Because they figured that “the Red Army would shoot them anyway,” they decided to kill themselves.⁶⁶ In the village of Wohltitz [*Volits*], one survivor told Red Army officers

that the Germans understand that they must bear responsibility for all of the destruction and murder that the German Army carried out on Russian territory. Fearful of this responsibility, they decide to commit suicide.

“Better a horrible end,” these Germans pointed to the familiar proverb in the last months of the war, “than horrors without end.”⁶⁷ The unspoken understanding developed among Soviet officers that both the mass suicides and the continued German resistance stemmed from the Red Army’s abuse of the civilian population. In enacting their revenge, soldiers were unwittingly prolonging the war; even more infuriating to many soldiers, the Germans refused to accept that they *deserved* the revenge, and that even in carrying out the punishment, the Red Army remained ultimately a liberating force for good. Paradoxically, the farther the Red Army marched into German territory, the more deeply fascism seemed to become entrenched into the German character. To the surprise of one NKVD report from March 1945, “a lot of Germans are still fanatical and believe in German victory.”⁶⁸

But even if the central command seemed surprised by the level of violence and issued orders for it to stop, those who were caught were not uniformly punished. In many cases, those in a position of power could choose whether or not to discipline soldiers. Pomerants recalled how the head of the Political Division of the 61 S.D. tried to bring charges on a lieutenant who had taken part in a mass rape, but the Political Division of the army sealed the case and destroyed all of the paperwork before anything could be done.⁶⁹ Vasilii Krysov, another soldier in East Prussia, recalled being sent on a days-long mission as an interpreter to question a German girl about her attacker and compile a case, but when he filed the report, the man was given five days of house arrest and released without further action.⁷⁰

Many reports described atrocities against civilians only in veiled terms, refraining from assigning direct blame to Red Army soldiers. Reports frequently noted “men dressed in Red Army uniform,” implying that the perpetrators were more likely spies, partisans, or propagandists; in other cases, reports denounced soldiers’ behavior, but only described incidents by auxiliary armies—not true Red Army soldiers. Soldiers in the First Polish Army

⁶⁶ GARF 9401.2.93.335, 8 March 1945.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Pomerants, *Zapiski*, 95.

⁷⁰ Krysov interview.

of the First Belorussian Front,⁷¹ an NKVD report from March 1945 pointed out, were known for “particular cruelty toward the Germans”: instead of sending captured German soldiers and officers to designated collection points, they chose simply to shoot them en route; in one case, having captured 80 German soldiers, the 2nd Infantry Division captured 80 German soldiers, but only two arrived alive to the collection point (the NKVD report was careful to offer only the example of Polish cruelty, not Soviet). In another case, nine prisoners were shot, even though they had surrendered voluntarily.⁷² Soviet memoirists, on the other hand, often recalled that those policies were common also within the Red Army, something the report could only imply. These veiled denunciations continued until the end of the war; their authors understood the political danger of questioning the collective behavior of Red Army soldiers directly.

In the meantime, a ‘soft approach’ developed throughout the spring of 1945 to address the soldiers’ excesses. Lectures about the Red Army’s mission of liberation at the beginning of the invasion increasingly included discussions about the conduct befitting a Red Army soldier on foreign soil; the goal was to balance the soldiers’ sacred right to enact their revenge with the need to maintain discipline. On 23 January 1945, *Frontovaiia Pravda* distributed one such leaflet to the troops, entitled “How I Understand Soldier’s Revenge.”⁷³ The author, a Sergeant S. Krasnov, describes how the “Russian heart is overflowing with great anger and hatred” of the Germans and how the soldiers came to East Prussia to avenge themselves “for all the humiliation, for all the material damage they have caused our people.” He came to East Prussia to “destroy, burn, and exterminate” [*istrebliat’*], but when he crossed the border, Krasnov realized that revenge must be “carried out with reason” [*chto mstit’ nado s poniatiem*]. Red Army soldiers should destroy the enemy army mercilessly, he came to understand, but not loot or pillage the towns and villages. The houses, the facilities, and the factories needed to be preserved “down to the last screw” for use by Red Army occupying forces; only then could everything that the Germans had robbed from the Soviet Union be repaid.⁷⁴ Krasnov’s article refers continually to “the German” (in the homogenizing singular) as the target for revenge and calls for his fellow soldiers to punish “enemy soldiers and officers” mercilessly. But Krasnov remains silent on the topic of German civilians—should they, too, bear the brunt of “sacred soldier’s revenge”? His stern warning not to waste time, resources, and blood on retreating Germans sits in uneasy juxtaposition with his final call to arms:

⁷¹ The First Polish Army was an ethnically Polish Army unit formed in 1944 from the previously existing Polish I Corps of the Ludowe Wojsko Polskie. The lower ranks consisted of Poles who had been deported into the USSR after the 1939 annexation of Eastern Poland, while almost half of the officers and technical specialists were Soviets. Polish citizens considered the army to be Russians in Polish uniforms, while the Red Army treated the Polish Army as politically suspect and arrested several of its members for singing patriotic songs or talking about enemy propaganda. Soviet memoirs from other armies frequently mention that in the heat of battle, Red Army soldiers often chose to shoot captured German soldiers rather than deal with taking them prisoner, but in this report, it may have seemed more politically expedient to focus on the practice by Polish soldiers.

⁷² GARF 9401.2.93.336, 8 March 1945.

⁷³ MVS 4/46374 S. Krasnov, “Kak ia ponimaiu soldatskuii mest’,” *Frontovaiia Pravda*, 23 January 1945.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

Who among us did not swell with fierce anger against the Germans! This anger, this hatred, is our great power in battle. And it does not flow in vain. Turn anger against the German beast, beat him, the reptile, with bullet and bayonet [*pulei shtykom*], grenade, exploding shell crush tracks, run him over with tanks! Don't hold back your heart [*tut uzh ne sderzhivai svoego serdtsa*], destroy the Germans, like mad dogs! Let their black blood pay for our burned-out city, for the tears and suffering, for our mothers, wives, and children!⁷⁵

Krasnov's article calls for the soldiers to embrace their rage, to harness their aggression to punish the Germans. But at the same time, he calls them not to destroy the East Prussian landscape and limit their rage to soldiers on the battlefield. The soldiers had earned the right to their "sacred soldier's revenge," but that revenge had become abstract. How would revenge look different from four other years of fighting German soldiers on the battlefield? How would soldiers know when they had truly avenged themselves?

Many of the memoirists maintain that violence tapered off after the first several weeks; some say that it continued at full strength until mid-April, until the change of course indicated by Aleksandrov's now famous *Pravda* article "Comrade Ehrenburg Oversimplifies."⁷⁶ Pomerants remembers, on the other hand, that the violence continued after the public criticism of Ehrenburg, only abating in the weeks after Stalin's directive, in which he blamed the marauding on penal battalions, enemy agents, and malcontents who had been relieved of duty, but then admitted that "the cruel treatment of the German population is not useful for us, because it increases the resistance of the German army."⁷⁷ After that, Pomerants recalled, the soldiers could no longer use the pistol as "the instrument of love." The risk of punishment had become too great.⁷⁸ (By then, Pomerants had left East Prussia for Berlin. The Germans who stayed behind in Königsberg remembered differently—the pistol served as an instrument for years after the final surrender.)

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ G. Aleksandrov, "Tovarishch Erenburg uproshchaet," *Pravda*, 14 April 1945.

⁷⁷ B.N. Ol'shanskii, "My prikhodili s vostoka," manuscript, p. 35, HIA, Nicolaevsky, Series no. 177, 231-1.

⁷⁸ Pomerants, *Zapiski*, 202.

During the Soviet period, discussions of Red Army violence did not appear directly in the press, official sources, or published memoirs;⁷⁹ the few participants to admit excesses before the 1980s were dissidents who used the Red Army violence against civilians as part of their condemnation of Soviet communism, especially two of the most famous Soviet detractors, Kopelev and Solzhenitsyn.⁸⁰ Even today, the Russian collective remembrance of the war does not include the public recognition of atrocities. Former soldiers interviewed after 1991 often do not admit to witnessing widespread violence; while some admitted there were occasional excesses, others maintained that they saw no violence at all. Aver'ianov, a pilot during the battle for Königsberg, remembered that relations with the Germans were peaceful, and that no one touched them.⁸¹ Mikhail Zharovskii explained that because his division rarely came in contact with civilians, he could not comment on any alleged "barbarism of Soviet soldiers."⁸² Dmitrii Kiriachek also remembered that relations with German civilians were good, with a few notable exceptions: he arrived once to an estate and saw that the German family there had been shot, but he insisted it was "hard to say who did it."⁸³ But even those who admitted that many of the soldiers indulged in violent acts insisted that not every sexual encounter was forced. Kobylanskii heard a story about how a few scouts found three good-looking German women and the soldiers enjoyed themselves greatly, "without even resorting to pressure." That was back when those sorts of things were still not punished, Kobylanskii added.⁸⁴ In cases when interviewees recalled witness-

⁷⁹ Memoirs and military histories during the Soviet period note how the desire for revenge melted into magnanimity when faced with the real, human suffering of German civilians—even those who had opportunistically benefited from the fascist system. Official generals' memoirs were published throughout the 1960s and 1970s, in the era of the friendship of the peoples. Marshal Rokossovskii, the commander of the Second Belorussian Front, presents his memoir, *A Soldier's Duty*, in terms of the forging of a hero in battle, with the help of the party, and focuses mostly on grand battles, tactical considerations, and the heroic deeds of his men. The troops' interactions with Germans, either soldiers or civilians, are almost never mentioned, and one gets the sense that a certain passage toward the end of the memoir was not written by Rokossovskii (or, rather, his ghost writer), but was added to a later version of the text as a political declaration. In it, Rokossovskii emphasizes how the Front's military council had created a cohesive policy on "the question of our people's behaviour on German soil." As Rokossovskii explains, it was their duty to prevent Red Army soldiers' legitimate hatred "from degenerating into blind revenge against the whole German nation." Party and Komsomol activists continually reminded the men of the essence of the army's mission of liberation, and Rokossovskii concluded that "on German soil our people displayed genuine human kindness and magnanimity." K. Rokossovskii[i], Marshal of the Soviet Union, *A Soldier's Duty*, trans. Vladimir Talmay, ed. Robert Daglish (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1970), 288-9.

⁸⁰ See in particular Lev Kopelev, *No Jail*, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *Prussian Nights*. Post-Soviet memoirs include Gregorii Pomerants, *Zapiski gadkogo utenka*, David Samoilov, *Podnennnye zapisi*.

⁸¹ Valentin Grigor'evich Aver'ianov, interview by Artem Drabkin, http://www.iremember.ru/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=159&Itemid=20, published 20 July 2006 (accessed 13 August 2013).

⁸² Mikhail Khaimovich Zharovskii, interview by Grigorii Koifman, http://www.iremember.ru/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=69&Itemid=2, published 14 July 2006 (accessed 13 August 2013).

⁸³ Dmitrii Timofeevich Kiriachek, interview by Artem Drabkin, http://www.iremember.ru/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=95&Itemid=19, published 18 July 2006 (accessed 13 August 2013).

⁸⁴ Kobylanskii, *Priamoi navodkoi*, 188.

ing violence, it was always the work of other soldiers. None of them admitted to taking part in “sacred revenge.”

Although looting and sexual violence are common features of war, particularly during invasions, Soviet soldiers often justified their actions in moral terms: “sacred revenge” and righteous violence, calling on the eye-for-an-eye principle of retaliation and maintaining that their swift and violent punishment of the Germans was in no way commensurate with the crimes of the Nazis. These soldiers came to East Prussia with the confidence of the moral superiority born out of the belief that the German people, having committed the ultimate crime, deserved the ultimate punishment.

Each act of revenge could be seen as another victory and another attempt at retaliation. Despite the Red Army’s rapid advancement into East Prussia and on to Berlin, the Germans’ refusal to surrender enraged many Red Army soldiers. On 20 January, a week after the beginning of the winter offensive, Inozemtsev wrote to his father: “I wouldn’t want to be in their place if the Germans don’t lay down their weapons in the next few days (I mean days, or else it’ll be too late).”⁸⁵ But the Germans did not lay down their weapons, and during the blockade of Königsberg, Uspenskii noted how “the number of German pockets [*Kessel*] is continuing to grow and the territory of Germany is getting smaller and smaller. I don’t understand what the Germans are really thinking. Apparently they want to see Germany turned into a pile of rubble.”⁸⁶ When Kopelev ordered two drunken soldiers to stop their attempted rape of a teenage girl, one of them, “hoarse with anger,” told Kopelev, ““You fucking officers, sons of bitches! You! Fighting the war on our backs! Where were you when my tank was on fire? Where were you, son of a bitch, when I set fire to that Tiger [German heavy tank]?”” Kopelev tried to outwit him: “Don’t you have a mother, a sister? Have you thought of them?”” He cursed in reply, ““And what did the Germans think of? Get out of my way, you son of a bitch! I need a woman! I spilled my blood for this!””⁸⁷ It seemed not to matter to this soldier that this woman was Polish.

Other soldiers wondered whether retaliation should really entail ‘repayment in the same coin.’ Some recalled after the war how they had at first wanted to carry out revenge but became reluctant after encountering actual German civilians. One soldier remembered that witnessing the German bombing of a railway station full of civilians had led him to decide “that as a soldier, I must some day try to get back to Germany to get even for such things.” But when he got to Germany,

quite unexpectedly, all of a sudden I started feeling some sympathy for them. It was strange for me to see, how, when we first entered on German soil, horrible things were done there, especially by drunken tankists. They shot whole columns of refugees, burned villages in East Prussia. And I was almost sick in reacting to it. It was not that I felt sorry for them after all they had done,

⁸⁵ Letter from Inozemtsev to Nikolai Inozemtsev (his father), 20 January 1945, reprinted in *Frontovoi Dnevnik*, 346.

⁸⁶ Uspenskij, “Tagebuchaufzeichnungen,” 523 [8 February 1945].

⁸⁷ Kopelev, *No Jail*, 50-1. The translation has been slightly modified.

but because it was unworthy, it was no way of treating people; it was bound to confirm the view that we were Asiatics.⁸⁸

Just before crossing the border from Poland, Samoilov spent the evening with two elderly German men and their wives. They spoke about music, not with words, but with the melodies of Brahms and Tchaikovsky, and Samoilov pitied them for having been too weak to flee. He wrote then in his diary (although perhaps in a passage added later, before publication) that “The German tragedy, the well-deserved tragedy, passed before my eyes, and I vowed never to hurt the wives and children of my enemy.”⁸⁹ But in wartime, this sympathy had its limits. Kiriachek, although remembering having no real contact with German civilians during his stay in East Prussia, did recall seeing the body of a young German boy who had been killed. He felt pity for the boy, but at the same time, he reminded himself that if the Soviets did not kill the Germans, the Germans would kill them.⁹⁰

Genatulin’s fictionalized hero Gainullin first felt a twinge of sympathy toward German civilians when coming across the body of an elderly woman.

Small, dressed all in black, wearing a hat, her face was buried in the cobblestones and she grew stiff in a pool of her own blood. Why did she not leave the city? Didn’t have time? Didn’t want to? How did she get shot? What surprised me was not that an old woman had been killed but that such ordinary old ladies could live in a town like that ...⁹¹

Perhaps Gainullin could feel real compassion for the old woman he had found because it was not he who had killed her, but the circumstances of the war. Later, Gainullin met her living analog—a pathetic estate worker with a grandson. Gainullin showed her true human compassion even though she mistrusted him and expected revenge. Gainullin took pleasure in the thought of confusing the prejudices of this woman: the “Asiatic” (Gainullin was ethnic Teptiar and spoke Bashkir) had demonstrated himself as a true humanist, and the German woman was forced to question her assumptions about the barbarians.

The diary of Yuri Uspenskii, the Soviet officer who called for revenge on Hitler’s Germany and declared that “no utterance of a word, no note of music, not a single brushstroke of color should be allowed for the glorification of war,” provides an interesting glimpse the ways that Soviet soldiers explained the violence in East Prussia. Uspenskii used his diary to reconcile the tensions between avenging the suffering of the Soviet people in the war and upholding a commitment to European humanism. Uspenskii can by no means be considered a “representative” Soviet soldier—he was a well-educated officer, a lover of German literature, and a committed internationalist—but his reflections reveal some of the complex rationalizations that many Soviet soldiers used to justify their “sacred revenge.”

Uspenskii was among those who were anxious to enter the lair of the fascist beast to punish the Germans; although he seemed surprised by the intensity of the destruction, after his first few days in East Prussia, he wrote with elation that “now their cities will be de-

⁸⁸ Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 26, Case 517 (Interviewer A.D., type A4) Male, 38, Great Russian, Electrical Engineer. Frankfurt, Germany, March 1951, <http://pds.lib.harvard.edu/pds/view/5371172?n=1&imagesize=1200&jp2Res=.25>, (accessed 11 May 2010).

⁸⁹ Samoilov, *Podennye zapisi*, vol. 1, 210 [7 February 1945].

⁹⁰ Kiriachek interview.

⁹¹ Genatulin, *Vot konchitsia voina*, 117.

stroyed, and their population now experiences what war means!"⁹² But soon thereafter, Uspenskii began dwell increasingly on the "great misfortune" that the war and Hitler had brought to the world.

The German people now actually feel in their own lives what war is. They witness the burned-out towns and villages and see and feel what war means! How much misery there is in the world! And this misery has raged for so long. But in the German newspapers everywhere you see the distorted mug of Adolf Hitler. In the German magazines you can see thirty pages of photographs of "Untermenschen," and then the pretty little Germans! What asses! I hope Hitler doesn't have much longer to wait for the noose.⁹³

While putting the blame on Hitler, Uspenskii felt pity for the German civilians and regretted the destruction of East Prussia. "War, war... whenever will it end?" Uspenskii wrote in his diary. For three years and seven months this "destruction of human life" had gone on, the destruction of all "human work and culture." The cities and villages were burning, "the treasures of a thousands years disappeared." But the "Good-for-nothings in Berlin," Uspenskii complained, were doing everything they could to prolong the battle, and it was natural for this foolish German resistance to anger the soldiers. "That's what created the hatred that is pouring over Germany now. And the Germans have the nerve to say, 'God be with us!' Is that God's will?"⁹⁴

"We hate Germany and the Germans very much," Uspenskii declared in his diary, but instead of explaining the reasons for that hatred, he focused on the results: "In one house, for example, our guys saw a murdered woman with two children. And on the streets you often see murdered civilians."⁹⁵ Shaken by his fellow soldiers' retribution, Uspenskii returned to the greater inhumanity of German fascism and the continuing virtue of the Soviet mission of liberation.

And the Germans have deserved these atrocities, which they themselves started. One only needs to think about Majdanek and the theory of the master race to understand why our soldiers are taking such satisfaction in East Prussia. Certainly, it is impossibly cruel to kill children, but the German cold-bloodedness in Majdanek was a hundred times worse. And the Germans glorified the war. Now the little German birds are singing their new songs with a different voice. It is particularly criminal that they continue the war even though the outcome is no longer in doubt. For this reason, Germany will have to suffer much more.⁹⁶

Yet days later, Uspenskii's conviction seemed shaken, and his rationalization of the soldiers' revenge became increasingly complex.

Last night the soldiers in my division told me a few things that really can't be condoned. In the house where the division staff is located, refugee German

⁹² Uspenskij, "Tagebuchaufzeichnungen," 518 [24 January 1945, Gumbinnen].

⁹³ Ibid., 520 [28 January 1945, Dorf Starckenberg].

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 519 [27 January 1945, Dorf Starckenberg].

⁹⁶ Ibid., 519-20 [27 January 1945, Dorf Starckenberg].

women and children were being housed. Then drunken soldiers came one after another, sought out the women, led them to the side and abused them there. Many men went onto each woman. The soldiers told that thirteen to fifteen-year-old girls were also abused. Oh, how they fought back! They were even telling all the little details of the proceedings. So, in the presence of everyone, a woman was taken out and they laid her on the frozen carcass of a cow and raped her there. They did the same to another women on top of the frozen intestines. And these orgies lasted the whole night. One came after another, shone flashlights on the women with flashlights and singled them out.⁹⁷

One should forgive the soldiers their revenge because the Germans had killed their relatives, Uspenskii explained, “but raping girls—no, that can’t be allowed!”⁹⁸

During the next few weeks, Uspenskii continued to justify the violence of the soldiers, but he focused increasingly on the suffering of individual Germans. As Uspenskii guarded the narrow Pillau Road that still connected besieged Königsberg to the sea, he watched the columns of refugees march out and found among them an elderly man of 92 and a few women of the same age, all dressed relatively poorly, “which is understandable since the rich have already long gotten out.” What did these miserable refugees have in common with the crimes of the Nazis? In his diary, Uspenskii attempts to work out the relationship between the individual and the collective, between an elderly civilian and “the Germans,” and between “the Germans” and “Germany.” Germany, he maintained, still needed to experience the “taste of tears it had brought to the Russian people.”

Terrible atrocities are being committed on the earth. And Hitler is the one who has caused them. And the Germans have glorified these atrocities. A cruel punishment for Germany is only too just because Germany did indeed follow Hitler and continues to follow him still. I am only surprised that no strong opposition has been made to eliminate these bloodthirsty scoundrels!⁹⁹

It was Germany’s fault, he told himself, for not resisting Nazism sooner. But the sorrows of the old women and hungry children were harder to reconcile.

And what are people not capable of! For example, in front of our tanks, a soldier shot a German woman and her baby because she refused give herself over to his desires. It is horrible! But the Germans have done much worse to us.¹⁰⁰

But for all his attempts to make the distinction between punishment and crime, “payback,” it now seemed to Uspenskii, in spite of what Ehrenburg had declared, would “be in the same coin.”¹⁰¹

The more time self-proclaimed humanists such as Uspenskii spent in East Prussia, the harder it became for them to rationalize this payback. Their misgivings arose sometimes

⁹⁷ Ibid., 521 [2 February 1945].

⁹⁸ Ibid., 521 [2 February 1945].

⁹⁹ Ibid., 522 [7 February 1945, Dorf Kraussen].

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 523 [7 February 1945, Dorf Kraussen].

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

out of compassion for the suffering of individual German civilians but sometimes out of practical and moral concern for the behavior of their fellow soldiers. Some venting of frustration was good, they agreed, but these excesses were hurting soldier discipline and ultimately prolonging the war.

This tension between revenge and the preservation of honor was echoed by Inozemtsev. Already in November 1944, he wrote his father that “every Russian soldier had compiled a “personal account” for all of those friends and loved ones who had died, for which [the German] will have to pay personally. It will be a terrible reckoning!”¹⁰² Once in East Prussia, Inozemtsev recalled in his diary a conversation he had had with a friend about the costs of jubilation and revenge. ““You know,”” said the friend, ““I don’t feel sorry for the Germans at all, let [the soldiers] shoot them and do whatever they want with them.”” Whatever the Soviets were doing in East Prussia could never compare with what the Germans had done, ““either in terms of it being state-sponsored or in scale,”” But it was a shame, he continued,

that all of these rapes are debasing the army in general and every individual Russian in particular. And besides, it inevitably leads to the weakening of discipline and lowers the army’s morale. All of these unleashed animal instincts will be difficult to rein back in later.

Inozemtsev agreed that he still felt no sympathy for the Germans after what they had done; the problem was the discipline and morale of each Red Army soldier: every time the troops received another order against arson, property destruction, or rape, he remembered the conversation with his friend: “The now-discarded Ehrenburg formula—leave it all to the soldier’s conscience—it took a lot of effort and energy on the part of the officer corps to undo the damage.”¹⁰³

Pomerants agreed with Inozemtsev that the problem was not whether the fascists deserved punishment, but whether doling out that punishment would come with its own consequences. During the march westward, Pomerants recalled how the soldiers had repeated a favorite anecdote. The first soldier would ask, “Where’s my wife now? Probably sleeping with a German.” Another would answer, “Oh well, let’s get to Berlin—we’ll show the German women!” Pomerants recalled how he became increasingly frustrated with this logic of payback: “Why do humanists need to repeat the fascists?” Even the party had supported this line, Pomerants complained. “Where did real humanism go, the logical foundations for communism? I didn’t ask myself this question at the time, but I remembered it in 1945.”¹⁰⁴

One of the greatest concerns was that the Red Army soldiers, as representatives of socialist internationalism, were stooping to the level of the fascists. The Red Army, Uspenskii argued, needed to destroy the German war machine and the fascist state apparatus, and the German people, both POWs and civilians, should rebuild what the German fascists had destroyed, but “we don’t want to become ‘Majdaniki’ who murder women, children, and

¹⁰² Letter from Inozemtsev to Nikolai Inozemtsev (his father), 18 November 1944, reprinted in *Frontovoi Dnevnik*, 343.

¹⁰³ Inozemtsev, *Frontovoi Dnevnik*, 210 [end of January 1945].

¹⁰⁴ Pomerants, *Zapiski*, 142-3.

the elderly.”¹⁰⁵ Majdanek, the concentration camp that had become symbol for the greatest crimes of National Socialism, was threatening to find its analog in the invasion of East Prussia. Could it be possible for the retribution to be as heinous as the crime?

The soldiers marched to the words of Ehrenburg, who had encouraged them to avenge their suffering, but they had forgotten the humanist message behind Ehrenburg’s vitriol. “The war,” Pomerants explained, “freed the soldiers of all fear.”

They had gotten used not to pity anyone, their own skins or the enemy. They had gotten so accustomed to it that anything was permitted to us heroes. I remember that feeling very well in October 1944 right before we invaded East Prussia. [...] Cross that border (they put up a black sign right there: Germany), and take revenge to your heart’s content.¹⁰⁶

If everything was permitted, then morality became relative. But as Pomerants recalled, there had to be consequences: “I saw how at the height of the heroic intoxication, sober courage was replaced by drunken abandon. And what followed was hangover.”¹⁰⁷ It seemed to true believers such as Kopelev and humanists such as Pomerants and Uspenskii that communism was corrupted and that anything had become possible. When Pomerants saw the first dead German civilian in East Prussia, the naked body of a teenage girl on a trash heap, and had asked himself who was responsible, he wondered: “If it was not us, then who? Those same criminals I allowed into the party? [...] Those same ones who believe that here in the lair of the beast everything is permitted?”¹⁰⁸

The Soviets’ westward march into East Prussia provided the first opportunity for the exportation of socialist ideology by the socialists themselves. Red Army soldiers came to East Prussia as bearers of civilization and the children of the revolution, and the fluidity of the borders and front lines in this exotic territory broke down the previous structures of discipline and allowed them to behave autonomously. In effect, their actions—as representatives and beneficiaries of the communist revolution—determined what socialism meant. When humanists such as Uspenskii, Kopelev, and Pomerants witnessed the behavior of the soldiers—the mindless vengeance, the animal aggression, the looting and rape—they feared that the soldiers’ behavior was both a symptom of the corruption of the communist project and a cause for it: the communist revolution had not been fully secured at home, and now it was being exported by men and women who had only undergone half of the transformation.

Pomerants deliberately calls on the formula from Dostoevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov*: “If there is no God, then everything is permitted.” But here the question came in reverse: if everything was permitted, then was there perhaps no God? Did the behavior of the Soviet soldiers in East Prussia mean that the absolute center of the Soviet universe was gone? Did it mean that the bearers of European civilization were themselves not civilized? Did it mean that the heirs of Russian humanism were not really humane?

¹⁰⁵ Uspenskij, “Tagebuchaufzeichnungen,” 522 [2 February 1945]

¹⁰⁶ Pomerants, *Zapiski*, 94.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 96.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 188-9.

Two Kinds of Ruin

The most controversial book about the last days of East Prussia was published in 1986 by the West German historian Andreas Hillgruber. *Two Kinds of Ruin: The Destruction of the German Reich and the End of European Jewry* tells the story of the defense of East Prussia in the mode of tragedy: the downfall of a German empire, the end of the German East, and the fate of the German civilians who lost their lives and homes. In the book, Hillgruber defends the *Wehrmacht's* desperate resistance in the last months of the war by arguing that the continued fight was necessary to postpone the fate that awaited the German population—the Red Army's violent orgy of revenge. Hillgruber rehearses the bitter experiences of civilians and ordinary soldiers, as Charles Maier argues, “to defend the German army against the charge that by resisting Soviet troops they were abetting Hitler's work of massacring the Jews” and to make their continued fight justifiable.¹

Two Kinds of Ruin caused a scandal when it was first released, as accusations were raised by several historians and prominent intellectuals of politically-oriented revisionism and historical “levelling” (i.e. trivializing the crimes of National Socialism through irresponsible comparison).² Some critics found Hillgruber's sympathy with the fate of the *Wehrmacht* soldiers alone to be reprehensible, but most critiques focused on Hillgruber's juxtaposition of two essays: an emotional story of Germany's demise and a brief, abstract account of the history of anti-Semitism and the destruction of European Jewry.

At the center of the controversy was Hillgruber's discussion of the “problem of identification.” Historians, according to Hillgruber, must not represent the choices that historical actors faced with a sense of detachment, but should “identify” with certain narratives over others.

If the historian looks at the winter catastrophe of 1944-45, only one position is possible [...] he must identify himself with the concrete fate of the German population in the East and with the desperate and sacrificial efforts of the

¹ Charles Maier, *The Unmasterable Past: History, Holocaust, and German National Identity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1988), 20.

² For a general discussion of the “Historians' Controversy” [*Historikerstreit*] about the historical presentation of National Socialism, which also involved controversies over the works of other prominent West German historians such as Ernst Nolte and Michael Stürmer, see Maier, *The Unmasterable Past*, especially chapters 1 and 2.

German army of the East and the German Baltic navy, which sought to defend the population from the orgy of revenge of the Red Army, the mass rape, the arbitrary murders, and the compulsory deportations, and sought in the final phases to keep open a flight path to the west for the Eastern Germans, either by land or by sea.³

Although Hillgruber attempted to present his position as a matter of methodology, he had more than one reason to “identify” with the fate of the German East in 1945. He had been born in the town of Angerburg in East Prussia in 1925 and grew up in Königsberg, where his father was a secondary school teacher until being forced out of his position by the Nazis. Hillgruber joined the *Wehrmacht* in 1943 and fought part of the war on the Eastern Front before spending the years 1945-1948 in a French POW camp.

Hillgruber tried to create a synthetic history of East Prussia’s demise in order to end what he called a regrettable “splintering of the scholarship.” Histories about the end of the war on the Eastern Front had been divided into unannotated witness collections and military histories on the one hand, and amateur local and regional histories written by expellees’ groups on the other; new academic works adopted an opposite perspective, focusing on the goals of the 1944 coup or the murder of the European Jews. Hillgruber claimed to overcome the divide in the scholarship by taking all of these perspectives into account simultaneously. But by writing separate essays about the Second World War’s “two national catastrophes”⁴— the demise of Germans in the East and the destruction of the Jews in Europe—in different ways, Hillgruber, in Hayden White’s words, salvages “the moral dignity” of part of the Nazi epoch “by splitting the whole of it into two discrete stories” and emplotting them differently: “the one as a tragedy, the other as an incomprehensible enigma.”⁵

Two Kinds of Ruin tried to assert the emotional power of the fate of German civilians at the end of the war at the expense of the Nazi crimes against the Jews. But Hillgruber’s broader intent, to give voice to an untold national narrative of the Second World War and to allow the German catastrophe to be represented (at least in part) as tragedy, was too quickly rejected by many of his contemporaries. Could not perpetrators be victims and victims sometimes be complicit? Might it be possible to tell the story of East Prussia’s demise as a tragedy not only for those “good Germans” who had opposed Hitler from 1933, but also for those who had flirted with Nazism, benefited from the system, built a Nazi city, helped unleash a murderous war, and were responsible (even directly, in the case of *Gauleiter* and Reichskommissar Erich Koch), for the murder of millions of people?

The stories of the Albertina’s anniversary, the atrocity at Nemmersdorf, the sinking of the *Gustloff*, the Nazi terror against internal enemies inside Fortress Königsberg, and the fall of a great city are all, in some sense, tragic: the conflict between the protagonists and their destiny, the heroism of the denial of fate, and the heroism of resigned martyrdom when all other outcomes seem impossible. Telling those stories in the tragic mode does not preclude other modes of emplotment, nor does it preclude emotional “identification” with other overlapping narratives.

³ Andreas Hillgruber, *Zweierlei Untergang: die Zerschlagung des Deutschen Reiches und das Ende des europäischen Judentums* (Berlin: Siedler, 1996), 24-5.

⁴ Hillgruber, *Zweierlei Untergang*, 9.

⁵ Hayden White, *Figural Realism: Studies in the Mimesis Effect* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 32.

The “end of the European Jewry” as Hillgruber calls it, was not separate from the tragedy of ordinary East Prussian civilians. With the massive defense preparations that began in Fall 1944, thousands of Jewish prisoners in Auschwitz were tested for their ability to work in constructing fortifications for the defense of the Reich, including for East Prussia’s *Ostwall*. Those who failed the test (in many cases, a 100-meter dash), were executed in the gas chambers, and the remaining inmates were transferred to Stutthof concentration camp, east of Danzig. Stutthof was the first camp built outside of the 1938 borders of Germany (and the very last concentration camp liberated in the war, on 9 May 1945). From Stutthof the surviving prisoners were sent in the fall of 1944 to more than a dozen satellite camps in East Prussia (including Schippenbeil, Jesau, Seerappen, and Kobbelbude) to be employed in the building of *Gauleiter* Koch’s series of fortifications, roads, and aerial landing strips.⁶

In the chaos surrounding the Red Army’s January Offensive, the camps had to be evacuated on short notice. Up to 13,000 prisoners, the majority of them women, were marched across the province and collected in Königsberg at the same time that the East Prussian refugees embarked on their journey westward.⁷ Those who survived the forced march to Königsberg were set to work in a camp erected on the site of the Steinfurt Rail-Coach Factory (earlier the Jewish émigré Fritz Radok’s factory) near the North Train Station.⁸ On 26 January, around 7,000 of them were sent on a night march to the seaside village of Palmnicken, at the order of Königsberg’s Gestapo Chief, the *SS-Sturmabführer* Gormig.⁹ By the time the prisoners left Königsberg, there were no overland routes to the Reich. Many of the prisoners were shot in Königsberg, their corpses piled in the streets.¹⁰ Up to 2000 of the prisoners died during the fifty-kilometer night march, many of them from weakness and starvation; others were beaten or shot by SS-guards for moving too slowly or trying to escape.

Germans living in villages on the path to Palmnicken witnessed the march, and many of them were confronted for the first time with the brutality of war and Nazi genocide. The young air force helper Gert Herberg from *FLAK-Batterie* Goldschmiede (west of Königsberg) recalled how his *Batteriechef*, Hauptmann Hey from Hamburg, retraced the path of the Death March and “rescued” [*erlöste*] the mortally wounded with a gunshot, because there was no other way to help them. Fourteen-year-old Hans-Dieter Willuweit was horrified to witness the column of “gray-brown clothed” people marching without shoes, with their feet bound in rags.¹¹ The then ten-year-old Klaus Lemke, who lived in Kumehnen (halfway along the journey) remembered seeing traces of the march in his village; the morn-

⁶ Martin Bergau, “Das Massaker in Palmnicken 1945. Ein Zeitzeugenbericht,” in Pletzing, ed., *Vorposten*, 195-6.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Andreas Kossert, “*Endlösung* on the Amber Shore: The Massacre on the Baltic Shore—A Repressed Chapter of East Prussian History,” *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 49, no. 1 (2004), 7 [3-21].

⁹ Kossert, “*Endlösung*,” 10, 12; Bergau, “Das Massaker,” 197. Bergau cites the conservative estimate of 5000; some survivor testimonies on the contrary mention that anywhere from 7000 to 10,000 died in the massacre at Palmnicken, but those numbers may include other victims who joined the SS death march outside of Königsberg. Kossert cites the figure of 7,000 leaving Königsberg, from Danuta Drywa, *Zagłada Żydów w obozie koncentracyjnym Stutthof: wrzesień 1939–maj 1945* (Gdańsk, Poland: Muzeum Stutthof w Sztutowie, 2001), 235. The BA-Ludwigsburg estimate is slightly lower at 6,500. BA Außenstelle Ludwigsburg AR-Z 299/1959, Bl. 944, 27 May 1964.

¹⁰ Kossert, “*Endlösung*,” 10.

¹¹ Bergau, “Das Massaker,” 198.

ing after they passed, the SS “forced Polish and Russian POWs to pile up the stiff, frozen bodies on the edge of the village,” creating a “mountain of corpses” [*Leichenberg*]. The women who had been shot “struggled around and begged for mercy.”¹²

In the early hours of 27 January 1945, the same day the Red Army liberated Auschwitz, the SS Death Squads marched around 3,000 Jewish prisoners into Palmnicken; the remainder of the 7,000 had been shot or had starved during the journey.¹³ The seaside town was the center of amber manufacturing in East Prussia, and at the suggestion of Gerhard Rasch, the Director of State Amber Manufacturing in Königsberg, an unused amber mining pit was designated as a mass grave for the starving prisoners. A few of the mine’s local administrators, however, showed unexpected resistance. According to one postwar testimony, Hans Feyerabend, the Amber factory manager and local *Volkssturm* Commander, told the leader of the SS squad, Fritz Weber, that so long as he lived, no more Jews would be killed in Palmnicken: “We won’t allow this to become another Katyn!”¹⁴ Feyerabend reportedly told Weber that “[y]ou have besmirched the German soldiers’ honor—you have thrown the German flag in the mud by killing innocent people. We do not carry out war with innocent civilians, especially women and children.” Weber explained that the front lines were rapidly approaching, calling for desperate measures, and that he had been given his orders and had to fulfill them. But Weber seemed shaken by Feyerabend’s condemnation and admitted that he had not been told originally that the prisoners were to be executed once they reached Palmnicken.¹⁵

Feyerabend managed to hold off the SS guards and protected the 3000 prisoners, providing them with warm shelter and potatoes from the *Volkssturm* reserves. German women from the village were recruited to cook soup for the prisoners. But the news soon reached higher SS authorities in Königsberg (postwar testimonies pinned the blame on the *Ortsgruppenleiter*, Kurt Friedrichs), and Feyerabend was punished for his intransigence. He and one hundred of his *Volkssturm* men were ordered to depart immediately for Kumehnen, the most dangerous part of the front. There they were stationed in a military unit that had not been told to expect them, and they understood the assignment was a death sentence. Soon thereafter, Feyerabend’s *Volkssturm* members found him dead, with his own gun in his mouth. No investigation was conducted to determine whether it had been murder or suicide.¹⁶

With Feyerabend out of the way, the SS guards resumed their task. Hitler Youth and young *Volkssturm* members were summoned by *Ortsgruppenleiter* Friedrichs, who organized them into a special unit to assist the SS. One of the boys was Martin Bergau, who had witnessed the march of the prisoners into the village days before. Bergau and his classmates reported with their weapons to their *Ortsgruppenleiter* that day, as ordered. An SS leader

¹² quoted in Bergau, “Das Massacre,” 200.

¹³ Kossert, “*Endlösung*,” 10, 12.

¹⁴ Testimony of Rudolf Folger, BA-Ludwigsberg [no citation] 6 February 1961, quoted in Bergau, “Das Massacre,” 198. Folger was appointed the Bürgermeister of Palmnicken by the Soviet occupying forces in April 1945.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Bergau, “Das Massaker,” 203; 45 See BA-Ludwigsberg AR-Z 299/1959, vol. I, Bl. 1–260, 24 January 1961; BA-Ludwigsberg AR-Z 299/1959, vol. II, Bl. 261–390; Testimony given in Winsen, 23 June 1961 by Kurt Friedrichs, cited in Kossert, “*Endlösung*,” 13–14.

handed the boys some schnapps to drink and led them to the amber pit. "Now I understood for the first time," wrote Bergau, "I had found myself in an execution squad."¹⁷

The SS death squad at the amber mine in Palmnicken was made up of 22 German members of the SS and 120 to 150 members of Organisation Todt from other nationalities (including Ukrainians, Belgians, Dutch, Lithuanians, and French).¹⁸ Bergau and his classmates were commanded to stand guard at the end of the long columns of prisoners waiting to be shot, and he could hear the distant echoes of gunfire ahead. One woman asked Bergau, in good German, to be allowed to move forward a few places in line and offered him a little piece of jewelry she had preserved on the journey. "I would like to be shot together with my daughter," she explained. Bergau refused her payment but allowed her to go. As she stepped out of line, one of Bergau's fellow classmates, Lothar, assuming the authority of his new position, beat her down with the butt of his rifle. "You dirty punk," Bergau growled, "I gave the woman permission!" He helped her up and escorted her to her daughter. Bergau claims to have shot no one that day, but a few of his classmates, including a boy named Alfred, joined in the massacre, shooting the stragglers who survived the first shots. "Was it showing mercy," he asked, "or an inflamed lust to kill? [...] We had been forced into becoming accomplices of mass murder."¹⁹

In the next few days, several of the residents of Palmnicken, shaken by their brush with total war, decided for the first time to seek passage on refugee ships to leave the province.²⁰ Meanwhile, running out of time and supplies, the SS death squads marched the remaining prisoners to the sea coast on 31 January and forced the women to wade into the freezing waters of the Baltic Sea. Those who tried to swim back to the shore were shot by the guards standing on the shoreline. That same day, the Feyerabend's *Volkssturm* men were allowed to return from their service in Kumehnen and brought Feyerabend's body with them. The official cause of death was listed as "fallen in battle with the enemy."²¹

In early February Bergau rode his horse along the coast, and when the horse refused to go forward, he saw the lifeless forms piled in the sand: "the ice had given up the bodies and new victims washed ashore for weeks." Bergau left the Samland Peninsula by boat shortly thereafter, on 28 February, but as a Hitler Youth soldier, he was captured by the Soviets and sent to a labor camp on the Murmansk rail line, where he came close to death from starvation and exhaustion, "in order to experience," he wrote in his memoirs, how "we Germans had exterminated six million people of Jewish faith." Years later, Bergau found out that his Hitler Youth classmates, Lothar and Albert, died from typhus and starvation in a Soviet camp. Unlike the Germans, the Soviets did not shoot their prisoners: "their punishment [*Bußgang*] for the crimes of an unscrupulous Hitler Youth leader was of a dif-

¹⁷ Bergau, "Das Massaker," 204.

¹⁸ BA-Ludwigsberg AR-Z 299/1959, Bl. 944, 16 June 1967; Testimony of Hoenisch, cited in Kossert, "Endlösung," 11.

¹⁹ Bergau, "Das Massaker," 204.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 205.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 208.

ferent sort." Neither of the boys had reached the age of sixteen.²² *Ortsgruppenleiter* Friedrichs managed to escape across the Frische Nehrung to the West on 15 April. He was imprisoned by the British a month later, released in 1947, and given a pension in West Germany. He later denied involvement, until finally confessing under interrogation in 1961.²³

Celina Malinewicz, then twenty-three years old, was one of about fifteen survivors of the massacre at Palmnicken.²⁴ Malinewicz was stationed toward the end of the long column of prisoners being marched to the sea, but she heard how around 300 men at the front of the line put up "futile resistance" and tried to attack the SS guards with their bare hands, only to be killed by machine gun fire. To keep the prisoners moving, the SS guards spread rumors that they would be taken to a Baltic sea port and shipped to Hamburg to escape the oncoming Soviet army, but soon news spread down the kilometers-long line that they would be drowned. As Malinewicz recalled,

We were so starved, so weak and demoralized, that death seemed to us to be a merciful deliverance, but still we did not have the courage to collapse on the path because a glimmer of hope still slept within us that at the last moment, as if by miracle, we would come away with our lives.²⁵

Late that night, Malinewicz arrived at the sea coast. The SS men forced the prisoners into the sea and shot anyone who tried to escape. When Malinewicz and her friends in line tried to back up, the commanding SS officer yelled at them, "Why do you not want to go forward? You'll be shot like dogs anyway!" But then the officer ran out of ammunition and instead beat her unconscious with the butt of his gun. She woke up in the water and realized that she was floating on a heap of dead and wounded bodies. She lay there, as still as possible, while the SS guards searched for survivors to shoot, and when they left, she and two of her friends waded back to the shore and assembled clothing for themselves from the bodies of the victims.

They made their way to Sorgenau, the closest village, and convinced a reluctant farmer by the name of Voß to hide them for eight days. But as the fronts stagnated and it seemed that the village was in no immediate danger of falling to the Soviets, Voß chased them away. "I believe in the victory of the German *Wehrmacht*," he explained, and no longer wanted to risk his life to protect them. "Just shoot us then!" cried Malinewicz's friend Ge-

²² Bergau, "Das Massaker," 206. Bergau's first spontaneous thought at seeing the lifeless bodies of the victims on the beach was "you'll never be able to swim here again." Decades later, the village of Palmnicken became Iantarnyi (the word for "amber" in Russian), and the massacre no longer features prominently in the history of the community who now lives there. Iantarnyi has become a successful resort town and a popular seaside destination for tourists.

²³ BA-Ludwigsberg AR-Z 299/1959, vol. II, Bl. 261–390, Testimony given in Winsen, 23 June 1961 by Kurt Friedrichs, cited in Kossert, "Endlösung," 14–15.

²⁴ The number of survivors varies depending on the source. Malinewicz [also spelled Manielewicz] says that 13 survived; other sources list either 15 or 16 survivors. Celina Malinewicz, born 21 July 1921 in Osokow, Poland. Yad Vashem testimonies from 10 October 1961 and 30 November 1958, Jerusalem, reprinted in Bergau, *Der Junge von der Bernsteinküste: erlebte Zeitgeschichte, 1938-1948* (Heidelberg: Heidelberger Verlagsanstalt, 1994), 249–59; BA-Ludwigsberg AR-Z 299/1959, Bd. III, Bl. 391–499, Testimony of Zila [sic] Manielewicz, Jerusalem, 10 Oct. 1961, cited in Kossert, "Endlösung," 16.

²⁵ Testimony by Celina Malinewicz, 30 November 1945, Jerusalem, reprinted in Bergau, *Der Junge*, 252

nia. "That is for others to do!" answered Voß.²⁶ The girls ran, and Voß fetched Gestapo men to find them, but in the meantime, another neighbor, Loni Harder, stepped in to help and hid the girls in her coal shed. When the Gestapo men arrived with their dogs and asked about the three Jewish women, Harder answered, "Yes, I saw the three miserable wenches [*zerlumpfte Frauenzimmer*] here [...] but I can't say where they went. It seems to me, they headed toward the forest!"²⁷

The Harder family protected the girls for the next two and a half months, giving them German names and instructing them to pose as refugees from Memel who had lost their documents. Because of their physical condition (they were *Gaunt* and their heads had been shaven), Herder told the villagers that her 'relatives' had been typhus patients. The girls managed to escape detection when more Memel refugees arrived, although they did attract the attention of German soldiers who wished to ask them on dates. Frau Harder, afraid to say no, gave permission for Malinewicz to go on a date with one interested officer, as long as she did not stay out longer than half an hour. The German officer and the former Jewish prisoner strolled along the shore and ended up at the same spot on the sea "where I spent the most terrible night of my life." The officer told her about the fate that awaited them, as 'Germans.'

On this spot, our people murdered 10,000 Jews. It is abhorrent what Germans became capable of. I can only tell you that when the Russians march in, which is only now a matter of days or weeks, they will do the same to us as we did to the Jews. A German will hang from every tree. The woods will be full of German corpses.²⁸

Malinewicz began to feel sick, but said nothing. She and the officer walked back silently to the Harders, and he told her that two hundred Jews had survived and escaped to another village, but the local population had turned them over to the Gestapo to have them killed.

Late in the evening before the Soviet invasion, the same German officer came to Malinewicz and presented her with a suitcase full of tin food that he had saved from the military canteen. He begged "Elsa" (Celina) to get dressed and come with him: "I'll bring you to safety in mainland Germany because you will suffer so much if the barbaric Russians get ahold of you here!" Malinewicz could not tell him that she was waiting for the "barbaric Russians" but explained that she could not desert the Harder family. She begged him instead to throw away his uniform and pretend to be a civilian farmer. "I cannot do that, dear Elsa!" he said in tears, "I have to take part in this evil play [*böse Spiel*] until its evil end [*bis zum bösen Ende*]."²⁹

The next day the Soviets arrived, and the three girls revealed their identities to Red Army authorities. But the Red Army officials did not want to believe them.

'The Jews' they said, 'were all killed there,' and they pointed to the sea. We were brought before a Jewish officer in the Red Army, who spoke with us in Yiddish. But he was still not completely convinced that we were Jews and be-

²⁶ Ibid., 253-4.

²⁷ Ibid., 255.

²⁸ Ibid., 258.

²⁹ Ibid., 259.

lieved that we either had been trained by the Germans to pose as Jews or that we, as Jews, had spied for the Germans and therefore had survived.³⁰

Finally, an investigation commission arrived, and when other survivors of the massacre were found, they accepted the women's story.

After the war, Malinewicz's husband decided to search for the Harder family, the "good Germans" who had helped her survive. After two years of searching, they discovered that the Harders were being held in a Soviet camp. Malinewicz's husband managed to rescue Loni Harder from the camp and brought her to their own displaced persons camp in Wetzlar, where she lived with her adopted family for two years. Harder's husband Albert had died in the Soviet camp; his last words to his wife had been, "have you heard anything from the girls?"³¹

The Harders were not the only German family to shelter survivors of the Palmnicken massacre; doctors and nurses at the Palmnicken hospital took in a severely wounded girl; a Dr. Schöder from Germau operated on one escapee, Maria Blitz, and removed her tattooed prisoner number. Two Polish forced laborers, Stanislaw and Romualdo Zbierkowski, also protected some surviving Jews.³² Others looked away. Helene Zimmer, a former resident of Palmnicken, later testified that when she returned from her aborted attempt to flee, she walked along the shore and came to the site of the massacre.

As far as I could see, those lying on the shore were all dead, and every now and then we could hear desperate cries coming from the water. ... The water along the shore was partly frozen and ice floes floated around, between them were the seriously wounded or dead people. Many of them were dressed in the same striped clothes. There were also many women among them. ... I was so shaken at the sight that I covered my eyes with my hands. ... We then quickly went on walking because we could not stand the sight.³³

During an inspection of newly occupied territory on 15 February 1945, Red Army soldiers found the bodies of 100 murdered civilians a kilometer and a half north of the village of Kümehnen. The civilians had been "brutally tortured and shot by the Germans." The vast majority of them were women from 18 to 35,

dressed in a variety of tattered clothes, with a band on the left sleeve, and on it an image of a six-pointed star and five numbers. Some of them were wearing wooden clogs; they had mugs attached to their belts, cups, wooden spoons. In the pockets of the dead was food: small potatoes, turnips, oats, wheat, etc.³⁴

A special commission of doctors and Red Army officers established that the victims had been shot at close range, and that among them were "Russians, Jews, French, Romanians." All of them were severely emaciated. An examination of the bodies revealed that they had

³⁰ Ibid., 259.

³¹ Ibid., 259.

³² Kossert, "Endlösung," 17.

³³ BA-Ludwigsberg AR-Z 299/1959, vol. IV, Bl. 500-748, testimony given in Werdohl, 3 July 1962, cited in Kossert, "The Massacre," 17.

³⁴ GARF 9401.2.93.343, 28 February 1945.

been killed at the end of January 1945.³⁵ These were the first traces of the Nazis' massacre of almost 10,000 Jews at Palmnicken. Later the Red Army would discover the full extent of the killing.

Rudolf Folger, a Palmnicken resident, was appointed the *Bürgermeister* of Palmnicken during the Red Army's occupation, and remembered what happened next:

On the first day of the Pentecost holiday, the Russians ordered that I collect a large number of women to dig up the mass grave for Jews behind the mine building. The men, provided there were any available, had to dig a new mass grave.

After the dead bodies were dug up, they were laid out side by side in two columns, and the Palmnicken women who had been assembled for the exhumation had to stand behind the bodies. The Russians set up two machine guns and pointed them at the women.

Then a Russian major—a Jew—made a speech in German. He made it clear that the Russians could do to the people of Palmnicken the same thing that had been done earlier to the Jews, but that they would not, because they would not stoop to the level of Hitler's criminals.³⁶

Palmnicken's last pastor, Johannes Jänicke, added "but much worse was to come. That [they didn't kill us then] is close to a miracle."³⁷

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Testimony of Rudolf Folger, cited in Martin Bergau, "The Massaker in Palmnicken 1945: Ein Zeitzeugenbericht," in Pletzing, ed, *Vorposten*, 210.

³⁷ Ibid.

The Fall of Fortress Königsberg

By late January 1945, the forces of the Third Belorussian Front had surrounded Königsberg. The Germans launched a counter-offensive and managed to punch a small hole through the Soviet blockade on 19 February, securing one path out of the city along the coast; otherwise the city was completely surrounded except when ice cover connected the Königsberg garrison with pockets of German resistance along the Frisches Haff Bay.¹ By March, the front lines had moved hundreds of kilometers westward. Although Königsberg and the Samland Peninsula had already been successfully severed from the front, the Soviet command decided to end the siege of the city with a full-scale assault.

The military command formed their composite picture of Königsberg before the siege based on interrogations of German POWs and local German civilians and reports from repatriated Soviet *Ostarbeiter*. Various sources gave conflicting estimates of the general situation in the city, including not only confusions about the military preparedness of the Königsberg garrison (down to uncertainty about the number of forts surrounding the city), the formidability of the supplementary lines of defense, and the number of soldiers and civilians in the city.

To make the foreign landscape of Königsberg more intelligible, a report to the commanders of the 11th Guards Army “translated” Königsberg by comparing it with Russian cities. The physical layout of cities could be divided into three types: (1) radial cities, such as Moscow and Kazan, which were ideally positioned for defense; (2) modern cities organized by grids, such as Leningrad or Odessa; and (3) cities organized with an arbitrary or chaotic layout, such as Sebastopol. Königsberg, the report explained, was a combination of a ring city built along concentric circles and an arbitrarily-planned city, with no clear logic or direction to its layout, especially in the suburbs and residential neighborhoods, making it difficult to determine the location of defensive positions.² In ringed cities, the further the battle proceeded toward the center, the greater the concentration of the defense, making the battle more intense because reserves in the center could operate on internal operational lines; yet

¹ GARF 9401.2.93.4-5, 22 February 1945.

² MVS 5/7/ 7/37.539, 8.

arbitrarily-designed cities would have defensive points scattered throughout the city.³

Fourteen forts surrounded Königsberg, spaced one to two kilometers apart. The forts were made of thick stone walls, and contained 150 to 170 rooms, and held up to 800 soldiers each. Various fortifications surrounded the city a few kilometers beyond the city limits; most of them were ground fortifications, with some anti-tank ditches and mines. Some of those fortifications had been built in 1944, others during the First World War. The forts themselves were older, having been built at the end of the nineteenth century.⁴ In previous wars, the commanders of the 11th Guards Army explained, fortified cities and fortresses had served as primary defenses in battle, as was the case at the end of the nineteenth century, when most of Königsberg's basic fortifications had been built. By the Second World War, the prevalence of artillery, tanks, and aircraft reduced the impenetrability of fortified cities, but storming such a city remained a great challenge.⁵

The battle for Königsberg would be a military action of a new type: intense street battles characterized by "limited visibility and firing angle" and "by an extensive use, on the part of the enemy, of all types of buildings and obstructions based on existing structures." Tanks and larger weapons would be no use in the narrower streets of the city, meaning that "the battle inside the city would inevitably break up into a series of separate confrontations." The outcome of the battle would be determined by "independent, bold actions of small units, especially assault detachments."⁶

The winter offensives of the Red Army had included a few similar battles to prepare the soldiers for what was to come, including street fights in Orsha, Borisov, Alitus, and also the more recent battles in the East Prussian cities of Goldap, Insterburg, and Wehlau. But in this instance, Soviet commanders planned a "fight for a fortress city," prepared in advance for persistent long-term defense, even in conditions of a complete blockade, where it would be necessary "to storm every neighborhood, every block, every building that the Germans have converted into a powerful stronghold."⁷ The Soviet commanders imagined the street battles of Königsberg would play out in a reenactment of the battle for Stalingrad: the German Army surrounded inside and cut off from fortifications and supplies, the Red Army besieging the city from the outside, forcing the Germans to fight at their backs. Just as in Stalingrad, the Red Army would conquer the city street by street, house by house, not through grand strategic operations, but through small group battles and flexible maneuvers: in Stalingrad, "our troops were stronger in street fighting, and the enemy was stopped and driven from the city."⁸

It seemed that the siege of Königsberg would begin in early February, but the Soviets did not move quickly enough and the Germans managed to secure their defense. Polonskii, who was fighting south of the city at that time, insisted that it was his division's drunken

³ Ibid.

⁴ GARF 9401.2.93, 28 February 1945. Postwar formulations of East Prussia militarism emphasized that many of the fortifications defending Königsberg were built systematically in the 1920s and 1930s (that is, during peacetime) in order to demonstrate the consistent role that militarism played in the province.

⁵ MVS 5/7/ 7/37.539, 8.

⁶ Ibid., 3.

⁷ Ibid., 4.

⁸ Ibid., 11.

diversion at the liquor factory that forced the Soviet command to postpone,⁹ but the German defense was significantly aided by Hitler's eleventh-hour decision to transfer troops from the Western Front to Pillau. Although the Red Army had made spectacular progress in the East Prussian offensive in January, some of the worst losses in the campaign happened during the battles around the city in those two months before the final siege. That memory was echoed by Zhidkov, who recalled that up to half of his division died; another soldier in East Prussia, Grigorii Genkin, also remembered particularly heavy fighting and casualties on the road to Königsberg.¹⁰

The First Guard Proletarian Moscow Division was among the few divisions in early February to push forward to the southern edge of Königsberg, where they took Fort Ponarth. Polonskii traveled to the fort on reconnaissance for the Third Artillery Division. The mission was dangerous: if anyone of his team were spotted by the Germans, they would all be killed immediately. But somehow they got lucky and reached the fort undetected, and they found that the Germans had not remembered to raise a narrow catwalk that crossed the moat to a solid wall of the fort. One of the sergeants had by chance brought a small keg of dynamite, and they rolled it along the walkway. The dynamite exploded and the wall of the fort "disappeared in smoke and flames." The moat filled up with rubble, forming a path into the fort, and Polonskii and his team ran inside. There they found a group of German soldiers who began to run, but the reconnaissance team shot them in their retreat because in the heat of the battle, "there was no time to take them prisoner." Polonskii and his team stayed in that fort for the next month and a half, and even found underground tunnels leading into the city. In his official memoirs, General Kuzma Galitskii, the commander of the 11th Guards Army, presented the event as a strategic victory, describing the capture of the fort as the result of classic military preparation.¹¹ "But in fact it wasn't anything like that," Polonskii claimed. "We were simply lucky that night..."¹²

The final assault on Fortress Königsberg began on the 6 April 1945 after four days of preparatory bombardment. The two main fronts were comprised of the North (the 39th, 43rd, and 50th Armies) and the South (the 11th Guards Army). The troops attacked the concentric rings of the German defense in a "star-like" formation, concentrating on several points around the perimeter and convening in the center of the city. The Soviet rifle divisions eliminated the Germans' first line of defense with ease because the previous days of bombing had destroyed most of the fortifications. By noon, the Soviet regiments reached Königsberg's stronger second line of defense, but within hours the regiments managed to break through in a few key places.¹³ The German troops attempted several counterattacks on the morning of 7 April, causing heavy losses on both sides, but the Germans were not able to regain their positions. Soviet troops captured the Eighth Fort after a bitter fight and the 11th Guards Army reached the Pregel River.

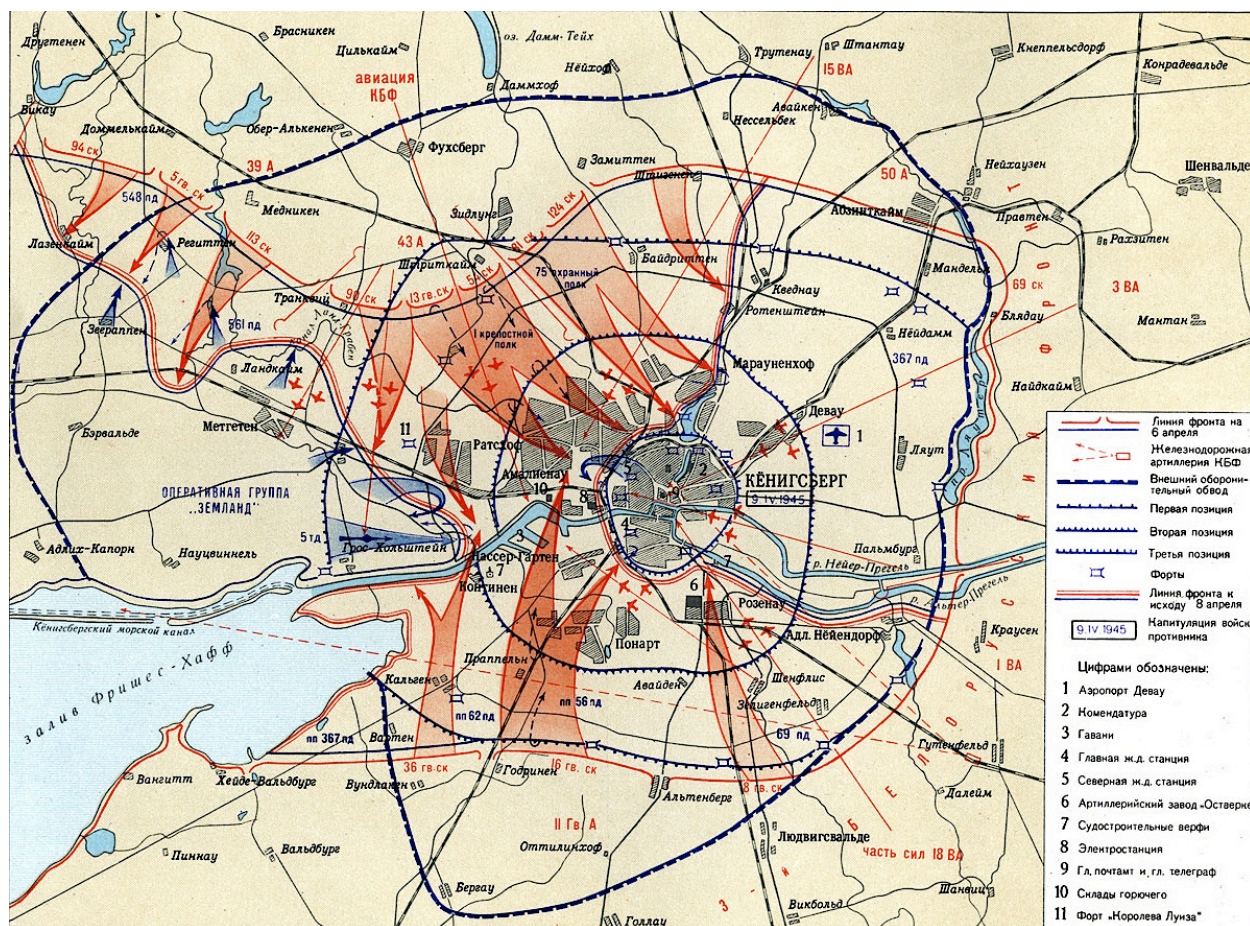
⁹ Polonskii interview.

¹⁰ Polonskii interview; Grigorii Semenovich Genkin, interview by Grigorii Koifman, <http://iremember.ru/minometchiki/genkin-grigoriy-semenovich.html>, published 18 July 2006 (accessed 13 August 2013).

¹¹ Kuzma Galitskii, *V boiakh za Vostochnuiu Prussiiu. Zapiski komanduiushchego 11-i gvardeiskoi armiei* (Moscow: Nauka, 1973).

¹² Polonskii interview.

¹³ V. N. Baliazin, *Shturm Kenigsberga* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1964), 69.



Map Showing the Storming of Königsberg, 6–9 April 1945. The outer lines show the position of the front lines during the extended blockade. By 6 April, the Red Army had enclosed the city (shown by the red line from which the attack direction arrows emanate), reaching the edges of the old city center and the south bank of the Pregel River by 8 April (shown by the smallest circle).

Aleksei Kuznetsov, who took part in the storming of Königsberg, remembered that “the way the Germans took Stalingrad, so did we do later.”¹⁴ The soldiers fought battles for each piece of territory: the fifth fort, the 18th school, the Zoo.¹⁵ There was a fierce battle for the South Train Station, with the soldiers of the 11th Guards Army fighting the Germans along the railroad tracks. The Soviets and Germans were separated by a high wall, over which they threw grenades all the way to the main building. Polonskii was among those who fought in the Zoo, where there was a “curious case.” The soldiers were fighting, “and between us the animals were running around, released from their cages and pens. During the battle we didn’t even pay special attention to them.”¹⁶

¹⁴ Aleksei Filippovich Kuznetsov, interview by Artem Drabkin, <http://iremember.ru/artilleristi/kuznetsov-aleksey-filippovich.html>, published 20 July 2006 (accessed 13 August 2013).

¹⁵ Kuznetsov interview.

¹⁶ Polonskii interview.

After the second day of the siege, Inozemtsev wrote that

The ring around the city is tightening inexorably. The artillery is employed to deliver massive strikes only; the commander of the artillery corps is using it very selectively, unleashing a full-scale barrage against a particular block 10-15 minutes before the assault. Flame throwers are being used widely, and if there is a single German in a building, he'll get smoked out of there. It is already clear to everyone that the storming of Königsberg will enter the history of military art as a classic example of a big-city battle.¹⁷

By the end of that day, the Commander of Fortress Königsberg, General Otto Lasch, radioed Hitler to ask permission to surrender, but Hitler refused. On 8 April, the third day of the siege, the 11th Guards Army crossed the Pregel and linked up with the northern troops, cutting off the Germans' Samland Group from the city. By the next day, the German defense had collapsed entirely, leaving only isolated pockets of resistance, and in the early evening, Lasch sent his emissaries to negotiate a ceasefire. Inozemtsev wrote that "the remains of the Königsberg garrison, surrounded by a narrowing ring of artillery fire and flames, realized the hopelessness of their position and surrendered. Königsberg is ours!"¹⁸

Shortly before midnight on 9 April 1945, Königsberg became Soviet. Inozemtsev wrote his parents on the day after victory:

If only you could see the city! Perhaps none of our cities has been destroyed as completely as Königsberg—it's hard even to see where the streets were. The garrison surrendered because, besides a few remaining cellars, there was absolutely nothing left at its disposal (the result of excellent work by our artillerists and pilots). The Germans suffered enormous losses, whereas our infantry—not so many. Since this morning, columns of surrendered Germans have been walking by, 5000-6000 people in each. [...] The whole operation is an example of the capture of a major city: for the first time in history, a city with 400,000 inhabitants, set entirely in concrete, with lots of soldiers and weaponry and no shortage of food, was taken in just two days [sic].¹⁹

For days the soldiers celebrated their victory, with music, drinking, and dancing through the night. Ivan Andreev, a soldier who finished the war in Königsberg, wrote his first letter to his mother a month later when the war ended, just a few lines to say, "Mama, I'm still alive."²⁰

¹⁷ Inozemtsev, *Frontovoi Dnevnik*, 218 [7 April 1945].

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 220 [10 April 1945].

¹⁹ Letter from Inozemtsev to Nikolai Inozemtsev (his father), 10 April 1945, reprinted in Inozemtsev, *Frontovoi Dnevnik*, 352-353.

²⁰ Ivan Ivanovich Andreev, interview by Artem Drabkin, <http://iremember.ru/letchiki-shturmoviki/andreev-ivan-ivanovich.html>, published 19 July 2006 (accessed 13 August 2013).



Frontovaia Illiustratsia, journal for the Red Army's Political Department, shows the tanks in front of the ruins of the Königsberg Castle, April 1945.²¹

For the next few days, however, there were still several pockets of resistance—SS men and officers hiding in basements, waiting to mount their attack and refusing to hand themselves over. Polonskii remembered walking in on a group of twelve German soldiers hiding in an underground bunker. Down a long, wide corridor he could see a faint light, and on each side of the corridor there were many doors. They started to fire, and all of the German resisters died in the fight. When they reached the end of the corridor, Polonskii and his fellow soldiers started to relax. But then suddenly a door opened.

²¹ *Frontovaia Illiustratsia: Zhurnal glavnogo politicheskogo upravleniia Krasnoi Armii 8, no. 106 (April 1945).*

In the doorway there stood a big, tall German without a jacket on. In his outstretched hand he held a pistol, which he pointed directly at Misha Bogopol'skii. The distance between them was one meter. I managed to shoot the the German down with my machine gun. He fell right at Bolgopol'skii's feet. Bolgopol'skii picked up his pistol from the floor and said, "Catch—trophy! Thanks for saving me!" The gun turned out to be a 30-round "Walter," a model well-regarded by all of the front-line soldiers. On the other hand of the dead [German] there was the flash from a gold watch. The commander of the Second Division, Bolgopol'skii, took the watch from his hand and gave it to me as a gift.²²

But the euphoria did not come without mourning for the loss of those who did not make it through. Asia Lavrovaia, a penpal and lover of Inozemtsev's, was working as a censor for the 11th Guards Army. They were hoping to get together when her division was appointed to meet up with his outside Königsberg. But then on 29 March, Inozemtsev received two letters. One was from Zoia Boldina, Asia's friend at the front: "'Dear Nikolai! I have to tell you something terrible: Asia stepped on a mine and died.'"²³

The meaning of these words is sinking in slowly. There is a pain somewhere inside, and the feeling of emptiness and worthlessness of life. All this time I've been living in the hope of going to Gross Lindenau [where Asia was stationed]. Gradually I am beginning to realize: that means that I don't need to go anywhere. And that thought makes me terribly sad. I can picture Asia standing before me—the way she was the day of our departure from Nevel: her flushed face, her hair peeking out from her flight helmet, her earnest, sad eyes that became wet at the moment of parting. That image is replaced with another, from the last photo: the weary pensive face staring into the distance. And the inscription: 'No matter what happens, my love for you is the best thing that has ever happened to me.' With an effort of will, I force myself to open the second letter from Valia Vitebskaia: "Andrei died." Those words, like an electric shock, hit my brain, paralyze my entire body. I slowly fall into a chair. Looking up from his letters, Ivan cried out: 'What's the matter?'"²⁴

Andrei was Inozemtsev's childhood friend, "of all of the old friends who have died, the only one who still remained near and dear."²⁵ For Inozemtsev, the call for sacred revenge had never felt stronger. He wrote his parents two days later.

We are preparing for the forthcoming operation—all of East Prussia, except for its capital, has been completely cleaned up. [...] Along with your letters, I got one exceptionally sad one from Valia Vitebskaia... On February 13th, Andrei died from wounds. You know how near and dear to me that man was, so there's no need for me to say anything. But of course you always loved him,

²² Polonskii interview

²³ Inozemtsev, *Frontovoi Dnevnik*, 213 [29 March 1945].

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 216 [29 March 1945].

²⁵ *Ibid.*

too, so you will understand perfectly well how I feel. Well, the many Germans who will have the “good fortune” to cross my path will pay for this death.²⁶

Concerned that fate came in threes, Inozemtsev warned his friend Ivan that during the assault on Königsberg, “will either be the last for me or for one of my close friends.”²⁷ A week later, Inozemtsev’s friend, Nikolai Safonov, died on the first day of the siege.

A fatal day—a successful start to the storming of the city and a terrible, irreparable loss: Nikolai is gone. Gone is the man with a big heart, wonderful soul, generous nature and a clear head, with great energy and a purely Russian, larger-than-life character. My best friend has died, the favorite of everyone who knew him even a little. The whole life-affirming image of Nikolai seems so incompatible with death that I simply can’t believe it. Nevertheless, it’s a fact—Safonov is gone.²⁸

Two days later, Safonov was buried in an officers’ cemetery nearby. Their division shot three salvos at “the Citadel,” their name for the Kneiphof Island at the center of the Altstadt, which had become the concentration of the German resistance.

We could hear the big bang of the salvo, the rustling sound overhead, and a series of loud explosions. Twenty-four BM shells, or 3.5 tons of steel and explosives, fell on the German heads, paying the last respects to the man who used to direct their flight.²⁹

General Cherniakhovskii, the young commander of the Third Belorussian Front, did not live to see the capture of Königsberg—he died on 18 February fighting in the town of Mehlsack, south of the city. And Yuri Uspenskii, the humanist and internationalist who wanted nothing more than to see an end to the tragedy and suffering, died outside Königsberg the following day, fighting General Lasch’s troops on the Samland Peninsula as the Germans tried to prolong the war.

During the siege of the fortress, one of Boris Gorbachevskii’s fellow officers and barracks mates also died. He was, as Gorbachevskii called him, their division’s good soldier Švejk, Captain Dimka Okunev. A former student, a favorite of his platoon, and in 1945, a commander. He refused to lead his troops into certain death: “an assault under fire spewed by bastions dressed in armored shields.” When they asked him whether he knew the punishment for refusing to follow orders, he answered:

I know! We aren’t still in basic training at Rzhev, are we?! And now you answer me! Why storm the fortress?! Why let yourself be killed, why put the last of my fighters there if in a few days the bombs and shells will do the work to force the enemy to surrender?!

²⁶ Letter from Nikolai Inozemtsev to Nikolai Inozemtsev (his father), 31 March 1945, reprinted in Inozemtsev, *Frontovoi Dnevnik*, 350.

²⁷ Inozemtsev, *Frontovoi Dnevnik*, 216 [29 March 1945].

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 218 [6 April 1945].

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 218-9 [8 April 1945].

But no one, not even the Soviet Švejtk, had the right not to follow orders. Dmitrii Okunev did not change his mind, and there was only one choice left to him, so “he drank up a mug of vodka and shot himself.”³⁰

Moscow joyfully saluted the winners who stormed the ancient fortress that the Germans had considered to be impenetrable. But no one, not the generals in their memoirs, not the official historians, remembered Captain Okunev or any of the others who died. How many of them were there? Who are they?³¹

Gorbachevskii noted in his memoir how in Kaliningrad in 2005, a book came out by Sergei Gol’chikov: *Pole Boia—Prussiiia* [*The Field of Battle—Prussia*].³² Golchikov argued that after the liquidation of most of the German resistance in East Prussia, the siege of the fortress held no military value. It would have been enough to keep the city blockaded until the end of the war, thus saving the lives of thousands. The storming of Fortress Königsberg, Gol’chikov insisted, was dictated by ideological considerations.³³ Pomerants argued that even in October 1944, the original offense into East Prussia was barely planned; the Soviets needed to show off by capturing a few German cities before the Americans could do the same on the Western Front: “There was no strategic purpose for the offensive.”³⁴

At the end of the siege, Gorbachevskii recalled, there was only one place in the center of Königsberg that remained undamaged: “an old church, which held the remains of the great German, the scholar and philosopher Immanuel Kant.” Rumor had it that Stalin ordered for the mausoleum to be saved, because “somewhere in Karl Marx the great leader had read that he thought highly of the philosopher.”³⁵ While most of the Kneiphof Island, including the cathedral, was destroyed during the siege, Kant’s mausoleum did remain mostly undamaged, although Gorbachevskii must not have seen it himself, or else he would have noticed that the actual sarcophagus cracked apart in the bombing, exposing the philosopher’s bones. Soldiers scrawled their names and the date on the walls to mark their victory; someone wrote: “Now you understand that the world is material.”

³⁰ Boris Gorbachevskii, *Rzhevskaiia Miasorubka* (Moscow: Iauza and Eksmo, 2006), 436-7.

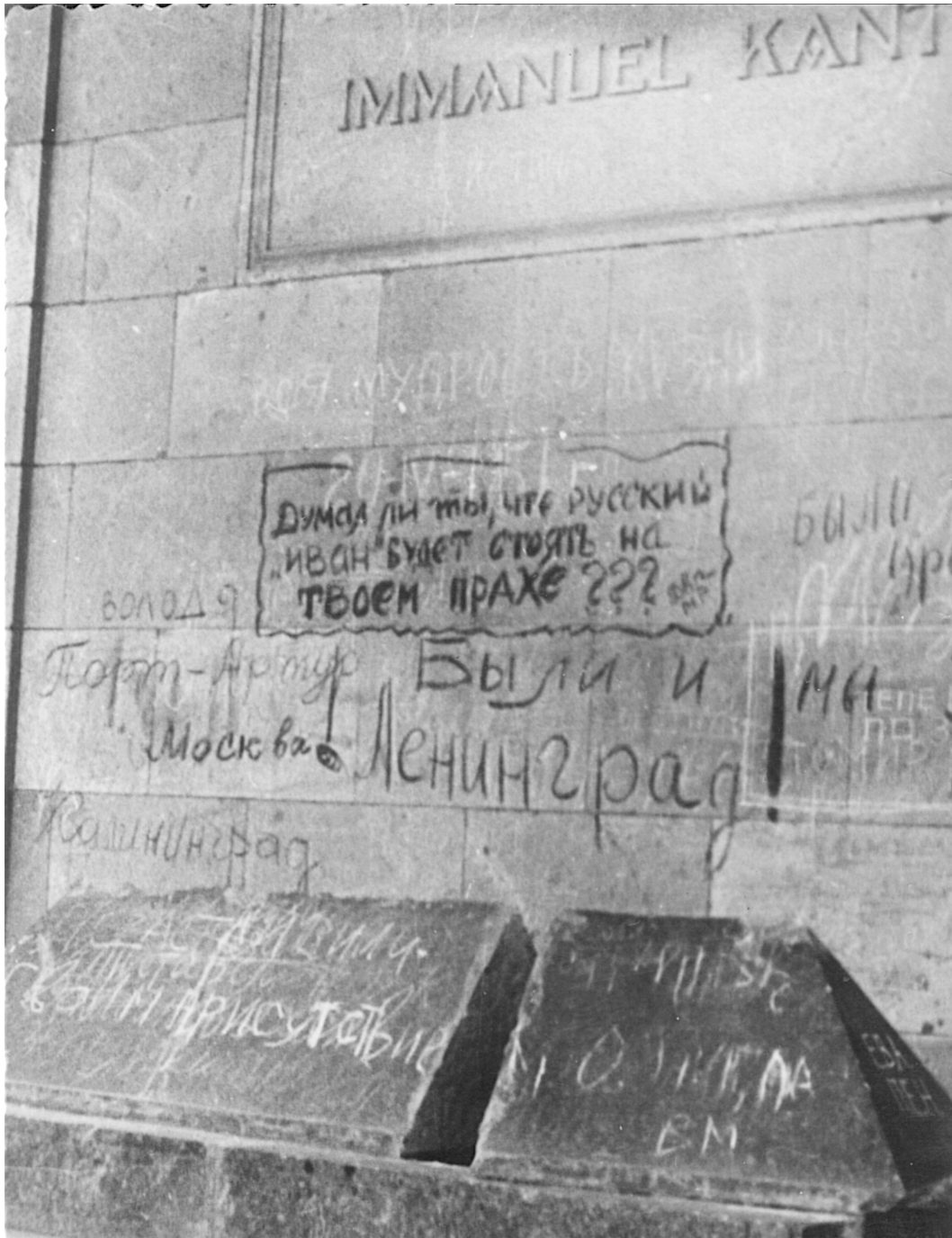
³¹ *Ibid.*, 436-7.

³² S. A. Gol’chikov, *Pole Boia—Prussiiia* (Kaliningrad, Russia: Umnozhenie, 2005).

³³ Gorbachevskii, *Rzhevskaiia Miasorubka*, 437.

³⁴ Pomerants, *Zapisi*, 187.

³⁵ Gorbachevskii, *Rzhevskaiia Miasorubka*, 436.



Kant's Mausoleum on the Kneiphof Island, 1951. The inscription "Now you understand that the world is material" is faded in the background to the far right. The inscription in the foreground center reads "Did you think that the Russian "Ivan" would be standing on your grave???"³⁶

³⁶ GAKO Digital Photo Collection.

Inozemtsev returned to the city a week after the siege and took a tour of the remains of Königsberg.

I photographed Major Trebukov and Shkurovskii in front of the monument to Friedrich and Bismarck. The bronze Bismarck looks out of one lonely eye (half of his head has been blown off by a shell) at the Soviet signalwoman, at the cars passing by, at the horse patrols, as if asking: "Why are there Russians here? Who let this happen?"

Yes, the Russians are here. And the Germans, mostly elderly men and women or women with children, with knapsacks on their shoulders, drag themselves wherever the Russian escort guard orders them to go. Their faces are blank, a deathly silence, the feeling of shame and defeat imprinted on all of them without exception. One, two, three, four years ago they lost their sons and fathers in far-away Russia, then lost faith in Germany, and now they are losing everything: their homes, their family, their homeland. It's hard to tell what they are thinking as they pass by Bismarck: thinking about how much stupider and smaller the current rulers of Germany are than their great predecessors, or thinking about a crust of bread for tomorrow. The heart of Prussiandom and militarism, the hotbed of the Teutonic Order and its deluded ideas, the true bulwark of fascism—has fallen to pieces.³⁷

The people who entered the remains of Königsberg claimed to represent both European civilization and merciless retribution. They considered themselves to be humanists by virtue of being Russians and socialists, but they were also, by most accounts, "the army of avengers." The people they found in Königsberg seemed to represent both betrayed humanism and pathetic humanity. They were also, by most accounts, the beast in its lair.

At the 400th anniversary of the Albertina back in July 1944, the professors of the university had attempted—also in the name of humanism—to defend the legacy of Kant against the barbarians (the Bolsheviks, and possibly the Nazis). Now it was the Soviets' turn. The Kant Mausoleum remained mostly undamaged.

³⁷ Inozemtsev, *Frontovoi Dnevnik*, 222 [18-20 April 1945].

Part III: Kaliningrad

Encounter

While some of the Soviet troops marched onward to Berlin, others stayed in East Prussia to occupy the Reich's first fallen territory. For the Germans there, the world as they knew it came to an end. Königsberg found itself severed from the Reich and abandoned by the rest of Europe; for the rest of 1945, the city's Germans had no contact with their families in the mainland of Germany (which many Königsbergers continued to call "the Reich"). They entered a state of timelessness, in which the war continued indefinitely; into Fall 1945, many Germans were not convinced that the Reich had truly fallen (despite all of the soldiers' exclamations of "*Gitler Kaput!*"); as late as 1946, rumors could be heard that the Nazis were preparing to launch a new offensive with the latest "wonder weapons" from a safe haven in Australia.¹ Others wondered, as the farmer Emma Kirstein wrote in her diary on 20 April 1945, whether they might hear Hitler's voice on the radio, so that they could be assured once more that everything would be okay.²

But gone were the well-furnished homes and motorcars; gone too were any remnants of the Nazi state which had promised for so long to provide for its chosen people. As the last fires burned out, Germans set out to resume their lives in this strange but familiar place, but soon found it was no longer possible. As the German doctor Hans Deichelmann wrote during his first walk through the remains, thousands of corpses of people and horses littered the streets, half covered in rubble. Bodies floated in the Pregel and the castle lakes.³ The city had been destroyed before, with the fire bombing of August 1944, but now there was no longer a German state to supervise the cleanup. For Deichelmann, "even worse" than rubble and ruins was a new, unfamiliar state of devastation, "neglect."

¹ *The Expulsion of the German Population from the Territories East of the Oder-Neisse Line, a Selection and Translation from Dokumentation der Vertreibung der Deutschen aus Ost-Mittleuropa, Band I,1 and I,2* (Bonn: Federal Ministry for the Expellees, Refugees and War Victims, n.d.), 73 (cited hereafter as *Expulsion*).

² Emma Kirstein, "*Aus schwerer Zeit.*" *Tagebuch—Ostpreußen 1945*, Kulturstiftung der deutschen Vertriebenen (Bonn: Kulturstiftung der deutschen Vertriebenen, 1999), 73 [20 April 1945]. Kirstein lived in a small town in the southern part of East Prussia, which was given to Poland after the war.

³ Hans Deichelmann [Johann Schubert], *Ich sah Königsberg sterben: aus dem Tagebuch eines Arztes*, 2nd ed. (Minden, Germany: Baganski Verlag, 1995), 5 [April 1945].

All the gardens—fences knocked down, broken, the streetcar wires dangle from tall posts, horse carcasses with their exploded intestines all around, when they're not cut up by rummaging Polish and Russian women, everywhere garbage, granite rubble, or defunct and broken-down vehicles. The worst of all, however are the senseless barricades that were set up from all kinds of rubble during the first days of the siege.⁴

To the doctor Hans Count von Lehdorff, the city appeared to have been transported to the surface of the moon, "crater beside crater, with a sea of rubble beyond."⁵

The lunar Königsberg came complete with Russian aliens—or perhaps the city now found itself in Hell, and the Russians were not aliens at all, but "little devils," as Lehnert remembered them decades later with a lingering zoomorphism.⁶ The first Soviet soldiers the German civilians encountered were the frontline troops, who came into the bunkers looking for hidden *Wehrmacht* soldiers. (One of the jokes at the time was that "LSR" [*Luftschutzraum*], the name for designated bunkers, now meant "Lern schnell Russisch" (learn Russian quickly).⁷ German diarists and memoirists date the transition from war to occupation to the first contact with a Soviet soldier emerging from a cloud of smoke, black skin smeared with dirt, even blacker teeth, "slanted eyes" and the tell-tale broad smiles that marked the character of the more 'primitive' peoples. To many at the time, it seemed that Königsberg had been overtaken by the enemies of civilization. None of the old rules applied in this new world, which seemed to be a sinister inversion of old virtues and vices, and encounters with the entering Soviet troops convinced the Germans that they were completely helpless. Strengths were now weaknesses, and the unexpected, now more or less the norm. Their captors, whom they often portrayed in their diaries as primitive and beastly,⁸ predictably displayed the most unpredictable of behavior. The doctor and East Prussian aristocrat Lehdorff adopted this imagery in his diary when describing his first contact. Powerless and subject to the whims of the Soviet soldiers, he "felt like someone who'd gone bear-hunting, and forgotten his gun."

As we approached them they left the trunk alone and transferred their interest to us. With tommy-guns pressed to our bodies we were honoured by a thoroughgoing examination. They made short, growling noises and carried on methodically with the work. Other Russians, meanwhile, came out of the main block, hung round like sleigh-horses with the most fantastic objects. They too ran their hands over us; my fountain pen vanished, money and papers flew all over the place. My shoes were too bad for them. They hurried

⁴ Deichelmann, *Ich sah*, 13 [4 April 1945].

⁵ Lehdorff, *Token*, 86 [24 April 1945].

⁶ Wolfgang Lehnert, *Die Russen kamen—und blieben. Erlebnisse eines ostpreußischen Jungen bei Königsberg in den Jahren 1944 bis 1948* (Berlin: Frieling, 2001), 17.

⁷ Michael Wieck, *Zeugnis vom Untergang Königsbergs: Ein "Geltungsjude" Berichtet* (Heidelberg: L. Schneider, 1988), 215.

⁸ This portrayal is more prevalent in diaries and reports from the late 1940s than in the memoirs written later. In many memoirs written in the 1990s the entering Soviet troops are still depicted as evil, but also as fully human. Many of these memoirists, who were mostly children at the time, see a connection between the suffering of the Russian civilians in the Eastern Occupied Territories and their own experience, whereas diarists and earlier memoirists did not openly reflect on the motives of the soldiers and their experience in the war.

away with a short-legged gait over the ruins and through bomb craters to the other block and disappeared in the doorways. Their mode of locomotion left us gaping: when the situation suggested it they dropped on their hands and ran on all fours.⁹

The residents of the small town of Großkuhren, as Lehnert recalled, found themselves forcibly herded into the town assembly hall, unsure about what would happen next. The Soviet lieutenant, dressed in Red Army uniform, stood above the crowd and announced in German, "Wieviel Uhr?" ("What time is it?").

As good-natured as the Germans were, they looked anxiously at their wristwatches and the old men at their pocket watches. All of those who looked at a watch were registered, and the little devils collected the watches and stashed them in a rucksack.¹⁰

Almost every German in possession of a wristwatch—that marker of civilized life—lost it in the first month of occupation.¹¹ When "countless Russians" came up to the young mother Marga Pollmann, they shouted, "Watches, Watches!" as they seized the Germans' arms and tried to rip them from the sockets. When a watch was not turned over immediately, she remembered, "it continued brutally to our upper arms."¹² Where the buildings and barricades once echoed with the loudspeaker's promise of the international solidarity of the working class (as during the siege), now "the murmur of 'Uri, Uri' ('waatchy, waatchy' the Russian form of the German *Uhren, Uhren*) filled the streets. It was not enough to have just one watch; the soldiers 'want watches, watches, watches.'"¹³

Watches were usually the first and most prized acquisition, but Soviet soldiers, it seemed, took anything they could, from jewelry and valuables to food and clothing. No one could anticipate what their whims would demand, although the troops seemed to be engaging in active consumerism, as Falk noticed in the first days after the surrender of the city.

Hardly do they see us, and we're greeted with exultation. A soldier reaches for my handbag and pours the contents onto the road for a better look. The pack hurls itself onto my suitcase and wants to pry it open with a knife. I get to it before them and open the suitcase myself. In only a few minutes each of the Russians has grabbed one of the dresses lying there and is pleased with it (*selig darüber*). They leave me the suitcase still half full with clothing, along with the purse, with its contents lying on the road.¹⁴

⁹ Lehdorff, *Token*, 52 [9-24 April 1945].

¹⁰ Lehnert, *Die Russen*, 17.

¹¹ Hannelore Müller, "Königsberg 1945-1948: Das war unsere Befreiung. Erinnerung 1995," in *Frauen in Königsberg, 1945-1948*, Kulturstiftung der deutschen Vertriebenen (Bonn: Kulturstiftung der deutschen Vertriebenen, 1998), 74; Kirstein, *Aus schwerer Zeit*, 47 [30 January 1945]; Michael Wieck, *A Childhood under Hitler and Stalin: Memoirs of a "Certified" Jew*, trans. Penny Milbouer (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 129.

¹² Marga Pollmann, "Königsberg 1945-1947. Bericht 1947," in *Frauen*, 55.

¹³ Deichelmann, *Ich sah*, 20 [9 April 1945].

¹⁴ Falk, *Ich blieb*, 7 [8-11 April 1945].

In these first weeks of occupation, Germans could not keep hold of their possessions for long. Whatever was not forcibly removed from them on the streets was stolen from their homes. In the euphoria of victory, Soviet troops looted and pillaged each town they entered.

Germans could not begin to sympathize with the Red Army's revenge as they saw their possessions carted off and their homes burned to the ground. Many of them had already assumed that the Russians were Asiatic, half-human animals (*Menschentier*), and the behavior of the troops in these first days only served to confirm their prejudices. Supplied with liquor stores abandoned by the retreating *Wehrmacht*, many Soviet soldiers spent their evenings in a stupor. The more they drank, the more animalistic they seemed to become, and as Pollmann later reported, "in these first days of the delirious conquest (*Eroberertau-mels*), no Russian was sober."¹⁵ The soldiers left a trail of destruction in their wake. "The street ditches always offered the same image," Lehnert recalled about the troops' march through the small East Prussian towns on their way to the city: "dead horses, dead men, injured German soldiers in mortal agony whine with pain, but the Russian soldiers showed no compassion and pointed at us: 'You are all criminals!'"¹⁶

Soon the search for German soldiers became a search for German women, and the unmistakable calls of "Davai!" and "Frau komm" were heard in all of the bunkers and cellars in the city. At the time, it seemed to German women who had seen the images of the barbaric rapist depicted in Nazi propaganda films, that the Soviet troops took seriously Ilya Ehrenburg's supposed call to seek retribution by taking German blondes as their own (no matter that Ehrenburg had written metaphorically about the German state). No one was immune to the violence; troops entered Königsberg's main hospitals, where they commandeered equipment, and marched the sick and wounded out into the yard for interrogation. They set fires under the beds of those too frail to get up and raped the sick and injured women.¹⁷ These atrocities were too commonly reported to be isolated incidents, although military commanders did sometimes try to intervene. Lehnert noted that when one Red Army major realized that his troops were beating and raping patients sick with scarlet fever, typhus, and diphtheria, he called out for them to stop and "hurled himself like a tank among his men." By the time he could stop them, four women were already dead.¹⁸ The major's reaction did not seem typical, however; Deichelmann figured that about eighty percent of the surviving women in Königsberg were raped or violently mishandled in the first weeks of the occupation.¹⁹ Wanda, a woman interned in the Rothenstein labor camp, supposedly claimed to Lehnert with "unmistakable pride" that she held the record for rape; "she counted up to a hundred and twenty-eight times."²⁰

Women's reactions to violence against them were varied and complex, but they seemed to share, as the historian Atina Grossman describes the attitudes of the Berliners, the sense that they were victims of "a surging Asian flood and marauding Red Beast tearing through what was supposedly still a pacific, ordinary German land."²¹ German women

¹⁵ Pollmann, "Königsberg," 55.

¹⁶ Lehnert, *Die Russen*, 21.

¹⁷ Deichelmann, *Ich sah*, 23-24 [20 April 1945].

¹⁸ Lehnert, *Token*, 59.

¹⁹ Deichelmann, *Ich sah*, 26 [20 April 1945].

²⁰ Lehnert, *Token*, 108 [30 April 1945].

²¹ Grossman, "Liberators," 50.

tried to make themselves less desirable to these soldiers by altering their appearance: covering their heads in scarves, smearing dirt on their faces, in order to look as unattractive as possible, “like old, hunchbacked grandmothers,” but most of these tactics were futile.²² If a woman tried to hide herself and was found, she risked the chance that the rape would be more brutal than if she volunteered herself as soon as the soldier singled her out. The one tactic that had the chance of working was to present oneself as sick, either with tuberculosis or—more effectively—with a venereal disease. Fear of contamination (and the disciplinary consequences) was one of the few reliable deterrents.²³ But once too many German women learned the rough pronunciation in Russian for “sick,” [*bol’na*], the soldiers might try to discern for themselves who was telling the truth.

Soviet *Ostarbeiter* who had been detained in Königsberg during the war also found themselves susceptible to sexual violence. Suspected of being spies or traitors or simply serving as outlets for sexual frustration, these women, too, were abused; Deichelmann watched in horror as “our Russians were also dragged about (*hineingezerrt*).”²⁴ Lehndorff discovered that “Wally, our plucky little Russian nurse, was lying among the patients with blood streaming over her face, not stirring. The Russians she had tried to intercept had seized her by the hair and dashed her to the floor, face downwards. Her upper jaw was broken and several teeth had been knocked out. She was conscious, but made no sound.”²⁵ Deichelmann described how one doctor decided to take up the issue of rape and other atrocities with the supervising General Smirnov (possibly the same General Smirnov who was in charge of the city’s entire Military Command Office).

While the German nurse who was working as an interpreter was still considering how to bring the delicate topic up with the General, he himself asked whether many rapes were occurring in the city. Already interrupting the descriptions of the atrocities from the start, he announced with a smile: “*Woina!*” (= *C’est la guerre*). We have not expressly allowed the troops to do it, but we also haven’t forbidden it.”²⁶

After the war ended, rape, violence, and atrocities became less common during the daytime but remained commonplace at night. In the towns and in the countryside, women were continually threatened with sexual violence for the next three years. No German woman felt entirely safe around a Russian man.

Germans saw themselves as the victims of an animalistic aggression beyond the limits of rational behavior. Trying to explain the widespread occurrence of rape, the West German scholarly commission set up to document the fate of Germans living east of the Oder-Neisse Line (the so-called Schieder Commission)²⁷ explained in the early 1950s that “it is clear that these rapings [sic] were the result of a manner of conduct and mentality [that is] inconceivable and repulsive to the European mind.” The reprehensible behavior of the Red

²² Wieck, *Zeugnis*, 228.

²³ Falk, *Ich blieb*, 9.

²⁴ Deichelmann, *Ich sah*, 26 [20 April 1945]; Wieck, *A Childhood*, 66.

²⁵ Lehndorff, *Token*, 51-2.

²⁶ Deichelmann, *Ich sah*, 25-6 [20 April 1945].

²⁷ The commission was led by the Königsberg history professor, former Nazi party member and *Lebensraum* advocate Theodor Schieder, and included a number of other Königsberg historians, including Hans Rothfels (excluded from the university as a Jew during the *Gleichschaltung*) and Werner Conze.

Army was a natural inheritance of Mongol primitiveness; in the “traditions and notions of the Asiatic parts of Russia [...] women are just as much the booty of the victors” as cash, jewelry, furniture, and booze from shops and homes.²⁸ The Soviet troops of non-European ancestry were the “most unbridled and savage in these doings,” proving that “certain traits of the Asiatic mentality [contributed] in a large degree to these excesses.”²⁹

At the time of the occupation, however, Germans heard a different explanation from the Soviet troops themselves. The soldiers repeatedly shared their stories about the *Wehrmacht*'s abuses against Soviet civilians on the Eastern Front, calling into question the clearcut division between the civilized and the barbarians. As Grossman explains, “the vengeful memory summoned was not a parallel violation by a German raping a Russian woman, but of a horror on a different order: it was the image of a German soldier swinging a baby, torn from its mothers arms, against a wall—the mother screams, the baby’s brains splatter against the wall, the soldier laughs.”³⁰ Michael Wieck in his memoir presents a more nuanced view of the first German civilians’ contact with the ‘primitives,’ many of them from Central Asia.

A few tried out bicycles, but fell off them. These soldiers came from regions where there were neither bicycles nor bathrooms. As I went to find the still-functioning toilet in the first floor of our house, they had done their main business on the floor and used a towel, when we would have used paper. It stank horribly. The years of heavy Russian casualties forced them to mobilize men from the most remote regions of Russia, and with the taking of Königsberg, these children of the steppes experienced their first modern city. Excited to the utmost and exuberant in the joy of victory, they let go of all control and were free of all inhibitions to act out any drive, be it sex, power, possession, gluttony, or murder; without fear of punishment or other consequences. What hatred! But, those who had attacked and defended as mercilessly as the Germans would be fought and defeated just as mercilessly.³¹

Wieck, as half-Jewish, could sympathize with the horror of German civilians while understanding the anger of those the Germans had with such self-satisfaction cast as *Untermenschen*.

For the Germans of Königsberg, the Soviet people’s historic victory was a broken promise, and liberation was Hell’s dominion on Earth. Eleven days after the fall of Königsberg, Deichelmann lamented, with deep religious imagery, how

[t]he street ditch is bed, is grave, the sky is the cover, is goal, is salvation. O, heaven is near, and the need is unbearable, the trembling arm can hardly steer the rod, the meager legs can carry the light emaciated body no more, the blurry eyes can no longer see the stone, the thorn that now pushes through the tattered sole into the wounds of the burning foot. Heaven come, take me! Yes, we pray [...]. But must one wait until God wants to open his kingdom for us, where he now permits Satan to run over the Earth? [...] This East

²⁸ *Expulsion*, 49.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Grossman, “Liberators,” 50-1.

³¹ Wieck, *Zeugnis*, 227-8.

Prussian soil, which has nourished us for so long, and into which we laid down our loved ones, which has drunk our sweat and our blood, it does not nourish us any more.³²

The Königsberg of Hell looked much like pre-war Königsberg had, only in reverse image. Another doctor, Lehdorff, whose aristocratic roots had established him as a local notable as well as a specialist in medicine, found himself arrested in the first days after the fall and interned in the Rothenstein NKVD camp, formerly a large automobile garage. “This spot is familiar to me too: a few weeks before the outbreak of war I got my car repaired here.” Homeless and stripped of all of his possessions (except his Bible), Lehdorff saw Russian soldiers and impoverished German forced laborers wearing the nightgowns stolen from his family’s estate—he recognized the embroidered initials on the shirts. “For the sake of completeness one now lives on the reverse side of everything,” he wrote.³³ The masters of Königsberg had become its servants and, as Deichelmann lamented, “our bondage has begun.”³⁴

* * *

The new occupiers saw themselves not as captors but as liberators, and the defeat of Nazism meant Europe’s release from bondage. But Königsberg lay in ruins, and the military had to act quickly to save the city from complete collapse, or else risk the lives of almost 100,000 civilians who remained behind. But these German civilians had so recently been the enemy, and even Soviet forced laborers could not be trusted to have maintained their loyalty while abroad. The Red Army had to secure its victory, and that meant systematically weeding out any potential resistance.

Throughout the invasion in the first months of 1945, NKVD units carried out mass arrests of Germans and Soviet citizens (both former POWs and civilian forced laborers), forcing every person in the province to undergo the process of “filtration.”³⁵ With the fall of Fortress Königsberg in April, the number of potential spies, traitors, infiltrators, and guerilla fighters doubled overnight: every bomb shelter, every bunker, every apartment in Königsberg could be an ambush or a breeding ground for future resistance. Therefore, the Red Army emptied the entire city within days: as German soldiers and civilians emerged from their bunkers, either coaxed at gunpoint or smoked out from the fires in the building above, they were herded into the streets, searched for weapons, and divided up—German soldiers separated from civilians, men separated from women, Soviet citizens and foreign nationals separated from Germans. The Soviet citizens were sent directly to NKVD-organized camps, while foreign nationals were sent to the neighborhood military commands. German soldiers were interned in POW camps (quickly reestablished from Nazi camps designed for the same purpose, some of which were inside Königsberg), and German civilians were marched to several central collection points within the city.³⁶

³² Deichelmann, *Ich sah*, 27 [20 April 1945].

³³ Lehdorff, *Token*, 82 [20 April 1945].

³⁴ Deichelmann, *Ich sah*, 23 [9 April 1945].

³⁵ See for example, an NKVD report about the fulfillment of orders for arrest, including 10,752 Germans, 707 of them military personnel, and 10,045 civilians, RGVA 38680.1.76.3, 11, no date [no later than 10 March 1945].

³⁶ GARF 9401.2.95.41, 43, 13 April 1945.

The scale of arrests was massive, and they were not limited only to Germans. By 11 April 1945, only two days after the surrender, the Third Belorussian Front as a whole reported that 42,817 people had been collected, including 37,409 Germans, but also numerous other nationalities from across Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, including 1,011 Poles, 1,986 Lithuanians, 1,299 Russians, 388 Ukrainians, and 556 Belorussians. From inside Königsberg alone, the NKVD reported by 13 April, only three days after the surrender, that a total of 60,526 people had been collected, among them 32,573 Germans, 13,052 Soviet citizens, and 14,901 citizens from other countries. Of those collected, already 1,710 had been arrested as dangerous opposition to the new Soviet order, including 152 “German spies” and “terrorists,” 1,501 members of National Socialist organizations (including the Hitler Youth), and 57 “assistants to the German occupiers” and “other enemy elements”—often Soviet citizens determined to be collaborators: 42 Russians, 20 Ukrainians, 14 Poles, and 12 Belorussians.³⁷



*Soviet soldiers search for landmines among the corpses of horses in Königsberg.*³⁸

The civilians were led westward out of the city on forced “propaganda marches” (as German diarists and memoirists called them—an uneasy analogue to the Nazis’ forced march of Stutthof inmates out of Königsberg just over two months before), while the Red

³⁷ GARF 9401.2.95.18-9, 13 April 1945; GARF 9401.2.95.39-43, 13 April 1945.

³⁸ Photograph by G. Samsonova, Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv kino-foto dokumentov, 27 May 1945, <http://www.transphoto.ru/photo/163593/>, (accessed 14 August 2013). Date is probably inaccurate; because the horses appear to be freshly killed, the date is more likely mid-April 1945.

Army remained behind to scour basements and bunkers for hidden traps and bombs.³⁹ The German civilians had no possibility to bring provisions with them for the journey (those who did found them swiftly ‘liberated’ by soldiers seeking trophies). They were left without food, material possessions, and in many cases, shoes or coats. The adults were divided up into categories according to their ability to work: elderly women and those with children in one column, the remainder in another.⁴⁰ The marches around the province lasted for days or weeks, in no particular direction, rarely far from the city, and often in circles, up to 25 to 30 kilometers per day.⁴¹ They spent the evening in barns or sometimes under the open sky, and soldiers came with lanterns to search out the women each night. Those who became too weak to go further were usually shot, sometimes after they were raped once more.⁴²

When the columns reached an estate or functional building (sometimes a prison), NKVD agents set up an interrogation station to filter the civilians. The old East Prussian estates at Corben, Quanditten, Tannenwalde, Wargen, Karmitten to the north of the city, the Labiau prison, and the villages of Starckenberg (to the east of Königsberg) and Jerusalem (to the south) were all converted into temporary internment camps; meanwhile Nazi labor camps, prisons, and satellite concentration camps used were turned into filtration points and longer-term detention for both POWs and civilians. One of the major detention centers was Quednau: the village on the northeast outskirts of Königsberg, which had housed East Prussia’s first and short-lived concentration camp in 1933, which then became a POW camp during the war and had been transformed into a *Volkssturm* barracks.⁴³ NKVD operatives set up detention centers in each administrative district of East Prussia, including longer-term prisons in Königsberg, Tapiau, Bartenstein (soon turned over to Poland), and Insterburg.⁴⁴

The interrogation, carried out with NKVD translators, many of whom were Poles or Soviet Jews who could speak German or Yiddish, was grueling and involved physical and psychological intimidation. German civilians were questioned about their personal history, their party membership, the location of any German soldiers in hiding. They were also asked for the names of party members they knew—neighbors, friends, and acquaintances. Despite their language skills, translators and NKVD officers seemed to have little understanding of the social and political situation in Germany, and in many cases, party members were released, and those who refused to confess (whether or not they were actual party members) found themselves imprisoned for hiding presumed party membership.⁴⁵ As Lehndorff wrote in late April 1945,

³⁹ Arbušauskaitė, “Das tragische Schicksal,” 9-10.

⁴⁰ Gerhild Luschnat, *Die Lage der Deutschen in Königsberger Gebiet 1945-1948* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1996), 42.

⁴¹ Hugo Linck, *Königsberg, 1945-1948*, 5th. ed. (Leer, Germany: Gerhard Rautenberg, 1987), 17.

⁴² Luschnat, *Die Lage*, 43; Wieck, *Zeugnis*, 232; Hildegard Rosin, *Führt noch ein Weg zurück?* (Leer, Germany: Gerhard Rautenberg, 1983), 27; Elfriede Kalusche, *Unter dem Sowjetstern: Erlebnisse einer Königsbergerin in Nordostpreussen, 1945-1947* (Munich: Schild Verlag, 1974), 31.

⁴³ GARF 9401.2.95.43, 13 April 1945. Quednau became the site of one of the main NKVD prisons within days of the fall of the city, with a capacity of up to 25,000.

⁴⁴ GARF 9401.2.93.31, 15 May 1945.

⁴⁵ Luschnat, *Die Lage*, 45; *Dokumentation der Vertreibung der Deutschen Bevölkerung aus den Gebieten östlich der Oder-Neisse*, vol. II, 118 [cited hereafter as *Dokumentation*, vol. II].

The [NKVD] examination is not for the purpose of extracting from people what they know—which would be uninteresting anyway—but of forcing certain declarations out of them. The methods employed are very primitive; people are beaten up until they confess that they once belonged to the Nazi Party. The result is more or less the opposite of what one would expect, namely that those who hadn't been of the Party would come off better. The authorities start from the assumption that everybody *must* have been in the Party.⁴⁶

“Everybody” also included the professed political and social opponents of National Socialism, not that many had survived the political persecution and the war. The results of the interrogation were typed in Russian (not translated), and the Germans were expected to sign, unable to verify what had been written.⁴⁷ Those deemed politically dangerous or in exceptional health were sent to the newly established detention camps for further filtration, forced labor in Siberia, or execution.⁴⁸ The majority of able-bodied men did not return to the city, and many thousand women were also deported for forced labor.⁴⁹

Despite Lehndorff's mockery of the NKVD forced testimony, Soviet troops had real reason to be suspicious; as they marched across East Prussia, they had been met by scores of Germans rushing toward them with friendly waves and exclamations of “Kamerad!” “Genosse!” and the occasional “Tovarishch!”—everyone claimed to have hated Nazism and had secretly been an antifascist. When Ilya Ehrenburg had toured several small towns in East Prussia in February, he had found this opportunistic antifascism infuriating.

[I] tried to find out from a Catholic priest, from a professor of Marburg [U]niversity, from old men and schoolboys what they thought about the notion of a ‘master race’, about the conquest of India, about Hitler's personality, about the Auschwitz incinerators. The reply was always the same: ‘We are not responsible’. One man said that he had never taken any interest in politics, that the war was a calamity, that only the SS was behind Hitler; another assured me that the last elections in 1933 he had voted for the Social-Democrats; a

⁴⁶ Lehndorff, *Token*, 96 [30 April 1945].

⁴⁷ Luschnat, *Die Lage*, 45.

⁴⁸ Few declassified archival records document the spontaneous executions or deportation of forced labor to Siberia from East Prussia; most of the accounts come from Germans after their return. See, for example, the memoir of an East Prussian woman sent in 1945 to Siberia for forced labor: Hildegard Rauschenbach, *Lager 6437* (Leer, Germany: Verlag Gerhard Rauschenbach, 1984), and another report of a woman sent in April to a women's internment camp in Tapiau, then to Nizhnyi Tagil in the Urals, but returned to the Soviet Zone of Occupation (Frankfurt an der Oder) in August 1945 because of illness and inability to work: GStPK HA XX Rep. 99c. Nr. 38, December 1945. Regarding a NKVD children's labor camp in Tapiau/Gvardeisk in 1946 for up to 1000 children under the age of 14, GARF 9401c.12.183.182; Heike Pfeiler-Breitenmoser, “Tapiau/Gvardeisk, ein Jugendarbeitslager im Gebiet Königsberg/Kaliningrad 1946,” *Berichte und Forschungen* 8, *Jahrbuch des Bundesinstitutes für Ostdeutsche Kultur und Geschichte* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2000), 65-78.

⁴⁹ Luschnat, *Die Lage*, 42; Wilhelm Starlinger, *Grenzen der Sowjetmacht im Spiegel einer West-Ostbegegnung hinter Palisaden von 1945-1954: mit einem Bericht der deutschen Seuchenkrankenhäuser Yorck und St. Elisabeth über das Leben und Sterben in Königsberg von 1945-1947: zugleich ein Beitrag zur Kenntnis des Ablaufes gekoppelter Grossseuchen unter elementaren Bedingungen* (Würzburg, Germany: Holzner-Verlag, 1955), 38.

third swore that he was in touch with his brother-in-law, a Communist who lived in Hanover and was a member of a clandestine organization there.⁵⁰

As the Germans would have it, the majority of Germans had already denazified themselves through their apathy. As far as the Soviets were concerned, however, this spineless acquiescence and claimed indifference only fueled their righteous anger.

During the many rounds of screening interrogations, even Germans who could document some kind of resistance to Nazism, such as a communist party card or proof of imprisonment, did not fare well. Any surviving communists, and even Jews, underwent, as Hans Deichelmann wrote in his diary, "'tangibly' intense" (*'fühlbar' verschäftes*) questioning and were encouraged to confess that they had cooperated with the Gestapo, "because otherwise you wouldn't still be living."⁵¹ Michael Wieck recalled that when it was his turn for interrogation, the NKVD agents suspected that he was a Hitler Youth member or a soldier; because he had torn the yellow Star of David from his arm in the first days, finally freed from that humiliation, he had no papers or means to prove that he was Jewish. When he tried to appeal to a Jewish officer, the man replied flatly, "We know that all Jews were killed by Hitler. If you are still alive, that means you must have worked for the Nazis."⁵² By contrast, it seemed to many that some lower-level party members got released with little more than a slap on the wrist, since they had something concrete to confess.⁵³

Most of the prominent East Prussian Nazis had already long ago fled (Erich Koch) or had died in battle (the Königsberg *Kreisleiter* Ernst Wagner, who took charge of the city after Koch's flight, and Heinrich Schoene, the Police President who returned from his post in Ukraine and chose to become a frontline soldier.)⁵⁴ The arrests made in the first weeks were mostly of minor officials—those who had not had the connections or money to escape before the invasion, or who had stayed to fight the final battle. Among them were the former Königsberg city judge, Dr. Kurt Czernik [*Tsernik*]; a POW camp commander for Königsberg, Otto Andris; the head of the Gendarmerie for the city of Labiau, Lux Marquart [*Liuks Markvoot*]; the head of the Gendarmerie for Goldap region, Wilhelm Gomann [*Goman*]; a Public Prosecutor for Pomerania, Eberhard Meyer [*Meer*], who was not only a party member, but also an owner of a beer brewery; a former small-town city police chief, Emil Litz [*Lits*], who admitted during interrogation to personally overseeing the arrest and shooting of 500 communists and Soviet citizens; an assistant to the head of a POW camp in Königsberg, Fritz Guss (the only one not identified in the records as a party member); an assistant to the mayor of Königsberg, Willi Schmick [*Shmik*], and a Polish Gestapo member and commander of a POW camp at the Königsberg port, Kazimir Makovetzky [*Makovetskii*].⁵⁵

Although the mass collections trickled off by the first weeks of May, German civilians who had been released from the initial filtration were often re-arrested, along with others who had managed previously to escape detention. The NKVD reported another 1280 arrests across East Prussia as of 15 May 1945, including 446 German "counterrevolutionar-

⁵⁰ Ehrenburg, *The War*, 165.

⁵¹ Deichelmann, *Ich sah*, 32 [20 April 1945].

⁵² Wieck, *Zeugnis*, 234, 244.

⁵³ Deichelmann, *Ich sah*, 32 [20 April 1945].

⁵⁴ Prit Buttar, *Battleground Prussia: The Assault on Germany's Eastern Front, 1944-1945* (Long Island City, New York: Osprey, 2010), 294.

⁵⁵ GARF 9401.2.95.42-43, 13 April 1945.

ies,” spies, and terrorists actively attempting (at least in the NKVD’s estimation) to undermine the Soviet occupation, along with 121 Gestapo and police workers, 678 “active members” of National Socialist parties, 18 Nazi youth leaders. Only three of those arrested had been government officials. As had been the case before, the vast majority of those arrested were German, but among them 23 Russians and 29 Poles and other nationalities.⁵⁶ Notable among them were a number of employees of the former Stutthof concentration camp, including Poles and one woman from Ukraine, most likely prisoners who had been promoted to guard roles.⁵⁷

The numbers declined over the summer, as conquest turned into a steadier occupation. At the end of May, a total of 14,115 people were still under arrest in East Prussia as spies or party members; two months later, number dropped to 10,621, after 2,344 detainees had been released due to a lack of compromising evidence.⁵⁸ By late summer, there were only a few minor incidents to report, notable mostly for their futility: a few lingering cases of German soldiers disguising themselves as civilians and shooting Red Army soldiers when confronted; a few ragged bands of Hitler Youth “Werwolf” guerrillas attempting to overthrow the government from their forest hide-outs.⁵⁹ By early August, NKVD operatives reported that the situation in East Prussia was “mostly calm.”⁶⁰

The military commanders had little time to celebrate, however. The city remained in ruins, and the widespread hunger and unsanitary conditions among the Germans threatened an outbreak of epidemic disease. The new Soviet occupiers would have to work quickly to resurrect the material foundations of the city—food provision, water supply and sanitation, housing, transportation, and the basic necessities of urban life.

⁵⁶ GARF 9401.2.96.256, 15 May 1945.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 257.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 260-1.

⁵⁹ GARF 9401.2.98.39-46, 6 August 1945; GARF 9401.2.96.260, 15 May 1945.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

Soviet Königsberg

By the time Königsberg fell in April, there had been an informal understanding among the Red Army command that the territory would no longer be German. The Polish Corridor had proven to be a political and economic disaster, and both out of the desire to punish Germany and to eliminate any future “drive to the East,” the Allies agreed that, in a turn away from previous principles of national self-determination, Germany could no longer have an exclave. The triumph of the principle of national homogeneity and contiguity would suggest that the territory be divided between the reconstituted neighbors Poland and Lithuania, and that the German populations be either assimilated or expelled to the new Germany.¹

East Prussia first caught Stalin’s eye in August 1939, when Moscow was preparing to sign the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Hitler and Stalin agreed to partition Poland and for the Soviet Union to annex the Baltic republics, creating a Soviet-German border between Lithuania and East Prussia. This shared border, combined with the historical precedent of East Prussia as a strategic ground for military action both during the Napoleonic Wars and the First World War, seems to have led Stalin to consider East Prussia a threat. That threat became a reality less than two years later, when Germany invaded the USSR. In December 1941, during a conversation with the British Foreign Minister Anthony Eden in Moscow, Stalin first introduced the idea that part of East Prussia might temporarily go to Soviet Lithuania as a reparations payment, similar to the Allied Occupations of the Rheinland and Ruhr after the First World War.²

As the war carried on, suggestions for provisional occupation turned into demands for full annexation. At the Teheran in December 1943, when Churchill suggested incorporating all of East Prussia into postwar Poland to compensate for Polish territory annexed by

¹ After a meeting with Stalin in December 1941, Anthony Eden reported that all of the Allies assumed that East Prussia would be given to Poland outright or divided between Poland and Lithuania. Richard J. Kirkus, *The Kaliningrad Question* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002), 29; Tony Sharp, “The Russian Annexation of the Königsberg Area 1941–45” *Survey: A Journal of East & West Studies* 23, no. 4 (1977), 156 [156-162].

² Iurii Kostiashev, “Stalin i Kaliningradskaia Oblast’: Popytka Istoricheskoi Rekonstruktsii,” *Acta Historica Universitatis Klaipedensis* XVIII (2009), 58 [57–7]; Krickus, *Kaliningrad Question*, 29.

the Soviet Union, Stalin countered during the proceedings that a sliver of East Prussia should go to the Soviet Union.

Marshal Stalin said that if the Russians would be given the northern part of East Prussia, running along the left bank of the Niemen and include Tils[i]t and the City of Königsberg, he would be prepared to accept the Curzon Line as the frontier between the Soviet Union and Poland. He said the acquisition of that part of East Prussia would not only afford the Soviet Union an ice-free port but would also give to Russia a small piece of German territory which he felt was deserved.³

“All the more true” Stalin added, “because, historically speaking, this is ancient Slavic soil. If the English agree to transfer that territory to us, we will agree to the formulation proposed by Churchill.”⁴ In reality, Königsberg’s port froze quite frequently in the winter; an unspoken motive for Stalin’s insistence might have been Churchill’s earlier refusal to recognize the USSR’s 1940 annexation of the three Baltic states, leading Stalin to attempt to secure East Prussia as buffer for the Soviet Union’s western annexations. Churchill agreed to study the problem, and when Stalin repeated his request in follow-up correspondence in February 1944, Churchill responded sympathetically, assuring Stalin that he had reminded the Polish government in exile

of the fact that the soil of this part of East Prussia was dyed with Russian blood expended freely in the common cause. Here the Russian armies advancing in August 1914 and winning the battle of Gumbinnen and other actions had with their forward thrusts and with much injury to their mobilisation forced the Germans to recall two army corps from the advance on Paris which withdrawal was an essential part in the victory of the Marne. The disaster at Tannenberg did not in any way undo this great result. Therefore it seemed to me that the Russians had a historic and well-founded claim to this German territory.⁵

In tacit recognition of Stalin’s assertion of “ancient Slavic soil,” Churchill agreed that Russia had claim to the northern part of East Prussia by virtue of having fought there before. Once again, the exclave’s future was rationalized in terms of an imagined historical claim, as ideology came into dialogue with diplomatic bargaining.

³ United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, The Conferences at Cairo and Tehran, 1943* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1943), 604.

⁴ The reference to “ancient Slavic soil” is not included in the paraphrased English minutes published by the United States Department of State, only the mention that Stalin felt the territory was “deserved.” The Soviet publication from 1984 includes the quote about “ancient Slavic soil”: *Sovetskii Soiuz na mezhdunarodnykh konferentsiakh perioda Velikoi Otechestvennoi vojny 1941-1945 gg. Tom II. Tegeranskaia konferentsiia rukovoditelej trekh soiuznykh derzhav—SSSR, SShA i Velikobritanii (28 noiabria-1 dekabria 1943 g.)* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1984), 150.

⁵ Letter from Churchill to Stalin, 20 February 1944, reprinted in *Correspondence Between the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR and the Presidents of the USA and the Prime Ministers of Great Britain During the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945, Volume 1: Correspondence with Winston S. Churchill and Clement R. Attlee (July 1941-November 1945)* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1957), 207.

At the Potsdam Conference in July-August 1945, the Allies returned to the topic of Königsberg's future. Despite earlier informal agreements that the Soviet Union would get northern East Prussia, including Königsberg, a heated discussion broke out when Truman and Churchill suggested that in discussions about setting up a Control Commission for Germany before the final peace conference, according to the borders of the German state in 1937. The issue was that if the borders were returned, even provisionally, East Prussia would be set up with a standard Allied Occupation Zone, complete with a temporary German administration and oversight by the four Allied powers. Taken aback by Stalin's reply, Churchill and Truman reaffirmed their plan to give Königsberg eventually to the Soviet Union, but Stalin insisted sharply that if a German administration were set up in Königsberg, even temporarily, "we'll throw it out, we'll definitely throw it out."⁶ Churchill and Truman ultimately agreed that Königsberg would remain under Soviet control for the time being, but insisted that the final discussions of status and borders be determined in the formal peace treaty. As cooperation broke down between the Allies, that treaty never materialized, however, and Königsberg's provisional status became permanent.⁷ The southern two-thirds of East Prussia, including the cities of Elbing, Marienwerder, Deutsch-Eylau, Bartenstein, Rastenburg, Allenstein, Johannsburg, and Soldau, were incorporated into Poland, and the Memel Region, north of the Memel River, including the city of Memel, were folded into the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic. The remaining territory, including Königsberg and the Samland Peninsula, Insterburg, Tilsit, Pillau, Cranz, and Gumbinnen, fell to the Soviet Union, and was formally annexed on 17 October 1945.

When the city fell on 9 April 1945, however, those negotiations were still months away. Rumors were wide-spread that Königsberg would be handed over to the Soviet Union (NKVD operatives in Königsberg already referred to the northern part of East Prussia as future Soviet territory in late May 1945, well in advance of the Potsdam Conference),⁸ but it was not clear to anyone in Königsberg at the time what it would actually mean for the city to become 'Soviet.' Unlike elsewhere in the Soviet Union, the re-annexed Baltic Republics, the future People's Democracies of East Central Europe, or even the future German Democratic Republic, no hopeful emigre government was waiting in the wings, preparing to return to Königsberg with ambitious plans for reconstruction.

In some ways, Königsberg provided an ideal stage for Sovietization because the war-time devastation would allow the new government to wipe away the former system with-

⁶ *Berlinskaiia (Potsdamskaia konferentsiia rukovoditelei trex derzhav—SSSR, SShA i Velikobritanii*, Moscow, 1984, 57; United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers: the Conference of Berlin (the Potsdam Conference)*, 1945, vol. 2 (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1945), 96.

⁷ For a comprehensive analysis of Kaliningrad's legal status during the Soviet and post-Soviet periods, including discussions of the Allied conferences and complications concerning Kaliningrad's international status, see A.V. Filatov, V.N. Patserina, *Naselenie Severo-Vostochnoi Prussii posle II Mirovoi Voyny. Pravovoi Analiz. Chast' I: Pereselenie ili Izgnanie? Pravovoye Predposylki i Posledstviia* (Kaliningrad, Russia: Biznes-Kontakt, 2001), 9-25.

⁸ Apollonov writes to Beria about "regions and cities in East Prussia that will go to the Soviet Union [...]" GARF 9401.2.96.256, 30 May 1945.

out much of a period of transition.⁹ But Königsberg was by no means a blank slate for the construction of socialism. There were traces of the street networks, parks and squares; the tram tracks criss-crossed the city in predetermined paths. There were also the remaining shells and foundations of buildings, the pylons of several bridges, and the fragments of water and sewage pipelines. Over the course of the next several years, the new government and the city's inhabitants, both Germans and Soviets, would refashion the remains of the city, reconfiguring not only the institutions, industry, and economy, but also public and private spaces—every building, park, square, house, factory, and street would be transformed.

Soviet officials would need to transform not only the urban landscape, but also the way people lived within it because remnants of Königsberg survived in the lives of those who remained behind. The NKVD Commander of the First Belorussian Front, Pavel Zelenin, reported on 13 April, 1945, that around 100,000 civilians (about a fifth of the prewar count) remained inside Königsberg, mostly women, children, and the elderly, among them very few who were able-bodied.¹⁰ Germans constituted the overwhelming majority of the population, but they were not the only remains of Königsberg left: there was also a large number of forced laborers and camp inmates drawn together from all over Europe: not only liberated Soviet *Ostarbeiter*, but also POWs from the Soviet Union, Poland, France, Italy, and Belgium. By October 1945, the Soviet civilian population in the city was registered at 4836 people (2351 men and 1985 women).¹¹ As the city was being rebuilt, the everyday life experience of both the remaining population and the new Soviet settlers developed in dialogue with the physical conditions in the city and the plans (both realized and unrealized) of the regime. Socialism was an economic system, but it was also, above all, an ideology. Not only was the city not a blank slate, but neither were the people. The Germans—former fascists, former enemies, the former masters of Königsberg, and now a defeated people—had to become proper anti-fascists fully committed to the communist project. The new government needed the Germans to build socialism (initially—to rebuild the remains), but the building of socialism required new—or sufficiently steeled—men and women.

Meanwhile, the meaning of socialism itself was changing in the wake of the war, and new Soviet settlers were developing their own ideas about what socialism would mean in their new homes. The future Soviet city of Königsberg was in the process of making itself, and the interactions of the Germans and Soviets in the city would have a profound impact on the way in which both sides came to understand the meaning of the war, their role in it, and the nature of the unfolding transformation.

In other newly-occupied Soviet territories, it was clear from the start who the beneficiaries of the new regime would be. The Soviet Zone of Occupation oversaw the transition toward a government *for* the Germans, just as the Baltic Socialist Republics were deemed to be run *by* and *for* the Lithuanian, Latvian, or Estonian peoples. Yet Stalin insisted at the

⁹ This course of action differed significantly from the policies adopted in the newly-Soviet Baltic republics, where private farms, local businesses, and select industries continued to operate in the first years after the war, despite the fact that the first stages of Sovietization had taken place during the brief annexation of the Baltic republics in 1940. For comparison with the situation in the Memel region, see Vygantis Vareikis, "Klaipėda (Memel) in der Nachkriegszeit 1945–1953," *Annaberger Annalen: Jahrbuch über Litauen und deutsch-litauische Beziehungen*, 3 (1995), 61 [52-66].

¹⁰ GARF 9401.2.95.39-43, 13 April 1945.

¹¹ GAKO R330.2.6.39, 30 October 1945.

Potsdam Conference in the summer of 1945 that there would be no German-run administration in postwar East Prussia. (Indeed, Stalin had claimed at the time that there were few Germans left because almost all of them had fled before the arrival of the Red Army.)¹² At the same time, there were no discussions of expelling them, even as provisions were made in the thirteenth article of the Potsdam Protocols (in response to the “wild” expulsions already taking place in the summer of 1945) to carry out the “organized and humane” expulsion of Germans from Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and other parts of Central and Eastern Europe to the Allied Zones of Occupation.¹³ Because Königsberg and the surrounding lands were designated as Soviet territory, even provisionally, the Potsdam agreements dictating the resettlement of German civilians did not apply, and the fate of the remaining Germans around Königsberg was left entirely to the Soviet Administration to decide.¹⁴ Until the Potsdam Conference, German refugees from the northern third of East Prussia were actually *encouraged* to return to their homes east of the Oder-Neisse Line. After 18 July, however, no more group transports were assembled, and as the borders between Polish and Soviet administrated areas of East Prussia became fixed, those Germans in Soviet East Prussia found it virtually impossible to leave.¹⁵

These Germans fell into a gray area, not quite Displaced Persons subject to repatriation, not quite liberated (annexed) peoples eligible for Soviet citizenship, as was the case in the reestablished Lithuanian SSR. After the armistice in May 1945, the local antifascists in Germany and elsewhere in East Central Europe were recruited from among the local population or imported from Moscow (as was the case with the high-level KPD emigres who, under Moscow’s close supervision, organized the development of German institutions in postwar Berlin. But in East Prussia and Königsberg, the ambiguity of the wartime occupation continued into the postwar, and the Königsberg Special Military District did not create German institutions to be run by antifascists but kept the Red Army system of appointing “Bürgermeisters” to serve as conduits between the Soviet officials and the German population.¹⁶

Stalin’s adage that the Hitlers came and went but that the German people (and, by extension, the German state) remained turned out to be only half true. With no German state in Königsberg, what would become of the German people? In the Soviet Zone of Occupation in Berlin, as in the Baltic Republics, the first stage of Sovietization was to purge the

¹² Bert Hoppe, *Auf den Trümmern von Königsberg: Kaliningrad 1946–1970* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2000), 29.

¹³ Pertti Ahonen, Gustavo Comi, Jerzy Kochanowski, Rainer Schulze, Tamas Stark, and Barbara Stelzl-Marx, *People on the Move: Forced Population Movements in Europe in the Second World War and its Aftermath* (New York: Berg, 2008), 91; Joseph B. Schechtman, *Postwar Population Transfers in Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1962), 36.

¹⁴ Kostiashev, “Stalin,” 60.

¹⁵ The first returnees were those who were met by the Red Army troops on their flight out; others came back from West Prussia and the Soviet Occupied Zone. The total number of returnees in some smaller towns was as great as 30 percent, but in most cases was only about a tenth of the former population. See Ruth Kibelka, *Ostpreussens Schicksalsjahre* (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 2001), 42, 91.

¹⁶ Hoppe, *Auf den Trümmern*, 25-6. These “Bürgermeisters” had no power of their own, and were only used in the first months after the war. They rarely make a presence in the archival documents of the provisional military administration or later permanent civilian administration, and their presence is documented mostly from testimonies of former Bürgermeisters after the expulsion of the Germans to the Soviet Zone of Occupation in 1947-1948.

enemies of socialism (capitalists, landlords, representatives of other parties), so that the working classes could become the beneficiaries of the new revolutionary government. In Königsberg, these first stages of Sovietization seemed to have already been accomplished: the city was in ruins, its agriculture and industry decimated, the province's elites (the wealthy and Nazi party members) had mostly succeeded in fleeing westward before the Red Army's arrival. Those who remained were refugees completely uprooted from their former lives.

What would Sovietization mean if the old regime had been swept away, but the remaining population had not yet been designated as either the administrators or beneficiaries of the new socialist system? This ambiguity influenced the practical and ideological policies of rebuilding the city and caring for its population in the first weeks, months, and years after the war. The relationship of the German population to the construction of the new socialist city of Königsberg remained undetermined, and had a profound influence on the emerging contours of socialism.

Bringing the State Back In

The Red Army officer Nikolai Inozemtsev left Königsberg the day after the victory for an assignment in Insterburg, but he returned on 18 April to tour the remains. While he was inspired by their size and lingering beauty, which made the Soviet victory seem all the more impressive, it was “sad to see the endless procession of burned-down and destroyed buildings.” As Inozemtsev wrote, “there was a smell of death in the air (quite literally, for hundreds and thousands of corpses were decaying underneath the ruins).”¹ On 13 April 1945, Pavel Zelenin, the head of the Third Belorussian Front’s counter-intelligence agency SMERSH,² reported that Königsberg had been “turned into a heap of rubble.” The destruction had been so devastating that only in the south and west of the city did a few buildings remain undamaged. Fires were still burning, and the streets were blocked by remnants of collapsed buildings—brick and stone, iron and steel, wood and splintered remains of furniture. Soviet architects later reported that the city had been at least sixty percent destroyed; in some places, including most of the old city center, the Kneiphof Island, and the streets around the Königsberg Castle, only ten percent of the buildings remained. The eastern and southern districts of the city, as the center of the Soviet onslaught during the siege were also significantly damaged, up to eighty percent in some areas, while the northwestern districts outside the former city walls, including Hufen and Amalienau, were damaged somewhat less, at sixty to seventy percent.³

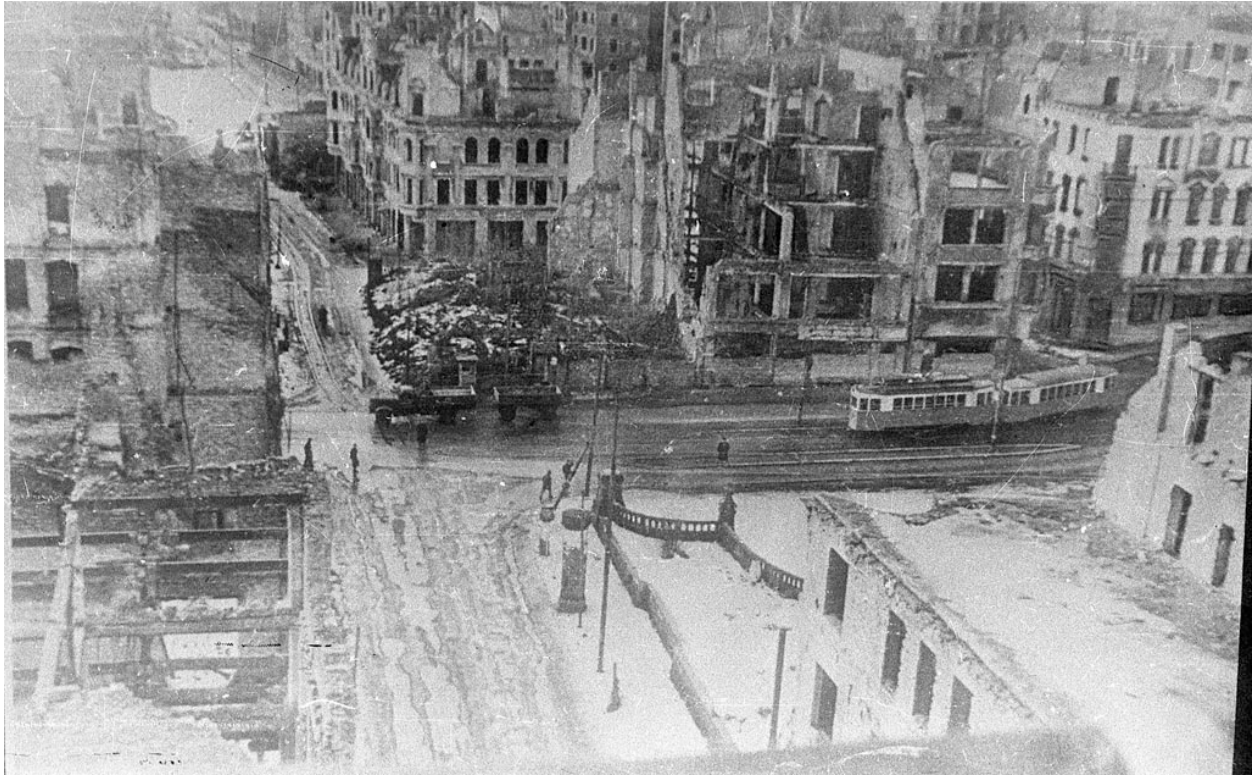
Königsberg was one of hundreds of cities razed to the ground during the Second World War. Along with dozens of other German cities, it was destroyed through Allied aerial raids (Königsberg had been firebombed months before Dresden); along with Hitler’s other “fortress cities,” including Breslau, even greater destruction was brought about by a prolonged and futile defense. The challenge of picking up the pieces after catastrophe was faced not only by these German cities in their defeat, but also by the cities the Germans had destroyed in their trail of destruction across East Central Europe and the Soviet Union, in-

¹ Inozemtsev, *Frontovoi Dnevnik*, 222 [18-20 April 1945].

² SMERSH was name for the Red Army’s counter intelligence agencies, formed from the Russian acronym meaning “death to spies” (*Smert’ shpionam*).

³ GAKO R310.1.7.28-9, no date [before October 1947].

cluding Kiev and Warsaw. Königsberg was one of a number German cities east of the Oder-Neisse line, including Danzig and Breslau, to be rebuilt as part of another state.



*Kaliningrad street, late 1940s.*⁴

But while Königsberg shared many common features with other post-catastrophic cities in Eastern and Central Europe, it faced some peculiar challenges. East Prussia had been the first German territory invaded, enduring a longer wartime occupation, and the wrath of the soldiers taking their “sacred revenge” was more furious and prolonged. Because East Prussia’s farmers fled westward in the winter of 1945, the crops did not get sown in time, leading to a miserable harvest in 1945 and shortages of seed grain for the next year’s crops. Also, compared to German cities further to the west, a larger percent of the population was uprooted and homeless, having already become refugees inside Königsberg or returning from the flight in the month after the war’s end. And while other Eastern European cities saw physical devastation coupled with the complete collapse of urban and agricultural networks, Königsberg was at once more heavily damaged and less able to secure resources for rebuilding because of its geographic isolation from the military command and relief aid organizations in Berlin.

Stalin, who had seemed particularly keen on obtaining Königsberg during the war, took little interest in it once it was secured. Investment in East Prussia’s postwar development was seen neither as part of creating future People’s Democracies, nor as geared toward rebuilding Soviet cities destroyed by the German army. In the highly-centralized gov-

⁴ Photographer unknown, <http://www.transphoto.ru/photo/64267/>, (accessed 14 August 2013).

ernment of the USSR, no one had the power or the resources to take an active interest in the region's development, and in the first year of the city's Sovietization, Königsberg seemed simply to have fallen off the radar.⁵

Without the participation of emigre antifascist committees or grassroots civilian organizations, Königsberg and the northern part of East Prussia came under a local military occupation. The 11th Guards Army of the Third Belorussian Front stayed behind after the fall of Fortress Königsberg, and a "Military Command Office of the City and Fortress Königsberg" was set up (on 7 April 1945, still during the siege) to organize the occupation. A month later, with the final victory in Berlin, a "Königsberg Special Military District" was established (10 May 1945) under the command of the 11th Guards Army General Kuz'ma Galitskii, to oversee the affairs of the entire territory. Finally, on 26 May 1945, a month and a half after the fall of the city, a "Provisional Administration for Civilian Affairs in Königsberg," under the direction of Viktor Gerasimovich Guzii, was established within the Special Military District to tend directly to the affairs of the city's civilian population, both Germans (the vast majority) and Soviets.⁶

The Special Military District and the city's Provisional Administration for Civilian Affairs received few cues about how to proceed, either from Moscow or from the Military Command in Berlin, besides broad orders to secure the territory and to resurrect industry and agriculture. Moscow and regional architects had begun planning the reconstruction of many Soviet cities while they were still under German occupation, and those plans were put into action soon after the Red Army recaptured them, but Königsberg had no centralized planning committee, no architects, no city council, and no budget. The reconstruction of the city was delayed, as was the region's incorporation into the government and economy of the USSR. The provisional military administration, left to its own devices, set out to resurrect the city through improvised, pragmatic rebuilding.

The provisional military administration worked to restore the foundations of city life, including basic municipal services, to rebuild its economy and industry. The most pressing task in the first months, however, was to gain control over the city's resources, and in 1945, the resource most necessary for life in the city was food. During the fall of Fortress Königsberg, the ration system established in the last months of the war fell apart along with the Nazi state that had organized it, and in the first days after the siege, German civilians became hunters and gatherers, scouring bomb shelters for canned foods and salvaging meat from the corpses of dead horses in the streets.⁷ When upwards of 70,000 German civilians returned to the city in late April following the interrogations, the Red Army conquerors were forced to become caretakers, lest the entire population of the city—not only the German civilians, but also German POWs housed in camps across the city, former forced laborers, and thousands of Red Army soldiers—starve to death. The physical survival of the

⁵ Kostiashov, "Stalin," 60.

⁶ V. S. Isupov, *Vostochnaia Prussia: s drevneishikh vremen do konsa vtoroi mirovoi voiny* (Kaliningrad, Russia: Kaliningradskoe Knizhnoe Izdatel'stvo, 1996), 440; Bernhard Fisch and Marina Klemeševa, "Zum Schicksal der Deutschen in Königsberg 1945–1948 (im Spiegel bisher unbekannter sowjetischer Quellen)," *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung* 44 (1995), 392 [391–400].

⁷ V. N. Maslov, "Prodovol'stvennyi vopros v deiatel'nosti sovetskoi voennoi komendatury Königsberga v 1945 g.," in *Vestnik Kaliningradskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta*, v.2 (Kaliningrad: Izdatel'stvo Kaliningradskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta, 2003), 47–52.

population—and of the primary workforce rebuilding the city—depended on the provisional military administration’s ability to assert control over the collection, production, and distribution of the city’s remaining resources, the most important of which was food.⁸

With the destruction of industry and agriculture, Königsberg no longer had an established base of food production, nor a means to distribute it, and so, for the first year, the city relied heavily on remaining *Wehrmacht* stockpiles and the food reserves of the Third Belorussian Front. But those resources were limited, and already in April 1945, the Head of the Military Command Office for the City and Fortress Königsberg, General-Major Smirnov, and Colonel V. Epshtein, his deputy in charge of food provision, warned that the city would soon have to become self-reliant because only limited funds were available from the military command in Berlin. In the spring of 1945, even before the establishment of the Special Military District, the Red Army created a number of military state farms (*sovkhozy*) across East Prussia to plant vegetables and grain to feed the troops because most East Prussian farmers had fled during the invasion. By mid-summer, the administration had shipped up to 10,000 Germans, many from inside Königsberg, to work in the fields. Within the city, a Trade Department and a Production Group were established, whose jobs it was to resurrect Königsberg’s food processing industry.⁹

The next task was to gain control over the material resources of the city. In the first days, there was little organized attempt to collect private and public property for military use; soldiers raided apartments for food and valuables, which they treated as their personal loot. But the military command soon attempted to secure control over Königsberg’s remaining wealth, issuing orders to collect everything from construction materials, apartment furniture, tools and equipment, and medical supplies. These orders constituted a semi-nationalization of the city’s resources, including goods that had once been considered private property, stored in individual businesses or private apartments. Numerous inventories document the scope and scale of the collection: an inventory of apartment furniture taken by the 11th Guards Army in late July 1945, for example, included 35 mirrors of various shapes and sizes, 19 couches, 98 upholstered chairs, 100 sofas, over 100 clocks, 274 stuffed ottomans, 143 pictures, 6 buffets, 30 dishes, 10 electric table lamps, 513 stools, 33 writing desks, 100 tables of various sizes, and two sewing machines.¹⁰ Often, this process took place in decentralized, piecemeal fashion—each district sending out teams to search apartments, businesses, and workshops—but in some cases, particularly in the cases of the larger industries and institutions, the collection was organized by Moscow. Many of the former university institutes, including the Hygiene Institute, the Agricultural Institute, and Veterinary Institute, were searched for materials, and the specialized equipment was sent not to the cen-

⁸ Ibid.; GAKO R330.2.4.8-9, 15 May 1945; GAKO R330.1.7.3, 6 May 1945; GAKO R330.1.3.1, 24 April 1945. The estimate of 70,000 is low—despite thousands of registered deaths over the next six months, the population estimates remain at around 70,000 into 1946. Population estimates for the city and for the Soviet-occupied part of East Prussia vary widely in the first months of the occupation and provisional military administration, anywhere from 60,000 to 100,000 German civilians in the city and 100,000 to 150,000 German civilians in the province. An estimate from 6 May 1945 noted that only 26,559 Germans had been registered in the city, and approximately 40,000 remained unregistered. In early May, many Germans who would eventually settle inside the city were still being held in internment camps or were still living in villages outside the city.

⁹ GAKO R330.1.3.1, 24 April 1945; Maslov, “Prodovol’stvennyi vopros,” 47-52; GAKO R330.1.7.27, 12 July 1945.

¹⁰ GAKO R330.1.12.28, 28 July 1945.

tral command in Königsberg, but back to Moscow as a reparations payment. (The Soviet officials organizing the collection used German civilians as their guides to translate markings on technical instruments and to figure out how to dismantle equipment for shipment.)¹¹ Each district command office had its own storage facilities, but the Trade Department, the office established in the summer of 1945 to supervise food production and distribution, organized a central warehouse for canned foods, vegetables, and grains.¹²

While the military administration continued its efforts to produce and distribute food and to gain control over Königsberg's material resources, over the summer of 1945, attention turned increasingly to larger-scale reconstruction. Red Army created a picture of Königsberg's industrial capacity by conducting surveys and inventories of the physical remains and by collecting information from archival documentation and interrogations of former workers from various industries. As early as December 1944, SMERSH reconnaissance teams reported on the industrial output of Königsberg, including Schichau-Werke's capacity to build small military cruiser ships and its twenty workshops to employ up to 20,000 workers (reportedly only 2,000 of them German), or the city's powerful port, which reportedly employed another 50,000 foreign laborers in the first month of 1945, repairing submarines and ships. By the time the city fell under siege, most of the industries were destroyed or evacuated, however: Schichau shuttered its doors because of a shortage of raw materials, and the nearby Steinfurt Train Car Factory was partially destroyed by Soviet aviation.¹³

Within weeks of the city's capture, a special commission arrived from Moscow to determine which industries could be saved. A number of industries remained, although all in a state of disrepair: notable among them were the Schichau-Werke Ship Building Plant, two paper milling factories, and the Steinfurt Waggonfabrik (Train Car Factory). A meat production plant, spirits distillery, grain elevator, and refrigeration facility had also survived; the natural gas plant was partially damaged but repairable, and one brick factory could also be rebuilt.¹⁴ Over the course of the summer of 1945, these major industries, along with various smaller industries in town—flour mills, bakeries, brick factories, lumber yards, road repair garages, metal-working factories, spirits factories, the radio station, auto repair garages, telephone and telegraph stations, shoe repair, laundry, a tank repair factory, and others—were distributed among military units and departments of the Provisional Administration for Civilian Affairs for reconstruction.¹⁵

By February 1946, a few plants had already begun production, among them a number of food and beverage plants (grain mills, bakeries, a partially-reconstructed meat processing plant, and spirits and beer breweries), wood production facilities (lumber yards and Pulp and Paper Mills, one rebuilt and another under construction), and the Schichau-Werke, renamed Factory 820 (ready for production, but still lacking qualified workers to begin assembly).¹⁶ Over the course of 1946, a number of other industries gradually came into operation, including, most notably, the Steinfurt Waggonfabrik (renamed the Wagon

¹¹ Luschnat, *Die Lage*, 38.

¹² Maslov, "Prodovol'stvennyi vopros," 47-52.

¹³ GARF 9401.2.93.328-31, 28 February 1945.

¹⁴ GARF 9401.2.95.40-1, 13 April 1945.

¹⁵ GAKO R330.2.7.21-2, 26 September 1945.

¹⁶ GAKO R332.2.7.11, no date [after 1 February 1946].

Building Factory [*Vagonostroitel'nyi zavod*].¹⁷ By April 1947, a number of other factories and workshops had been established, along with additional food production industries, but most of the industries of prewar and wartime Königsberg still lay dormant. Some, such as the former Union Chemical Plant, remained in complete disrepair.¹⁸

Despite the provisional military administration's efforts to assert control over Königsberg's resources and resurrect city life and industry, the region's ambiguous status caused continual administrative confusions. Neither the military command of the Soviet Zone of Occupation in Germany, nor the Third Belorussian Front wanted to accept Königsberg as their problem and frequently pushed responsibility off to other organizations. Although the Third Belorussian Front's Military Council had directed Königsberg's military administration to reconstruct the city, they provided little funding to do so, and the provisional military administration's frequent requests for money and food were usually denied, with the expectation that other organizations would foot the bill.¹⁹ For example, instead of delivering a month's worth of rations for the civilian population and Soviet administrators as promised, the Military Council of the Third Belorussian Front in August 1945 gave only five to six days' worth of rations and only for the administrators, refusing to send any food to feed the Germans at all. General-Major Mikhail Pronin, then the head of the Provisional Administration for Civilian Affairs, begged the Military Soviet of the Front to reconsider: if Königsberg did not receive the funds from somewhere, he explained, "the personnel I bear responsibility for will be left with nothing to eat."²⁰

Additional problems had to do with organization and discipline within the local administration. Despite repeated reminders that the city was facing dire shortages, soldiers and officers frequently pilfered food for their own use, distributed food according to whim, and used the military command's grain stores to make moonshine. In late April 1945, the central military command that property was being squandered; in an attempt to secure control over the resources, by May 1945, disciplinary action was threatened for anyone caught pilfering. Further orders to collect, inventory, and maintain control over resources were issued throughout the summer, with continuing complaints about the failure of individual soldiers and administrators to take those appeals seriously.²¹

Despite the attempts to produce more food, the new administration's efforts were not successful. Post-Soviet Russian historians generally point to the flight of the rural farming population in advance of the invasion and the destruction of the fields during military action as main causes for the dire situation faced by East Prussian agriculture in the first years after the war. But wartime destruction and labor and equipment shortages were not the only problem; as the Lithuanian historian Arūnė Arbušauskaitė points out, much of the

¹⁷ Isupov, *Vostochnaia Prussia*, 454-5. The original headquarters of the Schichau-Werke was in Elbing, with its two main satellite facilities in Danzig and Königsberg. After Danzig and the southern part of East Prussia were turned over to Poland, the Schichau-Werke in Gdańsk was renamed the Vladimir Lenin Shipyard and became famous in 1980 as the site of the Solidarity protests of 17,000 shipyard workers.

¹⁸ GAKO R310.1.7.13-4, 18 April 1947.

¹⁹ The cost of food alone was 42,000-45,000 rubles per day, up to 1.4 million rubles per month. GAKO R330.2.4.4-7, 12 May 1945; GAKO R330.2.6.4-5, 4 June 1945; GAKO R330.1.7.14, 18 June 1945; GAKO R330.1.7.8, 3 June 1945; GAKO R332.2.3.37-8; GAKO R330.1.5.61-3, 12 November 1945.

²⁰ GAKO R330.2.7.2, 11 August 1945.

²¹ GAKO R330.1.2.2, 22 May 1945.

destruction of agriculture took place *after* the siege, not only from the willful destruction and pilfering of rural estates, but also from Soviet reparations policy and a poor understanding of local farming conditions.²²

A major obstacle to rebuilding agriculture came in the form of reparations payments. Although East Prussia had become a Soviet territory, the region was still understood for the purposes of reparations as enemy soil, and as local Soviet administrators were attempting to rebuild the urban and rural economy, Soviet reparations teams were extracting industrial and agricultural equipment and raw materials to send back home. Because the agricultural bases of East Prussia had been so thoroughly destroyed, most of the reparations sent from the province were not food (as elsewhere in Germany), but the means to produce it: tractors, plows, hand tools, and livestock. The reparations continued into the fall of 1945, causing lasting damage to agriculture and hindering its recovery for several years.²³

Even more disastrous, however, was the rapid collectivization of the countryside—far more abrupt than other regions undergoing Sovietization. By comparison, agriculture was not collectivized in the Memel region, now turned over to Lithuania, until 1948, and in East Germany, collectivization only took place in the late 1950s, and then it was a slow process marked by stagnation and reversals.²⁴ With most of East Prussia's rural population uprooted in advance of the invasion, the army established its farms using methods common in the Soviet Union, without taking into account the special demands of East Prussia soil conditions and local farming traditions. Neither the Red Army farms established spontaneously in 1945 nor the military state farms established beginning in 1946 were considered efficient; as the Head of the Provisional Administration for Civilian Affairs Guzii wrote in February 1946, the farms were disorganized, were not taking an active role in planting, and did not coordinate their plans.

The quality of the land is getting progressively worse [...] Because of the sharp reduction of fertilization, the soil has been ruined. The drainage system located across the territory of the District has not been repaired and is falling apart. As a result, already in the fall of 1945, more than 20,000 hectares of the best arable land have been flooded, and in the Heinrichswald, Pillkallen, Tilsit, Ragnit, Labiau, Wehlau, Fishhausen, and other districts, much of the soil has turned into swampland.

²² Arūnė Arbušauskaitė, "Das Tragische Schicksal Ostpreussens nach 1945 im Lichte Neuer Dokumente," *Anna-berger Annalen: Jahrbuch über Litauen und deutsch-litauische Beziehungen*, 3 (1995), 11 [6-19].

²³ *ibid.*, 13.

²⁴ Vareikis, "Klaipeda," 61; Karl-Eugen Wädekin, *Agrarian Policies in Communist Eastern Europe: A Critical Introduction* (Totowa, New Jersey: Allanheld, Osmun & Co., 1982), 63. George Last, *After the 'Socialist Spring': Collectivisation and Economic Transformation in the GDR* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009), 2-22. In the late 1940s, large estates in the GDR had been parceled out, and only beginning in the early 1950s did SED officials make systematic efforts to amalgamate those small farms back into large-scale production units according to a uniform collective model. But widespread dissatisfaction in East Germany, culminating in the uprisings of June 1953, led the SED to slow down their efforts, and an uneasy situation between farmers and the regime until the final collectivization of farms by 1960.

Without the immediate repair of the drainage system, Guzii warned, much of East Prussia's farmland would end up under water. The region had great economic potential, but if it were not developed soon, that potential would be ruined through neglect and decay.²⁵

A year after the fall of Fortress Königsberg, the Special Military District and the Provisional Administration for Civilian Affairs in Königsberg had made little progress rebuilding, and had in many ways brought more damage. Guzii, recognizing the impossibility of continuing with an underfunded, disorganized military occupation, wrote to Deputy Kosygin of the USSR Council of People's Commissars in February 1946 with a sobering account of shortages, delays, and failures. Guzii argued that the provisional military administration had not been meant to govern the city's long-term reconstruction, and he requested that the Council of People's Commissars "speed up the process of establishing organs of Soviet order" on the territory of the Special Military District.²⁶

The matter was finally resolved two months later, on 7 April 1946, when the territory of the Königsberg Special Military District was incorporated as an official administrative district, or *oblast'*, into the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR).²⁷ The decision to incorporate the territory into the RSFSR was not an obvious one. Unlike other territories incorporated into the RSFSR after the war, including South Sakhalin in the Far East (subject to over a century of rivalry between Russia and Japan, and fused with Sakhalin Oblast') and the annexed Finnish territories (transferred to several existing administrative units), Königsberg was not contiguous to the RSFSR, had no historical precedent as a territory of either the Soviet Union or the Russian Empire, and was not fused into an existing administrative unit, but was set up as an entirely new *oblast'*.²⁸

Although Königsberg had been officially turned over to a civilian administration, the full array of standard Soviet institutions were not installed immediately; even the new Civilian Affairs Administration only became fully operational over the summer and fall of 1946, months after Königsberg was officially renamed Kaliningrad on 4 July 1946. The complete hierarchy of state and party institutions were established much later, in the spring and fall of 1947. Oblast', City, and District Soviets were introduced in October 1947, and the first meetings were held only after elections in December 1947. These elected bodies were designed to take the place of the Civilian Affairs Administration, but a continuing lack of qualified personnel with party credentials and work experience led to the reinstatement of many of the members of the Civilian Affairs administration back into service, and the Central Committee in Moscow had to send an additional 128 experienced administrators to help fill the gap.²⁹ The delayed introduction of Communist Party organs is even more striking. After preliminary meetings in December 1946, the Oblast' Committee was finally instituted on 7 March 1947, almost two years after the city's capture. And although smaller

²⁵ GAKO R332.2.7.5-6, 28, no date [after 1 February 1946].

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 28.

²⁷ GAKO R330.2.1.3, 16 May 1945; V.N. Maslov, "Prodovol'stvennyi vopros," 47-52; Arbušauskaitė, "Das tragische Schicksal," 9-10; Hoppe, *Auf den Trümmern*, 30.

²⁸ "Ukaz Prezidiuma VS SSSR ot 7 apreliia 1946 goda 'ob obrazovanii Kenigsbergskoi oblasti v sostave RSFSR,'" printed in Iu. I. Mandel'shtam, ed., *Sbornik zakonov SSSR i ukazov Prezidiuma Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR. 1938 g.–iiiul' 1956 g.* (Moscow: Gostdarsvennoe Izdatel'stvo iuridicheskoi Literatury, 1956), 47.

²⁹ Hoppe, *Auf den Trümmern*, 28; V. G. Birkovskii, *Istoriia Kraia: Uchevnaia posovie dlia studentov-istorikov Kalininskogo universiteta* (Kaliningrad, Russia: Kaliningradskii Gosudarstvennyi Universitet, 1984), 53.

meetings were held from late 1946, the first official oblast' party conference was only held in December 1947.³⁰

The transition from the military administration to the civilian administration did not proceed entirely smoothly; the military retained a strong presence in the city and the oblast', controlling the best administrative facilities, housing, and land. The civilian administration had to establish itself with what was left over. For example, because the military had already taken possession of the best housing stock in the city, by February 1946, there were only a total of 450 apartments available for employees of the future city and oblast' government.³¹ The military also remained the primary owner of agricultural land, over 500,000 hectares, or forty-four percent of the total land in the oblast', and 102,000 hectares of that land was set aside for special military use: drills, trench simulations, and testing grounds for weapons.³²

Even with continuing delays, the transition to the city and oblast' administration marked a turning point in the city's reconstruction. Whereas the provisional military administration had focused on the practical subsistence and resurrecting industry, the new civilian administration, amidst continuing material hardship, began to understand its mission more broadly. The dramatic increase in the number of Soviet citizens living in the city beginning in the fall of 1946 meant that the new administration felt increasing accountability, both from above and from below. There was great pressure not only to rebuild quickly and to provide for these new settlers and to assure new settlers that Kaliningrad was indeed an integral part of the Russian Socialist Republic. Königsberg, as a part of the Soviet Union, would now be built as a Soviet city.

While the new civilian government struggled with many of the same challenges that faced the provisional military administration, it also turned its attention to larger projects to reconstruct the city scape. In particular, the new government focused on reestablishing the city's transportation infrastructure and the city's main utilities. The provisional military administration had made rudimentary progress in reestablishing utilities, mostly in repairing those services directly connected to industrial output (such as gas and electricity), but other utilities remained in disrepair when oblast' administration took over in the summer of 1946. At that time, a Department of Municipal Services was organized within the Civilian Affairs Administration to oversee the reconstruction of city services.

One of the first tasks of the Department of Municipal Services was to resurrect the transportation infrastructure. Out of a total of 866 streets in Königsberg, over thirty percent of the road surfaces had been completely destroyed in the siege, and engineers estimated that most roads in the city required serious repair.³³ Königsberg, the city of bridges, provided particular challenges for postwar rebuilding because, of the 23 bridges existing before the war, only two had survived.³⁴ The city's transportation network—up to 200 kilometers of tram lines, in addition to numerous bus and trolleybus routes, and regional trains—had also collapsed. The railway bridges in the city had been bombed and the major track lines, ripped up (as the SMERSH representative Zelenin's report assured in April 1945, it had

³⁰ GANIKO 1.1.1.52, 2-4 December 1947.

³¹ GAKO R332.2.7.15, no date [after 1 February 1946].

³² Arbušauskaitė, "Das Tragische Schicksal," 12.

³³ GARF A259.6.3923.6, no date [mid-1947].

³⁴ GARF A259.6.4544.26, no date [late 1946]; GAKO R216.1.2.82, 14 February 1948.

been the Germans, not the Red Army, to inflict that damage).³⁵ There were three tram parks in the city (Kosse and Hindenburgstrasse in the Seventh District and Dirschauerstrasse in the Fourth District), all powered by electricity from the Kosse electrical station. Previously, the tram system reportedly ran up to 200 motorized wagons and 150-160 cars, carrying 55 million passengers per year. But all three tram parks had been destroyed, along with the wagons and the tracks; the buses and trolleybuses had also fallen into disrepair.³⁶

The city first established transportation for civilian passengers in the fall of 1946, when two bus lines were established, set to begin operation on 10 September 1946.³⁷ The first traveled north from the South Train Station to Gvardeiskaia Ploshad'; the second began at Prospekt Aleksandra Nevskogo on the eastern side of the city, traveling to the Pulp and Paper Mill along the Pregel River in the west.³⁸ However, as of May 1947, intercity transport still had not yet been organized, and the service for the two Kaliningrad routes remained unreliable at best because of delays, fuel shortages, and mechanical problems. Rudimentary tram service was reestablished by late 1946, and more trams were put into service monthly. Already by early 1947, the Head of Oblast' Municipal Services Kornaukhov reported that there were 120 kilometer of tram tracks under repair.³⁹ Service remained unpredictable, however, and the southwestern part of the city, where many of the port-related industries were located, had no direct tram connection to the center of the city through late 1948.⁴⁰

³⁵ GARF 9401.2.95.40-1, 13 April 1945.

³⁶ GAKO R332.2.7.28, no date [after 1 February 1946]; Isupov, *Vostochnaia Prussia*, 454-5.

³⁷ GAKO R332.2.7.28, no date [after 1 February 1946]; GARF A259.6.4544.23, no date [late 1946].

³⁸ GAKO R298.1.7.3, 10 September 1946. Buses were set to begin operation at 6:30 and run until 10:30 at night, operating in two shifts. The price through the end of 1946 was set at 20 kopeks per passenger-kilometer within Kaliningrad, and for intercity transport, 30 kopeks per passenger-kilometer.

³⁹ GAKO R310.1.7.1, no date [early 1947].

⁴⁰ GAKO R216.1.2.408, 18 November 1948.



Первый калининградский трамвай

*“First Tram in Kaliningrad,” late 1940s.*⁴¹

Establishing other essential utilities also posed significant challenges. Three of the city’s electrical stations survived the war, but five others had been completely destroyed and needed to be rebuilt entirely.⁴² Likewise, only one of nine prewar sewage pumping stations had survived and was finally brought into service by mid-1946, along with 400 to 552 kilometers of underground pipes, which had survived the siege with less damage. Because of the delays, however, sewage flowed backward into the Pregel River through 1946, contaminating the source of much of the city’s water supply.⁴³ The communications hub—telegraph, telephone, and post—had been located in the city center, including the Main Post Office, which housed both the telegraph and telephone offices. The first and second stories of the building had survived, including the infrastructure for long-distance communications and underground cables, but as the head of the Provisional Administration for Civilian Affairs Guzii pointed out in February 1946, the communications lines pointed the wrong way (westward toward Berlin) and would need to be redirected.⁴⁴ During the provisional military administration, virtually no work was done to resurrect the Main Post Office; the

⁴¹ Reprinted in *Grazhdanin* 24, No. 1037 (28 June-4 July 2007), <http://www.transphoto.ru/photo/92208/> (accessed 14 August 2013).

⁴² GARF 9401.2.95.40-1, 13 April 1945.

⁴³ GARF A259.6.4544.22-3, no date [late 1946]; GARF A259.6.3923.181, no date [April 1946].

⁴⁴ GARF 9401.2.95.40-1, 13 April 1945.

military had administered its own post, and the new Administration for Civilian Affairs had to start from scratch to resurrect the Main Post Office and set up a mail delivery service. A year later, on 16 May 1947, the Head of the Oblast' Administration for Civilian Affairs, Borisov, reported that while the Main Post Office had been reestablished, along with major telegraph and telephone lines (local and long distance, including connections to Moscow and Riga), the quality of the communications network remained poor.⁴⁵

By far the most difficult task of the new administration was to rebuild the city's public and private spaces. Before the siege, Königsberg reportedly had six million square meters of living space, most of which by April 1945 had become uninhabitable.⁴⁶ In late April 1945, the German doctor Hans Deichelmann estimated that around thirty percent of the city's housing had been destroyed during the August 1944 bombing, followed by another thirty percent during the blockade and siege.⁴⁷ A Soviet report from a year later estimated even greater damage, reporting in April 1946 that there was only 650,000 square meters of usable space in the city, about a tenth of the prewar total.⁴⁸ Most of the denser housing—four-story apartment buildings and row houses from the city center—had been destroyed, so much of the partially-preserved housing stock came in the form of cottages and single-family homes on the outskirts of town.⁴⁹

By late April 1945, many of the remaining undamaged buildings were transformed into garrisons for Red Army soldiers, apartments for officers, and headquarters for Red Army commanders and provisional administration offices. But even the military suffered from housing shortages; as of early August 1945, many officers, including commanders and administrative heads, were still being housed in barracks with soldiers; those who had received apartments often found them without basic furniture and badly in need of repair: leaky or absent roofs, missing windows and broken doors, no heating or water supply.⁵⁰ During the year of the provisional military administration, all of the work to create housing consisted of small repairs to make more of the city's apartments and buildings habitable: patching roofs, boarding up windows, rebuilding bullet-ridden walls, installing doors.⁵¹ Soldiers and officers of the Special Military District were gradually housed in these repaired apartments, and by April 1946, 40 percent of the available housing in the city was occupied by the military.⁵²

Housing became a primary focus of the civilian government in 1946. After the transition to the civilian administration, living space in the city was organized centrally, and control over the maintenance, repair, and distribution of that housing was either administered by the city as part of a general "communal fund," or allocated to organizations within the city, including industries. To facilitate the reconstruction, a Housing-Communal Division was created within the Administration for Civilian Affairs and was tasked with creating

⁴⁵ GAKO R297.1.102.68-79, 16 May 1947.

⁴⁶ GAKO R310.1.9.1, 1948.

⁴⁷ Deichelmann, *Ich sah*, 32 [29 April 1945].

⁴⁸ GAKO R310.1.9.1, 1948.

⁴⁹ GANIKO 2.1.47.9, June 1948.

⁵⁰ GAKO R330.2.6.16, 4 August 1945.

⁵¹ GARF A150.2.182.19, no date [1946].

⁵² GARF A259.6.3923.180, no date [April 1946].

new housing for newly arriving specialists, workers, and civil servants.⁵³ Even under the civilian administration, however, very little organized construction took place in 1946, with the exception of housing for use by workers in industries (particularly the Pulp and Paper Mills, the Ship Building Factory 820, and the Wagon Building Factory), and for arriving bureaucrats and party officials. For example, of the estimated total of 50,000-55,000 civilian residents in Stalingrad District by the end of 1947, only 11,711 residents were living in housing administered by the Communal Fund; the rest lived either in housing organized by the industries, by the Civilian Affairs Administration, or in buildings leased to individuals or organizations in exchange for their repair and upkeep.⁵⁴ By early 1947, housing was reportedly provided for 12,000 families across the oblast' (6,000 of them in Kaliningrad, and the other 6000 in the other main cities).⁵⁵

Over the course of 1947, renovation work increased dramatically. By mid-1947, the available living space had doubled from a year before, to around 1.07 to 1.3 million square meters (depending on the report), 650,000 of which was being used by the military (i.e. at least 50 percent of the entire useable space of the city).⁵⁶ By early 1948, over 2.9 million square meters of interior space had been restored and was being put to use, both for housing and for public administration. Of that total, only 1.1 million was in use for civilian housing, and the rest used for barracks, garages, administrative offices, storage, schools, and hospitals. But by early 1948, the total space used was still only one-sixth of the prewar stock, and over eighty percent of it still demanded substantial renovation.⁵⁷

Despite all of these measures, conditions remained dire for the first years after the war. By mid-1947, there was still no reliable transportation, electricity, sewage, or water supply. Many streets remained full of debris and abandoned buildings had been left untended. Meanwhile, the rapid influx of new Soviet settlers—almost 200,000 by mid-1948—taxed the city's resources and put increasing pressure on the government.⁵⁸

The late incorporation of the oblast' had prolonged the state of administrative and budget confusion that had plagued the Provisional Military Administration, as the city and oblast' were excluded from the USSR's first postwar 5-Year Plan for Economic Development (1946–1950).⁵⁹ With no centralized place in the budget of the Soviet Union or the RSFSR, Kaliningrad could not assert itself as a priority in appeals to Moscow for funds, labor, and supplies. At the same time that Kaliningrad continually fell through the cracks in the USSR budget and seemed to be neglected by Moscow, new orders, plans, targets, and expectations were, after 1945, increasingly issued by various government agencies (those overseeing the operation of different industries, municipal services, health and sanitation, and construc-

⁵³ GARF A150.2.182.19, no date [1946].

⁵⁴ GAKO R541.1.4.8, 27 December 1947.

⁵⁵ GAKO R310.1.7.3, no date [early 1947].

⁵⁶ Another 240,000 square meters was under the control of the Administration for Civilian Affairs, and 160,000 of which was part of the Institutional Fund, created according to government decree. Of the real estate controlled by Civilian Affairs, 59,400 square meters had been rented out for living space, and 38,000 rented out for administration and other organizations. GAKO R310.1.7.8, 18 April 1947; GARF A259.6.3923.6, no date [mid-1947].

⁵⁷ GAKO R310.1.9.1, 1948.

⁵⁸ GAKO R216.1.2.217, 10 June 1948.

⁵⁹ Hoppe, *Auf den Trümmern*, 42.

tion). Plans and calls for accountability issued by Moscow frequently backfired, coming in conflict with local conditions. Toward the end of the provisional military administration in February 1946, Minister Kosygin ordered that the nearby seaside villages of Cranz, Neukuhren, and Georgienwald be transformed into official workers' vacation resorts by the summer of 1946 and ordered that 200 horses be transferred from the Königsberg Special Military Soviet for use at the facilities.⁶⁰ A week later, however, Kosygin had to be informed that the Königsberg Special Military District only owned a total of 588 horses, making it impossible to transfer nearly a third of them to the seaside.⁶¹

The new Soviet regime focused, as elsewhere in the Soviet Union, on exploiting the city's economic potential by rebuilding industry of national importance. The local government's focus was on increasing production at the factories that had the greatest capacity to contribute to the all-union economy, especially the Pulp and Paper Mills, the Shipbuilding Plant 820, and the Wagon Building Factory, along with other industries connected to the ports.⁶² Königsberg's hastily reconstructed factories came under external pressure to produce already during the provisional military administration, when other guidelines about city construction still remained vague. But these factories rarely performed as promised because of continuing delays and consistent shortages of raw materials and labor. Although these industries in most cases produced the same goods as their predecessors in Königsberg, the reconstructed factories operated in isolation, disconnected from the network of industries that had formerly supported them. Many of the factories that had produced building materials and construction equipment, including lumber, bricks, and cement, for example, were among the last to be reestablished because of shortages of raw materials, and without those factories, other factories from prewar Königsberg were also paralyzed.⁶³ Although a number of industries had reopened by mid-1946, almost two years later, Gosplan's representative for Kaliningrad Oblast', V. Vakhrov, reported that production in almost every area of industry, the previous year had been characterized by "significant plan underfulfillment." The Cellulose Paper Plants met only an average of 42 percent of their annual goal, for example, while the military shipbuilding plant No. 230 fulfilled only 57.6 percent of the plan put forth by Moscow. Vakhrov blamed human failure: poor training of workers, low quality of work, and administrative inefficiencies that affected the supply and distribution of raw materials.⁶⁴

Gradually, some industries were developed in Kaliningrad that had no analogues in Königsberg. Deep sea fishing, which had no base in East Prussia before the war, soon became one of Kaliningrad's main industries, and later in the Soviet period, Kaliningrad fisheries were responsible for 10.4 percent of the entire fish production of the Soviet Union, more than all three neighboring Baltic Republics combined, and third only to Vladivostok and Murmansk. Meanwhile, other port-based industries that had been prominent in prewar Königsberg—military and civilian machinery building, the paper industry, agriculture—were prioritized during the initial rebuilding phase, but because they contributed little to the national economy long-term, were eventually relegated to secondary

⁶⁰ GARF A259.3339.1, 11 February 1946.

⁶¹ GARF A259.6.3339.7, 18 February 1946.

⁶² GANIKO 121.1.4, [no date].

⁶³ GAKO R310.1.7.13-4, 18 April 1947.

⁶⁴ GAKO R180.1.10.59-63, 13 January 1948.

importance.⁶⁵ Despite the perpetual underachievement (as measured by the annual targets set by Moscow industry headquarters), growth from 1946 to 1947 in most areas of the economy was significant. Depending on the industry, output increased from 1.5 to 4.5 times the production of the previous year. There were also a few cases in which the plan was not only fulfilled, but over-fulfilled, including the meat and dairy industry, bread production, shipbuilding, the Mechanical Factory (*mekhanicheskii zavod*), the Fishing Industry, and the Ship Repair Industries, among others.⁶⁶ But demands to produce before factories had the necessary labor and supplies continued to put pressure on all of Kaliningrad's industries.

The administration's efforts to resurrect the city infrastructure and utilities proved even less satisfactory. Ambitious reconstruction plans were made, but rarely accomplished because of shortages of labor and supplies. For 1947, the city reconstruction plan for utilities required 7.08 million rubles, but less than half that amount, only 3.06 million rubles, was available.⁶⁷ In 1947, the Municipal Services Administration, lacking qualified cadres, had not even been able to establish the full array of administrative offices necessary to oversee the reconstruction; for example, Kaliningrad's Municipal Services Administration had neither a planning sector nor even an accounting department, besides the general lack of specialists and qualified workers and shortage of transportation, building materials, and fuel.⁶⁸

The delays and shortages had a domino effect. Shortages of labor meant that more goods could not be produced; shortages of raw materials meant that factories could not be repaired in order to begin production. For example, in February 1946, the Head of the Provisional Administration for Civilian Affairs Guzii pointed out that vehicle and fuel shortages within the Special Military District and Provisional Administration for Civilian Affairs were holding back the development of every other facet of city life, including the reconstruction of electricity, water supply, sewage, and housing, as well as the establishment of communal facilities such as schools and hospitals. The Communal Affairs Division [*Kommunal'no-bytovoi Otdel*], for example, needed to transport 30,000 tons of materials in order to fulfill its quarterly plan, up to 300 tons per day. Guzii wrote to request that the new civilian Administration for Civilian Affairs be appointed several hundred automobiles in order to facilitate its work, but a full year later, the situation still had not changed, and the Head of the Oblast' Administration for Civilian Affairs Borisov complained to Minister Chadaev of the USSR Council of Ministers in May 1947 that "repeated petitions to the Ministry of Motor Transport of the RSFSR" to secure more motor vehicles "still remain unmet." Most of the automobiles in use by the city were captured German cars and trucks, few of them fully operational. Most of the remaining buses and trolleybuses had sunk into disrepair, and a lack of equipment and shortages of specialists to run the buses meant that they remained out of service for years to come.⁶⁹ Because organizations for rebuilding roads and bridges were only established in late 1946 in Kaliningrad (even later in other cities in the oblast'), conditions deteriorated further. By mid-1947, only two bridges had been put back into service, meaning only four bridges out of ten functioning were in the city center, limit-

⁶⁵ Valerij Galcov, "Grundlegende Besonderheiten der Geschichte des Kaliningrader Gebietes," *Annaberger Annalen über Litauen und deutsch-litauische Beziehungen* 7 (1999), 35 [29-38].

⁶⁶ GAKO R180.1.10.59-63, 13 January 1948.

⁶⁷ GAKO R310.1.7.10b-11, 18 April 1947.

⁶⁸ GAKO R310.1.7.5, no date [early 1947].

⁶⁹ GAKO R332.2.7.28-9. no date [after 1 February 1946]; GAKO R297.1.102.73, 16 May 1947.

ing transportation across the Pregel River and forcing the continued isolation of the city's surviving districts.⁷⁰

Failures to reestablish essential city services and utilities met with criticism not only from government administrators, but also from citizens. The new Soviet settlers to Kaliningrad, from specialists in industry to manual laborers, began to appeal to the civilian administration to register their complaints. Administering the population of the city was no longer just about keeping people alive, but about providing material welfare.

Electricity proved to be not only one of the hardest utilities to reestablish, but also the source for the greatest ire on the part of both government administrators and residents. Due to wartime devastation, but also continuing fuel shortages and poor management, most of the city remained without consistent electricity supply through 1947 and beyond. Many homes received no electricity at all, and while major organizations, industries, and administration offices received preferential supply, even many essential city services were forced to curb their activities because of outages. City services and cultural activities were crippled because of the unpredictability of supply: movie theaters, clubs, and libraries were often forced to cancel events at the last minute; outages also led to inconsistent service from the Water Trust, the Tram, and other utilities. Frequent letters were written to the Civilian Affairs Administration and, after 1946, the newspaper *Kaliningradskaia Pravda* with complaints about the work of the electricity utility, KaliningradEnergo. The residents of Gorky Street 128, 130, and 132 wrote to the City Party Committee on 11 November 1947, complaining about the lack of electricity on their street and demanded to know how long the electric utility employees would "continue to abuse Soviet citizens, and who had the right to do so?"⁷¹ A few months later, during the Second Session of the Kaliningrad City Soviet in February 1948, one speaker, Gokhman, noted how similar letters had been flooding in daily to the party, the city government and *Kaliningradskaia Pravda* with the single question: "When will the employees of Kaliningradenergo stop abusing us? When will we have electricity?" This situation did not seem to bother workers at Kaliningradenergo, Gokhman complained, and when asked when the situation would improve, "they gave no clear answer, claiming that the Ministry had not send staff, there were no funds, not enough workers, no materials and dozens of other objective reasons supposedly justifying the terrible state of the electrical supply."⁷² Around the same time, frequent letters to the editor in *Kaliningradskaia Pravda* in the spring of 1947 criticized the poor organization of the telegraph and communications agencies.⁷³ A letter to the editor from a man named Beglarian on 4 February 1947 complained that telegrams sent in January were not received until February, and customers were simply given a shrug of "better late than never." Other letters to the editor complained that post sent from Sovetsk (the former Tilsit) took 11 days to reach Kaliningrad; letters from Moscow arriving by plane to Kaliningrad on 28 October were only delivered to their addressees on 25 December, two full months later.

With Kaliningrad's growing population, the slow reconstruction and inefficient administration of the city's housing stock proved to be the source of the great tension, not only

⁷⁰ GARF A259.6.3923.6, no date [mid-1947]; GAKO R310.1.7.9b, 18 April 1947; GARF A259.6.4544.26, no date [late 1946].

⁷¹ GANIKO 2.1.22.37, 11 November 1947.

⁷² GAKO R216.1.2.81, 14 February 1948.

⁷³ "Letters to the Editor," *Kaliningradskaia Pravda*, 4 February 1947.

within the bureaucracy, but also during the early Kaliningrad City and District Soviet meetings beginning in late 1947. Despite the fact that all private property had been nationalized (at first informally, under the provisional military administration, and then formally, after the creation of the oblast'), in practice, the city government did not have full control over all of the physical space in the city. Soldiers and civilians, both Soviet and German, had occupied the remaining residences spontaneously and through 1947, many of them were paying no rent. Decrying the lack of state authority, speakers at the City Soviet called for renewed efforts to index and gain control over each building individually, including taking inventories of already occupied apartment buildings, including not only the number of rooms, but also the amenities, fixtures, and furniture. He also called for more control over the renovation and repair of individual apartments, hallways, roofs, and facades, as well as devise a system of accountability to get individual tenants to pay rent for their living space.⁷⁴

At the first session of the Stalingrad District Soviet in December 1947, the deputy Popkov reported that 116,229 square meters of housing were being used in the Communal Fund, housing a total of 11,700 people (an average of 9.93 square meters per person). That amount of space, Popkov criticized, was more than the norm appointed per person, but the problem lay in that the space was by no means distributed evenly: some residents might be packed in, while other large, spacious apartments might be occupied by only a couple of people. At the same time, a number of organizations, agencies, and industries were occupying housing from the Communal Fund without permission, and refused attempts to evict them. Popkov also pointed fingers at the heads of the two main industries in the district, Sokolov (the director of Pulp and Paper Mill No. 2) and Gorbunov (the director of the Wagon Building Factory) for not doing enough work to renovate housing for their employees. Popkov also complained about renters who behaved "barbarically," delaying construction efforts, wasting materials, claiming apartments arbitrarily, stealing fixtures, and using apartments for unsanitary storage. The combination of a poor attitude among renters, poor bureaucratic administration, and a lack of security and enforcement all added up to a state of the wild concerning living space. According to Popkov, an inventory of all living quarters in the city in October 1947 had revealed a total of 16,000 square meters of undocumented living space, illegal tenancy, and numerous incidences of non-payment. By late December of that year, 400 rooms had been seized from people who had occupied more than their allowance, many still lived in "hidden" quarters beyond the control of the bureaucrats. Popkov demanded immediate "genuine, real governmental order" over the housing stock.⁷⁵

Calls for "real governmental order" were heard increasingly frequently after the establishment of the City and Oblast' Soviets, when elected officials increasingly presented themselves as the voice of the new Soviet settlers. Although continuing structural problems were frequently to blame for problems—budget shortages and unrealistic expectations from Moscow that clashed with local priorities—increasingly individuals were held accountable, particularly the employees of utilities, industries, and municipal services. Two years after the end of the war, blaming wartime destruction no longer served as a rationalization for

⁷⁴ GAKO R216.1.2.217, 10 June 1948.

⁷⁵ GAKO R541.1.4-8, 27 December 1947.

failure, and it was politically dangerous to blame Moscow for raising expectations for output without supplying the necessary support.⁷⁶

The answer the new settlers to Kaliningrad kept pointing to was to assert more governmental control, to raise the level of authority that the city and oblast' government had not only over material resources, their production, and their distribution, but also over the behavior of individuals, from factory managers to postal employees to everyday residents who took advantage of loopholes to avoid paying rent. For example, after several speakers complained about the poor work of clean-up and renovation agencies at the Second Session of the Executive Committee of the Kaliningrad City Soviet, Comrade Borenko, who had been in Königsberg since the first days, reminded listeners about the violence and destruction of the siege, and how difficult it had been to win the city against (with rhetorical exaggeration) "more than two hundred thousand" fascists defending it. The Red Army soldiers would not have destroyed the city if they had known it would become Soviet, he argued, but, in February 1948, the city remained in ruins, and there was much work ahead "for our city to take on the appearance of the capital of our new oblast'."

I should say frankly that I, having lived in Kaliningrad from the first days, still do not feel the firm hand of the Soviet order [*vlast'*] in the city. Here it goes like this: the Fishing Trust wants to build a tea room, grabs two invalids, chooses a place, and builds it; Kaliningradenergo wants to tear down a transformer booth and tears it down; the Construction Trust [*Domostroi*] wants to tear down a bridge, tears it down, and then there's no crossing. No one is reacting to any of it.

Borenko called for the city Soviet members to assert their authority, and to "more strongly exercise the power of the Soviet regime."⁷⁷

Calls to exercise the power of the Soviet regime in the face of shortages, hardship, and delays, were calls to bring the state back in, and to build socialism. Almost three years after Königsberg had ceased to be fascist, Kaliningrad still had not become socialist.

⁷⁶ "Letters to the Editor," *Kaliningradskaiia Pravda*, 4 February 1947.

⁷⁷ R216.1.2.103, 14 February 1948.

Between Pragmatism and Planning

During the initial invasion in October 1944, Soviet propagandists created an exotic picture of the landscape of East Prussia, casting the territory not only as visibly fascist because of unfamiliar, distinctly German, landscape and the Koch's abundant border defenses, but also as the geographic origin of fascism—the place where the Teutonic Knights first launched their raids against the peaceful Slavic and Baltic peoples and built an empire of conquest. Fascism, the propagandists argued, became rooted into the East Prussian soil as part of the feudal agrarian system, sprouted in the Hohenzollern monarchy, and was ultimately transplanted from Königsberg to Berlin. Every distinctive feature of the East Prussian landscape—the steep slanted roofs, the medieval cobblestone streets, the meticulously-tended country roads, the narrow-framed windows and ornamented dark brick warehouses and factories lining the port—seemed to be identifying markers of fascism. Königsberg's architecture, an article in *Pravda* summed up in April 1945, stood as a monument of aggression against the eastern neighbors of East Prussia. V. Velichko wrote that

Königsberg—the history of the crimes of Germany. All of its many centuries it lived from plunder, and it knew no other life. The palaces [*dvortsy*] here are gloomy and silent. In the stillness of their offices, military archives, and libraries, in the thick fortress walls of military schools and classrooms grew over decades and decades of war and predatory campaigns. Around the fortress-city, heavy defenses grew up. In the center of the capital stands the citadel, a thick stone behemoth, into which halls, passages, and casemates were carved. They extend deep beneath the ground.

Velichko presented a city whose architecture had been designed for a single purpose, refined over centuries to become the seemingly impenetrable fortress city that fell to the superior forces of the Red Army.¹

Despite the continued elaboration of the myth by Moscow historians (including Nikolai Gratsianskii, who contributed to the myth during the war and helped codify it in a series of lectures thereafter), in Königsberg, the provisional military administration found little use for the idea that the cityscape itself was in some way fascist. Fortress Königsberg

¹ V. Velichko, "Padenie Königsberga," *Pravda*, 13 April 1945.

had been defeated, the Red Army occupied the city as victors, and fascism had been defeated, both on the battlefield and in the ideological battle to claim the inheritance of European civilization. Königsberg's architecture, what little remained, served as a monument of a civilization that had fallen and could no longer pose a threat. During the first year of rebuilding, when the administration's focus was on pragmatic solutions for sustaining city life, the only ideological intervention against the 'fascist landscape' was the removal of the political symbols of the old regime. Swastikas were taken down, Nazi flags were trampled on, and Adolf-Hitler-Platz became Victory Square.

Meanwhile, as the provisional military administration began to reintroduce state power, the city began to rebuild itself spontaneously, as military units directed German workers to patch up the windows and roofs of surviving buildings. Even in the most heavily damaged areas, the remains of the city dictated its future development through the foundations of buildings and their surviving walls, through the cobblestone streets that directed movement through the remains, and through the fixtures in store fronts, offices, and apartment buildings that in part informed the future use of structures lying half in ruins. At the same time, postwar Königsberg began to take on a new identity, because even the improvised rebuilding begun by the provisional military administration was influenced by the expectations of the city's new Soviet administrators. The emerging Soviet system, even as it developed pragmatically, operated on the basic assumption that the material resources of Königsberg would be socialized, that private property would be turned over to the state, and that the state would become the sole employer, producer and distributor of goods and services.² As the occupiers rebuilt industries, they combined their expectations of how factories should look and operate with the actual conditions on the ground.

In some cases, precedent dictated future development. Many of Königsberg's factories produced similar objects in Kaliningrad using similar methods and equipment; Königsberg's tram tracks remained in Kaliningrad, along with the streetcars, which ran on different track *Gauges* from the standard in the Soviet Union. Some specialized buildings preserved their function in the postwar: the Gestapo headquarters near the North Train Station became the base of operations for the NKVD. Even so, the process of pragmatic building was slowly transforming prewar German Königsberg into a new city. Commercial buildings were turned into apartment housing, and former residential buildings were refitted as administrative buildings or store fronts. In the first year, the buildings were built in a decentralized manner, with the construction overseen by individual military units, industries, or organizations. Although most of the workers were German, few of them had experience in construction, and the result was the spontaneous growth of a cityscape cobbled together by the urgent necessity to create useable space. Without coordination among industries or a clear plan for reconstruction, often this spontaneous reworking of the remains had the opposite effect: a not uncommon complaint by the civilian government was that the remains of two buildings were carelessly combined leading to less total usable space than before. In 1948, for example, a speaker in the Kaliningrad City Soviet criticized the Neman

² Already by late April, the provisional military command issued a number of orders reminding soldiers that the material "trophy" in the city needed to be collected and inventoried for military use and was no longer considered spoils for individual soldiers to collect. Those orders were frequently disregarded, and the provisional military administration struggled continuously with gaining complete control over the material resources of the city. See, for example, GAKO R330.1.2.2, 26 April 1945.

Forest Trust (*Nemanles*) for violating its lease rights to a building at Chkalov Street 94; instead of rebuilding it as promised, *Nemanles* tore it down to harvest the raw materials for other construction projects.³ The transition to a civilian administration did not put an end to pragmatic rebuilding, although the dynamics of repurposing gradually became more organized. For example, in mid-1947, the Executive Committee of the Kaliningrad Oblast' Soviet granted permission to the new Oblast' Retail Network [*Obluniversaltorg*] to dismantle refrigerators in an old German hospital clinic in the abandoned village of Wargen, 11 kilometers northwest, to use in grocery stores in Kaliningrad.⁴ Similarly, in March 1947, printing equipment, including presses and typewriters, were collected from a printing house of a former Gumbinnen regional newspaper for use in Kaliningrad, but the typeface needed to be switched from Latin to Cyrillic before it could be used.⁵

The most immediate and striking change was the shift of city life away from the old center of the city. With the city center almost ninety percent destroyed, one Kaliningrad city planner wrote in early 1947 that, "according to our Soviet understanding," Kaliningrad had no city center at all.⁶ The historic center—the cathedral on the Kneiphof Island, the old and new buildings of the university, the Königsberg Castle looming above the narrow commercial streets of the old town, and the fish and vegetable markets lining the river banks of the Pregel—was left in ruins, leaving an empty hole of rubble. In the first days after the fall of Fortress Königsberg, the new locus of urban life sprang up in the northwest suburbs of Hufen and Amalienau just outside the old city ring, where the destruction had been less significant, at an estimated sixty to seventy percent. The Hufen district had been the most prominent late nineteenth-century district outside the former city walls, where the new projects encouraging economic growth in the city were built in the early twentieth century, including the *Ostmesse*, the House of Technology, the Zoo, and the North Train Station. As the new provisional city center grew out of the ruins, German-run shops appeared selling household goods, and an improvised market place developed along the Luisenallee, where Germans and Soviets haggled for everything from furniture to heirloom antiques, to loaves of bread. The main administrative offices of the provisional military administration and the later civilian administration also set up there, with bureaucratic departments springing up in former residential buildings among the ruins.⁷

The displacement of the city center could be seen most clearly from the bird's-eye perspective, but it could also be felt on the ground. With the new provisional center growing up on the edge of the former city, other surviving neighborhoods were separated from the new center by as much as ten kilometers of wasteland. Utilities and specialized public services (including hospitals and schools) were rebuilt in their former locations, however, making the separation of these neighborhoods more pronounced, as critical city services were scattered with no means of public transportation to connect them. For example, Königsberg's surviving hospitals were mostly clustered around the former center, far from the new center of life along the Hufenallee. A single office within the Civilian Affairs Administration was set up to handle the registration of births, marriages, and deaths, over a

³ GAKO R216.1.2.167, 10 June 1948.

⁴ GAKO R297.1.24.17, 3 July 1947.

⁵ GAKO R297.1.110.168, 11 March 1947.

⁶ GANIKO 2.1.22.5, no date [early 1947].

⁷ GAKO R310.1.7.31, no date [before October 1947].

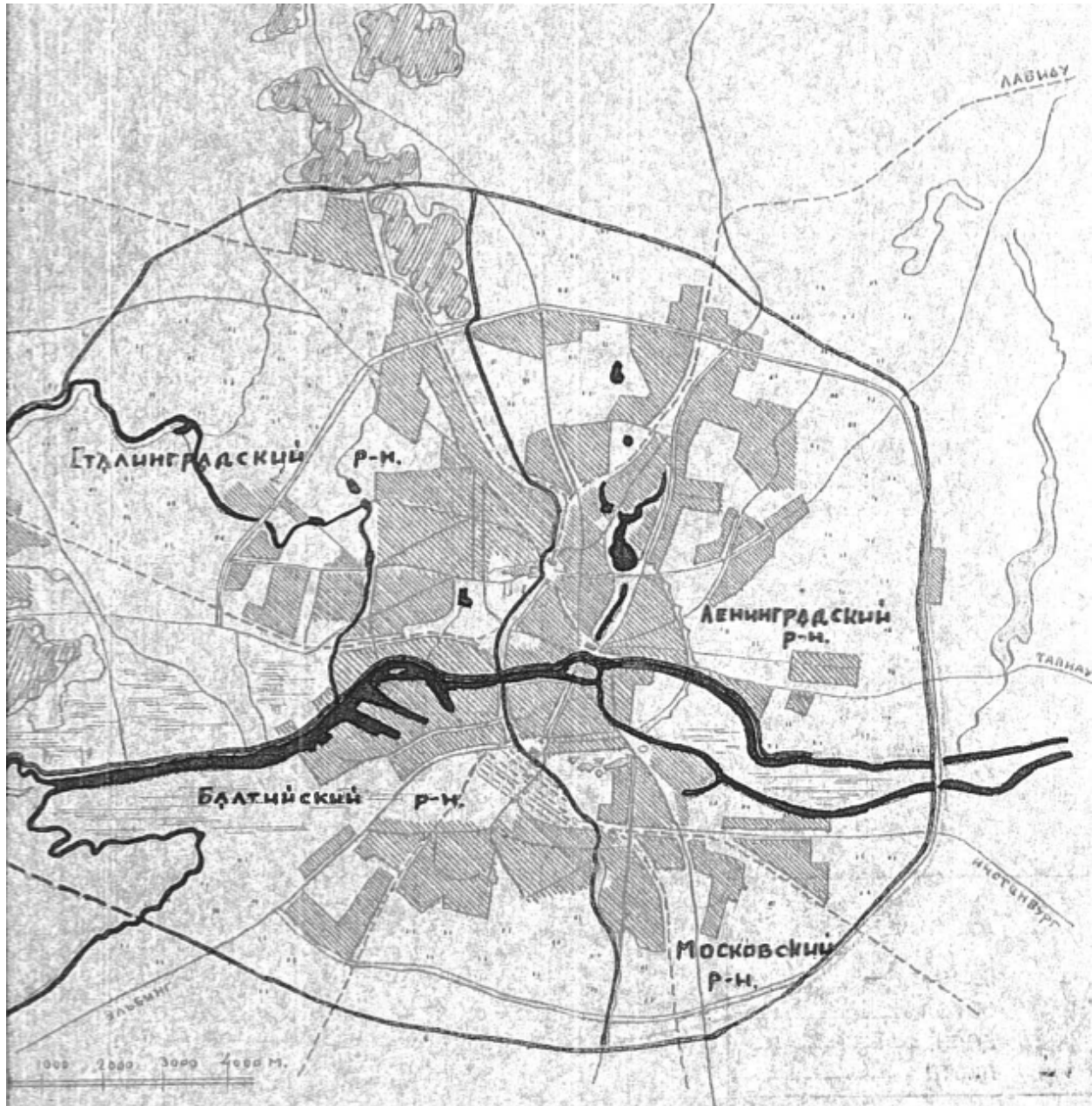
dozen kilometers on foot from other neighborhoods in town. And with the population scattered over great distances, the Main Post Office, operating without neighborhood branches, sometimes took weeks to deliver telegrams and months to deliver letters. The predetermined paths of Königsberg's surviving streets radiated from the empty center, complicating transit between outlying suburbs. After the trams were established, they too, crossed the ruins of the old town, with no direct connection between neighborhoods. Even the bridges, although most of them still lay in ruins, dictated access points to the Pregel River. The old "seven bridges of Königsberg" problem had become a "two bridges" problem: with only two ways to cross the Pregel River, how could workers on each side of the port in the western edges of the city reach the industries on either side without traveling several kilometers to the remaining bridges further east?⁸

With the influx of new Soviet settlers, the population of the city increased dramatically, from a reported 127,000 in mid-April 1947 to 211,000 by the end of the summer, with an anticipated growth to over 300,000 by 1950 (Königsberg's population in 1939, by comparison, was 372,164.)⁹ In early 1947, the civilian government produced plans to create new administrative districts in Kaliningrad in order to provide the full spectrum of city administration and services for the population in different areas of the city, ultimately creating four districts in mid-1947.¹⁰

⁸ GARF A259.6.3923.7, no date [mid-1947].

⁹ GAKO R310.1.7.13, no date [before October 1947]; Per Brodersen, "Enttäuschte Hoffnungen: Kaliningrader Industriearbeiter und die Neubesiedlung des nördlichen Ostpreußen in der sowjetischen Nachkriegszeit (1945-1953), 1. Teil," *Berichte un Forschungen* 10 (2002), *Jahrbuch des Bundesinstituts für Kultur und Geschichte der Deutschen im Östlichen Europa* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2002), 2.

¹⁰ GANIKO 2.1.22.5; GARF A259.6.3923.8, no date [mid-1947].



From top left, clockwise: Stalingrad District, Leningrad District, Moscow District, and Baltic District, 1947. The provisional city center, along with most city services, were clustered in the Stalingrad district. The old city center, located in Leningrad District, was much more sparsely populated, but retained a few essential city services, including hospitals and some industries.¹¹

Stalingrad District (the former Hufen and Amalienau neighborhoods) covered the territory of the new provisional center of the city, with a reported area of 43 square kilometers, 370,000 square meters of administrative and living space (not including military quarters), and a population estimated in mid-1947 at 50,000 (reported a couple of months later at

¹¹ GARF A259.6.3923, no date [mid-1947].

76,000).¹² Stalingrad District was also the center of industry for the city, including the Pulp and Paper Mill No 2, the Machinery Factory, the Train Car Factory, the Electrical Coil Factory, the Mill, the Sawmill, the Furniture Factory, the River Port, the Gas Plant, the Refrigerating Unit, the Electrical Station No. 1, the Tank Factory, and a number of bakeries.¹³ In addition, the main institutions for culture and entertainment were located there, including the first two movie theaters (“Victory” and “Dawn,”), the Sailors’ Club, the Red Army Theater, the Officers’ House, the Zoo (which also served as the temporary home of the Park of Culture and Rest), the City Library and Oblast’ Library, the future Drama Theater (still being reconstructed at the time), 14 schools, orphanages, and pre-schools, two clinics, an urgent care center, and a clinic at the Pulp and Paper Mill, two women’s clinics, 3 nurseries, 2 outpatient clinics, 80 stores, 2 hotels, 18 barber shops, and one city bath house.¹⁴

Leningrad District, on the north bank of the Pregel on the eastern side of the city, covered the area of the former city center and suburbs to the northeast. The territory was larger than Stalingrad District (60 square kilometers) and had a similar number of people (somewhere between the 70,000 reported in mid-summer 1947 and the 66,500 reported a couple of months later), but did not have significantly more useable living space than Stalingrad District (400,000 square meters, compared to 370,000), leading to a greater population density within individual apartments, but a more sparse layout of housing inside the ruins. Leningrad District also a number of industries centered, as in the Stalingrad District, along the north bank of the Pregel River: Pulp and Paper Mill No.2, a brewery, a bakery, sawmills and lumber yards, and a former Nazi uniform factory. As had been the case before the war, there were fewer industries on the eastern side of the city because the location was further from the sea port and bordered against marshy land unsuitable for development. Leningrad District, despite having a higher population, had fewer schools and fewer stores per capita, but had a significantly higher concentration of hospitals that had survived the destruction of the old town, including two City Hospitals, the Oblast’ Hospital, the Infection Hospital, and the Tuberculosis Hospital, in addition to other clinics. A large concentration of the remaining military barracks were also found in the Leningrad District, scattered in the former suburbs to the northeast.¹⁵

The two districts south of the Pregel River were less developed, although also attracted workers in industries along the river. Moscow District, in the southeast of the city (35 square kilometers), was less populated (35,000), as it had also been in Königsberg. By mid-1947, there was 260,000 square meters of living and administration space. There were also a number of factories, including the Meat Plant and other food industries (butter, liquor, and bread). Moscow District had more living space, but was particularly poor in services, having only one school for each school age, four barbers, one hospital and one outpatient clinic, and 25 stores.¹⁶ Baltic District, in the southwest of the city, was larger than Moscow District, with 52 square kilometers, but had around the same amount of useable housing and administrative space (270,000 square meters), and 56,000 residents (although reported later in the summer of 1947 at only 35,000). It also housed the south side of the main

¹² GARF A259.6.3923.8, no date [mid-1947]; GAKO R310.1.7.26, no date [before October 1947].

¹³ GARF A259.6.3923.8-9, no date [mid-1947].

¹⁴ GARF A259.6.3923.8, no date [mid-1947].

¹⁵ GARF A259.6.3923.9-10, no date [mid-1947]; GAKO R310.1.7.26, no date [before October 1947].

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

port, along with Shipbuilding Plant No. 820 (the former Schichau), and the railway connection to the Pregel River. Like the Moscow District, there were also relatively few services per capita: only one school per school-age, one out-patient clinic, one birthing clinic, and one polyclinic, among others. For the same population as Stalingrad District, there were half of the number of shops, but it did have a movie theater (“Motherland”), a House of Culture, and 13 barbers, among other services.¹⁷

Even as improvised rebuilding continued, the introduction of the civilian government in mid-1946 marked the beginning of the gradual transition from short-term solutions to longterm planning. The incorporation of Königsberg formally into the RSFSR in April 1946, its renaming as Kaliningrad in July, and the rapid growth of the city’s Soviet population beginning that summer coincided with new expectations on the part of the expanding Soviet civilian government about how Kaliningrad should develop. In particular, calls were made increasingly not only for Kaliningrad to be rebuilt more quickly in order to provide housing and services for the growing population, but also for Kaliningrad to be rebuilt as a “Soviet city” in the “spirit of socialism.”

New plans for city development originating in Kaliningrad were based on assumptions about what “Soviet” and “socialist” meant, formed from the shared experiences of growing up in the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s and fighting for the Soviet Union during the war. Socialism, everyone understood, meant the most progressive governmental system in the world: the most scientific, the most efficient, the most equitable, and the most humane. Socialism also meant the triumph of progress against backwardness through technological achievement, including the electrification of the countryside and the industrialization of the cities. In that sense, making a city “socialist” and “Soviet” meant, in part, making it modern. Socialism was also about creating an orderly, efficient society through the expertise and guidance of the state, and this desire for rational order stemmed from two separate motivations. The first was for the city to become the perfect expression of plans that were beautiful, mathematical, and clean. In this sense, architects, planners, and city officials intended for Kaliningrad to display the symbolic power of the Soviet state, to perform a pedagogical function, and to be the manifestation of the same rational, orderly principles that guided scientific socialism. The second motivation was the dream of the pragmatists for the design of the city to address the needs of the people living there, with the beauty being found in practicality: shorter commutes, easy access to parks, shops, schools, food, and entertainment. The hope was that these two priorities—the long-term organization of the city around orderly principles and the goal of providing for the daily needs of human beings—would necessary complement each other, and that the rationally-planned, orderly, geometric city would also be the city that best met the needs of the people living there.

Early on, the military and civilian administrations saw potential in the ruins of Königsberg, and numerous reports from administrators, architects, and planners documented the wealth of opportunity that the remains of Königsberg presented for the Soviet state. In April 1946, the Head of the Orgplan Department, Lieutenant-Colonel Antonov, reported on Königsberg’s economic capacity, without any reference to supposed ideological contamination of the remains. Antonov highlighted the wealth of the new city, even in its destroyed state, and insisted that the Soviet government not pass by the opportunity to re-

¹⁷ Ibid.

build the economy to its full potential.¹⁸ Likewise, the Deputy Minister of Municipal Services of the RSFSR, the Brigade Leader Shipilov, noted in late 1946 that Königsberg and other prewar cities in the oblast' had excellent city services and infrastructure, including full networks of underground water pipes and sewer systems.¹⁹ Soviet architects and engineers were also impressed that all of the roads in the city had been paved, either with asphalt or cobblestone or other forms of mosaic stonework.²⁰ In mid-1947, the deputy V. Dolgushin of the Kaliningrad City Soviet praised the prewar city for its "exceptionally high-level amenities," adding that it was "especially important to note the quantity and quality of the green areas and roads."²¹ Dolgushin seemed impressed not only with infrastructure and industry, but also with the city's natural beauty. He made a meticulous list of Königsberg's 166 hectares of orchards, 70 hectares of parks, 83 hectares of cemeteries, and 10 hectares of botanical gardens, which, he noted, had featured over 2,000 roses. Even in the city's destroyed state, the parks were covered with flowers, and window boxes adorned the stucco facades of apartment buildings.²² In mid-1947, the architect Maksimov, noting the rapidly growing Soviet population, called for Kaliningrad quickly to harness the modern infrastructural system and high quality of construction from Königsberg's remains in order to transform Kaliningrad into a true socialist city.²³

In the face of shortages and setbacks, however, socialism—be it in the form of order, rationality, government control, or improved standards of living—still seemed a long way off. Hundreds of thousands of Soviet settlers arrived to Kaliningrad in 1947, and even those who left cities and villages destroyed by the Nazis were horrified by the conditions they found awaiting them in Kaliningrad. Explanations appealing to wartime destruction no longer sufficed, and the government and the city's population struggled to rationalize the failures in rebuilding. At the same time, the introduction over the course of 1947 of new governmental agencies, architectural offices, and planning departments meant that local officials in Kaliningrad increasingly had to justify their failures to Moscow. And the largest questions remained unasked, if not unconsidered: if socialism was the most modern, advanced, and progressive social system, why had life in Königsberg been better? And why did Kaliningrad remain in ruins?

One response, which emerged within certain sectors of the new administration already in late 1946, was that the remains of Königsberg did not offer a wealth of potential for the new Soviet city, but constituted a threat against its development. German architecture, it seemed, more than having been a monument of a fallen civilization, might still be actively interfering with the development of socialism. The city, at first celebrated for its modern infrastructure, industrial capacity, and high-level amenities that could form the basis for the construction of socialism, was now criticized for being its antithesis. An image of a fascist Königsberg, created in the mirror of the future socialist Kaliningrad that would replace it, was constructed in party speeches, newspaper articles, and planning meetings increasingly over the course of 1947 and 1948. Binaries emerged that pitted irrational Germanism

¹⁸ GARF A259.6.3923.175, no date [April 1946].

¹⁹ GARF A259.6.4544.22-3, no date [late 1946].

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 26.

²¹ GARF A259.6.3923.21, no date [mid-1947].

²² *Ibid.*

²³ GAKO R310.1.7.32, no date [before October 1947].

against Soviet socialism, juxtaposing the small and the large, the irregular and the orderly, and the organic and the geometric. In late 1947, Dmitrii Tian, the city's first main architect, derided Königsberg's architecture as unplanned and medieval, criticizing the historical growth of the city and the seeming absence of any underlying principles guiding the placement of city streets. Many of the built-up areas of the city seemed completely unconnected to each other, he argued, and from an architectural standpoint, it was difficult, not only in Kaliningrad, but in many other cities in the oblast', to find any evidence of unified architectural ensembles. Tian derided Königsberg's historical development as pre-modern and Teutonic, with the exception of a few suburban districts built in the late nineteenth century or in the 1930s, which appeared to have been better planned. Tian denounced Königsberg's backwardness as evidence of fascism, while recognizing—without a hint of irony—that the ordered principles of city planning under the Third Reich corresponded more closely to Soviet designs.

By 1947, anything that Kaliningrad's new architects identified as "Gothic" in style was determined to be fascist. Even early twentieth-century modernist buildings were denounced as what Tian called the "Gothic in Constructivism."²⁴ Tian attacked in particular the surviving buildings of the Königsberg architect Hanns Hopp, the prominent architect for Mayor Lohmeyer's city projects in the 1920s (including the *Ostmesse*, the Park Hotel, and a number of other prominent public buildings). During the Third Reich, Hopp had been ostracized for his architectural modernism and socialist views, only for his surviving works to be judged among the most "fascist" buildings among Königsberg's remains. Tian condemned Hopp's work simultaneously (and somewhat contradictorily) as medieval-Gothic and bourgeois-modernist. The irony, unknown to Tian at the time, was that in the postwar period Hopp, having updated his architectural style to suit the aesthetic of state socialism, had been called on to design the most prominent blocks of apartment buildings in East Berlin, the so-called "Stalin Houses" on the Stalinallee.

After the rise of anti-cosmopolitan rhetoric of "capitalist encirclement" beginning in late 1947, some elements of Königsberg's landscape were rejected simply as "capitalist" when specific markers of fascism were harder to pinpoint. Capitalism could be found in the sprawl of the suburbs, the predominance of single-story homes, the lack of communal facilities, and in any remaining traces of the city's former wealth. The conflation of capitalism and fascism in the Soviet imaginary seemed to be self-justifying, and, indeed, the complete denunciation of Königsberg's architecture as hopelessly contaminated by capitalism applied mostly because that architecture was also German. Even though architecture was seen as the expression of a socio-economic base, the pre-revolutionary architecture of Soviet cities had not been rejected so completely. During the initial revolutionary fervor after 1917, modernist, constructivist architecture of the avant-garde was supposed to free the people from the oppression and inequality expressed through capitalist and imperialist architecture, but soon that path was abandoned in favor of the same neoclassical and historicist forms that had dominated the cityscape of the Russian capitals before the revolution.

Königsberg's architecture contradicted not only the socialist ideals of order, rationality, and efficiency, but also its humanist impulse. The city, according to the Soviet historical consensus, had been designed as base for raid and plunder, which meant that its entire spatial geography was compromised. Königsberg's steep red roofs and narrow medieval streets

²⁴ GAKO R520.1.12.1f.

were cast as cruel and ominous; the thick red brick city gates were offered as proof that Königsberg had been designed for conquest. The architect Navalikhin pointed out how military forms, “odious to mankind,” dominated the city center, creating the atmosphere of a military base. By contrast, working-class and residential neighborhoods seemed poorly planned, cramped and unfriendly, like hopeless, joyless barracks.” The winding, narrow streets of Königsberg’s medieval old town became proof of the oppression of the working classes.²⁵

Whenever government officials established Soviet-style institutions in Kaliningrad, they were constantly doing so in the mirror of Königsberg, arguing that socialism was the triumph of progressive principles, and always the complete opposite of fascism. When they built workers’ commons at the factories, or housed employees in on-site dorms because public transportation had not been reestablished, they claimed that Königsberg would never have shown such concern for its workers. When establishing the first communal bath house, the Head of Municipal Services explained delays by noting that work had to begin from scratch because prewar Königsberg had not had a single public bath house. This statement is revealing in two ways: first of all, Königsberg did have a public bathing house, similar to those in other German cities in the early twentieth century, and it was a place not only to get clean, but to exercise and socialize. Second, until the city was destroyed, there had been central plumbing inside individual apartments, well in advance of most Russian cities, minimizing the need for communal bathing. New planners, architects, and governmental officials often conflated the prewar city with the rubble city they had inherited. Any inefficiency, any obstacle to rebuilding, could be rationalized as proof of Königsberg’s backwardness or a lingering trace of “fascism.” During the seventh session of the Kaliningrad City Soviet in November 1948, a speaker reminded listeners that “before the war in Kaliningrad [sic], there were no communal services [*kommunal’no-bytovykh predpriatii*]. We have had to build bath houses, hotels, and outfit barbershops again, and the government is giving out a lot of money for that.”²⁶ The point was not to create an accurate depiction of life in Königsberg before the war, but to juxtapose the past to the present in order to rationalize the low quality of life in postwar Kaliningrad and to articulate the values of socialism, as local actors understood them, through the contrast.

Soviet officials frequently denounced the backwardness of certain features of Königsberg, when to an outside observer—and to the remaining German population—the new system seemed more antiquated. As was the case with soldiers during the war, new settlers often were surprised by the remnants of the previous civilization—private apartments, motor cars, street lamps, indoor plumbing, and consumer goods—and struggled to explain the Germans’ higher standard of living. German buildings, they noticed, were more carefully crafted, and with better materials; the roads were straight and lined with fruit trees. Previous higher standards of living, in particular, could be seen in the untarnished material abundance of the seaside villages of Rauschen and Cranz; the towns were cast as exclusive resorts for the imperialist elite (even as the the remaining Germans, often craftspeople and fishermen, called that depiction into question). At the same time as their supposed lavishness was denounced, however, their luxuries would be embraced for use by workers, veterans, and children. The answer to the material wealth of Königsberg, by ordi-

²⁵ Navalikhin, *K voprosu rekonstruktsii tsentra goroda Kaliningrada*, vol. 1 (Moscow, 1958), 26-33.

²⁶ GAKO R216.1.2.410, 18 November 1948.

nary soldiers and settlers, party members, and propagandists, was that bourgeois comforts were the result of imperialism and militarism, but that socialism would soon surpass them. Socialism had proven itself morally superior and victorious in battle, but now Kaliningrad would need to out-do Königsberg at providing for its citizens.

The city's German past became the foil against which Soviet planners designed their new socialist city. Hundreds of declarations were made, starting in 1947, that a new, socialist Kaliningrad deserved new architecture, completely liberated from the German style. As one building engineer wrote to the local newspaper, in no way could the Soviets "slavishly copy" the old buildings by rebuilding them. Kaliningrad needed to be rebuilt "in the spirit of Soviet ideology" in order to rid the city of its Prussian spirit once and for all. Kaliningrad's residents were obligated to rebuild a new, Soviet type of city, in accordance with the "cultural needs of our people."²⁷ As Dmitrii Tian wrote in *Kaliningradskaiia Pravda* in May 1947, however, creating a new General Plan for the city was no easy task "because the architecture of the German city is alien to Soviet architecture and unacceptable in form and content."²⁸ The new socialist architecture, on the contrary, would focus on the development of a just society. The most important task in rebuilding, Tian explained, was to bring the new social-economic structure of the city into architectural expression—to erase the traces of fascism, capitalism, and Prussian militarism from Kaliningrad.²⁹

The most significant spontaneous transformation of the city in 1945 had been the destruction of the city center and the shift of city life to the suburbs. When city planners began to draw up plans for the new Soviet Kaliningrad, much of their focus was on determining the location and character of the city's future center. Even with the gradual rise of long-term planning, tensions remained between pragmatists and planners, as pragmatists preferred to focus on short-term solutions to meet the needs of the people already living in the city, whereas planners took a more idealistic approach, aiming for solutions that would bring about a more ideal city in the long term, even if that meant prolonging inconvenience for the population. The ideal city, as the discussions progressed, was the city that, through socialist construction, most completely eradicated the traces of fascism.

The old city center had been so completely destroyed that in the first two years of the city's reconstruction, there were serious doubts that it could be rebuilt at all. One of Kaliningrad's first architects before the creation of a dedicated Architectural Office was the Head Architect for Oblast' Municipal Services, P. V. Timokhin, who, with his focus on establishing city services, came down decidedly on the side of pragmatism. In a letter from June 1946, Timokhin wrote that "the center of the city has been so thoroughly destroyed that it is either not worth restoring at all or would take several decades to restore." Timokhin suggested instead that the former center be left "as a monument to VICTORY in the GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR, 1941-1945, over German fascism."³⁰ Other early proposals included ideas to create a new city center around the ring of the former city walls, with open green space in the center of town formed from the cleared ruins of the original city center; the green space could be converted into new housing as the city grew. The idea to preserve the old city cen-

²⁷ N. Dychovichnaia, "Neotlozhnie voprosy vosstanovlenii i planirovki Kaliningrada," *Kaliningradskaiia Pravda*, 30 July 1947; N. Dychovichnaia, "Stroit' po-novomu, po-sovetski," *Kaliningradskaiia Pravda*, 9 October 1947.

²⁸ Dmitrii Tian, *Kaliningradskaiia Pravda*, 1 May 1948.

²⁹ cited in Hoppe, *Auf den Trümmern*, 50.

³⁰ GARF A150.2.182.1-2, 24 June 1946.

ter as an open air museum for the victory over Germany was eventually abandoned, although similar proposals reappeared into the early 1950s.³¹ These suggestions were not unique to Kaliningrad; early discussions for rebuilding Warsaw also included proposals to preserve the ruins of the city so that tourists could be reminded of the work of National Socialist barbarism.³²

Timokhin's proposal suggested that the new provisional center around the Hufenallee be made permanent by clustering new development around the North Train Station and the nearby grounds of the destroyed *Ostmesse* pavilion,³³ while maintaining the concentration of city life in the Hufen and Amalienau suburbs. The corner of Hagenstraße and Luisenallee, he suggested, could function as the nexus for development, given that the city's Administration for Civilian Affairs was already located there, at Luisenallee 47. Pointing to the rapid migration of Soviet workers into the city already by the summer of 1946, Timokhin called for making the city viable as soon as possible, rather than stalling reconstruction in the name of ambitious projects.³⁴ However, little was decided about the location of the future city center in the next year, and pragmatic rebuilding continued in an improvised, decentralized manner. Another architect, Maksimov, warned in mid-1947 that plans for the city needed to be established soon, before the rapid growth of unplanned construction permanently interfered with ordered reconstruction—the blank slate of Kaliningrad was already being filled, but without consensus about how to build an orderly, unified cityscape.³⁵

Over the course of 1947, an increasing number of Kaliningrad's new architects and planners pushed to reconstruct the old city center. These planners focused on the long-term expression of the city's geography, but also pointed to a number of practical benefits: the city center, they argued, still contained a number of repairable buildings and underground sewage and communications networks; in addition, the two main neighborhoods of urban growth (the northwest and the south) would remain isolated from each other if the old city center was not filled in. The main proponent of a rebuilt city center was Kaliningrad's Head Architect Dmitrii Navalikhin (1948-1955), who coming down firmly on the side of the long-term and ideologically-informed planning, had a strongly expressed desire to unify the cityscape through the reconstruction of the old city center.

Moscow architects had planned for the reconstruction of several Soviet cities while they were still under German occupation, and those plans were put into action soon after the Red Army recaptured the cities, in some cases still during the war. Real decisions about the placement of the city center could not be decided in Kaliningrad alone, as they required the participation and oversight of Moscow organizations, particularly the Moscow State Institute for City Projects (Giprogor), as part of the formation of a General Plan for urban development. The order to create the plan was a long time in coming; well over a year after the creation of the oblast', the Kaliningrad City Party Secretary P. Kolokhov wrote in May

³¹ Hoppe, *Auf den Trümmern*, 55; "Na zapade—net bolshe vostochnoi prusii," Introduction to *Kaliningrad: Literaturno-khudozhestvennyi i obshchestvenno-politicheskii sbornik* (Kaliningrad, Russia: Izdatel'stvo Kaliningradskaia Pravda, 1951), 3-14.

³² Hoppe, *Auf den Trümmern*, 55f.

³³ GAKO R520.1.2.1f.

³⁴ GARF A150.2.182.2, 24 June 1946.

³⁵ GAKO R310.1.7.32, no date [before October 1947].

1947 to the First Secretary of the Oblast' Party Committee, Iurii Ivanov, requesting help for its development, but it took another full year before Giprogor became involved, and in the meantime, city and oblast' authorities did not have the power to make major decisions.³⁶ Finally, on 13 May 1948, the Head of the Administration for Architecture of the Council of Ministers of the RSFSR, V. Shkvarikov, and the Director of Giprogor, N. Ia. Burlakov, were tasked with creating a General Plan for Kaliningrad, including the establishment of guidelines for the development of the city for the next 20 years in the realms of general construction, administrative buildings, housing, trade, industry, and recreation.³⁷

The discussions around the development of the General Plan for Kaliningrad placed great emphasis on the symbolic value of constructing of a new city center, as was also the case with other Soviet cities rebuilt after the war.³⁸ Over the course of several meetings, discussions, and publications, a number of plans for the center were proposed, with Kaliningrad's local office and Main Architect Navalikhin working in tandem with the Moscow team. In an article in *Kaliningradskaiia Pravda*, a leader of the Giprogor Project, M. R. Naumov, made the case in April 1949 against relocating the center to the periphery of the old city. His first reasons were pragmatic: the old center maintained the traffic links between the peripheral regions of town, and there were some still repairable buildings there that could become the core for new Soviet architectural projects. But there were also ideological considerations: although Königsberg's structure as a ring city had been previously denounced as a symbol of its militarism, it turned out that the ideal socialist city (Moscow) was also built as a ring. And so proposals for the General Plan for Kaliningrad, beginning in 1948, borrowed heavily from the 1935 plan for Moscow's reconstruction. Naumov's Giprogor team presented a future vision of Kaliningrad's center that would embody the ideals of postwar socialist architecture: order and scale. The main streets of the new Kaliningrad would be broadened and radiate from the city center; in the symbolic and geographic center, built on the ruins of the Königsberg castle, would stand a monumental Palace of Soviets to honor Mikhail Kalinin. Crowning the Palace of Soviets, a lighthouse would celebrate Kaliningrad's role as a port city.³⁹

³⁶ GANIKO 2.1.22.20-5, May 1947.

³⁷ GAKO R520.1.8.1; Hoppe, *Auf den Trümmern*, 55.

³⁸ Hoppe, *Auf den Trümmern*, 55; Andrew Elam Day, "Building Socialism: the Politics of the Soviet Cityscape in the Stalin Era," (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1998), 76.

³⁹ Naumov, "Kakim budet Kaliningrad," *Kaliningradskaiia Pravda*, 30 April 1949; Day, "Building Socialism," 65; Dmitrii Tian, "Sovetskii Gorod Kaliningrad," *Kaliningradskaiia Pravda*, 7 November 1947; Navalikhin, *K voprosu*, vol. 1, 3.



Although plans for a new city center were drawn up in the late 1940s and into the 1950s, those plans were not carried out for decades. Here, Lenin Prospect (formerly Zhitomir Street), in the former center of Königsberg, remains an open field.⁴⁰

The discussion about the placement of the new center remained theoretical for the time being, however, and the provisional center continued to grow around Stalingrad Prospect (the former Hufenallee). Even smaller plans for city neighborhoods required oversight and final approval from not only Kaliningrad's Architectural Office, but also from the Executive Committees of the Kaliningrad City and Oblast' Soviets (Gorispolkom and Oblispolkom) all the way up to the State Committee for Architectural Matters of the RSFSR. In advance of the finalization of the General Plan, Kaliningrad's Main Architect Navalikhin was placed in charge of overseeing the reconstruction of the provisional city center, starting in September 1948, in order to bring it in line with principles of Soviet planning.⁴¹

For Navalikhin, the aesthetic and ideological reworking of the provisional center proved to be of more interest than the practical short-term needs of the city's population. He imagined a Victory Square along the North Train Station entrance (at the Former Hansa Ring) to serve as a central square for gatherings and mass demonstrations, and proposed that the surrounding buildings, which had partially survived the war, be used for city administration. The segment of Stalingrad Prospect radiating to the west would be broadened

⁴⁰ Unknown photographer, GAKO digital photo collection, <http://www.transphoto.ru/photo/166989/>, (accessed 14 August 2013).

⁴¹ Hoppe, *Auf den Trümmern*, 59; GAKO R520.1.8.2f, 14 September 1948.

and straightened, to conform to the designs of a Soviet main thoroughfare. But facades of the buildings lining the Stalingrad Prospect would be reworked in neoclassical style, with the reconstructed Drama Theater (planned to be rebuilt from its early twentieth-century design with stucco and classical columns) serving as the avenue's centerpiece.⁴²

Navalikhin's project for Stalingrad Prospect underwent some minor revisions in late 1949 by the RSFSR Administration for Architecture in Moscow, as two experts differed in their judgement of Navalikhin's plans. The first, A.N. Kornoukhov, applauded Navalikhin for reworking the defects present in Königsberg's original street design and for transforming the "foreign appearance" of individual building facades in order to better give the area "the character of a Soviet city," where concern for the needs of inhabitants had led to the development of reasonable urban density, more orderly foundations and linear streets, and more pleasant, beautiful, and orderly buildings. Kornoukhov, if anything, found the proposal not to be drastic enough, but admitted that the previous architectural inconsistency would make the creation of a truly unified architectural ensemble perhaps too difficult to realize.⁴³ The second Moscow expert, Ia. A. Kornfel'd, a member of the Academy for Architecture of the USSR, however, responded much more negatively, criticizing Navalikhin for not having sufficiently foregrounded ideological concerns. Whereas Navalikhin had called for rebuilding the majority of the buildings on the street close to their original form, Kornfel'd pointed out that those buildings "had been built under the conditions of capitalist property." Each individual building would need to be reworked in the spirit of socialism in order for Stalingrad Prospect to be worthy of its name, the importance of which was "not only for Soviet people and their friends, but also for the enemies." Navalikhin, the architect who had pushed for ideological symbolism over short-term pragmatic goals, had been taken to task in the new climate of anti-cosmopolitanism; Kornfel'd went so far as to claim that Navalikhin and his team had fallen "prisoner to the old architectural landscape of the city," unable to liberate themselves from the pull of its oppressive, drab joylessness. Even through Navalikhin's reworking of facades, Kornfeld claimed, one could still see the darkness of Königsberg.⁴⁴

Despite these criticisms, Navalikhin's plans, with minor concessions, were approved, and his designs for Stalingrad prospect—originally designed as a short-term fix for the provisional city center—became the foundation for the permanent new center of Kaliningrad. And despite the grand debates concerning the future location and symbolic meaning of Kaliningrad's future city center, the plans made little difference in the long run. Without the massive funding required to reconstruct the old city center, the provisional "Central District" (as Stalingrad District was later renamed) remained the heart of the city and the location of most of the administration offices through the Soviet period and beyond.

Because the first decade of Kaliningrad was characterized by repair over new construction, planners, architects, and builders still had to work with the materials at hand. As Navalikhin explained in 1952, from an aesthetic perspective, it was difficult to bring individual buildings into a harmonious architectural ensemble. Reconstruction could not take place through carrying out plans from templates, since buildings retained their foundations and main exterior walls, and the irregular sizes and shapes made it difficult to translate

⁴² GANIKO 1.11.85.34.

⁴³ Hoppe, *Auf den Trümmern*, 61; GAKO 520.1.8.7-12, 10 December 1949.

⁴⁴ Hoppe, *Auf den Trümmern*, 61-4; GAKO R520.1.8.13-6, 2 December 1949.

Königsberg's buildings into standard Soviet budgets.⁴⁵ In practice, building in the 'spirit of Soviet ideology' more often than not simply meant re-working existing structures so that they seemed less identifiably German. Navalikhin advised that when the reconstruction of an existing structure was required, but because of "aesthetic considerations" could not be reconstructed in its former state, "the foreign architectural influence" of such buildings should be reduced, according to orders originating with the oblast' and city government, through the reworking of the facades.⁴⁶ Attempts to cover constructivist buildings with stucco facades originated not only in the cultural clash between Russianness and Germanness in architectural forms, but also in the internal Soviet battle over the direction of architecture, which had been raging since the beginning of the 1930s. After Neoclassicism was firmly established as the dominant style in Soviet architecture, several cities in the Soviet Union also covered their own constructivist buildings with stucco facades.⁴⁷

Despite Navalikhin's repeated orders, however, from the late 1940s through the mid-1950s, several structures from the 1920s were repaired in their original form, for example Hanns Hopp's constructivist Park Hotel on the Castle Pond, even though the facade was set to be restyled with pilasters and ornamental cornices. In order to prevent the unauthorized reestablishment of modernist or visibly German design elements, Navalikhin demanded personally to authorize all reconstruction projects for a number of years in order to control the decoration of facades.⁴⁸ As late as 1952, Navalikhin complained that buildings were still being repaired in a decentralized manner and without authorization; the fact that many of these buildings were located on the edges of town meant that individuals and organizations were taking private initiative to rebuild, circumventing the authority of the city and Kaliningrad's Architectural Office.⁴⁹

Even when plans were prepared, they often conflicted with the city's larger priorities. Many individual buildings projects were prepared locally by Kaliningrad architects and builders, while buildings for RSFSR organizations and industries were often planned outside of Kaliningrad by architects in other cities. Non-local planners often did not take into account Kaliningrad's peculiar building conditions, nor the needs of the local administration and architects, and the result was, despite attempts at national planning, the creation of more disorganization in the cityscape. Still other projects, designed locally, were reworked by the Ministry in Moscow, without a full understanding of the local conditions that had dictated the development of the project. For example, the building at Schiller Street [*Ulitsa Shillera*] 10-16 (the provisional location of the Office of the Ministry of Municipal Services) was given a grand facade, even though Navalikhin had recommended against it, partly because of other priorities in the budget and because the building, located on a residential side street, would seem out of place with elaborate ornamentation. Similarly, buildings at 44 and 46-48 Alexander Nevsky Street, leased to the Ministry for Fishing Industry of the USSR, were designated by Moscow to be rebuilt in their former state. The problem lay in that these buildings had been designated for use as apartments, but because they were

⁴⁵ GARF A150.2.529.6.11-2, 26 January 1952.

⁴⁶ Navalikhin, "Kazhdoe zdanie dol'zhno ukrashat' nash gorod," *Kaliningradskaia Pravda*, 3 September 1949; Navalikhin, *K voprosu*, vol. 1, 69.

⁴⁷ Day, *Building Socialism*, 41f; Hoppe, *Auf den Trümmern*, 54f.

⁴⁸ GAKO 522.1.8.

⁴⁹ GARF A150.2.529.11-2, 26 January 1952.

rebuilt as office buildings, forty apartments per building were given only one bathroom and kitchen to share. As Navalikhin complained, such conflicts between local and national priorities “were not isolated incidents.”⁵⁰

* * *

In the first years after the war, reconstruction in Kaliningrad was haphazard as individual buildings, streets, and bridges were reconstructed in haste in order to make human life possible in the city. But even among the pragmatic repurposing of the ruins, the new city grew from the Soviet understanding of how urban space should be arranged. Some aspects of city life became more communal, often by necessity, as many services were moved out of individual homes and into collective facilities, as was the case particularly for bathing, laundry, and eating. Architecturally, Soviet aesthetic preferences led to the preservation of German buildings that more closely corresponded to the Soviet taste for neoclassicism, while others were adapted with stucco facades or stripped of their ornamentation in order to fit new expectations.

Even as decentralized, pragmatic rebuilding continued after the foundation of the civilian government in 1946, a new way of thinking about Königsberg emerged, as city government officials, municipal services administrators, architects, and city planners began to think about how the new city of Kaliningrad should develop. Two main ideas emerged about how the socialist city would be different from its predecessor: the first was that the new city would be modern, whereas the old city was medieval and irregular; the second was that the new city would be Soviet, whereas the old one had been fascist (at the same time that fascism became synonymous with German). While architects and city planners denounced the fascist character of Königsberg’s architecture as a whole, including both Gothic and modern constructivist buildings, some of the city planning of the Nazi era, including the orderly housing subdivisions built in the 1930s, were allowed to survive into Kaliningrad, as Soviet architects appreciated the same principles of order and scale that had informed construction in the Third Reich.

Despite the dreams of the planners to make Kaliningrad a showcase for the socialist values of progress, rationality, and humanism, pragmatic rebuilding continued for decades, and the new city center was never fully realized. In the absence of funding, the only means to transform the city was to get rid of its fascist elements—not only Nazi swastikas, eagles, and other insignia from the Third Reich, but also any architectural styles that seemed German. In the absence of real reconstruction, building socialism became synonymous with battling fascism, and the measure for success—the measure for declaring that Kaliningrad had become a socialist city—was the degree to which traces of Germanness were removed. Socialism, stripped of unattainable goals, was defined as the opposite of German Königsberg.

⁵⁰ GARF A150.2.529.6-7, 26 January 1952.

Blood and Soil

While the dramatic plans to transform Kaliningrad into a model socialist city still remained on the drawing board, the main battle against fascism in the landscape was fought with names. One of the best ways to understand the priorities of the new government at various times in the early history of Soviet Königsberg-Kaliningrad is to look at plans for renaming; over the course of the first few years, there were a number of occasions when cities, villages, rivers, parks, streets, and squares needed to be given new names, and because the process was not completed at once, different priorities of the city, oblast' and Moscow officials were foregrounded at different moments. The creation of new place names in Russian was part of a gradual process to inscribe new meaning into the landscape and to foster new collective myths about the history and identity of Kaliningrad and the oblast'.

Phases in renaming corresponded with the phases in rebuilding and city planning, with a general division between early pragmatism and short-term solutions on the one hand, and more ideologically-informed planning and emphasis on symbolic meaning on the other. Initially, only street names in Königsberg and other major cities in northern East Prussia were changed, as orders came in the summer of 1945 to alter the names of those streets carrying the names of "fascist thugs, their leaders, and other enemies of the people."¹ At that time, street names were not replaced with Soviet or Russian names, but with the pre-1933 German names; General-Litzmannstraße, for example, once again became Stresemannstraße.²

In November 1945, the provisional military administration was ordered to prepare Russian names for every street in Königsberg, paying special attention to remove any remaining names tied to German fascism. The suggestions made by the provisional military administration in November 1945 were based on fluid criteria. In most cases, the officials in charge took great care in determining what the original German street names meant and often tried to find direct translations for the street name in Russian, particularly for street names describing geography, but also for other meanings. Steindammstrasse ("stone embankment") became Kamennaia ("stone"); Altergrabenstrasse ("old ditch") became Starokanavnaia; Langestrasse ("long," although possibly also a surname) became Dlinnaia

¹ GAKO R310.1.1.1-14, 23 November 1945.

² Hoppe, *Auf den Trümmern*, 26-7.

("long"); Gartenstrasse ("garden") became Sadovyi Pereulok; Poststrasse ("post") became Pochtovaia; Hafenstrasse ("port") became Portovaia; even Soldatenweg ("soldier") preserved its meaning as Soldatskaia, although presumably referring to soldiers of a different army. In other cases, a major landmark dictated the new name of the street, as in the case of Drummstrasse (a surname), which became Klinicheskaia ("clinic") and Augusta-Viktoria-Allee, which became Gospital'naia ("hospital"). Street names in German that referred to specific cities or places in Germany were given names of Soviet cities instead, such as the case of Wartenburgstrasse, which became Gorodskaia (simply "city"); Lübeckstrasse, which became Novgorodskaia; or Tapiauerstrasse, which became Belgorodskaia. A few streets were given names that sounded similar in German and Russian, even though they had different meanings: Selkestrasse (a surname) became Sel'skaia ("village"); Maibachstrasse (a surname) became Maiskaia ("May"); Holländerbaumstrasse (from the old spelling for "elderberry tree," *holunder*), at first transliterated as Golandbaumshtasse, became Golandskaia [sic: Gollandskaia] ("Holland/Dutch").³

As a general rule, the new names suggested by the provisional military administration did not prominently feature communist slogans, except when directly substituting names of "fascist bandits" or German national heroes, in which the direct substitution was made for Soviet equivalents. Kaiser-Wilhelm-Platz became Ploshchad' Svobody ("Freedom Square"), while Adolf-Hitler-Platz became Ploshchad' Pobedy ("Victory Square"). The Deutschordenring ("Teutonic Knights Ring") became Prospekt Geroev ("Avenue of Heroes"), a play on the Russian word *orden*, which meant a decoration for valor. There were a few communist names, however, including Oktiabr'skaia ("October"), Pervomaiskaia ("First of May"), Partizanskaia ("Partisan"), and Krasnoarmeiskaia ("Red Army," replacing General-Litzmannstrasse). The provisional military administration removed the names of most Prussian generals but frequently replaced them with general names rather than the names of Soviet or Russian military heroes: Yorckstrasse (after General Yorck, the Napoleonic War hero) became Ulitsa 1812 Goda ("The Year 1812"), which celebrated the same victory without reference to German participation, while Gneisenaustrasse became simply Bankovskaia ("bank"). The military administration even preserved Clausewitzstrasse as Ulitsa Klausevitsa, in recognition of the military philosopher who emphasized the moral aspects of war.⁴

In the Seventh District, the new provisional center of town (renamed Stalingrad District in mid-1947), there were a number of cases where the German names were preserved in the name of international humanism and European culture. The Amalienau suburb had featured a series of streets named after famous German composers, and the provisional military administration, recognizing their contribution to world culture, allowed the names to remain: Schubertstrasse became Ulitsa Shuberta; Mozartstrasse became Ulitsa Motsarta; Bachstrasse became Ulitsa Bakha, and similar translations for Liszt, Handel, Brahms, Strauss, Weber, and Schiller, although a few composers were either not recognized or were deemed not important enough to retain their names: Handelstrasse became Patrul'naia ("patrol"), Gluckstrasse became Shakhmatnaia ("chess"), and Haydnstrasse became Klubnaia ("club").⁵

³ GAKO R310.1.1.1-14, 23 November 1945.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.; GAKO R310.1.1, August 1946.

Despite the fact that the Provisional Administration for Civilian Affairs prepared Russian names for every street in Königsberg, little effort was made (and little funding available) to change the physical street signs, and so the new names remained theoretical. Soviet administrators, new settlers, and German civilians continued to use the German names for most streets in the city through the summer of 1946. In some cases, even the so-called fascist names remained in use—in a report from June 1946, the architect Timokhin still referred, without any degree of apparent self-consciousness, to General-Litzmann-Strasse.⁶

The incorporation of Königsberg into the RSFSR and creation of Königsberg Oblast' in early April 1946 set off a new wave of renaming, as plans began that May to give the city and the oblast' a new name reflective of its status. Several proposals were made in both Königsberg and in Moscow to give Königsberg a Russian name. The Head of the Provisional Administration for Civilian Affairs Guzii suggested the highly symbolic Slavgorod (the Russian root *slav* in this case meaning either "glory" and "Slavic,") although his suggestion was passed over for the less politically-charged Baltiisk, for Königsberg's location on the Baltic Sea.⁷ Another early proposal from Moscow was simply to translate Königsberg literally as Korolevets, since the name had been used in Russian for Königsberg in the past. This suggestion followed the early 'pragmatic' method for renaming used in part by the provisional military administration, simply to recognize the earlier place name in translation. The geographer A.G. Kuman from the Institute of Geography of the Academy of Sciences reminded everyone, however, that the 'king' in question was Ottokar II, who, "although he was a Czech (Slavic) prince," had taken an active part in plunder raids against the Lithuanian people, thereby making Korolevets an unsuitable name for a Soviet city.⁸ After much discussion, the new name for Königsberg was set to become Baltiisk, even appearing on some early correspondence in late May 1946, but the death of the nominal head of state of the USSR, Mikhail Kalinin, on 3 June 1946, led to the new suggestion, soon adopted, that Königsberg be offered in his memory as Kaliningrad—the city of Kalinin. The city and the oblast' were renamed officially on 4 July 1946.

Later that month, the Civilian Affairs Administration started the first drive to formalize new Russian names for Kaliningrad's streets.⁹ Unlike the name for the city and the oblast', the discussions were local; already in June 1946, correspondence between the first architects and city planners in the new city and oblast' municipal services administrations highlighted the need to standardize street names and addresses (for example, to fuse some old German streets with separate names into a single street names. In late July 1946, the Civilian Affairs Administration came up with new names, reworking the original drafts created by the provisional military administration. In most cases, the names suggested from November 1945 became permanent, although the new government made some significant changes.¹⁰

One of the most substantial differences between the names suggested by the provisional military administration and those finally adopted by the Civilian Affairs Administra-

⁶ GARF A150.2.182.2, 24 June 1946.

⁷ GARF A259.6.3923.215 [no date, early-mid 1946]; GARF A259.6.3923.54, 28 May 1946.

⁸ GARF A259.6.3923.87, 15 May 1946.

⁹ GAKO R298.1.4.11, 12 July 1946.

¹⁰ GAKO R310.1.1.15-32, August 1946.

tion was the decrease in direct translations; many of the literal translations were abandoned, as the new administration felt less beholden to replicating the original German names and meanings or sounds. Selkestrasse (a surname), which at first became Sel'skaia ("village"), was changed to Malyi Pereulok ("little alley"); Holländerbaumstrasse, which first became Gol[']andskaia, became Pribrezhnaia ("Riverside"); Steindammstrasse went from Kamennaia to Ul. Zhitomirskaia (the city Zhitomir). Erich-Koch-Platz lost the name Ploshchad' Pobedy (Victory Square), which was instead given to the former Adolf-Hitler-Platz across the street because Koch, once a feature in Soviet propaganda, had already been relegated to irrelevance, and Erich-Koch-Platz was no longer even designated with a name, but simply known as the location of the sports field. Unlike the provisional military administration, the Civilian Affairs Administration also deemed Clausewitz not worthy of preservation, and his street was renamed after the Enisei River in Siberia.¹¹

The other significant shift in naming practices was the noticeable increase in reference to Russian culture, folk heroes, and geography, as a means to more firmly anchor Kaliningrad into the symbolic geography of Russia. The Civilian Affairs Administration still recognized the contribution of the "good Germans" to the legacy of European civilization and preserved the names of German musicians and national poets (Goethe and Schiller), along with the notable addition of Tchaikovsky to the canon.¹² Another residential neighborhood in the northeast, the Maraunenhof, however, earned the names of great Russian authors. The neighborhood had originally featured street names of numerous notable Prussian and northern Germans (the writers Ernst Wichert, Hermann Löns, Johanna von Wallenrodt, Gerhardt Hauptmann, and Hermann Sudermann, the philosopher Johann Karl Friedrich Rosenkranz, and the Prussian diplomat Johann von Hoverbeck, among others). The provisional military administration had not paid much attention to them, and had issued nondescript substitute names, including Serzhantskaia ("Sergeant") and Perpendikular'naia ("perpendicular") among others, but in 1946, the German authors were instead replaced with even more famous Russians: Gorky, Gogol, Pushkin, Lermontov, Nekrasov, Tolstoy, Turgenev, and Chekhov. The Herzog-Albrecht-Allee, which had transected the neighborhood, retained some internationalist character, however, and was renamed after the German KPD leader and martyr Ernst Thälmann.

¹¹ GAKO R310.1.1.29, August 1946.

¹² GAKO R310.1.1.15-32, August 1946.

5. Бремштрассе	<i>Бресс (Зоопарк)</i>	"	Горелый переулок
6. Герман Аллея и Шубертштрассе	<i>Кашперс</i>	"	<u>Улица Шуберта</u>
7. Бетховенштрассе		"	" <u>Бетховена</u>
8. Моцартштрассе		"	" <u>Моцарта</u>
9. Бахштрассе		"	" <u>Баха</u>
10. Гоцштрассе	<i>Фриша Бусович</i>	"	" Штурмовая
11. Листштрассе	<i>Шопин</i>	"	" <u>Листа</u>
12. Энзенштрассе ?		"	" <i>Триугольный переулок</i>
13. Гандельштрассе	<i>Кашперс</i>	"	" <i>Патрульная ул. Венгер</i>
14. Лорд Цинкштрассе	<i>исведа.</i>	"	" Январская
15. Глюкштрассе	<i>Кашперс</i>	"	" <i>Шахматная ул. Москва</i>
16. Брамштрассе		"	" <i>Бремса ул. Франца</i>
17. Штраусштрассе		"	" <i>Штрауса ул. Штрауса</i>
18. Гейдльштрассе		"	" <i>Клубная ул. Вайкина</i>
19. Веберштрассе		"	" Вебера ✓
20. Вагнерштрассе		"	" Театральная
21. Тиргартенштрассе		"	" <u>Зоологическая</u>
22. Гинденбургштрассе		"	<u>Большая почтовая</u>

List of street names in the Seventh Military District in Königsberg, in German (transliterated) on the left and in Russian on the right. The street names were typed on the back of captured Wehrmacht maps of the Soviet Union, a common solution for paper shortages in the postwar period. Most of the German composers were allowed to keep their street names in November 1945, although the provisional military administration had changed Gluckstrasse to Shakhmatnaia ("chess"), Handelstrasse to Patrol'naia ("patrol"), and Haydnstrasse to Klubnaia ("club"). In 1946, the Civilian Affairs Administration decided to restore all of the composer names, as first suggested here by the handwritten annotations made in the margins of the original November 1945 list.¹³

¹³ GAKO R310.1.1.11, 23 November 1945, with annotations from July 1946.

- 7. B a z i r k - - -

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Nähe deutsche
Strassennamen

1. Lawske - Allee	4. Prospekt Pobedystr.
2. Hammerweg	5. Stalingradskij prospekt
3. Hagenstr.	6. K. Marksstr.
4. Steinmetzstr.	7. Rasinestr.
5. Albrechtstr.	8. Juriditscheskajastr.
6. Wermstr.	9. Borodinostr.
7. Hermann-Allee	10. Tschajkowskogostr.
8. Schuberstr.	11. Schubertstr.
9. Beethovenstr.	12. Betgowenstr.
10. Mozartstr.	13. Mozartstr.
11. Bachstr.	14. Bachstr.
12. Beckstr.	15. Soologitscheskij tupik
13. Lisztstr.	16. Liststr.
14. Eisenstr.	17. Krasnyj pereulokstr.
15. Händelstr. Henselstr.	18. Henzelstr.
16. Lertzlingstr.	19. Owrashjastr.
17. Gluckstr.	20. Glückstr.
18. Brahmsstr.	21. Bramstr.
19. Strass-Str.	22. Straustr.
20. Heydenstr.	23. Haidenstr.
21. Weberstr.	24. Weberstr.
22. Beckstr.	25. Aljabjewastr.
23. Adelf - Hitlerstr.	26. Teatraljnajastr.

The final list of street names for the Seventh District, with the former German names listed on the left and the new Russian names (transliterated) on the right, August 1946. The list was printed in Russian and German, possibly to assist German workers in changing street signs. Both the German and transliterated Russian lists have orthographical mistakes, making it difficult to determine the native language of the typist.¹⁴

¹⁴ GAKO R310.1.1.94, August 1946.

A few name changes from November 1945 to August 1946 corresponded with shifts in the Soviet public memory of the war. The Cranzerallee (the road leading to the seaside village of Cranz) had originally become Leningradskaia, but in 1946 was renamed Alexander Nevsky Prospect after the medieval prince who had battled German and Swedish invaders. Meanwhile, General-Litzmann-Strasse, which had originally been named Krasnoarmeiskaia (“Red Army”) was renamed Sovetskii Prospect. Both streets were major thoroughfares in the city, radiating outward from the ring and leading to seaside villages, and therefore the choice of names was more politically significant than for minor side streets. From late 1945 to August 1946, Leningrad’s heroic status had been downgraded in order to reduce any perceived competition with the leadership of the party in Moscow; similarly, the Red Army’s role in the Soviet victory was also folded into the larger, flattened narrative that the Soviet people, dedicatedly following the leadership of Stalin and the party, had collectively brought about the victory.

In Kaliningrad, new names first suggested in 1945 by the military itself did not actively engage in cultural myth-making, and it was those original suggestions that formed the basis for city street names adopted in August 1946. But the selection of new place names outside of Kaliningrad began after the foundation of the oblast’, and for these cities and towns, Moscow institutions played a much larger role. The primary justification for annexing northern East Prussia had been that Germany’s exclave had been the birthplace of fascism and the launching point for aggression in the East. According to this logic, the Western Allies and Stalin had agreed that the territory should no longer be a part of Germany, and Stalin had made a pragmatic case for the Soviet Union taking it over, arguing for the value of an ice-free port. But Stalin had also made an off-hand historical claim—that the territory was “ancient Slavic soil”—which had fueled propaganda during the war that cast the Teutonic Knights and Nazis both as invaders in the East. The propaganda had been all but forgotten after the victory in Berlin, but the foundation of the oblast’ prompted a new wave of efforts to bring the history of the territory in line with Stalin’s historical claims through the process of renaming.

Soon after the foundation of Königsberg Oblast’, the RSFSR Council of Ministers began discussions to rename place names outside of Königsberg. Scholars from the Academy of Sciences in Moscow were requested to “report on the ancient Russian-Slavic names” of place names in East Prussia.¹⁵ In May 1946, experts from the Institute of Ethnography and Institute for Geography responded with suggestions for new names. The trouble was that the ethnographers and geographers had difficulty coming up with ancient names to fit the assignment. S. P. Tolstov and M. G. Rabinovich from the Institute of Ethnography reported gingerly that the territory had been settled originally by “Prussian-Lithuanian tribes” who had given names to many places before the arrival of the Germans, and they explained that most suitable “Slavic” place names had not come from ancient settlements but from contemporary Polish or Lithuanian usage. For example, the German town Gumbinnen was known as Gumbinė in Lithuanian and Gąbin in Polish; Darkehmen was Dargkemaė and Darkiany [sic: Darkiemis in Lithuanian and Darkiejmy in Polish]; Labiau was Labguva and Labiawa; Pillkallen was Pilkalnis and Pilkały; Tilsit was Tilžė and Tylża, among others. Other Polish and Lithuanian names were not adaptations, but literal translations from

¹⁵ GARF A259.6.3923.81, 20 April 1946.

German; the Poles, for example, translated Fischhausen as Rybaki and Heiligenbeil as Świąta Siekierka. Similarly,¹⁶ A. G. Kuman from the Institute for Geography also delicately side-stepped the request for ancient Slavic names by offering possibilities for Russianizing existing German names from their Polish or Lithuanian variants. For Labiau, he suggested Lab'iava; for the border town Ragnit, he suggested the "old Slavic" name Rognet', without making a claim that the town had originally been Slavic (Rognet' had simply been the Russian name in use).¹⁷

Despite the fact that no "ancient Russian-Slavic names" had been found, the desire to connect the East Prussian towns to non-German ancient settlements remained, and the RSFSR Council of Ministers again requested the opinion of experts in February 1947, with the specific question of whether towns with Lithuanian name origins should be preserved.¹⁸ In the second round, more scholars responded, including the Lithuanian professor P. I. Pakarklis, a specialist on the Lithuanian people's national struggle against the Teutonic Knights. Pakarklis put forth an historical argument that satisfied the Council of Ministers' search for ancient connection to the soil, but that argument proved to be unexpectedly troublesome. Pakarklis claimed that the territory of Kaliningrad Oblast' had originally been settled "exclusively by Lithuanians" (although they were sometimes referred to as "Prussians" or "Sambians"), and the violent colonization undertaken by the Teutonic Knights had wiped many of them out. Still, Pakarklis argued, these original Lithuanian settlers constituted much of the territory's population through the seventeenth century (as evidenced by the number of churches that conducted services only in Lithuanian), and by the seventeenth century, the city of Königsberg "had become an island where German predominated" in a sea of the Lithuanian language. Even after the forced Germanization of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the northern and eastern parts of East Prussia still had many Lithuanian speakers—into the 1930s and 1940s, a number of middle-aged people could still speak Lithuanian.¹⁹ Pakarklis attempted to appeal to Soviet nationalities policy, arguing that since "Lithuanian is a language of a Soviet republic," Lithuanian place names should be preserved—particularly because many of those town names had been so recently Germanized by the Nazis, who had attempted to conceal their Lithuanian identity.²⁰ Appealing likewise to the Lithuanian national struggle, Pakarklis claimed that many of the towns had been important in the development of Lithuanian history and culture, and the first Lithuanian-language books were printed on the territory of Kaliningrad Oblast'. (Pakarklis, did not mention, as another scholar, V. I. Picheta did, that Lithuanians had published in East Prussia precisely to avoid censorship in the Russian empire.)²¹ Pakarklis went so far as to make a territorial claim.

Besides, it's possible that with time, if not all of Kaliningrad Oblast', then a large part will be unified with the Lithuanian SSR, since the territory is historically and geographically connected to the Lithuanian SSR. Especially closely connected to the Lithuanian SSR is that part of Kaliningrad oblast

¹⁶ GARF A259.6.3923.82-82b, 3 May 1946.

¹⁷ GARF A259.6.3923.86-7, 15 May 1946.

¹⁸ GARF A612.1.1.1, 1 February 1947.

¹⁹ GARF A259.6.4950.67, 12 February 1947.

²⁰ GARF A259.6.4950.68, 12 February 1947.

²¹ GARF A259.6.5950.40-1, 20 February 1947.

which was called Prussia or Lithuania Minor, and most particularly those regions where all of the adults from among the local population can speak Lithuanian and the elderly cannot speak any German.²²

Pakarklis attempted to use an historical connection to make a claim for legitimate possession. Pakarklis's argument revealed the danger of appealing to ancient inheritance: if the territory were indeed "originally" Lithuanian, then returning the land to its original owner would mean giving it to the Lithuanian SSR. Soviet nationalities policy claimed to be about the liberation of all Soviet nations: all of the peoples of the USSR had been deemed free from imperialist oppression, and in the framework of being "national in form and socialist in content," each Soviet nationality would be encouraged to express itself through the preservation of its language, culture, and traditions in its ancestral homeland.

The trouble was that the territory had already been given to Russia, and the RSFSR Council of Ministers—not settling for the justification offered by international diplomatic agreements—had hoped, somewhat foolishly, to make an historical claim for *Russia*. The preservation of Lithuanian town names would give credence to the historical connection of the territory to Lithuania, which would have the unintended consequence of making Russia play the role of occupier and colonizer, the very result Moscow wished to avoid.

Other experts recognized the danger of Pakarklis's assertions and steered clear of suggestions to preserve Lithuanian names. Back in May 1946, the experts Tolstov and Rabinovich from the Institute for Ethnography and the expert Kuman from the Institute of Geography had agreed that the Lithuanian option should not be pursued. In the case of German town names with direct Polish and Lithuanian translations, Tolstov and Rabinovich argued that referring to the towns by their Polish names "would hardly make sense" (presumably because the Poles were not a Soviet nationality) and the "Prussian-Lithuanian names would not be intelligible to the new population." Therefore, Tolstov and Rabinovich recommended that *all* towns be given new names, with the exception of Gumbinnen and Ragnit, which, as former border cities with the Russian Empire, already had Russian names (Gubin and Rognet'). The only nod to Lithuanian heritage was the suggestion that Tilsit might be given its Lithuanian name Tilžė, since "that city played a significant role in the Lithuanian national-liberation movement and right up to the Nazi seizure of power in Germany was a center of Lithuanian culture in East Prussia."²³ Kuman, on the other hand, argued that Tilsit should keep its original name and not be translated into Lithuanian, since the city had also played an important role in Russian history.²⁴

The Institute of Ethnography participated again in February 1947, with a letter this time from Tolstov, V. I. Chicherov, and P. I. Kushner. The ethnographers insisted more firmly and directly than before that "in the oblast' no ancient-Slavic names exist," recognizing that places with Slavic names had come originally from Prussian or Lithuanian; Slavic place names further South (in the territory ceded to Poland) had been settled more recently by Poles. But they rejected the course suggested by Pakarklis, insisting that none of the places had been connected to historically significant events. Moreover, they argued that Lithuanian names were too complicated to preserve, and that even the option to Russify Lithuanian roots would cause more problems than solutions. "Since a large part of the population

²² GARF A259.6.4950.69, 12 February 1947.

²³ GARF A259.6.3923.82-82b, 3 May 1946.

²⁴ GARF A259.6.3923.86, 15 May 1946.

of Kaliningrad oblast' is made up of Russians," the ethnographers argued, "it makes sense in the renaming to choose those names that have meaning in the Russian language." Generally in cases of "dramatic change" of the ethnic make-up of a population, the ethnographers explained, new settlers usually come up with new place names themselves. If these places were to keep unintelligible names, the new settlers would give them nicknames that would become more common than the official names. Rather than preserve Lithuanian names, they suggested simply translating their meaning into Russian.²⁵ Therefore, instead of renaming the village of Kelladden into Keladinskii Village Soviet, which the Russian population would quickly rename "Kaledinskoe," it would be better to preserve the meaning of the old-Lithuanian word (*koloda*, for log or woodpile) and rename the village Kolodnenskii.²⁶ In other cases, the suggested Russian names also could pose difficulties for the new population: the ethnographers noted a number of cases of potential mispronunciation, and other cases when name suggestions had been made by hastily translating according to similar sound, as in the case of Althof, which had been suggested to become Ol'khovsk, but, as the ethnographers explained,

There's not a true similarity in sound, and the translation does not work; the meaning ("alder") does not correspond to the environmental conditions. If you want to preserve some continuity with the old name, then it would make sense to name the village soviet Starodvorskii ["old courtyard"].²⁷

In other cases, attempts to Russify the Lithuanian roots of names caused more complications. In the case of "Talpaken" [sic: the German name was Taplacken, and the Lithuanian similarly was Toplaukiai], which had been Russified as "Talpakinskii Village Soviet," the ethnographers speculated that the Russian population would pronounce the proposed name as "Tolpakinskii," assuming the root came from "tolpa," the Russian word for crowd, which was hardly an appealing name for a village. Since the Lithuanian name itself had no great meaning or historical significance, "it would be possible not to keep it."²⁸ (Interestingly, the final Russian name Talpaki was adopted against the advice of the ethnographers, one of the few instances of partially preserved names—although in this case with an improper transliteration.)

The Slavacist V. I. Picheta, who was a specialist on early Slavic and Baltic history and the Deputy Director of the Institute of Slavic Studies of the Academy of Science of the USSR, also firmly insisted that there were no ancient Slavic names, and made a point of noting that "this region never was Slavic. Prussians and Lithuanians, the original populations of the region in different historical moments, were never Slavs. The phonetics and morphology of the Lithuanian language demonstrates that."²⁹ While Picheta partially upheld Pakarklis's historical interpretation by explaining that, "even according to German data," up to 40 percent of the population was Lithuanian-speaking before the First World War and that the region had been important in the development of Lithuanian culture, he recognized the impracticality of keeping Lithuanian names. However, Picheta explained that the full erasure

²⁵ GARF A259.6.5950.65, 13 February 1947.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

of Lithuanian place names would also be a terrible public relations disaster, because it would “likely cause adverse reactions in the United States, where around one million Lithuanians live, most of whom are hostile to the Soviet Union.” It was therefore important to preserve some place names with Lithuanian origins “in order to avoid accusations of Russification and the destruction of the remnants of Lithuanian culture and traces of Lithuanian presence in the area.”³⁰ Picheta was careful, however, to reject the perspective of a number of Lithuanian professors with whom he had consulted, in whose historical claims it was possible “to feel a degree of nationalism.” As a compromise, he suggested preserving some Lithuanian roots by Russifying them, the proposal that the ethnographers had rejected as impractical.³¹ Both the ethnographers and Picheta agreed that, although the ancient place names often had Lithuanian roots, the preservation of those roots should come second to larger considerations. Picheta suggested giving entirely new names to places where Russian collective farmers would settle, in order to remind them of their former homes;³² the ethnographers, too, suggested that conventional methods for naming collective farms in the Soviet Union should be carried over into Kaliningrad: heroes of the Russian Civil War, the Bolshevik Revolution, and, now, the Great Patriotic War.

All of the suggestions remained on the table initially, but in the end, with the Lithuanian claim on East Prussian soil proving to be politically inopportune, the ancient place names rubric was mostly abandoned. Only a few small towns received updated versions of their older names, including Domnau, which became Domnovo. Instead, larger cities and towns were honored with the names of military heroes, particularly those who had some connection to East Prussia by fighting or dying there. Stallupönen became not Stolupiany but Nesterov (Hero of the Soviet Union who died there), Tapiau became not Tap’iava but Gvardeisk (for the Guards who captured the city in 1945).³³ Of the top thirty cities and towns, almost half received names connected to the Soviet invasion. For example, Gumbinnen was renamed not Gubin (Kuman’s updated Slavic suggestion), but Gusev after Captain Gusev, the Hero of the Soviet Union who died there; Insterburg, originally suggested to become Mezhdurechensk (“Between the Rivers,” after Lithuanian ethnographers determined that the root Inster came from old-Lithuanian and should be preserved, even if Russified), also lost in favor of Cherniakhovsk, after General Cherniakhovskii, who died in battle in East Prussia in 1945. Mamonovo (Heiligenbeil), Ladushkin (Ludwigsort), Polesk (Labiau), and Gur’evsk (Neuhausen) were all likewise named after Soviet martyrs of the Great Patriotic War (all of whom, except for Nikolai Mamonov, had died in East Prussia). Krasnoznamenensk (Lasdehnen), Slavsk (Heinrichswalde), Znamensk (Wehlau), and Slavskoe (Kreuzburg) received more general names referencing Soviet military bravery for battles that took place nearby. Only one town received a name of a hero of the “Patriotic War of 1812”: Preußisch Eylau became Bagrationovsk, after Pëtr Ivanovich Bagration, the Georgian prince who fought in East Prussia in 1807 and who gave his life at Borodino outside Moscow five years later. The name Bagration also had meaning in the Second World War: Operation Bagration was the code name for the offensive to push the German forces out of the Belorussian SSR in the summer of 1944, immediately preceding the invasion of East Prussia.

³⁰ GARF A259.6.5950.40-1, 20 February 1947.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 41.

³² *Ibid.*, 40.

³³ GARF A259.6.3923.78-80, 21 May 1946; GARF A259.6.3923.86-7, 15 May 1946.

Around half of the towns were named after geographical markers: Gerdauen became Zheleznodorozhnyi (“railroad”), Zimmerbude became Svetlyi (“bright”), Pillau became Baltiisk (“Baltic”), Palmnicken, the village where the forced march from the Stutthof concentration camp ended with the death of thousands of Jewish prisoners, was named Iantarnyi (“amber”) after the local amber mine; the seaside villages Rauschen and Cranz became Svetlogorsk (“bright/light mountain”) and Zelenogradsk (“green city”); and Ragnit became Neman (for the Russian name for the Memel/Nemunas/Niemen River). In some cases, toponyms even trumped suggestions to honor military martyrs: Darkehmen was at first set to become Krasnoozërsk (“red/beautiful lake,”) for more than 15 in the region and then ultimately became simply Ozërsk (“lake”); the name won out over the suggestion Bykov (after the captain who had died in battle there) and Dark’iany (A.G. Kuman’s updated Slavic suggestion).

While many individual collective farms were given typical Soviet names celebrating the revolutionary slogans or Civil War heroes, only a few major towns received them: Nemmersdorf, the site of one of the first Red Army incursions in 1944, became Maiakovskoe (after the poet Mayakovsky); Tilsit became Sovetsk (“Soviet”); and Friedland became Pravdinsk (“truth”). Other smaller places were given their final names according to varying criteria. Kelladden, which the ethnographers had suggested be translated as Kolodnenskii, became Il’ichevo (after Lenin’s patronymic); Althof (“old courtyard/estate”), which had originally been set to become the similar-sounding Ol’khovsk (“alder”), and which the ethnographers wished to translate as Starodvornyi, became Orekhovo (“nut”), preserving a similar sound with a second entirely unrelated meaning. Other candidates for name preservation, such as the tiny villages of Malwischken and Schillehnen, were given generic names: Maiskoe (“May”) and Pogranichnyi (“border”).³⁴

The final focus on military figures and Russian translations of local geographic features proved, in the absence of ancient Slavic names, to be the most successful means to anchor East Prussia’s geography to Russian history and culture. New place names honoring military heroism and sacrifice helped inscribe the landscape of Kaliningrad Oblast’ into the collective myth of the Second World War. East Prussia could not be proven to be Russian soil, but it belonged to Russia because it was soaked in Russian blood. And with new Russian names for the landscape, new collective farm settlers were expected to tame the landscape once deemed exotic.

* * *

Even though the claim to “ancient Slavic soil” could not stand up to scrutiny as a principle for renaming, the historical narrative that originated with the propaganda of the war remained in use and continued to develop into a complex historical myth of the territory’s origins. The catch phrase “ancient Slavic soil” became common currency locally in Kaliningrad, used in the context of the renewed battle of socialism against fascism in Kaliningrad’s landscape.

As the Head Architect of the Oblast’ Department for Architecture, Dmitrii Tian, wrote in November 1947 in *Kaliningradskaia Pravda*, after the “ancient Slavic” myth had been abandoned in place names, that “the territory of East Prussia—ancient Slavic soil, which

³⁴ GARF A259.6.3923.76-80, 21 May 1946.

found itself for centuries imprisoned—has been returned to its true owners. The new pages of the history of this territory will from now on and forever more no longer be full of sorrow as before, but instead bright and joyous.”³⁵ In the same year, the new First Secretary of the Oblast’ Party Committee (the most important man in Kaliningrad), Vladimir Shcherbakov, wrote in *Stalinskaia Programma*, a pamphlet outlining economic plans for Kaliningrad’s development, that

The Soviet Army has forever destroyed and liquidated the most dangerous base of war and reaction and gave the Slavs back their ancient land. “The centuries-long battle of the Slavic people for their existence and independence against the German occupiers and German tyrants has been brought to an end” (I. Stalin, *On the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union*[...])³⁶

Stalin’s words had originally referred to the *Wehrmacht*’s occupation of Soviet territory, but Shcherbakov cast the entire history of German East Prussia as a period of occupation by “German occupiers” and “German tyrants,” implying that socialist Kaliningrad had been installed as a government of liberation after centuries of oppression.³⁷

Over the course of 1947, local government officials in Kaliningrad, from the neighborhood Communist Youth League organizer up to the party leadership, increasingly began each speech with a declaration of Kaliningrad’s sacred inheritance, insisting that Königsberg—the city whose architecture and people had spawned the germ-seed of fascism that threatened the development of socialism into the present day—had actually been built on “ancient Slavic lands.” The first session of the Stalingrad District Soviet, which met on 27 December 1947, opened with this speech by I. G. Gavrilin of the 14th Election District. By that time, the formula and ritual were well-understood by all of the participants.

Comrade deputies! Today we are gathered for the first time on our ancient Slavic soil, which for 700 years was under the heel of the Teutonic Knights, as well as German-fascist bandits. German-fascist bandits attacked the Soviet Union to subjugate our people, bring them to their knees and destroy the first socialist workers’ government in the world and establish rule of landlords and capitalists in our land. The heroic Russian people did not tremble and did not falter. Under the leadership of our Bolshevik party, under the command of our dear comrade Stalin, our people took up arms in the defense of our beloved native land, and in brutal battle with the German invaders, secured the freedom and independence of our motherland, and liberated these ancient Slavic lands from the invaders once and for all. This land will now be forever Soviet and we should build a good, joyful life for our people. Let’s make our young Soviet province cultured, prosperous, and joyful.³⁸

The myth was complete. In the era of national self-determination, Kaliningrad needed to prove its legitimacy not through ideology but through blood and soil, and the historical narrative, even in the absence of “ancient Russian-Slavic” place names, presented a version

³⁵ Dmitrii Tian, “Soveskii gorod Kaliningrad,” *Kaliningradskaiia Pravda*, 7 November 1947.

³⁶ V. V. Shcherbakov, *Stalinskaia Programma khoziastvennogo i kul’turnogo stroitel’stva Kaliningradskoi oblasti* (1947), 3f.

³⁷ Hoppe, *Auf den Trümmern*, 46.

³⁸ GAKO R541.1.1, 27 December 1947.

of history in which the Teutons had stolen the land from the ancient Prussians, who themselves became “Slavs” by virtue of both their ancientness and their suffering. Just as fascism had come to mean German, so too had socialism come to mean, above all, Russian.

* * *

Rebuilding Kaliningrad from the ruins of Königsberg was about rebuilding the housing stock, establishing municipal services, and making human life possible in the city, but it also was about creating a socialist city as an antithesis to fascism. The city planners in Kaliningrad imagined ways to transform the cityscape to make the city modern and to erase all traces of its “Prussian spirit,” but before they had the means to carry out those plans, they focused on giving the city and its surrounding territory a new identity by giving them new names.

The first stage of renaming inside Königsberg-Kaliningrad focused on the removal of obvious traces of fascism, while finding Russian translations for many German street names. The process was completed by the new Soviet civilian government, which made small alterations to lessen the earlier connection to German street names, while preserving many of the functional names (streets named after clinics, schools, and ports), and adding new street names to celebrate the Russian cultural heritage.

The second stage, supervised by Moscow with local participation, looked to give meaning to the territory as a whole. The strategy was to look to history, in order to identify “ancient Russian-Slavic” names for contemporary German towns. This process mirrored the act of renaming in the two other parts of divided East Prussia: in the territories ceded to Poland and the Lithuanian SSR, the existing Polish and Lithuanian versions of German town names became official—as part of their return to their rightful owners. Attempts to follow the same principle of ownership by virtue of ancestry (the “we were here first” principle) backfired in the case of Kaliningrad, however, as it turned out that the ancient names were Lithuanian, while the Slavic names were Polish, and, in that part of East Prussia, mostly newer translations of German names.

Briefly, attempts were made to make a Soviet connection to the soil through reviving ancient Lithuanian names. But Soviet nationalities policy, in practice, demanded that soil be connected to a nation, and if Russian farmers settled land with Lithuanian names, Russia risked being construed as an imperial colonizer on land that should have, by the ancient soil principle, have been given to Lithuania. The proposition to preserve Lithuanian names proved even more dangerous than the nationalist reaction that the erasing of those names could provoke.

If Russian nativeness could not be asserted through ancient settlements, a new method had to be found to demonstrate Kaliningrad's connection to the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic. Many place names translated German geography into the Russian language, to incorporate the Baltic sea coast, flat meadows, sandy dunes, and pine forests of East Prussia into the geographical mental map of Russia. But a full half of the major town names in the territory were connected to the Russian imperial state (Bagrationovsk, and his sacrifice in the Napoleonic Wars), and to Soviet bravery and sacrifice in East Prussia during the Second World War through names of martyrs who had died fighting for the land. The soil of Kaliningrad Oblast' became Russian because it was soaked in Russian

blood; it was through the heroism and sacrifice of the Russian people that the Soviet Union had earned and domesticated East Prussia.

While the ancient Slavic soil myth was abandoned in the practice of renaming, it proved resilient in other spheres because it came from Stalin's own words and because it was an easy soundbite to be used in the symbolic appropriation of the province, both in Moscow (where it continued to appear in arguments about historical German aggressors in the East) and locally (where it served as a foundation for the myth of Kaliningrad's origins and purpose). According to the myth of ancient Slavic lands, Kaliningrad residents could present themselves in the same way as the inhabitants of other occupied Soviet cities: as *liberated* from the Germans by Soviet bravery. But Kaliningrad was different in that, even after the liberation of the soil, the cityscape itself needed to be continually *reconquered*, lest the city's remaining fascist elements reassert themselves. The myth of liberation was used to claim the Soviet population's rightful ownership of the city and the land, in order to obscure the uncomfortable reality that confronted the new settlers in the newspaper articles and propaganda speeches: that they were living in a city that for the past 700 years had belonged to another civilization, and that until the destruction of the war, the quality of life there—at least for its chosen people—had been better.

Life and Death

Survival, at its most basic, meant simply staying alive. Amidst harsh conditions and food shortages, Königsberg-Kaliningrad became a laboratory of life and death, an experiment in what happens to human beings in extreme hardship. The physical transformation of human bodies through deprivation was a continuation of the war, in ways that were understood by both sides: many of the German doctors who remained behind to tend to the sick in Kaliningrad had been university professors trained in epidemiology and hygiene (and even the more dubious “racial hygiene”); while they had not taken direct part in the experiments on human bodies in the camps, they had been a part of the Nazi medical community during the 1930s, and many had directly contributed to new understandings of the biology of war. Soviet soldiers and civilians, meanwhile, had experienced the effects of physical deprivation first hand; many of them came from areas devastated by the German army, had survived the famines of Soviet collectivization during the early 1930s, had suffered in Nazi concentration camps, or had lived through one of the war’s greatest experiments in deprivation, the Leningrad Blockade. For the new settlers arriving to Kaliningrad, the Soviet concept of “dystrophy” [*distrofiia*], the Soviet medical term for extreme malnourishment, was already a familiar term.

After the war, however, it was mostly the Germans who experienced first hand what “dystrophy” meant. From May 1945, after the end of open conflict in East Prussia, until the final mass transport of the Germans out of Kaliningrad in the fall of 1948, every German experienced physical hardship, malnutrition, epidemic ailment, and starvation; a large proportion of the population did not survive. Estimated death rates for the three and a half year period vary widely, and because of the nature of the available sources, it is impossible to determine exactly how many Germans died. The problem lies in the fact that there are no accurate counts for the number of Germans in northern East Prussia at the end of the siege and no way to determine how many crossed the border (in or out) in the summer of 1945. The recorded population actually grew over the summer of 1945 because of return-migration and more complete registration, even as military officials reported high mortality due to hunger and intestinal ailments. Only starting in September 1945 did the numbers begin to even out (and decline). Still, there are many sources that document illness and mortality among both the Soviet and German populations, and most of these sources separated their statistics according to nationality. The provisional military administration compiled

monthly statistics about the population in the city or in the countryside, including the number of able-bodied workers, reports of epidemic disease outbreak, hospitalizations, and monthly deaths within Königsberg. The Civilian Affairs Administration from 1946 did not compile information as frequently, but individual organizations, including the Health Department, collected information about hospital stays and epidemic outbreaks. Correspondence between the Civilian Affairs Administration and various organizations in Moscow, including ministries of the RSFSR Council of Ministers, give a glimpse of broader trends and areas of concern for the Soviet administration as oversaw the German population in life and death.

German Population Chart, Compiled from Soviet Archival Sources

Date	Registered in Königsberg	Estimated in Königsberg	Population outside Königsberg	Total Population
—				
1939 Census¹	372,164			
Late 1944²	251,752			
26 April 1945³	23,247	63,247		
6 May 1945⁴	26,559	66,559		
30 May 1945⁵	47,219		82,500	
1 September 1945⁶	68,014			129,614
6 October 1945⁷	65,137			
17 October 1945⁸	63,168			
12 November 1945⁹	62,594			
1 February 1946¹⁰	56,888		69,581	126,469
1 April 1946¹¹	46,485			
26 April 1946¹²	46,000			119,000
21 May 1946¹³			67,903	
1 June 1946¹⁴	42,957			116,737

¹ Brodersen, "Enttäuschte Hoffnungen, 1. Teil," 2.

² Ibid., 2.

³ GAKO R330.1.7.2, 26 April 1945.

⁴ GAKO R330.1.7.3, 6 May 1945.

⁵ GARF 9401.2.96.255-6, 30 May 1945.

⁶ Fisch and Klemeševa, "Zum Schicksal," 393.

⁷ GAKO R330.2.9.1-32, October 1945.

⁸ GAKO R330.2.9.1-32, October 1945.

⁹ GAKO R330.1.5.61-3, 12 November 1945.

¹⁰ GAKO R332.2.7.3, no date [after 1 February 1946].

¹¹ GARF A259.6.3923.179, no date [April 1946].

¹² GAKO R330.2.5.23-8, 26 April 1946.

¹³ GARF A259.6.3923.73-6, 21 May 1946.

¹⁴ RGASPI 17.122.143.78-80, 1 June 1946.

19 August 1946 ¹⁵	37,000
18 April 1947 ¹⁶	37,000
12 June 1947 ¹⁷	37,000

The chart is compiled from various Soviet archival sources in Kaliningrad and Moscow, and shows some of the confusion about how many Germans were in the city and oblast' at any given time. The highest number of Germans was reported in September 1945 at 129,469 for the entire region (after filtration, epidemic, and starvation had killed tens of thousands in the summer of 1945); Soviet officials reported that they had transported 97,284 German civilians to the Soviet Zone of Occupation by the end of 1948.¹⁸ The total number of reported expellees is highly questionable, however; Soviet records reported virtually no deaths en route, while most Germans recall that numerous fellow passengers died during the trip. Moreover, the number of *registered* deaths in the city and oblast', even after September 1945, is far greater than the 32,185 deaths that these two statistics alone would suggest.

A better insight into the mortality of the German population can be found not by looking at the total population figures, which became increasingly inaccurate after the Civilian Affairs administration stopped keeping accurate counts (the Kaliningrad city population froze at 37,000 from August 1946 onward, despite a high death rate that winter), but by looking at the number of deaths reported by the administration during various points in the postwar period. The best records were kept in the first year by the provisional military administration, who documented 14,714 deaths of German civilians from June 1945 to January 1946 in Königsberg alone.¹⁹

Mortality of the German Population in Königsberg (City), June 1945–January 1946²⁰

Month	Died in Hospitals	Died at Home	Total
June	554	—	554
July	713	—	713
August	800	1482	2287
September	881	1798	2479
October	768	1876	2644
November	663	1467	2130
December	574	1201	1775
January	490	1636	2136
Total	5448	9470	14718

¹⁵ GARF A259.6.3923.40, 19 August 1946.

¹⁶ GAKO R310.1.7.13, 18 April 1947.

¹⁷ GARF A259.6.3923.1, 12. June 1947.

¹⁸ Fisch and Klemeševa, "Zum Schicksal," 399.

¹⁹ GAKO R332.2.7.21, no date [after 1 February 1946].

²⁰ Ibid.

The only report on the total German population in the city during that time was from 12 November 1945, when there were 62,594 Germans registered in the city. The number of documented deaths from June to October was 8667, making the total population as of June 1945 possibly as high as 71,261 (although with allowance for miscounting and migration to and from the countryside). That means that out a possible total of 71,261 Germans in Königsberg in June 1945, 14,714 died over the course of the next eight months, or around 20 percent of the German population in the city in two-thirds of a year. Extrapolating from the numbers from February 1946 (estimated 126,469 total Germans in the region) and the combined numbers from April and May 1946 for Germans inside and outside Königsberg (114,388), it is possible to estimate, at least according to these reported numbers, that 12,081 Germans died in the three and a half months between 1 February and 21 May 1946, or 9.5 percent of the remaining German population of the entire oblast' over that period. In other words, if that rate were to remain consistent over a twelve-month period, almost a third of the total German civilian population in the oblast' would have died *in one year alone*.

Because records after the summer of 1946 are less complete, it is not possible to calculate similar death rates during the civilian government. Although living conditions improved in the summer of 1946, the winter famine of 1946-1947 was remembered by many as the most dire time since the first months after the siege; food shortages combined with terrible cold, triggering new epidemics of typhus, typhoid fever, dysentery, and diphtheria; it is not improbable that, while earlier epidemics would have already taken the lives of those most susceptible (small children, the injured, and the elderly), that the winter famine had a similarly high rate of mortality.

Even though it is not possible to calculate a conclusive mortality rate, given inaccurate census data, unknown migration patterns and ultimate number of expellees, it is not unreasonable to estimate, based on the known deaths reported in official Soviet sources, that the higher estimates present a more accurate picture. Factoring in deaths from murder and East Prussian forced laborers who died elsewhere in the Soviet Union, it is possible to estimate that anywhere between one third and one half of the Germans present in northern East Prussia as of May 1945 did not survive.

* * *

Getting by took both skill and luck, and survival was no guarantee. Each time of year had its associated dangers: the spring thaw led to outbreaks as contaminated water and soil drained into drinking supplies; summer epidemics were often the consequences of spoiled food during the warmer months; food shortages going into fall and winter often combined with insufficient protection from the cold (not enough clothing, no heat in homes), leading to catastrophic conditions that took the lives of thousands of Germans and even new Soviet settlers.

The squalid living conditions and widespread malnutrition prompted seasonal epidemic outbreaks, particularly among the German population. The most common diseases were typhoid fever, typhus, diphtheria, and dysentery, although malaria was also not

uncommon.²¹ During the first months after the siege, contaminated water and food supplies led to many intestinal ailments, which caused the even more rapid transmission of disease. The doctor Hans Deichelmann estimated that nine out of ten infants in his district hospital did not survive that summer, and 40 percent of all of the hospital patients had to be buried in the yard behind the hospital. The four remaining German hospitals lacked the most basic supplies to treat all of the sick; the infection hospital was so overcrowded that there were two patients for every one bed. The historian Bernhard Fisch estimates that typhus outbreaks between September 1945 and May 1946 killed a total of 20,000 people (almost exclusively Germans), although the number of deaths from all ailments was probably far higher; from August to January, over 14,000 Germans died in Königsberg alone, and during the height of the epidemic, the provisional military administration recorded daily deaths within Königsberg; an average of 58 German civilians died per day that month. Over half of the German population lived outside of Königsberg, and while there are no comprehensive death rates for that period, numerous reports document epidemic outbreaks across the territory.²²

By February 1946, the provisional military administration, without the resources to combat the epidemic, admitted that a large source of the problem was that “living conditions are unsatisfactory, especially for the German population.”

Substantial overcrowding, lack of soap, and periodic water shortages have caused the spread of the lice among the population, the mange, typhoid fever, and typhus. In addition, there has been the significant spread of venereal diseases (gonorrhoea, syphilis) which have appeared also among the Soviet soldiers of the District.²³

Typhoid fever was by far the most documented infection, although the poor organization of medical care at the time meant that most Germans who became ill received no formal treatment and their cases remained unregistered by the government.

Documented Infectious Disease in Königsberg (City), 1945-1946²⁴

Month	Typhoid Fever	Typhus	Diphtheria
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²¹ Typhoid fever [*briushnoi tif*], spread by the ingestion of food, feces, or water contaminated with the bacterium *Salmonella enterica enterica*, included symptoms of high fever, fatigue, headache, cough, bloody nose, abdominal pain in the first week of infection, followed by a higher fever, delirium (or “nervous fever”) and red spots on the chest and abdomen. In the third week, the infection spreads further, causing intestinal hemorrhaging and perforation, and neuropsychiatric symptoms. In the absence of proper medical care and nutrition, typhoid fever meant a death sentence by the third week. Typhus [*sypnoi tif*], spread by lice carrying the bacterium *Rickettsia prowazekii*, includes symptoms of fever, cough, chills, delirium, joint pain, headaches, muscle pain, and rashes. Diphtheria is an upper respiratory tract illness caused by *Corynebacterium diphtheriae*, causing fever, chills, swelling, cough, sore throat, and skin lesions.

²² Fisch and Klemeševa, “Zum Schicksal,” 396; Deichelmann, *Ich sah*, 45 [15 July 1945], 51 [30 August 1945]; GAKO R332.2.5.17, 19 April 1946; GAKO R332.2.7.21, no date [after 1 February 1946].

²³ The word “Soviet” was struck through in the text. It is not possible to determine from the context whether the word was eliminated for redundancy (all of the soldiers in the District would be understood to be Soviet, or else they would be called POWs), or for delicacy.

²⁴ GAKO R332.2.7.20, no date [after 1 February 1946].

July	1137	7	31
August	1560		76
September	1585		37
October	801		42
November	553		15
December	425	3	15
January	494	41	17

During this period, the mange [*chesotka*] was especially wide spread, with up to 80 percent of the population infected in some parts of the District. But even with the high rate of infection, the provisional military administration admitted that, “due to the insufficient food provided to the German population, the widespread dystrophy (attrition) is the main reason for the high death rate of the population.”²⁵

Epidemics continued for the next several years with similar death rates reported among the Germans. As new settlers began to crowd the cities and collective farms, conditions became worse, and some Soviet citizens also became vulnerable to epidemic outbreaks, although never to the same degree as the Germans.²⁶ The continued threat of epidemic drove many of the policies of the provisional military administration and later civilian government, to improve sanitary conditions in the city for everyone, although their motivation seemed to stem, as Marga Pollmann noted at the time, “from an instinct of self-preservation.”²⁷ After the foundation of the oblast’, a Health Department was created, dozens of treatment centers established throughout the city and countryside, pharmacies were set up, and over the next couple of years, hundreds of medical workers came on short or long-term assignment to combat the spread of disease. Deichelmann’s clinic in June 1946 was transformed into a treatment center specifically for skin infections and STDs; and special commissions were sent to Kaliningrad from Moscow in 1946 and in 1948 to combat venereal disease.²⁸ But shortages of sanitary supplies, including not only medicine but in many cases also soap and clean running water, meant that the problems remained difficult to combat. No sooner than one epidemic seemed to have been defeated did another break out; one deputy in the Kaliningrad City Soviet, Murashko, announced dramatically in late 1947 that “the hotbed for infectious diseases has been liquidated,” only for new cases of typhus and typhoid fever to threaten the population (and increasingly among them, Soviet

²⁵ GAKO R332.2.7.20, no date [after 1 February 1946].

²⁶ GAKO R332.2.5.17, 19 April 1946; GAKO R330.1.7.3, 30 July 1946; R216.1.2.87, 14 February 1948; GAKO R793.1.14.84, November 1948; GAKO R793.1.13.23-4, late 1948.

²⁷ Pollmann, “Königsberg,” 57.

²⁸ GStPK HA XX Rep.99c, Nr. 37 (Dr. Martin Attz); GARF 8009.25.1-13, July 1946; GAKO R793.1.10.35, 25 August 1948. The problem with venereal disease was so significant that the USSR Ministry of Health organized a 30-person expedition to the newly-formed oblast’ in July 1946. Some other Soviet republics and regions also received expedition teams, but the scope of the disease rates were far lower in other places than in Kaliningrad. Commission reports for Moscow, for example, focused on a few unsanitary barber shops, whereas a report for the Estonian SSR detailed organizational work, but had no significant statistics to report. Kaliningrad, however, was a special concern in the postwar period because of the extraordinarily high rate of infection; but while at least two expeditions were organized (one in 1946 and another in 1948), the resources dedicated to stopping the spread of disease made little difference in infection rates.

citizens).²⁹ By late 1948, after the last Germans had left Kaliningrad, epidemic disease remained behind. There was still no systematic city sanitation, no water supply or sewer in many homes, and poor garbage collection. Conditions were especially bad at the Shipbuilding Factory 820 due to the absence of boiled water in the dormitories. At other factories, workers and their families also still lived in cramped, unsanitary conditions. The Baltic District still had no bath houses at all, except the one located on the grounds of the Shipbuilding Factory 820. The city had not yet set up a communal laundry service. Overfilled hospitals meant that infectious patients were not treated quickly enough, and combined with unsanitary conditions, infectious disease was on the rise, including gastrointestinal infections, typhus, relapsing fever, typhoid fever, dysentery, parasitic typhus, scarlet fever, diphtheria, measles, and whooping cough.³⁰

German doctors in Kaliningrad mocked the epidemic outbreaks in their diaries and later memoirs; Lehndorff pointed out that typhus, diphtheria, dysentery, and malaria were all diseases that Central Europe had long ago succeeded in pushing outside its borders (he figured that East Prussia had not seen these diseases for 80 years or more).³¹ For Lehndorff, epidemic outbreak was evidence of the barbarity of the Soviet occupation. A similar story might have been told by a Soviet POW in the hands of the Nazis, however. As Ehrenburg wrote in his memoirs, "A Frenchman, an army surgeon, told me that not far from their camp was another for Russian prisoners of war. When a typhus epidemic broke out the Nazi doctor said: 'No use treating them, they'll die anyhow'. Every day they would bury the dead."³²

The winter of 1945 was a period of terrible hunger for both Germans and, to a lesser extent, Soviet military, administrators, and civilians after the disrupted planting during the 1945 invasion. Ongoing shortages combined with administrative disorganization during the early occupation, leaving Königsberg completely unprepared for the cold. Food stores were mostly depleted already by November 1945, and the firewood that each district military command office had collected for the Germans to use was only enough to last into January 1946 at the latest.³³ Many thousand Germans succumbed to hunger and cold that winter; after the mass death in the summer of 1945 from epidemic diseases, the food shortages in the spring of 1946 led to an average of 80 Germans dying each day from starvation.³⁴

Conditions became better in the summer of 1946 with a much improved harvest after an uninterrupted growing season and better organization for food distribution, but soon thereafter, the mass centralized settlement of Soviet collective farmers and urban workers began, with 20,000 to 30,000 new settlers arriving each month. This migration was poorly timed—the Soviet population more than doubled in a matter of months, but the food sup-

²⁹ GAKO R216.1.2.13, 30 December 1947; R216.1.2.87, 14 February 1948; GAKO R793.1.14.84, November 1948; GAKO R793.1.13.23-4, no date [late 1948].

³⁰ GAKO R793.1.13.23-4, no date [late 1948].

³¹ Lehndorff, *Token*, 32.

³² Ehrenburg, *The War*, 170.

³³ GAKO R330.1.5.61-3, 12 November 1945.

³⁴ GAKO R330.1.7, 30 July 1945, 31; GAKO R330.2.3, 20 March 1946; GAKO R332.2.5, 19 April 1946.

ply did not grow in proportion.³⁵ At the same time, the delayed establishment of the civilian government in the summer and fall of 1946 meant that the Civilian Affairs Administration began to make serious preparations for winter only in October 1946, already at the end of the harvest, when it was too late to organize facilities for large-scale food storage.³⁶

That winter turned out to be the harshest in decades. Combined with the massive new settlement, a new wave of starvation and epidemic disease spread among the population. Germans found themselves losers in the competition for increasingly scarce resources, and suffered the brunt of the hardship.³⁷ The hardship that winter matched the first months of the occupation in 1945. By the spring of 1947, conditions had become so bad that the Civilian Affairs Administration wrote a report about “mass death” among the city’s Germans. In the previous seven months, 3493 Germans had died in one of the city’s six districts alone (there was no mention of the total number of deaths). Germans were dying everywhere: not only in hospitals and clinics, but also in their apartments and out on the streets. Corpses had to be exhumed daily from the basements and rubble of abandoned buildings. The report explained that the Germans’ poor living conditions resulted from lack of living space, housing and food (“as could be seen by the frequent occurrence of Germans scrounging for scraps from the trash”), and mentioned how these poor conditions might account in part for the “noticeable growth” of crime, including child prostitution among the German population. But despite calling for several measures to improve the “complicated situation” of the German population (mostly directives to establish increased administrative clarity on various topics), not a single one of the proposed measures called for an increase of food. Although food was the only solution to starvation, in the spring of 1947, it was the solution most impossible to implement.³⁸

One new settler, Natalia Liubkina, lived in the countryside outside the city at the time, and recalled how her German neighbor on the collective farm went hungry during the winter famine. She tried to give him food when she could, and remembered that he always repaid her by doing small tasks or gathering hay, so as not to beg. He still starved, though, and she remembered that he called for her by his bedside, and she sat by him as he cried (according to her memory and minimal understanding of German) “Alles kaputt! Alles kaputt!” and died.³⁹

Although the winter of 1946-47 was by far the hardest on the Germans, life during the winter famine was hard for everyone. In 1947, a medical commission of about 500

³⁵ GAKO R298.1.7.71, 30 September 1946; Galcova, “Die Neusiedler,” 107; Iu. V. Kostiashev, “Zaselenie Kaliningradskoi Oblasti posle Vtoroi Mirovoi Voyny,” *Gumanitarnaia Nauka v Rossii: Sorosovskie Lauriaty* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnaia Nauchnyi Fond, 1996), 85; S. P. Galtsova and Iu. V. Kostiashev, eds., *Vostochnaia Prussia glazami sovetskikh pereselentsev: pervye gody Kaliningradskoi oblasti v vospominaniakh i dokumentakh* (Kaliningrad: Izdatel'stvo Kaliningradskogo Gosudarstvennogo Universiteta, 2003), 75.

³⁶ GAKO R298.1.8.67, 15 October 1946. The head of the Oblast' Civilian Affairs Administration Borisov issued several orders to prepare warehouses and to store potatoes and vegetables for the urban population, but the measures were too little, too late. Already anticipating disaster, Borisov made an urgent requests for as many potatoes as possible from the Belorussian and Lithuanian republics before the first frost.

³⁷ Galcova, “Die Neusiedler,” 107.

³⁸ GAKO R237.1.1.9 no date [late February to early March 1947].

³⁹ Natalia Liubkina, interview by Iurii Vladimirovich Kostiashev, 29 September 1991, in GAKO collection, *Inter'iu s Pervimiy Pereselentsev, Pribyoshimi v Kaliningradskuiu Oblast' v 1945–1950 gg.*, vol. 19, 40. [Cited hereafter as *Collected Interviews*].

workers at the Train Car Factory found that 63 suffered from malnutrition and 60 of undernourishment, and that 3 were sick with tuberculosis. Workers at the Shipbuilding Factory 820 (the former Schichau-Werke) in 1947-48 suffered from many cases of typhus and malaria, to the point that the factory administration warned the Oblast' Party Committee of an epidemic.⁴⁰ In the Kaliningrad countryside, Vladimir Petrovich Filatov remembered that "in the Marshal'skoe village I found the ruins of a building, and in the basement, found rotten potatoes, made potato starch from it, took it back to Zalivnoe [village] and fed my family [...] My daughter, who was two at the time, would ask not for bread, but said, "give me potatoes." With a lot of work I took a thousand rubles and sent my daughter to Tula so she wouldn't die of hunger."⁴¹ Antonina Egorovna Shadrina remembered how she and her fellow collective farmers resorted to eating grass and sorrel. Other peasants killed the horses and divided the meat among themselves, and some even remembered that "all of the cats and dogs got eaten." Antonina Semenovna Nikolaevna from Ladushkin (Ludwigsort) remembered that two of the daughters of her neighbors' family did not live through those first months.⁴² Despite the hunger and the hardship, because the German population suffered disproportionately, the suffering of the new settlers was not as widespread as elsewhere in the Soviet Union. In Russia, the northern and Volga regions were hit the hardest, although conditions in central Russia were also bad. Ivan Ivanovich Potemkin, who came to Kaliningrad from Kostroma Oblast in 1948, remembered that "war veterans gave away their rations to their families while they themselves died from hunger and cold." The settler Aleksei Nikolaevich Solov'ev remembered by contrast to Kaliningrad that in Vologda Oblast' "entire families died of starvation."⁴³

During the winter famine, one means for survival was to cross the border into Lithuania where there was more food to be had. Soviet settlers traveled by train or car to Lithuanian farms and brought back loads of food to share with their families or to sell at the market. Ekaterina Kirilovna Blokhina remembered driving to Lithuania and "trading away all of my best possessions for potatoes and beets."⁴⁴ Germans also traveled to Lithuania when they could, although the journey held more risk. Because they were not Soviet citizens, they were not allowed to travel freely, so many Germans found other ways to cross the border. Hielscher remembered the danger and excitement she felt arranging her first trip in the spring of 1946.

Soon we find out which train is going to Vilnius and with the help of German speaking [Soviet] civilians who had worked as civilian prisoners [*Zivilgefangene*] in Germany during the war and are well disposed to us, we manage upon the arrival of the train to jump into the empty cargo wagon and hide in a corner from the controllers.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ T. A. Proshina, "Problemy zaseleniia Kaliningradskoi oblasti v dokumentakh TsKhIDNIKO [GANIKO]," *Kaliningradskie Arkhivy: Materialy i Issledovanie* vol. C (1998), 18 [14-18].

⁴¹ Galtsova and Kostiaшов, eds., *Vostochnaia Prussia*, 75.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 76.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 71.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁴⁵ Hielscher, *Als Ostpreußen*, 119.

Hielscher and her traveling companions jumped from the train shortly after crossing the border, and brought back food from Lithuanian farmers to share with their families. The Civilian Affairs Administration also turned for help to Lithuania, writing in mid-January 1947 with an urgent request to the Lithuanian SSR Council of Ministers to send food to Kaliningrad to sell at the market.⁴⁶ Some Lithuanian goods did make their way to Kaliningrad officially by the end of winter, but not before the damage from the winter had been done.⁴⁷

Conditions in Kaliningrad Oblast' also improved dramatically by the farm season of 1947, and new settlers arriving then frequently contrasted the experience of the winter famine in their former homes with the new perception of relative abundance they experienced in Kaliningrad. When Solov'ev arrived to Kaliningrad in the summer of 1947, he remembered that life had become much easier; when Potemkin came to Baltiisk (Pillau), life seemed far removed from the hardship he had escaped in Kostroma: "Supplies and food in the city were very well set up. No one went hungry. For us it felt amazing." Ekaterina Petrovna Kozhevnikova remembered, likewise, that "we arrived here, and for us it was simply heaven!" There were "vegetables and potatoes, but in Moscow Oblast' where I'd come from, there had been nothing. And there were so many beets!" Others were surprised to find that sometimes omelets were served at the train station for arriving settlers, made with fresh eggs and complete with rhubarb jam.⁴⁸ Conditions were not always as good on the collective farms as some new settlers remembered nostalgically, of course. In some cases the juxtaposition between wartime deprivation and the beginning of a new life in Kaliningrad colored the memories of the new settlers remembering the start of their new lives. At the time, there were numerous complaints about endemic food shortages and poor preparations for winter continuing through the end of the decade.⁴⁹

It was not uncommon for the new Soviet settlers to connect the higher rate of starvation also to the emotional defeat of the Germans, believing that part of the reason that they did not survive is because they lost the willpower to keep going after Germany's defeat, echoing the words of Dr. Lehndorff's camp commander at Rothenstein (who described the defeat of National Socialism and the subsequent death in the camps as the result of an "emotional affair"). Decades later, this sentiment was echoed in interviews with the new Soviet settlers; as Sergei Vladimirovich Daniel'-Bek remembered, many Germans died from hunger partly because they had lost the will to survive. "[B]ut we felt differently—it was no time to die. The war had just ended!"⁵⁰

⁴⁶ GAKO R297.1.105.17, 21 January 1947.

⁴⁷ Galtsova and Kostiashev, eds., *Vostochnaia Prussia*, 78.

⁴⁸ Galtsova and Kostiashev, eds., *Vostochnaia Prussia*, 71.

⁴⁹ GANIKO 1.1.1.77, 2-4 December 1947; GAKO R216.1.2.313-81, 2 September 1948.

⁵⁰ Galtsova and Kostiashev, eds., *Vostochnaia Prussia*, 77.

Getting By

Life for the Germans in northern East Prussia differed radically from the experiences of Germans in the Soviet Zone. The occupation began earlier and lasted longer than elsewhere before the German capitulation in May 1945; as East Prussia was the first German territory occupied, many of the guidelines for the treatment of the German population had not been established, and the “anything goes” wild conquest continued for months, along with extended violence against the civilian population. It was a full four days after the fall of Fortress Königsberg that Aleksandrov’s corrective to soldiers’ excesses and sacred revenge (“Comrade Ehrenburg Oversimplifies”) appeared in *Pravda* on 14 April 1945, at which point much of East Prussia had been under provisional military control for three full months.¹

Because of the administrative isolation from the military command in Berlin and from the Soviet civilian government in Moscow, the occupational nature of the government in Königsberg continued through the summer of 1945 without intervention due to Allied agreements, with no dialogue with the Red Cross or other relief organizations, and with no contact with antifascist emigres eager to establish a postwar government for the civilian population. But while the military administration had been instructed not to form a German-led government, the future political shape of the Special Military District remained unclear, and there was no greater question than how the German population would fit into the provisional military occupation and any future government of the territory. Were the Germans to be considered a conquered population and prisoners of the military administration, which would supervise their internment as if in a labor or concentration camp? Surely not, as those Germans deemed truly guilty of fascism had already been sent to Siberia for forced labor along with many *Wehrmacht* and *Volkssturm* men who survived the spontaneous executions after the surrender. Although every German was complicit by association by having survived through the Nazi rule, those released from filtration had been deemed less guilty. The Germans were no longer citizens of the defunct Third Reich, but they also did not automatically become citizens of the Soviet Union by virtue of living on Soviet territory. In some ways, they became stateless people, although not technically displaced persons, as they still lived, if uprooted, in the territory of their former state, in the same city, and some-

¹ G. Aleksandrov, “Tovarishch Erenburg Uproshchaet,” *Pravda*, 14 April 1945.

times even in the same apartments. And although Stalin had declared that there would be no German government in Königsberg, the Provisional Administration for Civilian Affairs was set up *de facto* for the Germans, in order to register them, supervise their labor, and oversee their affairs. Were they akin to the liberated populations elsewhere in Eastern Europe, including in Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia, who were expected, after proper guidance and reeducation, to be beneficiaries of a new socialist system? That is, even though a new state in Königsberg would not be built *by* the Germans through German-led government, could it not, perhaps, be built on their behalf?

At the time, these questions were not asked explicitly, either in Königsberg or in Moscow, but because they remained both unasked and unanswered, the ambiguity led to a variety of responses by both the new government and by the Germans. The same overlapping tendencies guiding Soviet soldiers and commanding officers during the war—liberation and revenge, nationalism and internationalism—also informed the way that the German population was understood and treated after the war.

* * *

Germans and Soviets in Königsberg came together under extraordinary circumstances, and their cohabitation marked the only instance of such a large number of Soviet and German civilians living together for such an extended period of time.² Nowhere else in East Central Europe did such a large population of German civilians remain so long after the war before their final expulsion to Germany—almost two and a half years before the first mass expulsion in October 1947 and three and a half years before the final round of expulsions in November 1948. Spontaneous forced resettlement began elsewhere in Eastern Europe already in the summer of 1945 and became official policy in the wake of Potsdam; the German populations in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and the Balkans were almost completely resettled within a year after the end of the war. Germans from the northern part of East Prussia, however, actually returned to their homes in the summer of 1945 before the Potsdam Conference. The borders later closed to returnees by the end of the summer, but in contrast to what happened elsewhere in Eastern Europe, once the borders closed, Germans who remained in Königsberg were not allowed to leave even if they wanted to, and no plans were made, either in Kaliningrad or in Moscow, for their eventual expulsion. (In late summer 1946, when several German evacuees to the Soviet Zone sought permission to return to their former homes in newly-renamed Kaliningrad, they were informed that their return was “for the time being” [*vorläufig*] prohibited.)³

Population estimates from 1945 to 1948 for the German population are incomplete, inconsistent, and often contradictory, but they give general insight into the changing demography of the city and oblast'. Soviet officials frequently tried to catalogue and classify the population they inherited, but in mid-1945, the task proved virtually impossible. The city's population was 372,164 in 1939, but had decreased by the end of 1944 to 251,752 following the August bombing raids and the approach of the front.⁴ Up to 25 percent of the

² J. V. Kostjašov [Ju. V. Kostjashov], “Russen und Deutschen in Ostpreußen nach 1945—Konfrontation oder Integration?” *Annaberger Annalen: Jahrbuch über Litauen und deutsch-litauische Beziehungen* 7 (1999), 161.

³ BA-Berlin DO 2/54/2, 22 August 1946.

⁴ Brodersen, “Enttäuschte Hoffnungen, 1. Teil,” 2.

remaining population was killed during the invasion,⁵ and thousands more died within the next month of suicide, starvation, official execution or violence by Red Army soldiers, and deportation to Siberia for forced labor.⁶ NKVD operatives, and then the provisional military administration, made frequent attempts to register the population over the summer of 1945, but because there were few staff and resources available, many Germans went uncounted. Of those, many elderly and invalids, too weak to report for registration, died in basements and cellars before they could be registered, leaving their lives—and deaths—unaccounted for.

As of 26 April 1945, 23,247 German civilians had been officially registered in the city, with estimates that around 40,000 more remained unregistered, living either in their homes or still in filtration camps operated by SMERSH.⁷ The registered population jumped to 26,559 by 6 May 1945 (with an estimated 40,000 still unregistered).⁸ But these initial numbers were not comprehensive, as the borders remained porous, and a number of Germans, despite official restrictions on movement, migrated in, while others migrated south into the Polish zone of East Prussia before the border became more tightly controlled. The NKVD representative Arkadii Apollonov, who had been dispatched to East Prussia to supervise NKVD affairs, reported on 30 May 1945 to Beria that an estimated 193,758 Germans remained in all of East Prussia, including the areas that would soon be turned over to Polish administration, while only an estimated 82,500 remained in northern East Prussia (the territory was soon turned over to the Soviet Union).⁹ Apollonov greatly underestimated, however—the more accurate territory-wide count on 1 September 1945, even after a high death rate through the summer, was almost 50,000 higher at 129,614, with just over half of the German population living in Königsberg.¹⁰

By the fall of 1945, population estimate became more precise, and the government was able to make a more accurate count of the population based on registration efforts and death statistics, which they began to collect starting in June. The population remained fluid, however, with many Germans being sent to the countryside for the farm season, and others leaving the city without permission for smaller towns, looking for work or hoping for better living conditions. Despite the fluctuation, a snapshot of city population statistics from October 1945 creates a general picture of the city's population: of the total of 65,137 German civilians registered in Königsberg on 6 October 1945, only only 36,270, just over half at 55.6 percent, were of prime working age (between 17 and 60). The rest were much younger or older: 12,370 people over the age of 60 (18.9 percent) and 16,496 children under the age of 17 (25.3 percent). The gender difference in these categories is even more striking: while there were roughly an equal number of boys and girls under the age of 17, an astounding 81 percent of adults of working age (between 17 and 60) were women—that is, four women for

⁵ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁶ For reports of widespread suicide beginning during the invasion, see GARF 9401.2.93.334-7, 8 March 1945; GARF 9401.2.94.85-88, 14 March 1945. Suicides continued into the summer of 1945 and for the next three years, although they were less frequently documented.

⁷ GAKO R330.1.7.2, 26 April 1945.

⁸ GAKO R330.1.7.3, 6 May 1945.

⁹ GARF 9401.2.96.255-6, 30 May 1945.

¹⁰ Fisch and Klemeševa, "Zum Schicksal," 393.

every one man. Over the age of 60, the difference was somewhat less marked, with 58.7 percent women.¹¹

Meanwhile, the Soviet civilian population was a small minority in 1945. A census from 30 October counted only 4336 Soviet civilians, 54.2 percent of whom were men. In sharp contrast to the German population, 80.7 percent were of prime working age (between 17 and 60), and there were roughly equal numbers of men and women. (Although, given the large number of male Soviet soldiers who remained in the city for the next three years, one can generalize that postwar Königsberg was very much a city of German women and Russian men.) Among the Soviet population, there were also many children (19.1 percent of the population was under the age of 17); some of them had been forced laborers in East Prussia, others were war orphans who had followed the Red Army, and still others were the children of Red Army soldiers and officers whose families came to Königsberg in the summer of 1945: while the number of boys and girls under the age of eight was similar, there were almost twice as many boys as girls aged 8 to 17. The Soviet civilians were on average much younger than their German counterparts. Less than one percent of the population was over the age of 60, only seven Soviet civilians in all of Königsberg.¹²

But this population dynamic shifted with the arrival of new settlers in the fall of 1946. Just as the initial policies toward the German population were developed based on the need for their labor, so, too, was the initial settlement of Soviet citizens directly connected to the need for workers in specific industries. Settlement¹³ began in a decentralized fashion, as individual industries themselves recruited workers from other industrial centers in the Soviet Union; in a number of cases, recruiters were so desperate for labor that they took on any willing applicants, regardless of previous experience.¹⁴

By February 1946, the number of Soviet civilians in Königsberg had grown to 7843, and according to statistics at the time, one out of three of them was a repatriate. At the time, an even greater number of Soviet civilians lived in other towns in the future oblast' (in contrast to the Germans, who were divided equally between the capital and the countryside): of the 13,837 Soviet civilians living outside of Königsberg, one out of five was a repatriate. Combined, repatriates accounted for over a quarter of the total Soviet civilian population; in other words, one out of four Soviet civilians had spent a significant time outside the Soviet Union and outside the control of the Soviet state.¹⁵ After the war, civilians who had spent time outside the Soviet Union during the war were considered a security risk: despite being brought to Germany as POWs or slave laborers and receiving cruel treatment, repatriates had witnessed the higher standard of living in Germany and could potentially compare it with the continuing disorganization and hardship in Kaliningrad. Authorities also suspected that at least some of these repatriates might still be susceptible to foreign influence or be maintaining international ties. Orders were issued to repatriate them (that is, to interrogate them) quickly, and either send them to their former homes or to labor camps, but unlike what was happening further west in the Soviet Zone of Occupation, the process was

¹¹ GAKO R330.2.9.1-32, October 1945.

¹² GAKO R330.2.6.39, 30 October 1945.

¹³ GAKO R332.2.7.4, no date [after 1 February 1946].

¹⁴ Eckhard Matthes and Svetlana P. Galcova, eds., *Als Russe in Ostpreußen: sowjetischer Umsiedler über ihr Neubeginn in Königsberg/Kaliningrad nach 1945* (Ostfildern vor Stuttgart, Germany: Ed. Tertium, 1999), 37.

¹⁵ GAKO R332.2.7.3, no date [after 1 February 1946].

slow and incomplete. Further orders were issued by the NKVD and UMVD in 1945 and into 1946 to collect Soviet civilians needing to undergo the repatriation process, but many eluded filtration or found other ways to stay in Königsberg, often by finding jobs. Even as more new settlers arrived, as late as May 1946, repatriates made up sometimes up to half of the Soviet population of smaller towns. For example, in Ozersk (Darkehmen) District, there were 1568 Germans, 179 newly-arrived Soviets, and 219 repatriates; in Gubin (Gumbinnen) District, there were 2718 Germans, 1113 newly-arrived Soviets, and 708 repatriates.¹⁶

The Soviet population of Königsberg and the smaller towns and villages continued to grow gradually in the first half of 1946.¹⁷ A report to the Central Committee on 1 June 1946 noted the following breakdown:

Population Statistics for Königsberg and Königsberg Oblast', 1 June 1946¹⁸

	in Königsberg	Total
Citizens Arriving from USSR	15,039	43,743
USSR/Awaiting Repatriation	2,901	9,539
German	42,957	116,737
Total	60,897	170,019

Germans still constituted over two-thirds of the population of Russia's newest oblast', and still almost a fifth (17.9 percent) were repatriates. Two months later, on 1 August 1946, the estimated number of Germans had dropped to 108,000 (due to death and possibly partly to revised census estimates), while the Soviet population had increased to 84,000, that is, 44 percent of the population. Germans still constituted the majority, but not by much and not for long.¹⁹

The watershed moment in Soviet settlement came late in the summer of 1946, when the USSR Council of Ministers issued an order (No. 1298 from 21 June 1946, signed into effect by Stalin on 9 July 1946) calling for the planned, centralized settlement of the newly re-named Kaliningrad Oblast'. The transition to planned settlement had several causes, not the least of which was the desire to fully exploit the region's agricultural and industrial potential. Another reason was the desire for more controlled settlement after the decentralized migration of the first year; Königsberg (after 4 July 1946, Kaliningrad) was declared a "Closed Zone" and border region of the USSR on 29 June 1946, meaning that authorities needed to screen potential settlers more carefully to filter out anyone politically suspect. Settlers were only permitted to move to Kaliningrad Oblast' with official permission and registration, but continuing labor shortages and the impossibility of total filtration meant that these regulations were often disregarded, both locally and in the regions of the USSR

¹⁶ GARF A259.6.3923.73-5, 21 May 1946.

¹⁷ GARF A259.6.3923.179, no date [April 1946].

¹⁸ RGASPI 17.122.143.78-80, 1 June 1946.

¹⁹ GAKO R181.10.22; Kostiashev, "Zaselenie," 82.

where potential new settlers applied. Yet even with somewhat lax adherence, between three and twelve percent of applicants were rejected; most of them were repatriates.²⁰

Collective farmers were promised special incentives to resettle, including, as of July 1946, free one-way train fare to Kaliningrad Oblast' and the transfer of up to two tons of cattle and household possessions; financial support of 1,000 rubles to the head of household (which led to a number of fictitious marriages to claim the prize) and 300 rubles for each additional member of the family; a loan of cereal grains, a credit of up to 10,000 rubles to build or repair a house, and the possibility of longterm credit to purchase farm animals for individual farmsteads, and release from paying taxes for three years.²¹ One of the main motivators for new settlers was the hope of securing housing and food, particularly for those settlers from western Russia, Ukraine, and Belorussia who had their homes destroyed during the Nazi occupation—16 percent listed the destruction of their homes as an explicit motivation at the time of application. (By contrast, 'political enthusiasm,' later identified as a main motivating factor for new settlers by Soviet historians in Kaliningrad, was listed only in a minority of cases.)²² In order to encourage further settlement, the new settlers were instructed to write their relatives soon after their arrival to describe their new lives of abundance in Kaliningrad Oblast'. The letters were then published in the kolkhoz newspapers in their former homes, encouraging more volunteers to come.²³

The first mass transport took place on 23 August 1946, bringing 570 new settlers from the western Russian city of Briansk to Gumbinnen (Gusev). Days later, transports followed from Velikie Luki to Insterburg (Cherniakhovsk), and from Kirov to Stallupönen (Nesterov). According to official statistics, 2990 families had arrived already by 1 September, 8,795 families by 1 October, and 11,675 families by 1 November. These families were distributed to 295 newly established kolkhoz farms throughout the oblast'.²⁴ By 1 January 1947, 278,000 new Soviet settlers had arrived. Although the settlement campaigns had focused on populating collective farms, the 58,000 new farm settlers accounted for less than a quarter of the newcomers, however, as urban civil servants, laborers, and technical specialists arrived to the cities at an even faster rate.²⁵ New settlers came from 50 separate oblasts and republics of the USSR: 23 percent from Black Lands areas of Russia, 24.7 percent from the Volga region, and 16.7 percent from Belorussia. The vast majority of the new settlers were Slavs: as of 1950, 77 percent Russian, 9.4 percent Belorussian, 5.8 percent Ukrainian. Lithuanians comprised another 3.5 percent of the population, and the remaining 3.7 percent came from various other nationalities of the USSR (including Mordvinians, Chuvash, Jews, and Poles). The original settlers were mostly young: 40.3 percent of them under 30 years old, and 60.4

²⁰ GAKO R298.1.4.10; Kostiashev, "Zaselenie," 83.

²¹ Galcova, "Die Neusiedler," 111; Hoppe, *Auf den Trümmern*, 37; Kostiashev, "Zaselenie," 83; Matthes and Galcova, eds., *Als Russe*, 39-44.

²² GAKO R20.1.5; Galcova, "Die Neusiedler," 110-11; Hoppe, *Auf den Trümmern*, 40; E. M. Kolganova, *Obrazovanie i razvitie v Kaliningradskoi oblasti—internationalnyi podvig sovetskogo naroda / Leninskaia nacional'naia politika v deistvii* (Kaliningrad, Russia, 1974), 37-64. Kolganova identified political enthusiasm as a leading force for new settlers.

²³ GAKO R297.1.125.1-2, [July] 1946.

²⁴ Hoppe, *Auf den Trümmern*, 37; Arbušauskaitė, "Das tragische Schicksal," 14-15; Kostiashev, "Zaselenie," 83; Birkovskii, *Istoriia Kraia*, 56.

²⁵ Kostiashev, "Zaselenie," 85; Hoppe, *Auf den Trümmern*, 38.

percent under 40. Around 20 percent of collective farmers [*kolkhozniki*] and 34 percent of state farmers [*sovkhozniki*] were members of the Communist Party or its youth organization, the Komsomol; these communists were similarly young, with over half of them under the age of forty.²⁶ According to the original state program for resettlement, all families being resettled were required to have two working adults, but in reality, many “fictitious” families with single mothers or mostly children arrived, and there were also large numbers of younger people with no children (60 percent of all of the settlers). Of the new settlers arriving between 1945 and 1950, 84 percent came from peasant ancestry (though most were not peasants themselves), 11.5 from workers’ families, and only 4.5 percent from the professional class. Seventy-four percent of them had agricultural professions, but 24.3 percent of all state farm workers had less than one year of work experience (about a quarter of them were demobilized soldiers who had remained in East Prussia). They were generally poorly educated: although 66.3 percent had finished elementary school, just over a quarter of them (27.4 percent) had a middle-school education, 5.5 percent had a secondary school diploma, and only 8 percent were college educated specialists with a degree. Those who were illiterate were usually over 40, however, and two-thirds of those under 30 had been to (if not completed) secondary school.²⁷

New settlers knew very little of the land that would become their new home. Many thought they were going “to Germany” or “to Prussia”: the name “Kaliningrad Oblast” meant very little.²⁸ Before the actual encounter, the impressions of potential new settlers about their future German neighbors were overwhelmingly negative. But there was also simple human curiosity—interest in a new land and in the people living across the border in “the West.”

Stories of first encounter from later interviews with the first Soviet settlers to Kaliningrad follow similar patterns: the train arrives in the station (final destination Gumbinnen, Darkehmen, or Königsberg), and when the doors open, young Germans are already standing in front of the doors, clean and orderly, but weak and emaciated. They beg, in a mixture of Russian and German, for bread, and the new settlers give them food, and through conversation, an acquaintance develops. According to the narrative, this direct human contact erases years of propaganda and preformed impressions, the desire for revenge and retribution for everything the enemy had done.²⁹ The Kaliningrad historian Iurii Kostiašov points out how the first Soviet settlers to Kaliningrad later remembered mostly friendliness or indifference toward the Germans. While admitting that the memory of these settlers decades later was not a clear indication of their attitudes at the time, Kostiašov uses the memories of the new settlers to argue that the deeply anchored animosity that most Soviet settlers felt toward Germans during the war dissipated soon after Soviets and Germans began living together after the war. In fact, Kostiašov argues, this animosity disappeared *more quickly* in Kaliningrad than anywhere else in Russia, aided by the experience of cohabitation.³⁰

²⁶ Galcova, “Die Neusiedler,” 110.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 109-110.

²⁸ Kostjašov, “Russen und Deutschen,” 162.

²⁹ *Collected Interviews*. The interviews with Kaliningrad new settlers mirror the standard formulation from postwar memoirs of Red Army soldiers in East Prussia and elsewhere in Germany.

³⁰ Kostjašov, “Russen und Deutschen,” 168.

The new settlers did not make such a favorable impression on the German civilians, by contrast. Germans were more likely to see the Soviet civilians in terms not dissimilar to the Nazis' anti-Bolshevik and anti-Slav propaganda during the war. The basis for the comparison was the familiar binary between civilization and barbarism, expressed all the more bitterly after the apparent victory of the savages, and framed in terms of the first encounter they had with Soviet soldiers. In December 1945, the doctor Hans Deichelmann wrote about the visible evidence of the cultural (and hygienic) superiority of the vanquished over the victors. The new settlers, he noted mockingly,

are dressed in a smudgy blue garrison cap, in some kind of dark coat with frayed sleeves, untidy seams, dangling buttons, and material pulled out and pushing through sleeves. Their heads peak out from a collarless neck or a moth-eaten scarf. The shoes or boots are warped and worn out, and not too infrequently a few toes peek out the front. Everything is carefully covered with dirt, with hardly a spot missed. The women appear to be mostly in their twenties, but have lived through a lot (*verlebte Zuge auf*), which still shows through lots of powder and bright red made-up lips. Farmers and farmer's wives are fitted in lumpy wadding jackets and wadding trousers, which keep them beautifully warm—the lice agree—and they appear so shapeless. The soldiers' garb hardly looks better.³¹

“By contrast,” Deichelmann maintained, the defeated German civilians still looked clean and well-groomed, “even though many only wear old military things, bomber jackets, and camouflage fatigues.” Even from a distance, it was easy to tell “whether one is dealing with Russians or Germans.”³²

* * *

By the end of 1946, there were more Soviet civilians than Germans; Königsbergers had become a minority in Kaliningrad. In the post-catastrophic city, there were new hierarchies, new winners, and new losers. The German civilians who had benefitted as the “chosen people” under the old regime now found themselves at the bottom of a hierarchy based both on nationality and ideology. Above them were all of the people the Nazi state had oppressed: above them were the repatriated *Ostarbeiter*, former slaves on German farms, in homes, and in factories; above them were the Red Army soldiers who had fought to push the *Wehrmacht* out of the Soviet Union and whose families had experienced life as an underclass during the Nazi occupation; above them were the new settlers who came to find a new life in Kaliningrad because the Germans had destroyed their homes. German civilians hoped to weather the occupation and rebuild their old lives. But the old world was now gone forever.

Surviving in this new system, as an underclass and with no rights or recourse, seemed at times impossible. A large percentage of the German population succumbed to disease and starvation over the course of three years, while countless others were killed, imprisoned, or sent to forced labor in the Soviet Union. Soviet civilians, meanwhile, also

³¹ Deichelmann, *Ich sah*, 75; 21 December 1945.

³² *Ibid.*

experienced Kaliningrad as less of the postwar paradise than they had been promised, and also suffered poor living conditions, constant shortages, illness, and hunger in the first years; the socialist entitlements they expected to receive in reward for winning the war remained unfulfilled, and many felt that they were at the mercy of a government that did little to improve their quality of life. Not everything was hopeless, however. Life continued for Germans and for new Soviet settlers between the cracks of the state and its plans for the place and its people. Soviet Königsberg, and then Soviet Kaliningrad, operated according to rules, and those who could decipher them quickly and position themselves accordingly had a better chance of survival than those who could not adapt. Everyday life for both groups was a series of compromises and improvisations; surviving in Königsberg-Kaliningrad meant being flexible, and learning to make do in a world that did not always operate according to those rules as defined.

For the remaining Germans of Königsberg especially, and also for the increasing number of new Soviet settlers who joined them, getting by in the postwar city was about tending to basic life needs: finding enough food to eat, securing a place to stay and to collect material goods, and working in order to earn more money for food. Food, as the most important resource for survival, became even more valuable because it was in short supply. The overwhelming concern of everyone in the city in 1945, not only German civilians, was food—how to get enough, and then, how to get more. After the fall, the last remnants of the German state collapsed, leaving no means to distribute food. In the hours or days before Red Army soldiers entered cellars, basements, and bunkers in the captured city, huddled civilians divided their stored food among themselves; when they emerged above ground, a not uncommon practice was to salvage meat from the horse carcasses littering the streets.³³ Already in these first hours, the difference between eating and going hungry, and between living and dying, came down to skill and luck: the savvy, courage, and creativity to track down food and secure enough for more than hand-to-mouth subsistence, and the fortuity to delay encounter with Red Army soldiers or to find a secret stash of canned goods. Michael Wieck describes the creativity and sheer will it took to survive in these first days.

To discover food leftovers in the ruins, to carry out the commanded work, to not constantly freeze, to find water, to protect oneself against arbitrariness demanded all of one's strength, intelligence, and concentration. Imagination and ingenuity had no limits. First one had to come around to the idea that, even in fully burned-out ruins without staircases to connect the floors, some charred tin cans could have some still edible content under rusted crusts. With help of a ladder and at the risk of collapse of the ruins, you could climb up there. From semi-decomposed horses you could cut off meat, roast it and eat it, although I could not bring myself to do it. But those who did got something good out of it.³⁴

German civilians in the city were worse off because they were separated from any means to produce their own food. After they were collected and marched to internment camps outside the city, the population lived in a state of complete dependence on their captors for their physical survival. Marched at gunpoint to central collection points through town, the

³³ Maslov, "Prodovol'stvennyi Vopros," 47-52.

³⁴ Wieck, *Zeugnis*, 243.

civilians had been allowed to bring with them no more than they could carry, and any possessions they had were likely to be taken in those first days by soldiers collecting trophies to send back home, or in the case of clothing, forcibly exchanged on the spot—a soldier upgrading his ragged shirt and worn boots by identifying a better dressed German of similar size. Already in the first points of collection, water and toilets became a problem, and as Wieck recalled, “everyone had to care for himself.” Many had not eaten or drunk in a long time, but they had not been allowed to collect water before being marched out of town. Wieck remembered that as his column was marched from the Hufen district north toward the village of Charlottenburg, those who had managed to bring a cup or pot were allowed to collect water from a stream, but others were left with nothing.³⁵

In the makeshift camps—an old church, a barn, or a recently liberated Nazi prison—civilians waited sometimes up to two weeks until it was their turn to be interrogated. Malnutrition led to epidemics of intestinal ailments, typhoid fever, and dysentery, and repeated rape led to the spread of sexually transmitted diseases among the German women and Soviet soldiers.³⁶ As Wieck recalled, the horror of the march and the camps seemed unending. When they reached Rothenstein, a former barracks a few kilometers northeast of the city, German civilians were crammed into windowless cellars, with twenty to forty men sleeping on top of one another. The ceiling was too low for the men to stand up straight, and the lack of ventilation meant that there was not enough oxygen in the room, except for when a soldier opened the door to blow in a new draft of air.³⁷ The men were fed only once a day, a thin water soup and stale bread that was covered in mold. Because there were no bowls for the soup, only those who could fashion some makeshift container had any way to eat; Wieck unfastened the glass cover of an overhead lamp (and managed to impress his captors, who offered him extra portions to share with his companions in the cellar).³⁸ Dr. Lehdorff also ended up in the Rothenstein internment camp, where he was recruited by the Soviet administrators of the camp to care for the sick. By the end of April, he and his fellow doctors had to spend a part of each day tending to the dead.

Several people had died in the passage, one sat dead on a pail. The rest were not easy to pick out because even the living respond very slowly when spoken to or touched. In time there were about thirty-six corpses, all men, piled up in a heap three feet high in the wash-room. (The women hold out longer.) Many were almost naked, their clothes having been appropriated by others against the cold.³⁹

When Lehdorff complained in April 1945 about the poor sanitary conditions at his internment camp, the camp commander shrugged and replied, “National-Socialism must be a very emotional affair [...] to have shattered people to this extent; otherwise it wouldn’t have been possible for so many people to fall ill and die.”

Upon returning to Königsberg, the Germans remained hungry and dependent on their captors for survival, and the provisional military administration had to act quickly to

³⁵ Wieck, *Zeugnis*, 230-1.

³⁶ Luschnat, *Die Lage*, 44.

³⁷ Wieck, *Zeugnis*, 245.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 247.

³⁹ Lehdorff, *East Prussian Diary*, 95 [30 April 1945].

organize the city's food resources to prevent further starvation and disease. As in other cities liberated (and now, conquered), the military command quickly set up a system of rations for the population, already in mid-April 1945, only days after the end of the siege.⁴⁰ Wieck remembered, however, that there was no food when he and his family returned to the city weeks later; although a military command had already been set up in his neighborhood (the Hufen, the new provisional center of the city), for food they still had to fend for themselves, searching the cellars for what was left: "Dr. Oetkers pudding mix, vanilla sugar, a can of vegetables, or, when someone had great luck, meat and sausage conserves. You ate whatever you could find."⁴¹ In her memoir, Käthe Hielscher referred to this type of urban foraging in the summer of 1945 as "organizing."

Organizing means rummaging under the ruins, looking for cellar entrances and finding something edible there. Only those who work receive at their workplace a thin, very wet piece of bread. In the meantime, the shrub berries in the garden are ripe, and gradually the first apples, too. And so we conserve our water as much as we can. Just like in the camp, the people here are dying like flies. The causes of death are the same: starvation, diarrhea, typhus.⁴²

When the military commands finally began to issue rations, they were not uniform and varied according to group: German POWs, injured soldiers in hospitals, German civilians working in various capacities, and Soviet citizens working in various capacities received different amounts and kinds of food. The main determinant for quantity was not nationality or presumed complicity with National Socialism, however, but labor: generally speaking, the more arduous the labor, the higher the rations. In the early days, when the military was still able to supplement with the remaining *Wehrmacht* stockpiles, stated rations were as low as 200 grams of bread per day, which averaged, depending on the nutritional content of the bread, 500 to 700 calories.⁴³ The assumption was that Germans would supplement with additional food from stockpiles, although in practice, many German civilians subsisted only on those 200 grams of bread per day, and in many cases, far less.

Promised rations increased by the summer of 1945 to at least double what they had been in the first weeks after the siege. By 15 May 1945, Soviet citizens, repatriates, German prisoners, and German civilians working under direct Red Army command in various capacities—factory deconstruction, agriculture, and on the railways—were to be fed according to the so-called standard Third Norm, the military's designated rations for non-combat troops stationed behind the front lines.⁴⁴ Germans employed by other organizations, however, had no official rations set, and so the provisional military administration issued several orders, many of them vague and contradictory, over the course of the summer and fall of 1945 to indicate how those Germans should be fed. One order directed that that Germans working on railways and in communal services should be given 400 grams of bread (1,000 calories), 30 grams of salt, and 600 grams of potatoes (around 500 calories),⁴⁵ while another

⁴⁰ GAKO R330.2.9.1, 15 April 1945.

⁴¹ Wieck, *Zeugnis*, 238.

⁴² Hielscher, *Als Ostpreußin*, 91.

⁴³ GAKO R330.2.9.1, 15 April 1945.

⁴⁴ GAKO R330.2.4.8-9, 15 May 1945.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

order the same day instructed that some German workers be given only 200 grams of bread a day (500 calories), while others be given an unnamed amount of cabbage and potatoes from trophy supplies, in addition to the 200 grams of bread.⁴⁶

But although rations were not based strictly on nationality, there were significant differences in the way that Germans and Soviet citizens were fed, and those differences became institutionalized over time. Rations for Soviet citizens awaiting repatriation gradually became standardized according to the military's "Third Norm," while only a few Germans received "Third Norm" equivalents, depending on where they worked. Rations for other German workers continued to depend on local supplies and varied significantly in quantity and quality, but in practice were generally far lower than what Soviet workers received. Likewise, the Special Military District created different guidelines for urban kitchen gardens in Königsberg according to nationality; while Soviets and Germans were directed to plant the same quantity of produce, Soviets were supposed to plant a large variety of vegetables, while Germans were instructed to grow only root vegetables: beets, kohlrabi, and rutabaga. The list of different vegetables is one of the subtle markers of the "separate and unequal" regime that was instituted during the provisional military administration. The report did not specify whether the harvests were intended to be collected and redistributed evenly, although in practice the Germans did not have independent access to the produce they planted.⁴⁷

In the real world, the amount of food that a German civilian or Soviet repatriate received depended on the supplies at hand and the kindness (or indulgence) of the food servers. At least some Germans employed in city reconstruction efforts were promised one cooked meal per day, although supply shortages meant that meal was usually only provided on paper (as a report noted in November 1945, the meals had to be stopped because "at the current moment, the People's Commissariat of Defense has completely stopped delivering food").⁴⁸ Moreover, only workers were consistently promised rations, while the non-working population, including children, the elderly, and the ill, received nothing in many cases. With around half of Königsberg's German population unable to work, those who did receive rations often had to share their meager pieces of bread, which itself was not enough to sustain one person, with their children and parents. Soviet policy did not intentionally set out to starve those who could not work and several guidelines were issued over the course of three years to provide rations to invalids and dependents. For example, dependent rations were promised as early as 15 May 1945 (although that was already five full weeks after the end of the siege) at 200 grams of bread (half a worker's ration at the time),

⁴⁶ GAKO R330.2.9.1, 15 May 1945.

⁴⁷ GAKO R332.1.1.22-23, 6 February 1946. "[A]ll categories of the Russian and German population" were ordered to plant gardens of the same size (1500 square meters) and with the same quantity of vegetables, but the variety of vegetables and the location of the gardens differed. "Russians," the report ordered, were supposed to plant gardens on the grounds of their own dwellings, whereas Germans were ordered "with the goal of protecting the harvest as a whole" to plant them collectively near the edge of town, rather than in front of their individual houses. Russian gardens were supposed to grow a large variety of vegetables, including potatoes, radishes, beets, cabbage, cucumbers, onions, garlic, and carrots, whereas German gardens would only grow three kinds: beets, kohlrabi, and rutabaga.

⁴⁸ GAKO R330.1.5.61-3, 12 November 1945.

400 grams of potatoes (two-thirds the worker's ration) and 30 grams of salt.⁴⁹ But in practice, dependents did not receive rations, and even workers rarely received what was promised. Hermann Balzer, for example, remembered that for most of his time in Kaliningrad, received rations were only around half of what was recorded on their ration cards.⁵⁰ Hielscher, a teenager at the time, recalled working extra shifts to earn more food to share with her elderly grandmother, but she still died of hunger within months.⁵¹

The archival records of the provisional Administration for Civilian Affairs reveals the process by which German rations were frequently recalculated in dialogue between official promises and the constraints of the food budget. In a draft report written in late October 1945, rations were reported for German workers, including higher rations for highly-qualified specialists and daily allowances of salt and vegetables in addition to the 400 grams of bread promised to ordinary German workers. In the final version of the report written on 12 November 1945, however, the supplemental rations were removed, and the total daily expenditures of bread and vegetables for the German population were reduced by 25 percent of more, from 17,000 kg of bread per day down to 12,000 kg, and from 17,000 kg of pickled cabbage down to 13,000, only three weeks after the previous version of the report had been drafted.⁵² A report from the same month described the overall health of the German population going into the winter of 1945, noting that the provisions for the Germans were not sufficient to keep the population in good health, let alone to raise their productivity for city reconstruction efforts.

In order to improve the nutrition [*pitanie*] of the German working population in support especially of labor for establishing city industries and also for establishing the city, the current situation with food [*pitanie*], that is, the giving out of one [piece of] bread, is not enough. It is necessary in addition to bread to give out even a minimum amount of fat and vegetables.⁵³

But despite calls to raise their rations, by the winter of 1945, the city's food resources had been depleted. In the barren winters before the next summer's produce could provide more food, Germans frequently found themselves rummaging through trash pits and the garbage cans in search of rotten leftovers to supplement the few hundred grams of bread and perhaps some "so-called kasha" (as Lucy Falk described it in 1946)⁵⁴ they received for their work. Those who did not have a steady job found it even more difficult to get enough to get by. "We lived almost entirely from Russian kitchen scraps," recalled Pollmann, who reported, after leaving Kaliningrad, on the difficulty she had feeding herself and her small children with "potato peels, bones, and fish carcasses."⁵⁵

Those working in industries directly connected to food production were better off, although they, too, rarely ate their fill. Farm workers had direct access to vegetables, and also occasionally to eggs and dairy. But collective farmers were supervised so that they

⁴⁹ GAKO R330.2.4.8-9, 15 May 1945.

⁵⁰ Hermann Balzer, "Eyewitness report of Hermann Balzer of Königsberg in East Prussia. Original. 6. May 1951. 24 pages. Printed in part," in *Expulsion*, 193.

⁵¹ Hielscher, *Als Ostpreußin*, 92.

⁵² GAKO R330.1.5.64-70, 12 November 1945.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 61-3.

⁵⁴ Falk, *Ich blieb*, 79 [beginning of June to 12 August 1946].

⁵⁵ Pollmann, "Königsberg," 61.

could not carry off much more than an undocumented potato here and there. Fishers, on the contrary, did not suffer from such close supervision (at least not when they were offshore), and could feast on the fruits of their labor and stow away some of their catch to sell. The good fortune of these food workers sometimes caused jealousy and bitterness among the rest of the German population; their relative material comfort underscored the growing divide between the successful and the unsuccessful, between those whose skills allowed them to adapt to the new system and those who were martyred by it. One woman living in the seaside town of Cranz, Erna Ewert, found work as a night guard in early 1947 after struggling for months to find a steady job to feed her two children. She was fired from her job soon after, however, because she could not learn to pronounce Russian commands quickly enough. Forced to go hungry, she complained bitterly about the inequity of the new world in she found herself struggling to survive:

Yes, fischers in Sarkau live good, wonderful days. The women get fatter and fatter and have forgotten in their dumb pride how they used to haul the fish to our house with all that praise and fuss. Now they bend over (*buckeln*) for the Russians and can't do enough of "Herr Brigadeur here and there." But one day this grandeur will also come to an end, even if I won't live to see it.⁵⁶

By the time Ewert wrote this passage in her diary, her mother and her young son had died from starvation. Because both her Russian or German neighbors refused to loan her a shovel, she had been forced to dig her young son's grave with her bare hands.

Unable to provide enough food to fulfill all of the rations because of practical necessities, perpetual shortages, and pervasive disorganization, the administration tended to take care of its own first, and in practice, that meant little left over for the Germans. But everyone suffered the shortages. Pilfering, petty theft, and 'skimming off the top' were often the only ways to guarantee a meal for anyone in the city, but that meant that a vicious cycle was created, whereby the city's inhabitants—Germans and Soviets alike—stole from the government because the government could not provide enough. Potatoes, as the basic food stuff most easily stored, were frequent targets of pilfering, leading to a constant battle by the state to control their distribution. On 27 August 1945, for example, the military tribunal reported the case of three Red Army soldiers, I. P. Zhuravskii, I.I. Khorod, and I. Iu. Mertsinkevich, who had been caught stealing potatoes. The three men had served with the 50th Army before being hospitalized with typhus. Upon their recovery, they had been sent to work at the Central Sanitary Warehouse, but because their status in the military budget then became unclear, they, like the Germans, fell between the cracks.

They did not receive food as Red Army soldiers, so they went to a garden plot in the Fifth Military District and dug up twenty potatoes to eat. Along with that, they said that German women were also there with baskets. It was known to them that the German women frequently came to the garden for potatoes. It needs to be said that the majority of potato theft is by German women because of the absence of security.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Erna Ewert, "Tagebuch," in *Frauen*, 25, 27 [1947].

⁵⁷ GAKO R330.1.6.31, 27 August 1945.

The military tribunal admitted that the soldiers had not been paid, but soldiers were under trial for committing a crime. When the city's population became victims of the broken distribution system, they had to break the law in order to eat.

The rations system remained confusing and inconsistent into 1946, and employers frequently did not know how much to feed or pay their workers, or where to find the funds to do it. For example, the head of one of the Pulp and Paper Mills, Gorbunov, wrote to the Head of the Provisional Administration for Civilian Affairs, Guzii, in late February, 1946, requesting clarification on the status of the German workers the plant had just hired. He asked several questions, among them whether there was a system to pay Germans for their labor, whether taxes should be deducted from their pay, and according to what norms workers and dependents should be compensated. Almost a year into the occupation, still no one knew how the Germans should be fed.⁵⁸

Even as food shortages continued for years, the ration cards were gradually issued side by side with wages paid in rubles starting in late June 1945, although most workers were still paid only in rations for the next two years.⁵⁹ Early Soviet civilians working in Königsberg at the time recall rations that were similar to what the Germans received on paper, although they were more likely to receive rations that matched what they had been promised. Nina Fedorovna Romanchikova, who worked as a clerk for military food distribution, remembered that the military administration gave out rations of 400 grams of bread to adults and 200 to children, and later began to add milk, fish, and meat. Ivan Aleksandrovich Shilov remembered that he received twice that, but most settlers remembered receiving far less.⁶⁰

The food supply finally stabilized after a better harvest in the summer of 1947, at the same time that the new civilian administration gradually began to assert more control over food production and distribution. During the military administration, some private shops sprung up spontaneously in the summer of 1945, as entrepreneurial Germans spontaneously occupied some of the remaining useable store fronts, primarily in the northwestern suburb of Hufen. These stores sold household goods, mostly German: furniture, clothing, dishes, and even antiques, original works of art, and other rare goods and, operated semi-autonomously at first, but soon the stores' proprietors were expected to pay taxes to the administration, at first in German marks, and later in rubles. In October 1945, there were a total of 29 private stores with taxes ranging from as low as 1 Mark (for Margarita Ulle's shop on Hindenburg 2) to as high as 35 Marks (for 6 of the 29 businesses).⁶¹ Through early 1946, newly-established state shops operated alongside these private, German-operated stores, but gradually these private stores were also socialized and put under Soviet control. By November 1945, there were a total of 32 commercial stores selling bread and other food to the German population, in addition to the private stores selling household goods.⁶² By that time there were also 3 commission stores, growing to 16 by the end of the provisional

⁵⁸ GAKO R332.2.3.47, 28 February 1946.

⁵⁹ GAKO R332.2.7.17, no date [after 1 February 1946]; Hielscher, *Als Ostpreußin*, 145. Hielscher, who worked numerous odd jobs in construction and cleaning, recalled only receiving wages in rubles starting in the summer of 1947.

⁶⁰ Galtsova and Kostishov, eds., *Vostochnaia Prussia*, 72.

⁶¹ GAKO R330.1.5.33, November 1945; GAKO R332.2.3.15.

⁶² GAKO R330.1.5.61-63, 12 November 1945.

military administration, and large cafeterias operating in each district of the city, usually connected to the military command offices.⁶³

By May 1946, the German-operated stores had been completely consolidated, and the remaining state shops catered to different segments of the population. Eight food stores were designated explicitly for “Russian citizens,” [*dlia russkikh grazhdan*] and seven for “the German population” [*dlia nemets. naseleniia*]⁶⁴—an equal number of shops for each group, despite the fact that Germans still greatly outnumbered Soviet civilians at the time.⁶⁴ But not all Soviet citizens received the same access: there were separate stores for administrators and bosses, who received much higher rations, including meat (when it still remained an uncommon luxury), milk, and even chocolate. These elites working directly for the state also had the opportunity to order special fabric or custom-tailored clothing, perfume, shoes, and even gramophone records.⁶⁵ The existence of such stores did not guarantee that the full range of goods was always available to be purchased, however. Frequent shortages even at special stores meant that it was usually necessary to stand in line overnight for even basic goods such as flour and sugar.⁶⁶

Beginning in the summer of 1946, official employment was no longer enough to get a ration card; the new oblast’ administration also required passports for Soviet citizens and “temporary identification” papers for Germans (although Germans referred to their papers as passports). These “passports” for the Germans cost about 30 rubles officially, but the skilled and cunning could get one for as low as 18, and those unable to take advantage of informal networks were known to pay as much as 60. Even at the official rate, 30 rubles was still more than many Germans could afford at the time. Paying for a passport could mean skipping several meals, but then again, not purchasing a passport meant the same thing. Although the doctor Hans Deichelmann had little trouble purchasing a passport with his wages, Erna Ewert, a woman who had no special skills, could not scrape together enough money for the despite her best efforts. She lost her rations to feed herself, her son, and her elderly mother until she could save (or steal) the necessary funds.⁶⁷ The worst thing that could happen for Germans and Soviets alike was losing a ration card. As Ksenia Ivanovna Ternovykh remembered,

One time I went to the store for bread and forgot the ration cards there, mine and my sisters. I went back, and the cashier woman looked at me and said she hadn’t found anything, no cards at all. Well, what was I supposed to do? I went to the Civilian Affairs Administration and said, here’s what happened, what should I do, I’ll die of starvation! A man was there, said that they have all the cards on an account, and that he could only give out one more. So my sister and I lived for a whole month together with only one ration card.⁶⁸

⁶³ Maslov, “Prodoval’stvennyi vopros,” 47-52.

⁶⁴ GAKO R332.1.2.163, May 1946. As had been the case during the provisional military administration, Soviet citizens received rations in these stores according to a standard norm, while the stores for the German population had no specific norm listed.

⁶⁵ Galtsova and Kostiashev, eds., *Vostochnaia Prussia*, 82-3.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 81.

⁶⁷ Ewert, “Tagebuch,” 18, 39 [1946].

⁶⁸ Ksenia Ivanovna Ternovykh, interview quoted in Kostiashev, *Vostochnaia Prussia*, 73.

A German who had lost her card may not have fared so well in that scenario. According to an order from December 1945, Germans were subject to a 100-ruble fine for losing a ration card, which was for many workers, as much as half of their monthly wages.⁶⁹

Because stores were rarely stocked well enough for everyone to receive rations and buy food, informal local markets appeared alongside the formal state shops. Trade centers sprouted up all over—in the ruins of former shops, on street corners, and in cellars and shanty huts. The first market appeared around Luisenstrasse (Komsomol Street) and Hagenstrasse (Karl Marx Street), near the “Victory” movie theater, and larger so-called “German bazaars” developed along Batal’naia and Kievskaiia streets, at the train stations, and in the more sparsely populated Moscow and Baltiiskii districts in the southern suburbs.⁷⁰ Although private trade had been outlawed, the provisional military administration and the later oblast’ administration tolerated these markets, in tacit recognition that the state had not been able to organize enough food to feed the population. By the end of 1945, improvised trade turned into an established network of buyers and sellers, a genuine second economy in a region that still lacked an official one. The markets attracted all sorts of Germans and Russians who came to buy and sell. Anything one could possibly want could be found there, sold at first by predominantly German merchants, and increasingly, by Soviet civilians.⁷¹

Depending on the season, prices for food at the market could be reasonable (when Lithuanian farmers traveled to Kaliningrad to sell their produce) or so astronomical that most Germans and many Soviet civilians with lower incomes could not afford to buy anything. At the market, one loaf of bread might cost anywhere from 40 to 80 rubles; a half kilogram of butter, 80 rubles; a kilogram of rye or wheat, 20 to 40 rubles; a kilogram of potatoes, 13 to 18 rubles; and flour, 5 to 10 rubles per glass. A kilogram of bacon, at an average of 240 rubles, an entire month’s salary for many unskilled workers.⁷² During harsh winters, a loaf of bread cost as much as 100 to 120 rubles—ten times the summer rate—and so it was sold in pieces: 10 slices per loaf, 10 rubles per slice. The more cunning traders would cut a loaf into 12 slices but charge the same price per slice.⁷³ Erna Ewert, whose monthly wage at the time was 250 rubles in addition to her ration card, tried to purchase bread at the market during a time when the price was high. “A [loaf of] bread on the black market price,” she wrote in late 1946, “[...] costs 100 rubles. So as you figure it, it’s a starvation wage (*Hungerlohn*). If you don’t also have something to trade, you’ll get thrown to the dogs.”⁷⁴

While Soviet citizens ate better than their German counterparts, they, too, remembered the postwar period as a time of great hardship. When the ration card system was finally ended on 4 December 1947, many of the Soviet settlers remembered that day as an important turning point, a signal that food shortages across the Soviet Union were closer to being resolved. Aleksei Nikolaevich Solov’ev, a child at the time, later remembered how his mother placed a whole loaf of bread on the table. He ripped off a little piece to eat, but she told him “Eat it all.” For the first time in his life, he ate an entire loaf of bread, “for the first

⁶⁹ GAKO R332.2.3.24, 15 February 1946.

⁷⁰ Galtsova and Kostiašov, eds., *Vostochnaia Prussia*, 82-3.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁷² Balzer, “Eyewitness Report,” 193.

⁷³ Galtsova and Kostiašov, eds., *Vostochnaia Prussia*, 84.

⁷⁴ Ewert, “Tagebuch,” 21, 40 [1946].

time I felt full, and mother suddenly burst into tears.”⁷⁵ The elimination of the rations system also led to the gradual increase of official government supply. Goods began to appear more frequently in the commission shops—not only bread, but meat, sausages, and fruit from as far away as Bulgaria. Anna Viktorovna Zykova, who worked as a clerk in a grocery store, remembered that by the end of the 1940s, her store stocked four kinds of meat and 11 kinds of sausages.⁷⁶ Hielscher remembered that more stores were opened for the German population in the spring of 1947, too, where it was possible to buy bread (for the low price of only 3.20 rubles per kilo), butter and oil, and even fish. Even when the staple goods were frequently sold out, she remembered that it became possible, for the first time, to eat one’s fill, and even use the flour to make pastries to sell for a profit at the market.⁷⁷ But even if food began to appear in the stores, it was still often too expensive for everyone to buy it, at least not in the quantities they desired. Even with the end of the ration cards, Aleksandra Aleksandrovna Rusakova remembered that it only became possible to live more or less normally starting in 1953.⁷⁸

* * *

After food, the most basic necessity for physical survival was housing—finding a roof to put over one’s head and a place secure enough to store collected food and material possessions. Housing, like food, however, was in short supply and marked another discrepancy between the experiences of the German population and their Soviet neighbors.

Finding a place to sleep proved difficult in the first weeks after the siege. Almost all of the housing that had survived the August 1944 bombing was burned down during the wild first weeks of occupation,⁷⁹ and the housing that remained was located outside the former city center, in pockets of the suburbs, particularly in the four-story apartment buildings lining the main streets of Hufen and Amalienau, in townhouses even further to the west, and in the grand (by Königsberg’s modest standards) two-story late nineteenth and early twentieth century villas that once housed the Nazi elite (including *Gauleiter* Koch). Beyond them, on the outskirts of town, remained the more modest subdivisions of single-family homes, which, although they had been the scene of house-to-house gun fights in the last days of the battle, had escaped most of the aerial raids. Even the habitable apartments frequently had neither doors nor windows, and sometimes no roofs; soot and ash covered the floors with no means to clear it away, and most of the houses had been raided for trophies by Soviet soldiers, leaving behind only broken furniture, now unusable. Plumbing and electricity were now only luxuries of the past, and the corpses of soldiers and civilians who died in the siege left a putrid stench in the rubble and basements of surviving buildings. When Wieck and his family returned to their apartment on Steinmetzstraße in the Hufen district, they found that the building, still habitable in the days after the surrender,

⁷⁵ Galtsova and Kostiashev, eds., *Vostochnaia Prussia*, 85.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ Hielscher, *Als Ostpreußin*, 145-7.

⁷⁸ Galtsova and Kostiashev, eds., *Vostochnaia Prussia*, 85.

⁷⁹ Deichmann, *Ich sah*, 32 [29 April 1945].

had been burned down to the cellar. "Ruins, nothing but ruins. Only seldom here and there was there a half-burned and—shockingly—a fully undamaged house."⁸⁰

For the houses that had survived, Germans returning from internment sometimes found that they had been commandeered by the Red Army in their absence and transformed into barracks. But some German civilians recalled that even the troops had difficulty finding housing because of the destruction,⁸¹ and next to securing food and provisions, one of the primary occupations of the Special Military District for the following year was to secure living space for its own. But while the provisional Administration for Civilian Affairs was created to oversee the affairs of the German population, it did not coordinate housing, meaning that German civilians were left on their own to find and secure a place to stay.

A proposal was made early in the summer of 1945 to separate the housing of Soviet soldiers and German civilians in order to minimize contact between them. An order from 20 June 1945 complained that in some neighborhoods in the city large numbers of soldiers were "having contact with the German population" (sexual encounters between Soviet soldiers and repatriates and German women), leading to an "increase in the percentage of venereal disease." Soldiers were expressly forbidden to have any contact with the Germans, and other orders specifically stated that Germans working for the administration as janitors and cleaners should not be allowed to live together with soldiers or Soviet civilians, and that, citing fears of poisoning, Germans should under no circumstances be allowed to cook food for Soviet citizens. These attempts to separate soldiers and Soviet civilians from the German population had little effect, however, and the proposal to separate the populations by neighborhood was soon abandoned. Germans settled spontaneously throughout the city, on the same streets, in the same buildings, and sometimes even in the same apartments with Soviet soldiers and civilians.⁸²

Once they found a place to sleep, Germans began to assemble all sorts of materials from their former lives—beds, tables, desks, buckets, pots and pans, shirts, shoes, coats, and most importantly, for those able to secure one, a wheelbarrow or suitcase as a means for transport.⁸³ In a city in which useful things were in short supply, all things were potentially useful. Shattered chandeliers, piano keys, broken lamps (even with no electricity in most parts of the city), smudged and dirty paintings; everything held value, if only because it existed, and might some day be turned into something else. Wristwatches, which were now so hard to come by (although Soviet officers could be seen with several on each arm), continued to be seen as especially valuable prizes; besides the practical value they held for their ability to divide up the days into comprehensible segments, they represented a symbol of power for both sides and a reminder of the old predictable routines of civilized life.

⁸⁰ Wieck, *Zeugnis*, 238.

⁸¹ Pollmann, "Königsberg," 61.

⁸² GAKO R330.1.3.7, 20 June 1945; GAKO R332.2.10.83-84, 20 June 1945; Fisch and Klemeševa, "Zum Schicksal," 393; Hoppe, *Auf den Trümmern*, 33. Although there were numerous cases of poisoning during the war, organized by the retreating *Wehrmacht* troops, I found in the archives no incidence of German civilians poisoning the food supply after the surrender.

⁸³ Wieck, *Zeugnis*, 228. Wieck writes about how soldiers were excited to see suitcases, and were often more interested in the suitcases themselves than in their contents, which were often only personal mementos of little value.

Securing this bricolage of rummaged goods proved to be a harder task than collecting it, however. An unsuspecting German might return at the end of the day to her residential cellar to find that her goods had been carted off en masse by an opportunistic thief. In the name of socialism and equal distribution, theft could also be carried out in official guises. Erna Ewert, who was jobless and living at the time in nearby Craz, lamented about her inability to keep hold of any necessary goods because of these unofficial rules. She described in 1947 how her Russian neighbors brazenly entered her quarters whenever they pleased and took with them whatever they needed, including all of her firewood for the winter. Trying to make up for her losses, "I try to steal, get caught. Get tortured a whole lot in the bunker and have to hide with the kids from the police."⁸⁴

But even life in Hell allowed for some tactics of self-preservation. Understanding that the possession of any undamaged goods could make one susceptible to any number of confiscation campaigns (official or unofficial), savvy Germans disguised any goods they had managed to accumulate. For example, Wieck, who had found a job as a carpenter in a bakery, covered a bucket of baking flour with wood scraps and debris in order to sneak the flour home with him for his mother to cook with.⁸⁵ The doctor Hans Deichelmann, perennially interested in documenting the newly-developed subversive tactics of his fellow Germans, noticed that on the streets, one could easily point out the cunning "bourgeoisie" who had smudged bits of dirt and leaves on otherwise clean-pressed clothes to avoid becoming the targets of socialist hatred (or consumer desire).

Still, their clothing is often much better than one would guess from superficial appearances. The many stains and patches are often just purposeful artificial productions; a tattered coat won't get ripped off, so you'll sew a few patches on it. Then you're not so easily a 'capitalist.' Under the patches they've hidden one or a couple of thousanders [marks]. But for the most part, German money doesn't have any worth now. No Russian is interested in that.⁸⁶

But efforts of even the most cunning German civilians could not protect their living space from incursion. While Germans were not guaranteed housing in exchange for their labor, the new Soviet settlers were, which meant that the apartments where Germans lived could be "nationalized" at a moment's notice for use by Soviet citizens. With the pretense of searching for spies or weapons, entire apartment buildings and even city blocks could be forcibly evacuated. It was the experience of most Germans at some time or another to be evicted from their makeshift homes as the new settlers moved in; Wieck and his parents moved, each time involuntarily, a total of six times to successively more cramped and dirty accommodations; Hielscher recalled that in the spring of 1946, all of the Germans living on Barbarastrasse were given a week to resettle to the neighboring street to make room for arriving Soviet settlers.⁸⁷ The inhabitants were sometimes given only a few hours to vacate, however. They could take with them whatever they could carry out, although the furniture they had carefully assembled from the ruins had to be left behind, as the communal prop-

⁸⁴ Ewert, "Tagebuch," 22, 43 [1947].

⁸⁵ Wieck, *A Childhood*, 164.

⁸⁶ Deichelmann, *Ich sah*, 33; 20 April 1945.

⁸⁷ Wieck, *A Childhood*, 173; Hielscher, *Als Ostpreußin*, 134.

erty for use by Soviet citizens. New settlers were given permission by the housing department to inhabit any quarters not already in use by other Soviet citizens, which in practice meant any house or apartment still occupied by Germans. The new settler Manefa Shevchenko remembered the process of finding her own apartment after arriving to Kaliningrad:

As I began to work in the school in 1947, it was hard for me to reach it because there were no trams. So my husband and I were given a permission slip to take possession of any house in the district of the school. We looked for a very long time and finally found a house that we liked. Four Germans lived there. The representatives of the housing administration told them to move out within twenty-four hours. Part of that, can you imagine, was that they were not allowed to take their things with them. That meant that they were allowed to take a bundle with them, but not more than two kilograms, and only in certain cases.⁸⁸

Each forced evacuation pushed Germans closer and closer together, while new settlers occupied the better housing.

Many Germans found themselves living, for the first time in their lives, in multifamily dwellings. They had to share their activities, meals (as often as there were meals to be had), and fates with strangers. Cramped, dark quarters shared by huddled groups of Germans became a standard scene by the spring of 1946 and remained an uncomfortable reality for the next few years. Dismayed by the lack of privacy and the filth of the arrangement, many Germans wondered why the incoming Soviet civilians seemed to prefer the communal apartment, or *kommunalka*, even as more and more housing was available for their use.⁸⁹ In the small town of Gumbinnen, according to one observer, for example, Soviet civilians moved into the Germans' big former houses, but "used for the whole family only one room; cattle and other things they had brought with them were accommodated in the other rooms."⁹⁰

The two groups had different understanding of privacy and personal space, but most Germans, while having their own possessions constantly stolen, could not see how the new collective farmers' practice of keeping their personal animals indoors was the only reliable means of securing them against theft.⁹¹ Instead, many Germans saw "barbarism" and the collapse of civilized life. But Soviet officials and many of the new settlers saw the same thing. Concerning sanitary conditions in the city, one speaker at the City Soviet complained in February 1948 about several instances of a "barbaric attitude" toward housing, with some people keeping cows, pigs, vegetables, and feed stored in their apartments.⁹² In a move to decentralize food cultivation during dire shortages, the oblast' government permitted townspeople to keep their own livestock starting in 1947 on the outskirts of town. Facto-

⁸⁸ Manefa Stepanova Shevchenko, interview by Anna Anatol'ieva L'vova, 1989, Kaliningrad, *Collected Interviews*, vol. 5, 36.

⁸⁹ Lehnert, *Die Russen*, 22.

⁹⁰ B. L. "Eyewitness report of B.L. of Gumbinnen in East Prussia. Attested copy. 1. December 1952," in *Expulsion*, 204.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² R216.1.2.85, 14 February 1948.

ries and other organizations in the city already kept animals to feed workers; the Infection Hospital, for example, kept over 100 hogs for feeding the patients.⁹³ “Hired herdsmen and their cattle grazed at the end of Kashtanovaia Alley,” recalled Antonina Vasil’evna Motora. “Every family had at least a hog. The neighboring streets also had their own farms. Because of that, cheap meat appeared at the market,” remembered Zoia Ivanovna Godaieva. Gradually, this “bovinization” of urban space spread from the outskirts of town to the very center of the city, against regulations, but as a measure of practical necessity. Antonina Prokop’evna Otstavnykh remembered that on Lenin Avenue, “in the yards of homes instead of garages there were barns, and all kinds of animals were grunting and cackling.” Galina Rodionovna Kosenko-Golovina remembered that

everyone got cows, including the wives of senior officials. The cows were a special breed of milk cow. The women traded the milk. Namely the wives of high-paid workers had cows, and did not go anywhere for work. The cows had been trained to march up steps and left their ‘calling cards’ across the city. Herds were out on the streets in the mornings and evenings. They walked around in open lots. At night, they stomped on the floors and in basements and garages.⁹⁴

Soviet city dwellers themselves were also not always content with this practical measure: a disgruntled neighbor complained to *Kaliningradskaiia Pravda* in June 1948 that the residents of 21, 26, and 28 Ofiterskaia Street were breaking public health codes by keeping cows in the basement, and neither the building managers nor state health inspectors were taking any measures against it.⁹⁵ In the very center of the city, on Kommunalnaia Street 4-6, the chief engineer and several colleagues of the Flour Mill had amassed a collection of cows and pigs in the basement, but the courtyards and stairwells, not having been cleaned for a year, had become so soiled with manure that they posed a serious health risk. Despite having paid a fine, they still have not removed the cows, and criminal proceedings were delayed in the process.⁹⁶ Germans rarely kept livestock themselves, as much due to the cultural taboo separating the urban and the rural as from the fact that they would have no official access to livestock, which was an entitlement that only Soviet new settlers enjoyed.

By the summer of 1946, still at the beginning of the influx of new Soviet settlers, the young German woman Lucy Falk had just been hired as a teacher, and she was assigned to travel door to door to register German children for school. She noticed that Germans, as a rule, no longer lived on the ground floors of their former apartment buildings; instead they lived in the cellars and attics of buildings whose apartments were inhabited by Soviet citizens, or they had been pushed entirely to semi-segregated neighborhoods in the ruins on the outskirts of town.⁹⁷ The new German communal apartment became the communal cellar, the communal attic, or the communal shack. “Since the Germans were only allowed to live in ruins and cellar pits,” Marga Pollmann later recalled, “the vermin almost ate us, the

⁹³ Galtsova and Kostiashev, eds., *Vostochnaia Prussia*, 79.

⁹⁴ Galina Rodionovna Kosenko-Golovina, interview quoted in Galtsova and Kostiashev, eds., *Vostochnaia Prussia*, 79.

⁹⁵ quoted in *ibid.*, 80.

⁹⁶ R216.1.2.85, 14 February 1948.

⁹⁷ Falk, *Ich blieb*, 86 [12 August 1946].

Russian mange cropped up, and so on. Everything was destroyed" [*alles wurde überwunden*].⁹⁸

From the German perspective at the time, their neighbors no longer seemed to be suffering from that "Russian mange," because by comparison, they appeared to have all of the advantages: food, shelter, clothing—everything that had been German shortly before, and whatever they did not have, they could easily take. The heads of the Special Military District and Provisional Administration for Civilian Affairs seemed to echo this view in February 1946, when they attempted to explain the downtrodden state of the German population, their poor health, high death rates, and low work productivity on the eve of the foundation of the oblast' civilian administration. "The German population," the report explained, had been completely uprooted, "deprived of property and tools for production, [and] does not have its own farms, land, or apartments."

This situation was created during the period of military action, when the population fled from our soldiers and upon returning found their apartments destroyed or occupied by other tenants. This situation was aggravated by the frequent resettlement of Germans from district to district, which was dictated by the military situation and by the necessity of quartering the troops.⁹⁹

The administration had not created policies intentionally to punish the Germans, although it appeared that way at the time to those who suffered the effects of the administration's pragmatic solutions.

Other Soviet archival records tell a different story, however: not one of Soviet "haves" and German "have-nots," but one of ongoing hardship for the new settlers. Even for those who arrived from villages in Belarus and Ukraine that had been devastated by the Nazi occupation, coming to Kaliningrad felt like traveling the wild frontier after the collapse of civilization. Settlers frequently complained about the low quality or complete absence of municipal services, including water supply, electricity, transport, medical services, and entertainment (a particular complaint among collective farm workers who were promised films and dance evenings, but found themselves with nothing to do after sundown). Disgruntled Soviet settlers frequently wrote with complaints that military personnel had taken the best apartments, collective farmers did not receive their promised housing, equipment, or grain and required to live in half-destroyed ruins, sometimes without windows, doors, or even floors. Other complained that they were all "hungry, barefoot, poorly dressed" and felt in Kaliningrad as if "they were doomed to die." "We live like primitive people," complained new settlers from Iaroslav Oblast to the USSR Council of Ministers in 1947: they had been given no matches, no soap, and no kerosene.¹⁰⁰ Even though Soviet officers and later the civilian administrative elite inherited better apartments and had access to more food and supplies, even they felt as if they were living on the edge of civilization. Their apartments, too, lacked windows and doors, and they often arrived to find even the

⁹⁸ Pollmann, "Königsberg," 61.

⁹⁹ GAKO R332.2.7.4, no date [after 1 February 1946].

¹⁰⁰ Iu. V. Kostiashev, "Obratnichestvo v protsesse zaseleniia Kaliningradskoi oblasti v poslevoennye gody," in V. I. Galtsov, ed., *Baltiiskii region v istorii Rossii i Evropy* (Kaliningrad, Russia: Izdatel'stvo Rossiiskogo Gosudarstvennogo Universita imeni Immanuila Kanta, 2005), 217.

most basic furnishings had been pilfered before the property could be inventoried. Others received no apartments for months and had to wait for something to become available.¹⁰¹

Conditions were especially bad for factory workers, who arrived in large numbers on short notice, placing pressure on the ill-prepared government and factory managers to find housing for them. These workers, often young, recent graduates of trade schools, arrived in Kaliningrad already in reduced circumstances, only to find conditions even worse upon arrival. The 227 young graduates from a trade school in Omsk, for example, came to Kaliningrad in July 1946 each with only one pair of underwear and one threadbare suit, and the majority of them were barefoot. The workers had not received any food for their long train journey, and had been forced to sell their clothing and bed linens just to buy food.¹⁰² The factory housing set up for them in Kaliningrad was even worse, their living quarters covered in layers of dirt and dust, with no tables or chairs for them to sit, and not even pots for them to boil water to drink. The cafeteria set up for them was understocked and unsanitary, and because they had no laundry facilities, they were forced to wash their clothes and linens in the contaminated Pregel River.¹⁰³ Workers arriving in October 1946 to work at the Electrical Coil Factory had been housed in communal apartments throughout the city, but those apartments were also dirty, had no glass to cover the windows, and had neither heating nor hot water. In an apartment on Energetikov Street, 11 people were packed into a single 22 square meter room, with 15 people living in a 25 square meter room next door. Because there was no room for furniture, everyone slept on the floor. With no bath houses nearby, none of the families bathed or washed their clothes, and every resident, with out exception, was infested with lice.¹⁰⁴ The city government hastened to improve the living conditions, and even requested futilely that Moscow temporarily stop sending new workers until living quarters could be prepared in advance of their arrival.¹⁰⁵ Problems with cramped quarters and unsanitary living conditions continued for several years, however.¹⁰⁶

Poor conditions and widespread disappointment meant that a large number of the new settlers simply picked up and left shortly after arriving. For the first ten years of the history of the oblast, there was not a stable Soviet population at all: people arrived, stayed a few months or a year or two, and then left, and new settlers arrived in their place. In that period, the total population of the oblast turned over three times. After 1949, more than fifty percent of the total arriving settlers left each year, with the number increasing at some points to 100 percent—that is, from 1955 to 1958, the same number of people left Kalinin-

¹⁰¹ GAKO R330.2.6.16, 4 August 1945; GAKO R514.1.51.220; GANIKO 1.9.86.33; GAKO R332.1.2.209, May 1946.

¹⁰² GAKO R298.1.23.20, 23 August 1946; GAKO R298.1.23.8, September 1946.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ GAKO R298.1.23.30-2, 24 October 1946.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ GANIKO 2.1.40.27-8, no date [late 1948].

grad Oblast' as those who arrived.¹⁰⁷ One of the most important factors explaining the high rate of return is that, in the 1940s through early 1950s, Kaliningrad was one of the few oblasts in the USSR that issued internal passports for the entire population. Unlike most of the rural population in the RSFSR, Kaliningrad collective farmers were able to use internal passports to travel to other cities within Kaliningrad Oblast' and to other regions in the RSFSR. This permission to travel interfered with the administration's attempts to stop outward migration, and as it became clear that there were few negative consequences for leaving, more settlers took the initiative. Using their passports, settlers returned to their former homes or moved to other parts of the USSR.¹⁰⁸

Many of those who left were urban workers who had been sent to Kaliningrad for term work and left when their contracts expired; others left because they had not received the promised benefits that had lured them in the first place. Homesickness also played a role, and a number of new settlers left after illness or the death of the head of the family, particularly in the first few years.¹⁰⁹ Part of the disappointment of the new settlers was realized that they had been lured to Kaliningrad with promises of abundance. They had been told that this formerly German land was wealthy, that the soil was fertile and the climate mild, and that the streets were lined with fruit trees. As an oblast' report noted, there had been "an inaccurate presentation of the real situation and conditions of labor in Kaliningrad oblast' on the part of the recruiters."¹¹⁰ Whereas Germans responded to their dramatic decline in living standards in the post-catastrophic city, many of the Soviet new settlers had been expecting a life better than the one they had left behind.

¹⁰⁷ Kostiashev, "Obratnichestvo," 211-3, 219. Statistics are vague, inaccurate, and were prone to falsification. For political reasons, early reports and investigations by Soviet historians vastly underestimated the number of settlers who left; Kaliningrad's prominent Soviet-era historian E.M. Kolganova claimed that at the end of 1947, only 2.4 percent of settlers had returned to their former homes. Other Soviet historians, while admitting to higher rates of turnover, claimed that settlement had mostly stabilized by 1950. Yet from 1946 to 1958, not two to six percent of the population left, as early Soviet statistics reported, but 64 percent—that is, almost two thirds of the new settlers to Kaliningrad returned home, and an even higher percentage of them returned in the 1950s than the 1940s. See Kolganova *Obrazovanie*.

¹⁰⁸ Galcova, "Die Neusiedler," 109.

¹⁰⁹ GAKO R180.1.14.7-8; Kostiashev, "Obratnichestvo," 215; Galcova, "Die Neusiedler," 111.

¹¹⁰ Kostiashev, "Obratnichestvo," 217; GAKO R514.1.51.220; GANIKO 1.9.86.33.

Working Together

The availability of food and shelter ultimately depended on work and wages: because there were few other ways to procure food and shelter and because socialism was about the duty (and right) to work. Work was inherently connected to the socialist project—socialism was built by labor, and the toilers who built socialism would be the beneficiaries of their own labor. Work was the means to improve one's living conditions, the release from the alienation of the capitalist system, and the path to rehabilitation.

But before the socialist city had been created, the work to build it did not feel much like liberation. German Königsbergers were the newly conquered people, and it was their labor that was needed urgently to rescue the city from collapse. As elsewhere, German civilians and POWs were forced to work, clearing the rubble from the streets and burying the dead.¹ The teenager Michael Wieck was one of the workers who remained behind in Königsberg during those first days while the majority of civilians were marched to filtration camps. Tasked with searching the streets and buildings for dead bodies, he spent his first days of work fastening nooses around the necks of corpses and dragging them through the streets. He found that, like other forms of debris, corpses made useful landfill for craters.² On Wieck's first day on the job, in the lower floor of a half-burned house lay a partially-naked young woman with dried blood crusted on her mouth and vagina. "She had a fine, soft face. We carried her—using gloves we had been given—by the arms and legs out onto the street; we threw her into the nearest crater."³ Iurii Ivanov, a Russian teenager who had

¹ GAKO R330.2.9.1, 15 April 1945; Arbušauskaitė, "Das Tragische Schicksal," 13; *Expulsion*, 64-5. Gradually, most of the German POWs were sent further east to work in reconstruction in the Soviet Union, joining an estimated 44,000 East Prussian civilians who had already been collected during the spring invasion. Around 11,000 POWs remained in East Prussia to work in newly established industries. However, and they formed the first workforce at the newly-reconstructed Pulp and Paper Mills and ship building industries. The estimate number of civilians sent to the USSR was made by the Schieder Commission in the 1950s, and is difficult to corroborate with Soviet archival sources. It is noteworthy that the reported number of East Prussians sent to the Soviet Union is lower than in the other former Eastern provinces, although the commission reported that the collection of forced laborers in East Prussia involved a higher number of women and children from farms and villages and fewer workers from Königsberg because the city was still under siege.

² Wieck, *A Childhood*, 144.

³ Wieck, *Zeugnis*, 239.

made his way to Königsberg with the Red Army after surviving the Leningrad blockade, was Wieck's Russian counterpart on rubble duty; in his fictionalized memoir, the young narrator also found himself on a funeral team, working together with Russian and German hospital patients to bury the stacks of bodies lined up outside. One of them, he saw, was a German boy his age, like Wieck, his double.⁴

German civilians and POWs were not the only workers before the massive centralized settlement campaign brought hundreds of thousands of new Soviet settlers to Kaliningrad Oblast'. They were joined by Soviet repatriates and active duty Soviet soldiers working in industry and agriculture. Technical specialists were also dispatched from Moscow starting in the summer of 1945; already by September, the mostly-preserved Pulp and Paper Mills were sent more than a hundred workers in order to facilitate production (although the vast majority of laborers at the plant remained German POWs). In the next six months, another 250 workers arrived to resuscitate the Steinfurt Waggonfabrik (Train Car Factory); in the spring of 1946, hundreds more arrived, including a number of demobilized soldiers.⁵ But German civilians, the majority of them women, formed the majority of the work force in Königsberg-Kaliningrad until late 1946.

In the first months, work was arduous—non-stop from sunrise to sunset with no days off.⁶ Labor was mandatory for all adults, and even those who were physically weakened were expected to contribute if they were not infectious or bed-ridden. But even so, less than a third of the total German population in the city was deemed able-bodied, just over 17,000 in September 1945, and around the same number (despite the decrease in total population because of death and migration to the countryside) in February 1946.⁷ For the first several months, Germans were called to work by military units who went house to house each morning, forcing everyone who wasn't bed-ridden to come to work. The teenage girl Käthe Hielscher and her mother remembered the dread they felt each morning when the work commandos came for them, screaming in a mixture of German and Russian, "*Raustreten, dawei, dawei!*" ["Come out! Come on, come on!"]. Each day promised different types of labor: in 1945 alone, Hielscher worked at various construction sites, cleaned pieces of furniture rescued from buildings and carried them to a church to be stored, hauled rail ties to change the German tracks to Soviet *Gauges*, and sorted German soldiers' uniforms for recycling. Her mother, like Wieck had in the first days, worked in a corpse collection brigade. The work was arduous each day, and the only incentive to push forward was the promise of a single piece of bread as payment, which often had to be shared with family members at home who were too sick to work. And the work location could change at a moment's notice:

⁴ Iurii Ivanov, *Tantsy v krematorii. Desiat' epizodov kenigsbergskoi zhizni* (Kaliningrad, Russia: IP Mishutkina I.V., 2006), 58-9. Ivanov read a number of the published German memoirs and combined tropes and commonly told stories from both Soviet and German memoirs into his own. The narrator's parallel situation to Wieck's was by design; the two met in 1992 in Kaliningrad and shared stories of being teenagers in parallel worlds in Kaliningrad.

⁵ Hoppe, *Auf den Trümmern*, 34-35.

⁶ GAKO R330.1.2.7, 6 May 1945.

⁷ GAKO R332.2.7.4 no date [after 1 February 1946]; Fisch and Klemeševa, "Zum Schicksal," 399. As of February 1946 in the city as a whole there were still around 17,000 Germans employed in the city: 6020 were working in factories and industry, 1077 in agriculture, and 2311 in municipal services, 5352 with military units, and 2244 in other organizations within the city; the remainder of workers performed various types of unskilled labor and cleaning for the above departments and agencies.

Hielscher and her mother awoke one morning to find trucks waiting for them outside. They were taken several kilometers outside the city to work in the fields for the summer. The work was hard and most of the women were barefoot, having lost their shoes along the way. Workers were only allowed to return home after falling ill with typhus (as was the case with Hielscher and her mother), and then they were sent to Königsberg to recover. They would receive no food until they were well enough to work again, if they recovered.⁸ By the winter of 1945-1946, it was no longer necessary for work commandos to call Germans out of their homes each morning: with private food supplies depleted, working was the only way to prevent starvation.⁹

Work remained mandatory for Germans until the summer of 1946, although most Germans continued to see working as the best means for their survival. Although orders had been issued already in the summer of 1945 to only employ Germans who had been properly registered, in those first months, many Germans continued to slip through the cracks and earned their daily bread without being formally documented. Many Germans feared that official registration would make them more vulnerable and tried to remain as much as possible “under the radar” to minimize mistreatment;¹⁰ because the paperwork was complex, many military units and factory managers also willingly took on Germans who were not registered, and in some cases, even issued their own registration papers to keep track of who was working for them. Not only out of security concerns, but also for economic reasons, the provisional Administration for Civilian Affairs attempted to crack down on under the table employment, and threatened punishment and steep fines for Germans and employers alike. The problem was that individual industries were luring German workers with promises of higher rations, creating labor shortages in sectors where the labor was most needed: the unpleasant, but necessary work to clear away rubble, repair utilities (including sewage), and reestablish city services. With promises of better working conditions and higher wages, an employment “market” had been created, the Germans were choosing easier conditions, and the government was losing out. In order to establish control over the distribution of labor, the Civilian Affairs Administration cast under-the-table employment not only as inefficient, but also as the willful “concealment of various enemy elements.”¹¹

Although many preferred not to enter the system, gradually everyone was incorporated, and being registered provided more benefits than remaining isolated. After the winter of 1945, Germans gradually settled into more stable employment, and, even if they still changed jobs several times a year, they had, at least in theory, a greater choice in determining how and where they worked. By the summer of 1946, work conditions had improved significantly, along with food rations, and Germans were now only required to work eight hours a day, in line with their Soviet coworkers and supervisors, although Germans, unlike Soviet citizens, were not guaranteed days off.¹²

Most of the jobs were manual labor. Germans worked as factory workers, as farmers, as construction workers, bakers, cabinet makers, electricians, gardeners; some worked in

⁸ Hielscher, *Als Ostpreußin*, 96-104.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 118.

¹⁰ Falk, *Ich blieb*, 13f; Hoppe, *Auf den Trümmern*, 30.

¹¹ GAKO R330.2.1.20, 30 July 1945.

¹² Hielscher, *Als Ostpreußin*, 134.

more specialized trades they had been trained in before, but most found themselves working in highly demanding physical labor, a new experience, given the limited types of employment German women had engaged in during the Nazi period. When the teenage Hielscher found herself on the verge of fainting from carrying heavy rail tracks in 1945, she complained to her sympathetic boss, Konstantin, whom she affectionately called Kostian. "In Russia, women always do this kind of work," he laughed, but called a few other women over to help lighten their load. But when the women still fell to their knees and protested, Kostian became angry. Yet, as a gentle, sympathetic student, rather than a soldier, "[h]e doesn't scream and doesn't beat the broken-down skeletal women [*Frauenskelette*]." Instead, he called in a more forceful team leader to make them keep working. After that day, Hielscher dedicated the rest of her strength to finding a job she could survive.¹³

Finding a decent paying job that was not too physically taxing was one of the greatest challenges. Young people were often more adept at fitting themselves into this new world; Wieck was particularly skilled at working the system, and remembered how, as carpenters increasingly came into demand, he styled himself accordingly.

Had I not learned to handle saw and plane? The officer to whom I presented myself as a carpenter didn't believe me. He handed me boards, a handsaw, hammer and nails, pointed to an empty door frame in the ruined part of the bakery, and said, "Go make a door." I managed somehow to put something together, which he allowed as a door. And that's how I became a carpenter in a bakery.¹⁴

Those who could pick up some elementary Russian were also at a distinct advantage, although perfect fluency might also raise the suspicion of espionage.

Germans who had some kind of technical skills—particularly medical doctors and engineers—could earn the coveted title of "specialist" and enjoy higher wages, better treatment, and more respect from their Soviet colleagues; to simple Soviet workers, these German specialists even appeared to be wealthy by comparison.¹⁵ Craftsmen, such as fitters, porters, smiths, carpenters, glaziers, shoemakers, and tailors, were also promised better wages than unskilled laborers. Work in the artisanal trades was not easy however; craftsmen worked long hours and entire workshops and communal apartments could get transferred to less desirable locations with little notice.¹⁶ Hospital employees, as the doctor Hans Deichelmann noted, had better access to the limited supplies of medicine and better rations than most, although they, too, found their activities strictly directed by a Russian military *Nachalnik*, a word soon familiar to every German worker. Soviet employers harnessed these 'bourgeois specialists' for their good work ethic, attention to detail, technological sophistication and familiarity with the region. They sometimes also taught their Soviet coworkers new methods for doing their jobs—cleaner techniques for surgical incisions, new procedures in shipbuilding, sturdier constructions for furniture and cabinets. German skills were in such high demand that Soviet civilian and military officials increasingly appropriated

¹³ Hielscher, *Als Ostpreußin*, 125-6.

¹⁴ Wieck, *A Childhood*, 164.

¹⁵ Wieck, *Zeugnis*, 307; Linck, *Königsberg*, 75-80; Fisch and Klemeševa, "Zum Schicksal," 399; *Dokumentation*, vol. II, 144f; Deichelmann, *Ich sah*, 209; Hoppe, *Auf den Trümmern*, 31.

¹⁶ Hermann Balzer, "Eyewitness report," 193.

employees from the few remaining organizations serving German clientele and sent them to work for Soviet Russian agencies, under the official guises of “restructuring” and “efficiency.” At the German hospital, a mandatory reduction in the number of employees meant that several German craftsmen, grounds keepers, cooks, and specialists were required to find new work under direct Russian supervision, and for the direct service of the Soviet inhabitants. But at the hospital where Deichelmann worked,

We could have used ten times as many craftsmen as available. Everything is broken, from the windows to the roof, from the wheelchairs to the stairwells, the plaster and the cement floors, which lay in pieces in many places in the cellar, since the days of last April [1945]. [...] The craftsmen must work instead for the Russians. All the objections don't help, 37 men have been let go [...].¹⁷

In the new socialist city, the Russians were the beneficiaries of German expertise. For a while, at least, the two groups needed each other, and neither could survive without the other.

The downside of becoming a specialist was that once one's labor was considered indispensable, it became harder to become disentangled. The doctor Wilhelm Starlinger became the German Head of the Infection Hospital and enjoyed more prestige and better treatment than most of his fellow Königsbergers. His powerful role at the hospital made him politically vulnerable, however, and in 1947, numerous false charges were raised that he had maintained conspiratorial “fascist” connections with East Prussians outside of Kaliningrad. (After a few unsuccessful trials, Soviet officials succeeded in sending him to the Gulag in the mainland of Russia, where he worked as a doctor until his eventual release after Stalin's death.)¹⁸ Other employers attempted to keep their German specialists in Kaliningrad after 1948; G.K., who worked as an auxiliary nurse at the hospital, found that her valuable skills put her in a difficult position in 1947 when it first became possible for Germans to register to leave the city and return home to their families in Germany. She tried to apply for permission to leave,

But the Russians wanted to keep me. I had often seen, how Russian nurses were abused because of their bad work, and how I was held up to them, as an example. I had in the meanwhile learned enough Russian, in order to understand and be understood. Such occurrences caused me to doubt, whether my departure would not be delayed, or all together hindered by my readiness to work.¹⁹

¹⁷ Deichelmann, *Ich sah*, 87 [15 March 1946].

¹⁸ Starlinger, *Grenzen*, Chapter 1. Prosecutors pointed to supposed communication between Starlinger and the former East Prussian Catholic Bishop Maximilian Kaller, although Starlinger claimed that the only communication he had with him was the sending of good wishes in a letter in 1946 (the irony here is that Kaller himself had opposed the Nazis). Other accusations declared that Starlinger had even attempted to reach audience with the Pope.

¹⁹ G.K., “Eyewitness report of Mrs. G.K. of Königsberg in East Prussia,” in *Expulsion*, 331. Grammar mistakes in original translation.

Although G.K. was able to leave in 1948, other specialists were among the last to be resettled from Kaliningrad, some as late as 1951.²⁰

Soviet employers sometimes preferred to hire Germans because the common understanding was that Germans worked harder and cheated less than Russians. Despite the general admiration of the German work ethic, former fascists, as a rule, could not be compared favorably to socialists. Russian supervisors reportedly enjoyed pointing out this fact; they educated their German employees about the cultural and ideological superiority of socialism and the Russian people. Ewert, after finally landing a job, discovered with dread that her boss loved “commanding German women only too well, criticizing them and saying; ‘Puh, German *Kultur* bad, Russian woman work better. So, so, tak, tak. Hmm, hmm’—for a half hour. But not for 10 hours a day.” Unable to stand his projections of apparent insecurities, Ewert and her coworkers “mutiny and answer him back: ‘Please, please, Russian woman work better.’” Finally satisfied, the boss left them in peace for the next three days.²¹

Originally, Germans were forced to work, not as punishment, but to save the city from collapse. Gradually, as conditions in the city stabilized, Germans and Soviets could expect, at least in some ways, similar working conditions and similar compensation for their labor. Already by mid-summer 1945, the standard Soviet incentives for labor were put into effect for the German population: rewards of higher wages or extra food for surpassing production norms, and penalties for underperforming.²² Moreover, wages were not determined according to nationality, but according to the type of job performed, meaning that, at least in theory, Germans and Soviets would receive equal pay for equal work. Monthly wages in the Soviet system varied widely depending on the type of job; within the Oblast’ Civilian Affairs Administration, for example, pay started as low as 200 rubles for unskilled laborers (janitors, cleaners), ranged between 600 and 800 rubles for mid-level employees, including inspectors, heads of divisions, workshop leaders, and translators, and topped out at 1,300 rubles for the highest-level officials (for example, the Assistant Head of the Political Division). Wages in other industries fell along a similar distribution, although for factory managers and highly specialized engineers working in construction or technical fields, wages could as high as 3,000 rubles.²³

Despite the potential to earn equal work for equal pay, German civilians in diaries at the time and in later memoirs complained bitterly about working conditions in Königsberg-Kaliningrad, identifying their experiences with “socialist labor” as the greatest condemnation of the system. In theory, Germans and Soviets were supposed to receive equal pay for equal work, but in practice, Germans’ wages, like food rations, did not always come from the same budgets, especially during the provisional military administration, meaning that often the money simply was not available to pay them.²⁴ In other cases, when Germans and Soviets were paid from the same funds, shortages meant that Soviets received their pay first, or German wages were garnished. Equal opportunity within Kaliningrad remained a mirage: Germans were only hired for unskilled labor and had few possibilities for ad-

²⁰ Fisch and Klemeševa, “Zum Schicksal,” 399; Hoppe, *Auf den Trümmern*, 31.

²¹ Ewert, “Tagebuch,” 20, 39-40 [1946].

²² GAKO R330.2.1.11-14, 3 July 1945; Maslov, “Prodovol’stvennyi vopros,” 47-52; GAKO R330.1.5.64; GAKO R330.15.86; GAKO R330.1.5.64.

²³ GARF A259.6.3923.106-8 no date, [between April and June 1946]; GAKO R192.7.2.21, 150, 163 [1946].

²⁴ GAKO R330.2.1.14, 3 July 1945.

vancement. Team leaders, supervisors, and department heads were invariably Soviet citizens; even learning Russian could not open doors to management roles, which meant that the majority Germans, with the exception of a few specialists (doctors and engineers, in particular), remained a blue-collar class in low-paying, unskilled jobs, while their Soviet coworkers had greater possibilities for advancement. Germans, unlike Soviet citizens, were also only promised benefits if they worked, but they were not guaranteed employment. Even with ongoing labor shortages, many Germans struggled, particularly in the winter of 1946-1947, to find paying jobs when budget shortages meant that employers did not have a way to pay them. Most German workers had to live with the constant threat of mistreatment on the job; a boss or coworker may decide to 'skim a little off the top' of their rations or salaries to keep for himself, or norms for productivity may be arbitrarily raised in order to deduct money from Germans' paychecks. And because Germans were already in a weakened state from food shortages, they often did not have the physical stamina to work at the rate they were expected to. For German women, employers' sexual advances were frequent occupational hazards, but often the only means to continue earning a ration card.

The records of the Train Car Factory reveal the conflicting tendencies guiding Soviet treatment of their German employees and the range of experiences these workers had in the socialist system. Among the list of employees for the main floor of the factory in early 1946, there were numerous young workers recently sent on assignment from Russia, and one German among them, Karl Günther, who was hired as a construction engineer at the respectable salary of 600 rubles per month, well in line with his Soviet colleagues. Although Günther was the only German listed working the factory floor, the Train Car Factory also had its own farm to grow crops and livestock to supply food to the factory, and a large number of the workers in this "Agricultural Division" were German. In the summer of 1946, a draft list was created to award bonuses to workers who had worked hard; of the 9 workers slated to be rewarded, four were German and five were Russian. The three veterinary workers, Ol'ga Alisova, M. I. Peterevnikova, and Efrema Iv. Nikifarova were each awarded 300 rubles bonus; the milkmaid P. P. Reviakina was given 100 rubles, as was the herder Egor K. Reviakin (presumably a relative). The four Germans, three milkmaid, Margarita Klein, Erika Shtubert [sic—Schubert?], and Gerta Esse were each promised 100 rubles, as was the herder Horst Witt. The original draft was handwritten in purple ink, but when the director of the factory, Gorbunov, signed the order in blue ink, however, he crossed the names of the Germans from the list before signing his name to make the order official. There are many possible motivations: perhaps Gorbunov had the original list prepared, but discovered that there were not enough funds available for everyone to receive a bonus. Perhaps he decided (or was warned) that awarding Germans could raise suspicion of "fascist" sympathies, even though officially Germans were eligible for bonuses. Or perhaps a book keeper or agricultural team leader had nominated the Germans based on their merit, but when the proposed bonuses reached the desk of the boss, he refused.²⁵ In any case, even in the case of labor, the supposed great equalizer of the socialist system, citizenship (which, in this case, equaled ethnicity) was the true determinant for the possibility for advancement.

Even so, as late as April 1947, the Head of the Oblast' Civilian Affairs Administration Borisov, when writing to Moscow about the "legal situation of the German population" still

²⁵ GAKO R192.7.3.26, 8 June 1946.

made official claims of equal pay for equal work.²⁶ German workers increasingly were under the impression that it was not Königsberg that they were rebuilding for their own benefit, but a foreign city. Farmers sowed German seeds to grow crops for Russian workers; construction workers built roads for Russians to drive (German) trucks and used German bricks to construct apartments for Russian families; electricians rewired German churches to become Russian dance halls and sports centers; teachers explained to former Hitler's Youth about the impending world revolution; and artists painted oversized posters of Stalin's head for state holidays now that the two most important days in the year were not Christmas and Easter, or Hitler's birthday and the anniversary of the Seizure of Power, but International Labor Day and the Anniversary of the October Revolution. (The one point of commonality was New Years, which to Germans may have seemed to be similar to Christmas). For each holiday it was necessary to start making preparations weeks in advance, and, as Deichelmann wrote in his diary, German workers did as much or more of the "voluntary" work of clearing the streets of rubble for the parade route as the Russians did. At the hospital, the German employees helped decorate the grounds; the central decoration was a giant wood-framed portrait of the great leader of the revolution. As the craftsmen hoisted the portrait above the entrance portal, they warned to passers-by, "Watch out, we're hanging Stalin here!"²⁷

In postwar memoirs and oral testimony, German Königsbergers created a trope of the hard-working, earnest German who attempted to overcome physical hardship in Kaliningrad through the hearty application of the Protestant ethic. But this approach turned out to be counter-productive, as judged by the West German scholarly commission reporting in the early 1950s:

The deportees often attempted, by exceeding the quota, to earn additional rations, as what they normally received was totally insufficient. When the quota of work was regularly exceeded, this amounted not only to a continued exploitation of the capacity to work, but also often led to the quota being raised. The Russian workers had already had their experience of this system of increasing production, and were hardly likely any longer to be driven on in this way, but many Germans fell victim to this cunning system.²⁸

It was through this "cunning system," according to the later German presentation, that German workers first learned that their chances for survival increased by working less, not more. Corrupted by the system, they lost their good-natured innocence in order not to be perpetually abused by it.

Working conditions in Kaliningrad were poor for everyone, however, not just for the Germans. New Soviet workers arriving to Kaliningrad also felt that they had entered a foreign land that still seemed to them, by contrast, much more like Germany than Russia. And

²⁶ GARF A259.6.3923.137, 7 April 1947.

²⁷ Deichelmann, *Ich sah*, 67 [15 November 1945].

²⁸ *Expulsion*, 67. This specific quote refers to those Germans who were deported to the mainland of the Soviet Union as laborers, but the situation also applied to German workers in Königsberg. Riemann also discusses the system of norms and the impossibility of achieving them: "It was generally impossible to achieve these "norms," especially considering how physically exhausted the people were. In order to earn the merest necessities of life the [work] was, therefore, done badly and superficially," 181.

with food shortages, pay for unskilled Soviet workers was often not enough to purchase food at market rates, and in any case, even in late 1948, paychecks at factories were often issued weeks late, leaving workers hungry in the meantime. With only rudimentary public transportation set up in the first years, many workers had to walk several kilometers to and from work.²⁹

* * *

Even though all Germans were required to register for employment, many decided by the fall of 1945 to go off the radar and make a living through other means. Sometimes working through unofficial channels was a means to maintain more autonomy or flexibility; sometimes it was an attempt to avoid the potential persecution of working visibly in the Soviet workplace. For some, however, earning money by other means became the only means to survive when it was impossible to maintain an official job. By mid-1946, as the doctor Hans Deichelmann estimated in his diary, perhaps only one-third of able-bodied Germans worked in professions that provided ration cards,³⁰ and with the influx of the Soviet civilian population, the number of Germans working official jobs declined by early 1947. An increasing number of Germans took up employment in unofficial sectors, by working as traders, craftsmen, and merchants in the market and as undocumented laborers and specialty service providers for families. Although no longer subject to the capriciousness of the *Nachalnik*, these Germans became completely dependent on the good will or gullibility of their Soviet employers and customers, and because they had no access to the government ration cards, the earnings they collected from Soviet civilians had to be enough to purchase everything they needed. These opportunities offered the greatest risks but also the greatest benefits. Those who succeeded at the art of making a living through unofficial channels could survive better than their fellow Germans who remained tangled in the web of the emergent Soviet bureaucracy.

Trading at the market was potentially the most lucrative means of making a living outside the state. The greatest advantage of working as a trader in the market was the freedom that it provided. Official employment demanded up to 12 hours of work per day, besides the chance of being detained on a moment's notice for street cleaning or compulsory corpse collection. Selling goods at the market, however, was unsupervised, and offered (ironically) the opportunity for 'unalienated' labor, which was not possible for most Germans working under direct Soviet supervision. Before Lucy Falk secured a teaching position at one of the schools set up for German children in 1946, she found herself unemployed and contemplating her options for acquiring her bread for the day. One woman she talked to encouraged her to try her hand at market trade. Despite the uncertainties of trading, the woman explained, "I'm free, not bound to any hours, and can live and spend my time how I want."³¹ With the combination of survival instincts and entrepreneurial skills, traders could hope to improve their situations without handing their fates over to the system.

Germans were not the only ones to work the black market; Soviet repatriates and new settlers joined them in increasing numbers as they arrived in Kaliningrad, particularly

²⁹ GANIKO 2.1.40.27-8, late 1948.

³⁰ Deichelman, *Ich sah*, 99-100 [16 May 1946].

³¹ Falk, *Ich blieb*, 83 [1 September 1946].

the non-working family members of factory workers. Each nationality had its own specialization at the market: for the sale of various household products, luxury items, and crafts, the sellers were almost exclusively German and the buyers almost exclusively Russian; for the sale of food the sellers were usually Russian (or Lithuanian), and the buyers almost exclusively German. Of the two groups, the Germans became the truly skilled entrepreneurs, turning trade into a successful means to make a living, and often outsmarting their Soviet customers in the process.³² In the first incarnations of the market, Germans sold goods they had managed to hoard from their former lives; when those ran out, they relied on acquiring and selling possessions of the recently deceased, and on the production and sale of handicrafts, specialty baked goods, and items promised to represent markers of Western culture. Hielscher's mother exited official employment in the late fall of 1945 and had success trading at the black market that sprung up on the corner of Barbarastrasse and Dreysestrasse near their home in the southern suburb of Ponarth, but she had to switch to selling the occasional pastry by the spring of 1946, when she had run out of other goods to sell.³³

Success in trade depended not only on the quality of the goods but on their proper presentation; the more knowledgeable one could appear (and sometimes, in the case of children sellers, the more pathetic or adorable), the better the luck at getting customers to pay full price. Soviet consumers seemed to be particularly fond of luxury items, which were sometimes regular goods reworked to look exotic (for a decent profit, Wieck rigged together old lamps to look like chandeliers). Bits of jewelry not already confiscated by the troops could be sold to eager customers who in turn hired moonlighting German dentists to cap their front teeth with the melted gold. German tailors and dressmakers also sold their services to Soviet clientele for considerable profits, as one dressmaker reported to Falk, since

Most Russian women come to Königsberg with only a carton full of possessions. Their greatest wish is to get pretty clothing. German women who understand something about dressmaking can find abundant work. In a few of the small state shops, there is here and there some colorful printed cotton fabric to buy. Those who are skilled and clever can make different things out of it, which the Russian woman will gladly buy on the black market.³⁴

Women, as a rule, succeeded in this respect more than men because to Soviet consumers they appeared more trustworthy and less devious. Having heard that "the Russians like to buy pictures," Falk resigned to sell an old valuable oil painting she had rescued from her brother's home. At the market, however, she first had no luck. All of the paintings were being bought by Russian customers except for hers, which they called "Plocho!" and "Nicht gutt, alt!" A more experienced merchant explained to her that Russians preferred newer, more cheerful paintings; "they don't want it any other way, paint more sunshine in it." With some disappointment, Falk painted in yellow sunbeams, a red hull for the ship, and bright highlights on the dark water. In the end, she was pleased with her work, even though her roommates "had to laugh." Her efforts proved successful: the painting found a buyer the next day. The man was stunned that she asked for only a loaf of bread as payment.³⁵

³² Deichelmann, *Ich sah*, 74 [21 December 1945].

³³ Hielscher, *Als Ostpreußin*, 112.

³⁴ Falk, *Ich blieb*, 88 [1 September 1946].

³⁵ Falk, *Ich blieb*, 62-3 [2 March 1946].

After the first few months, men in the marketplace suffered a greater risk of having their wares confiscated, and so men often acquired and produced goods for sale, and sent their wives, mothers, or children to act as the merchants. Children became the most “business savvy,” because they could appeal to what many Germans considered to be the Russians’ almost preternatural fondness for them (a quality that made Russians seem at once both more humane and more primitive).³⁶ Their most lucrative wares were cigarettes, which a smart child sold one at a time, sometimes along with matches. Calling out “Papürossi, ßigarettü!” they appealed to the impulses of the Soviet customers passing by, who would buy one and smoke it on the spot. In that way, children usually earned more in a day than their mothers selling handicrafts.³⁷ Because the cigarette trade had become so lucrative, many mothers decided to keep their children out of school: they could make more money selling cigarettes than they could from collecting the ration card promised to registered school children. “I gotta have my Fritz for making money,” one woman explained in rough East Prussian dialect when the German school teacher Lucy Falk tried to register the young boy for class. “What am I gonna do when he doesn’t earn anything? He does the cigarette trade. [School] don’t help him none.”³⁸

Market trading, though offering the greatest possibility of reward, held many dangers for buyers and sellers of both nationalities. Soviet citizens who could not match their German counterparts in business allegedly posed as police officials, waving some document in Cyrillic and explaining that all of the seller’s goods would be immediately confiscated if an exorbitant fine were not paid immediately. A German seller could get duped by a Russian customer who might take the product with the promise of payment “saftra.” Deichmann explained in his diary that “they tell us this word is supposed to mean ‘tomorrow,’ but the seller usually has every reason to translate this word as ‘never.’”³⁹ One could also buy defective products, such as wet sugar, stale flour, or a smaller amount than what was promised during price negotiations. In the rare event that a German purchased meat, it was hard to be certain that one was not eating a recently disappeared colleague; human flesh was sold among other types of meat—beef, cats, and dogs—since it remained in ample supply when the others became scarce.⁴⁰

The market operated for the first several years after the war, but from as early as the fall of 1946, the oblast’ administration made the first efforts to constrict market trade and

³⁶ Descriptions of the Russians’ delight in children appears frequently in diaries written during the occupation in East Prussia and in the Soviet Occupation Zone. See, for example, Atina Grossman, “Liberators,” 60. Grossman notes how accounts of the Russians’ fondness for small children was a ubiquitous feature in reports and diaries written by women in occupied Berlin: “Invariably there was mention of Russians’ pleasure in small children and their tenderness toward babies (in explicit contrast to the stories of the Red Army soldiers told of German behavior in the East). But this positive characteristic was, of course, only another aspect of their underdevelopment.”

³⁷ Falk, *Ich blieb*, 83 [early June to 12 August 1946]. On the dangers facing men at the market: Deichmann, *Ich sah*, 101 [17 May 1946].

³⁸ Falk, *Ich blieb*, 93 [10 October 1946]. Falk recorded the woman’s part of the conversation in East Prussian dialect, as she sometimes did (more or less affectionately) when recounting certain conversations with old and simple East Prussian locals: “Ick bruk mien Fritz tom Geldverdene. Wat soll ick moake, wenn he nuscht verdient? He moat Zigarett verkeepe, da helpt em garnuscht.”

³⁹ Deichmann, *Ich sah*, 38 [30 May 1945].

⁴⁰ GARF 9401.2.136.185-6, 6 May 1946.

assert centralized state control over distribution. In mid-September 1946, the head of the Oblast' Civilian Affairs Administration Borisov issued an order prohibiting private trade, in order to bring Kaliningrad in line with Soviet regulations dating from 1936. The order forbade any intermediary trade, with the goal of controlling prices by weeding out middlemen. Any private or cottage industry production was prohibited, and the right to produce and sell food—such as bread, pastries, desserts, dairy products, sausages, fruit and vegetables, snacks, coffee, non-alcoholic drinks (among others)—from raw materials would be allowed only with the proper registration.⁴¹ The order was not entirely successful; two months later, in late November 1946, Borisov again issued an order, this time specifically prohibiting the sale of homemade goods, and threatening a 100-ruble penalty and up to twenty-days of forced labor.⁴² Efforts to limit market trade continued, and over the course of 1947-1948, more arrests and fines were made against both Germans and Soviet citizens for trading on the market. An unfortunate Frau Pflaumbaum, for example, was reportedly sentenced to seven years of hard labor for dealing in hand-knit stockings.⁴³ The threat of punishment was real, but its execution inconsistent, however, and the markets continued to operate through the end of the decade. Informal market trade for food and goods continued after the Germans left Kaliningrad, but gradually declined by the early 1950s, when the oblast' administration's attempts to provide food to the population through official channels—grocery stores, cafeterias, and officially-sanctioned market trade—coincided with the final crackdown on unregistered private trade.

For those German civilians not adventurous enough to risk the dangers of trading on the market, specialty services could be provided for Russians inside their homes. In a complete reversal of wartime roles, German women served as housekeepers and servants for Soviet families, tidying their apartments, washing laundry, chopping wood, and serving meals. They usually received no pay, but the work provided them with a full day's worth of home-cooked food. The terms were sometimes hardly bearable—such as when the master of the house expected the woman to play “housewife” as compensation for his generosity.⁴⁴

In many cases, however, the home workers recalled some positive interactions with their hosts. The opportunity provided a glimpse into the humanity of their Russian employers and allowed them to differentiate individual people from the homogenous stereotype of “*der Russe*.” Ewert, who had little success with official employment, developed good relations with a few Russian families, who arranged for her to sell goods for them on the black market—they did not want to do it themselves, out of a desire to protect their reputations as upstanding communists. One Russian general, in particular, treated her well, and they even made each other laugh on occasion—sometimes on purpose, sometimes by accident.

I often had to tell him about our films and theaters. Then he told me about a Russian film. It was a tragedy piece. But in his German it sounded so funny that I was often on the edge of laughter. But for God's sakes I couldn't laugh because it was something sad. He said among other things: “There sit the

⁴¹ GAKO R298.1.7.26 18 September 1946.

⁴² GAKO R298.1.10.9, 26 November 1946.

⁴³ Balzer, “Eyewitness Report,” 194.

⁴⁴ Ewert, “Tagebuch,” 31, 33 [1946].

woman on the bench and cries and cries" [*Da sitzt das Frau auf das Bank und weint und weint*]. I was glad when the sad film was over.⁴⁵

Ewert's diary is full of anger and sadness over the hunger and oppression she suffered in Kaliningrad, but moments such as these reveal the persistence of individual human interaction that allowed some Soviets and Germans to see each other as individuals.

A universal concern for Soviet families seemed to be the acquisition of culture, through objects or through education, and entrepreneurial Germans could sell their access to Western culture, education, and fashion. In her diary, Falk expressed a continual interest in (and approval of) the emphasis Russians put on education and their "striving for 'Kultura.'" ⁴⁶ German women offered valuable services as *Kulturträger* for Russian children, teaching them foreign languages, music, and art. Besides working as a masseuse, a radio announcer for the German news hour on the Kaliningrad radio, and a teacher in the Non-Russian Middle School for German Children, Falk taught piano lessons for Soviet children. One day, Falk's brilliant eight-year-old piano student Pole Goldmann, having already beautifully mastered "technique Strauss Waltz" approached her, tears falling into her handkerchief and sobbing, "Pole nix kultura?" ["Pole no culture?"]. Falk, astounded, assured her that she certainly had *Kultur*, and complimented her until she stopped crying. Later, she relayed the story to her supervisor at the Non-Russian Middle School for German Children, whom she called Frau Cpewak. "Is it not strange that an eight-year-old girl asks such a question? No German child would ask whether or not it was cultured," asked Falk. Cpewak replied that each group was most concerned with what it lacked, "the Russians with culture, the Germans with food." Falk agreed that she was certainly right about the Germans.⁴⁷ (Adding another layer to Falk's cultural exchange is the fact that both Cpewak (Spivak) and Goldmann (Goldman) were common surnames for Soviet Jews, although in her diary, Falk appeared not to have noticed.)

The Germans seemed to offer a challenge: in many ways, they displayed more of the outward signs of "culture" that Soviet people were told to aspire to. New settlers often remarked on the tidiness of Germans, who washed their clothes even when they had nothing to eat. Anna Ryzhova remembered her astonishment how in the face of starvation, one German woman fastidiously washed the clothes of her children every three days, and because they had only one outfit, the children put the wet clothes back on to dry. On the other hand, Germans seemed obsessed with food and material possessions, which seemed to contradict loftier Soviet understandings of "culture" and "civilization" beyond simple hygiene. It was at the market, especially, where many new settlers encountered the remaining material traces of the former civilization. "The quality of life in East Prussia was noticeably higher than ours," remembered Irina Iosifovna Lukashevich. "In front of the school in [the town of] Cranz, there was a market, and I used to go there as if going to a museum: silver, dishes, rugs... I saw crystal for the first time here. Often the Germans sold these things for a pittance. For example, a crystal vase went for a total of 3 rubles."⁴⁸

Those Königsbergers who could not style themselves as specialists in crafts or in *Kultur* had to become specialists in another sense—masters of cheating, swindling, and theft.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 8, 38 [1946].

⁴⁶ Falk, *Ich blieb*, 113 [20 April 1947].

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 97 [17 November 1946], 99 [20 November 1946].

⁴⁸ Galtsova and Kostiashev, eds., *Vostochnaia Prussia*, 83.

Germans found that survival was no longer possible through hard work and naïve honesty alone; the system seemed prejudiced against all its citizens in general and the German people in particular. As Deichelmann reported, the Germans seemed convinced that the impenetrable world of Soviet bureaucracy was designed to care for them on paper (and report its successes back to Moscow) but in reality deny them any opportunities to survive the ordeal.⁴⁹ Swindling and theft—making do with what the system provided in a system that provided very little—became the new common denominators in the world where shortages were the only guarantee.

After their self-reported gullibility in the first days of the occupation (the days of easily stolen wristwatches), most Germans learned how to minimize their chances of becoming victims and maximize their resources by any means possible. Some Germans had begun to style themselves as thieves even before the end of the siege as Nazi authority broke down, lifting food and supplies to get by. By the war's end, these shoplifters, burglars, and thieves had already developed the useful skills necessary for living in post-apocalyptic Königsberg, and held an advantage over their more scrupulous colleagues who still struggled to maintain any old sense of East Prussian decency.⁵⁰ Every space offered opportunities for augmenting one's situation, from the market and the workplace to Russian homes. At the market, for example, Wieck's mother developed a useful tactic: she purchased loaves of bread for 100 rubles, but resold them by the slice at an increased price (for both Russian and German customers).⁵¹ One German nurse who had rubles stolen from her while at the market used the incident to justify stealing even more rubles from another passerby, and a particularly cunning and courageous market trader supposedly sold a piece of furniture to two Russians at once—while the first one left to fetch his truck, she collected payment from the second one, and then disappeared while the two men started an argument about who was entitled to the goods.⁵² But it was at the workplace, Deichelmann lamented, that

Dishonesty and theft takes on the crudest forms. Where clothes, beds, underwear lay unsupervised one moment, they are all gone the next. Nurses steal patients' things in their own station; building personnel steal the coal from the doctors' quarters; craftsmen steal tools; the kitchen staff, the meals; almost everyone steals. When they can, patients steal back what the hospital has stolen. The need is too great. The only ones who don't steal are those who are already too weak.⁵³

Deichelmann never noted whether he, too, participated in this crudest form of survival.

⁴⁹ Deichelmann, *Ich sah*, 125; 23 October 1946. See also Brodersen, "Enttäuschte Hoffnungen, 1. Teil," 123. Brodersen also describes the dichotomy between presentation and reality, noting how representatives from Moscow, upon arriving to Kaliningrad for the first time, were appalled to discover how much presentation diverged from reality, in regards to the status of rebuilding efforts, and the care for the Soviet and German populations.

⁵⁰ Wieck, *A Childhood*, 86.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 179.

⁵² Deichelmann, *Ich sah*, 127 [6 November 1946].

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 68 [17 November 1945].

Many diarists and memoirists, like Deichelmann, were appalled by the ease with which most Germans adopted a looser moral code in order to make ends meet. The socialist system, they figured, seemed to them to encourage theft, and the world of crime in Soviet Kaliningrad seemed not to be an unfortunate perversion of not-yet-realized socialism, but its ultimate realization. And if being Soviet meant stealing, underhand dealings, unofficial networking, swindling, and general dishonesty, then Germans had eagerly transformed themselves into stellar new Soviet men and women. To Pollmann's dismay,

The German people changed; the need [...] turned relatives against one another and destroyed trusted friendships, envy and distrust grew within one's own family. The example of the Russian riff-raff (*Gesindels*), who steal everything they can rip off (*raffen*) under the principle of "zappzerapp" and strip the people naked for the sake of a few rags, gradually became the course of action among the Germans as well. All of life became agony.⁵⁴

But then again, perhaps this development was not caused as much by communism as by the obstinate primitiveness in the character of the Russian people—something that even communism could not tame.

To have stayed among the Russians would have been the same as living a life under criminals. The children would have doubtlessly gone down this path, callous and compassionless in the face of strange sorrows, without intellectual instruction, without familiar connections. [...] Six-year-old boys stood smoking at the markets, stumbled through the streets drunk, just as the Russian children did.

This primitiveness was communicable, as Pollmann explained, and so "the Russian took pleasure in destroying the German youth."⁵⁵ The Civilian Affairs Administration in Kaliningrad took no such pleasure, however, and even attempted to rein in the wild German youth by prohibiting children in November 1946 from roaming the streets in crowds, from engaging in underage employment, market training, shoe shining, ticket scalping, street performances and acrobatics, and other money-making opportunities. Children were also prohibited from unruly gathering and from buying tobacco or alcohol under the age of 16. Any adults who allowed children to break the rules would be fined up to 100 rubles or 30 days of community service labor.⁵⁶

Some, such as Wieck, celebrated the advantages of this apparent destruction of the German youth. Having been issued an official overalls for his job as an electrician, Wieck used his uniform and specialist credentials to trespass in Russian homes; as a teenage boy, the danger and excitement of burglary appealed to him as much as the opportunity to abscond with a sack of potatoes to take home to his family.⁵⁷ For Wieck, who was half-Jewish and had been persecuted by the Nazis and his fellow Königsbergers during the war, Germans never became the target. The divide between "us" and "them" (with the knowledge that it was acceptable, even commendable to steal from "them") soon became clear: "us" now meant Germans, and "them" meant the Russians (for other thieves desperate to sur-

⁵⁴ Pollmann, "Königsberg," 61.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 62-3.

⁵⁶ GAKO R298.1.10.1, 26 November 1946.

⁵⁷ Wieck, *A Childhood*, 174.

vive, however, national loyalty meant very little). In one particularly harrowing episode, Wieck was intercepted by a “Jewish-looking lieutenant” while trying to break into a Russian apartment. He was called into interrogation and beaten by the lieutenant, who then proceeded to strip him. Hoping to provoke some understanding from his interrogator,

I pull down my pants so that the sign of our commonality might soothe his hostility. But it has the opposite effect. He grabs my hair and bangs my head against the wall until my knees, no longer able to support me, give way and I crumple to the floor [...] It’s obvious the military policeman doesn’t care for this officer. Maybe he’s anti-Semitic, maybe he doesn’t care for all the theatrics, and maybe the fact that not one item of stolen goods is presented or found is the deciding factor in his attitude. [...] I understand only fragments of what he’s saying: “I’ll let you go this time, but make sure you never cross the path of this officer again or I’m in trouble too.”⁵⁸

With the help of a sympathetic (and non-Jewish) military official, Wieck could continue his campaign against the material advantages of the Soviet populace. But there were other matters to consider, as well: “Obviously,” he explained in retrospect, he never stole from Russians living in his apartment building, “[n]ot only on moral grounds, but also not to jeopardize the enormous advantage of living where we were secure against the winter.”⁵⁹ But of course, that “enormous advantage” was jeopardized every time he stole something from a Russian; only through good fortune did he manage to live a life of crime for three years (and survive to become a violinist in the Stuttgart Symphony Orchestra).

* * *

For many, despite the ongoing hardship, old animosities gave way to friendlier interactions that pointed the way toward gradual integration. Russian soldiers and workers danced with German girls and fell in love (Wieck played the violin for a dance orchestra in an officer’s club where Ivanov danced with German girls),⁶⁰ German and Russian soccer teams competed at the old Nazi stadium (at least until the Civilian Affairs Administration ended the games in the summer of 1946), and some Germans had even learned to “speak Bolshevik,” that is, speak and act as if they actually believed. Many Germans in their diaries and later memoirs noted the stark contrast between the inhumanity of the system and the kindness—albeit unpredictable—of individuals. Wieck remembered how in the summer of 1945 “a kind-hearted compassionate Russian” wanted to help out German workers and gave each one a slice of cheese with honey. “That was such a rare occurrence that I could not even imagine where he had gotten it,” Wieck remembered. (But the kind gesture had its own consequence, and Wieck, already ill with infection later threw up from the food and became even sicker.)⁶¹

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 192-3.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Wieck, *Zeugnis*, 398. Ivanov and Wieck met in 1992 when Wieck returned to Kaliningrad for the first time; Ivanov recalled seeing the young German boy playing the violin.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

As was the case the Allied Zones of Occupation, one of the best means for survival for a young German woman was to ally herself with a soldier. The first encounters in the spring of 1945 were forced, and a number of those encounters resulted in pregnancy. But because of malnourishment, few of those pregnancies came to term. For those that did, the babies that were born in the winter of 1945-1946 usually died soon thereafter because the mothers could not produce milk to feed them.⁶²

After the first months of the occupation, most German women still found themselves vulnerable to sexual coercion, although the encounters were more often presented by the pursuers as romantic overtures (whether or not the resulting sex act was consensual). Yet after the first months, many German women, in an attempt to better their chances of survival, found themselves Russian boyfriends. And despite official bans against cohabitation, many soldiers found themselves live-in girlfriends. Sometimes the arrangement was purely business, the exchange of sex for food and protection. Wieck recalled how the mother of one girl had "wisely allied herself with a Russian officer," thereby securing enough food for both her and her daughter to survive, but despite her mother's action to protect her daughter, the memory of her mother's prostitution haunted the girl for the rest of her life.⁶³ In other cases, real romance blossomed between former enemies.⁶⁴ German women who became the girlfriends of Russian soldiers got more to eat, and in some cases gave birth to mixed families of German-Russian (or even German-Jewish) children. In most cases, opportunism and romance were so intertwined that it became increasingly difficult to distinguish the two.

The memoir of Käthe Hielscher (nee Urban), written in the 1970s and published in 1998, explores some of the conflicting feelings that many German women had about seeking protection from Russian men. One of the recurring themes of Hielscher's memoir is the tension between doing what is necessary to survive and maintaining what she often refers to as "national pride" (*Nationalstolz*). Hielscher, who was 15 in 1945, was in the Hitler Youth and was the child of Hitler supporters; her father was a member of the SA in 1933 and sported a "little Schnauzer under the nose" (the Hitler moustache) after 1935. Despite her family's support for Hitler (her aunt believed in the victory as Soviet troops surrounded the city), she does not dwell on the crimes of National Socialism, and mentions only once that there had been rumors during the war about crimes by the SS and concentration camps. Like many other East Prussian *Heimat* memoirs and stories of postwar victimization in Kaliningrad, Hielscher tells the story of one young girl's innocence and naiveté, and the undeserved punishment she suffered as a 15-year-old girl in 1945.

Hielscher had numerous encounters with Russian men between 1945 and 1948, almost all of those encounters while at work. She was raped at least twice, the first time in the summer of 1945, when a Russian man surprised her on the street from behind, drew her aside, and whispered "I you love" [*Ich dich lieben*]. Soon thereafter, a Soviet officer attempted to rape her, but she was spared by a translator who claimed that she belonged to him. The translator then demanded sex with her as repayment. Afterwards, he rewarded her with a pudding packet and a piece of sausage. In Hielscher's depiction, Russian men are either aggressors or protectors; the aggressors are men who declare their love forcefully

⁶² Hielscher, *Als Ostpreußin*, 118.

⁶³ Wieck, *A Childhood*, 162.

⁶⁴ Kostishov, "Russen und Deutsche," 169-70.

and expect sex in exchange for gifts of food; protectors are the men who act as father figures and deflect the advances of the aggressors. In the internment camp in the spring of 1945, Hielscher survived because of the kindness of a civilian Russian who got her a job in the kitchen. He whispered love words to her (in Polish or Russian, she was not sure), and attempted to woo her, until she convinced him that she was too young. He had a 15-year-old daughter himself, and agreed instead for “good, friendship!” and treated her like his own daughter, giving her food and protecting her against sexual advances until she was released from the camp.⁶⁵ In 1947, by contrast, a Polish translator took a fancy to her, sneaking food into her backpack (bread, preserves, *Wehrmacht* chocolates), and finally declaring his love. She rejected him, and he pushed her to the ground. The next day he became cruel and forced her to work harder at the job while the Russian workers laughed, dragged her away, and undressed her. She was saved (presumably—Hielscher obscures the outcome) at the last minute by another Russian boss who then chastised the soldiers and the Polish translator. The other German women criticized Hielscher, however, by telling her that she was being a fool to put all of the women in danger: if she continued to anger her suitor, he could find a way to ship the entire work crew to Siberia.

‘Why take the risk? We will leave Königsberg and go back to the Reich soon. Why are you being like this? Ultimately, you’re just young and so is he. He is actually a good looking guy. Just go through with it. It would be much better than to put us all in danger!’ These women put terrible pressure on me. I underwent a long, hard internal battle. The idea that I could be given over to the brutal Russian soldiers finally led me to the decision to relent to the Pole.⁶⁶

Hielscher consented to a date, and the Pole again declared his love and intention to take her home to his big farmhouse in Poland. He kissed her, and she felt embarrassed that someone will see. When he offered her a glass of vodka, she claims to have passed out immediately. Hielscher implies that he raped her while she was unconscious: she woke up to find herself lying horizontally, her dress smudged with dirt. It was only due to the kind intervention of her Russian boss that the Pole was transferred away, saving her from his proposal of marriage.⁶⁷

Hielscher claims never to have consented to sex; the frequent gifts of food were snuck into her backpack when she was not looking, and she was expected to reciprocate. Thirty years later, though, Hielscher writes that she never did, unselfconsciously declaring that she refused out of “national pride” as a German. Other German women, however, seemed not to feel such loyalty to the German nation. Hielscher described unsympathetically (and with only a modicum of self-reflection when writing in the 1970s), the tearful farewells at the Kaliningrad train station in March 1948.

Tragic scenes played out before everyone’s eyes. German girls said goodbye to Russian officers, to their lovers. They hang crying on their men, begging them on their knees to be allowed to stay with them. A law prohibited the

⁶⁵ Hielscher, *Als Ostpreußin*, 78-82.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 152.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 155-7.

marriage of a German woman to a Russian man. I can't understand any of it. Do the German women have no national pride?⁶⁸

It was out of this same sense of "national pride" that Hielscher refused to learn Russian in over three years of cohabitation ("the antipathy to this bitter languages is far too great"). She says nothing about her own process of coming to terms with National Socialism, claiming that she was too young at the time to have an opinion, but what remained for her, even decades later, was the idea that the nation is a meaningful unit and that breeding and commitment should be to one's own nation, to the point that she expected her fellow Germans to act, by refusing to adapt, in opposition to their own self-preservation and in opposition even to genuine romance.⁶⁹

At the same time, Hielscher's memoir is more complex than a formulaic West German memoir: unlike other diaries and memoirs written before 1990, Hielscher records her positive interactions, and even describes on multiple occasions the first feelings of protolust (never overtly sexual) for her protectors. One civilian who supervised her concrete-mixing brigade had been a student in Moscow; Konstantin Irilowitch caused her to feel "an unfamiliar warm feeling" through her body when their eyes met; the fact that he, like her, suffered with head lice, made her feel less embarrassed about her own condition. But Hielscher presents these encounters as school girl joys, and desires these men precisely because they did not pursue her. With one of her protectors, there was "an unspoken taboo agreement" about their attraction, but Hielscher was spared from her own desire when the man found love in a Russian woman (also named Katia).

So I was not quite sure whether I wanted this agreement [*Abkommen*] at all. Something moves in me when I see Moppel. At night I dream or wish to be allowed to be completely alone with him. Unfortunately, or thankfully, Katja knew not to let that happen.⁷⁰

With all of Hielscher's conflicting feelings about love, opportunism, and loyalty to one's own kind, she found that for most Germans, nationality no longer meant much in a time of hardship. Hielscher's grandmother died of hunger even though the rest of the family shared their rations with her, and when food became scarcer in 1946, the family agreed that everyone would fend for himself. Her uncle died of hunger soon thereafter, and the aunt, no longer possessing the strength to bury him, simply dragged him to the cellar and notified the corpse collection brigade. At the end of the memoir, she recalls how an epidemic broke out during the week-long train ride to Germany, leading everyone once again, despite professions of solidarity, to fend for himself.

The old woman on our platform is carried out. None of the Germans support her and everyone looks away. The word fellowship [*Kameradschaft*] no longer exists. It was only the person who thinks of himself and thought about the past who survived.

For all of Hielscher's national pride, Germanness meant very little in practice.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Ibid., 165-6.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 145.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 116, 157.

⁷¹ Ibid., 114, 170.

For those for whom national pride meant very little, love was also not enough to overcome all obstacles. Although many Soviet officials, both in the military and the civilian government, had open relationships with German women after the end of the war eased security concerns, those relationships later became political liabilities. In any case, most of these relationships, whether they were opportunistic or genuinely romantic, did not last after the departure of the Germans, no matter what the intention of the lovers. In the case of mixed families, with few exceptions, the children were sent to Germany with their mothers, never to see their fathers again.⁷² In rare cases, Soviet lovers were able to keep their girlfriends in Kaliningrad when they had connections to forge the proper paperwork: more than a few German women turned out to be Lithuanian citizens who had lost their documents.⁷³

But it was not only Russians and Germans falling in love and breaking taboos in Kaliningrad; far from home, Soviet settlers sent on assignment or demobilized in Königsberg after the war often left behind other families that they had not seen since the start of the war in search of new romance with other Soviet citizens. In one poignant example, a woman wrote to a railway manager in Kaliningrad, requesting that her husband be sent home for a few days to settle their affairs. She had heard rumors that he'd remarried in Kaliningrad, leaving her stranded with their two children. (The boss agreed to send the estranged husband home.)⁷⁴

* * *

In many ways, living and working conditions for Kaliningrad's Germans began to improve by the summer of 1947. Wages began to arrive on time, and workers could purchase enough food in the shops to feed themselves and their families. A number of Germans were selected to undergo Soviet vocational training, in order to become specialists in construction trades, and their wages increased so that they could buy not only food but also consumer goods in Kaliningrad's newly-opened shops. By the summer of 1947, however, other Germans found themselves competing with new Soviet settlers for their jobs, and with no guarantee of employment, found themselves suddenly out of work. The Germans' status in Kaliningrad remained unclear, and while conditions remained harsh, legal ambiguities still left many Germans falling through the cracks of socialist society.

⁷² Kostiashev, "Russen und Deutsche," 169-170.

⁷³ Per Brodersen, "Am Weitesten im Westen: Werden und Sein in einer sowjetischer Stadt, 1945-1971," (Ph.D. diss., Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf, 2005), 109.

⁷⁴ GANIKO 2005.1.3.3, 8 November 1946.

An Antifascist Education

Life was difficult for Kaliningrad's Germans: tens of thousands were executed, sent into forced labor, or died from starvation and epidemic disease. While conditions were generally difficult everywhere after the war, several factors came together to create particular hardship for the German civilian population in postwar Königsberg: the timing of the destruction, the protracted wartime occupation, the isolation from relief aid, and the prolonged ambiguity about the political fate of the region. During the first months of the occupation in the spring of 1945, the Red Army's rhetoric toward the German population had been one of conquest, which followed its wartime depiction of the Germans as "fascist beasts," universally evil and subhuman. The treatment of the German population was harsh, not only because of the exigencies of the wartime occupation but because of the desire for retribution by Red Army soldiers, eager to repay the Germans for unleashing the war. Although "sacred revenge" was understood to be an unspoken permission for soldiers to inflict violence on German civilians, official discourse had already shifted by the last month of the war: while celebrating Great Russian virtue and heroism, the emphasis moved away from punishment and revenge back to antifascism, world socialism, and liberation.

What would that mean for Königsberg's Germans? The answer was unclear in the spring of 1945, just as the fate of the entire region remained undetermined. In 1945, there were no plans to expel the Germans, even after the incorporation of the territory into the Soviet Union and the formation of Kaliningrad Oblast. The German population remained in legal limbo—not allowed to leave, but not yet allowed to fully integrate. At the time, Moscow seemed to take little interest in the problem (as the historian Per Brodersen points out, among Kremlin officials, there was widespread confusion about where and what "Kaliningrad" was, let alone who lived there).¹ According to Soviet precedent, there were many possible options for dealing with a population after political change. Russia's own native German population had been forcibly resettled to Central Asia during the war in order to minimize the threat of their political unreliability. The populations of the nearby Baltic re-

¹ Brodersen, "Am Weitesten," 43-4; Hoppe, *Auf den Trummern*, 34f. Both Brodersen and Hoppe point out that Moscow took little interest in Kaliningrad in the first postwar years, and many officials were not sure where it was located. Brodersen points out that in 1947, a hand-drawn map of Kaliningrad Oblast' for RSFSR Automobile Transport showed Kaliningrad bordering Latvia.

publics—Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia—had been filtered in the first months of the re-annexation after the *Wehrmacht's* retreat. Those who survived the purges were determined to have been liberated by the Red Army and—under close guidance of local antifascists and strong oversight by Moscow—was declared to be active participants in the building of socialism. There was also the option of expelling the Germans entirely, as had been the case for other areas in Eastern Europe. Germans sent westward to the Allied Zones of Occupation were forcibly uprooted from their homes, first through grassroots expulsions in the summer of 1945, and then through controlled resettlement in accordance with the Potsdam agreements.² Yet another option was to use the labor of Königsberg's Germans as a short-term retribution payment to rebuild the region to its full economic capacity, and then to expel them once their labor was no longer needed.

Yet in 1945, there were still no plans to either expel or integrate the remaining German civilians, no clear guidelines about how to treat them, and no consensus about what their future role would be in Soviet society. In some ways, the Germans continued to experience wartime treatment: spontaneous violence and theft, forced labor, and poor living conditions. Yet rather than being a conscious continuation of wartime “sacred revenge,” the unequal treatment that the German civilians received can be seen as the result of the ongoing ambiguity about their status, rather than the result of a calculated policy, in what the historian Ruth Kibelka has referred to as a “general decision-making vacuum.”³ The local administration did not have the autonomy of action to determine the legal status of the German population, and the central authorities did not seem to have made up their minds.

Over the course of three and a half years, various policies were implemented, each in response to conditions on the ground and each with a different understanding of what role Königsberg's Germans were to play. Most of the administrators were young and inexperienced, having been inducted into the party because of their bravery in battle, not their dedicated study of Marxist theory. They brought with them an intuitive understanding of communism that combined the old goals of socialist internationalism (“workers of the world, unite”) with new currents of nationalism (the victory of the Great Russian people over the German fascists). Tensions between these two approaches led to inconsistent practices in Kaliningrad, reflecting two tendencies in Soviet socialism. The “nationalist” tendency, which cast Kaliningrad's Germans as irredeemably antagonistic by virtue of being German, coexisted with a larger “internationalist tendency” in Soviet socialism, based on the still powerful motivating principle that the world revolution could be brought to all peoples.

Within the internationalist rhetoric, it was understood, however, that Königsberg's German population had very recently been the enemy and would need to be shown the error of their ways. But there was no clear program for doing that in 1945. Anti-fascist re-education had been set up for German soldiers in Soviet POW camps during the war, but those methods were designed for the closed environment of the camp, with the purpose of training anti-fascists in order to form new resistance against Hitler, and could not be trans-

² Norman Naimark, *Fires of Hatred: Ethnic-Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2002); Alfred de Zayas, *Fifty Theses on the Expulsion of the Germans from Central and Eastern Europe, 1944-1948* (Arlington, Virginia: Kern C. Schemm and Friends, 2012); R. M. Douglas, *Orderly and Humane: The Expulsion of the Germans after the Second World War* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2012).

³ Kibelka, *Ostpreußens Schicksalsjahre*, 157.

ferred directly to postwar conditions. Likewise, the separation of the provisional military administration from the affairs and organizations of the Allied Zones of Occupation meant that the methods developed in Berlin had no direct institutional means of spreading to Königsberg.

The most basic policy in Königsberg, and the one most consistently implemented, was excision—immediate de-Nazification by way of arresting and removing those Germans who were deemed especially irreparably contaminated. During the initial filtrations, NKVD interrogations focused on determining who among the German civilian population had been *active* fascists—ideological Nazis, high-level officials, and members of party organizations. By late May 1945, tens of thousands of East Prussian Germans were revealed to have been double agents, party activists, werewolves, saboteurs, and class enemies. Many of them were deported to Siberia or executed.⁴ But the question remained: what to do with those German civilians who could not be so easily identified as “active fascists”? After their interrogation, they were released and allowed to return to Königsberg. While not declared “innocent” of fascism—even Jews, as in the case of Michael Wieck, and card-carrying communists were deemed complicit and untrustworthy by virtue of their survival—those who remained were considered capable of being rehabilitated through active penance and good example, at least implicitly. Yet questions remained about how they would be treated, how and whether the Soviet government would oversee their ideological education, and what role they would play in the building of socialism. Were Königsberg’s last Germans ever to become Kaliningrad’s first communists, or were they to remain aliens in their former homes as second-class citizens and guest workers? Would the experience of living in a socialist society gradually demonstrate the virtues of equality based on class liberation? And how would it be possible to *Gauge* success? That is, how would it be possible to tell that the Germans had truly been converted?

The provisional military administration made few efforts beyond direct de-Nazification, but many of the civilian government’s efforts focused on bringing the German population into the system. The first step was to incorporate German workers employed in various industries and the city government into standard budgets and accounting and re-register the population in order to make sure that official employers were documenting and paying their German employees. The second step was to provide social welfare. The provisional military administration had set up no organizations to provide services, especially when it was struggling to provide enough food even for those who could work. A February 1946 report by the heads of the Special Military District and Provisional Administration for Civilian Affairs identified the problems—an increasing number of German orphans, no schools for German children, and no care for the elderly—and emphasized the urgency with which they should be solved. Various local agencies made requests to Moscow asking for permission and funding to set up orphanages, schools, and hospitals. By the fall of 1946, the disorganized German hospitals (operating continuously since the siege, although often with no wages for the staff or food for the patients) were finally incorporated into the Oblast’ Health Department; numerous German orphanages were set up in Kaliningrad and surrounding towns and integrated into the standard orphanage budget along with new orphanages for Soviet children (mostly war orphans who had come under the care of the Red

⁴ GARF 9401.2.95.18-9, 13 April 1945; GARF 9401.2.95.39-43, 13 April 1945; GARF 9401.2.93.31, 15 May 1945; Luschnat, *Die Lage*, 42; Wilhelm Starlinger, *Grenzen*, 38.

Army during the war); the first small nursing homes were set up for the elderly; and an extensive network of schools was set up for German children, according to the guidelines for “non-Russian schools” for minority nationalities living in the RSFSR.⁵

Orphanages and schools, which were shown special attention by the state, continued to grow and develop. German children were seen as the least complicit in the crimes of fascism, while also being both the most vulnerable to contamination by the lingering fascism of their parents and the most open to socialist education. The provisional military administration had called for three orphanages to be set up in Königsberg to house up to 750 German children, but the civilian government ultimately created a much more extensive network of 18 orphanages across the oblast', caring for 2,545 children by the end of 1946 and 3,300 children by May 1947. These orphanages were included in the Soviet budget and were better supplied than many other organizations, with dedicated funds to pay staff, employ medical personnel, and outfit each building with furniture and supplies.⁶ In late 1946, a report to the RSFSR Ministry of Municipal Services noted that there were a number of children who were “emaciated and ill,” but that all children were by that time being fed the “normal amount of food” in addition to clothing and shoes.⁷ By April 1947, the Head of the Oblast' Civilian Affairs Administration, Borisov, reported to Moscow that all the children were receiving excellent care.⁸

German civilians had a similar impression at the time, as the well-groomed orphan children stood in sharp contrast to their homegrown counterparts. Lucy Falk wrote in her diary about watching the orphans walk through the city center, arranged into neat single-file lines by their caretakers. The boys wore uniforms, and had their hair cropped close like the Russian children did, not in the long wavy locks that had been the common (“fascist”) style for young boys in Königsberg.⁹ In some cases, the parents of orphans were still living: when Marga Pollmann lost her arm in a train accident, she was forced to deposit her children in the orphanage because she could no longer feed them.¹⁰ In Kaliningrad, the orphanages became the best social welfare for a system that otherwise provided very little. As the doctor Hans Deichelmann wrote with grand irony, a poster in one German orphanage hallway read, “We thank our great Stalin for our happy childhoods!”¹¹

For children outside the orphanage system, schools provided social welfare in the form of day care. Schools for the children of Soviet citizens were set up beginning in the fall of 1945, but during the first year, the provisional military administration made no effort to open German schools, admitting that “control over their education and schooling is practi-

⁵ GARF A259.6.3923.138, 7 April 1947. Few mentions were made of nursing homes for the elderly, although the Head of the Oblast' Civilian Affairs Administration Borisov reported to Moscow in April 1947 that 9 homes had been set up in 1946 to care for 449 people, expanded in early 1947 to care for 700. Although nursing homes with such a small capacity were inconsequential, given that such a large percent of the population were invalids, their creation nevertheless highlights the increase in efforts to provide social welfare to non-working Germans.

⁶ GAKO R332.2.7.24, no date [after 1 February 1946]; GAKO R332.1.2.118, 2 April 1946.

⁷ GARF A259.6.4544.33, no date [late 1946].

⁸ GARF A259.6.3923.137, 7 April 1947; GAKO R297.1.102.77, 16 May 1947.

⁹ Falk, *Ich blieb*, 86 [12 August 1946].

¹⁰ Pollmann, “Königsberg,” 60.

¹¹ Deichelmann, *Ich sah*, 129 [18 November 1946].

cally impossible.”¹² In 1945 and early 1946, some Germans had begun to organize schools of their own. Lutheran churches, which had continued to operate (thereby demonstrating the Soviet constitution’s progressive policies regarding the freedom of religion), had become informal centers of the German community, and had begun, with the limited resources they had, to offer day care and schools for children of working parents.¹³ The growth of these networks during the absence of state control only heightened the urgency of providing official Soviet education. As was the case with orphanages, the new civilian government exceeded the original recommendations of the provisional military administration, which had modestly advocated the creation of two German schools (one in Königsberg and one in Insterburg), and for the 1946-47 school year, simultaneous with the establishment of new schools for Soviet citizens, opened dozens of German schools across the oblast’.¹⁴

Many Germans, including Falk (who soon became a teacher for one of the schools) and Deichelmann, at first expressed suspicions when they heard about the administration’s plans, uncertain about the purpose those schools would serve, and leery of young children’s exposure to overt propaganda.¹⁵ But after this initial skepticism, most German parents and caretakers allowed their children to be registered (particularly for the promise of a ration card). By the end of 1946, there were 26 German schools (mostly elementary schools, but also a few middle schools), and by April 1947, there were 44 schools across the oblast’, with 142 German teachers and almost 5,000 registered pupils.¹⁶

According to the standard practice in each Soviet republic, minority nationalities were guaranteed instruction in their native language. In Kaliningrad, the German schools were set up according to RSFSR guidelines for “Non-Russian Schools,” including instruction in German and curricula developed in accordance with Soviet standards. Neither Russian nor German schools had enough textbooks to go around, however, so, in the first few years, much of the curriculum was improvised. For Russian schools, textbooks needed to be shipped in; for German schools, the few surviving textbooks from the Nazi period were deemed politically dangerous. In the fall of 1946, the Education Department in Kaliningrad requested that Soviet textbooks designed for the Volga Germans be sent to Kaliningrad, in order to determine their suitability (although later orders were made by the RSFSR Council of Ministers to develop entirely new textbooks).¹⁷ The curriculum for Russian and German

¹² GAKO R332.2.7.23-4, no date [after 1 February 1946]. The first Soviet schools in Königsberg had been set up for the sons and daughters of military families and newly arriving workers at the Pulp and Paper Mills. By February 1946, there were already 18 Soviet schools, many of them teaching older children who, because of the war, were attending school for the first time in years. These schools came under the control of the RSFSR Ministry of Education in 1946, as the new civilian government scrambled to open hundreds more schools over the course of the next year to keep pace with the arrival of new Soviet settlers.

¹³ GAKO R332.2.7.23-4, no date [after 1 February 1946]. For more information on the Lutheran community in Königsberg, Hugo Linck, *Im Feuer geprüft...als die Sterbenden, und siehe, wir leben: Berichte aus dem Leben der Restgemeinden nach der Kapitulation in und um Königsberg*, (Leer, Germany: Rautenberg, 1973); Hugo Linck, *Königsberg*.

¹⁴ GANIKO 1.1.101.58, 12 August 1947; GAKO R297.1.110.29, 6 December 1946; GANIKO R313.1.6.48, 12 July 1947.

¹⁵ Falk, *Ich blieb*, 86 [12 August 1946].

¹⁶ GARF A259.6.4544.27, no date [late 1946]; GARF A259.6.3923.137, 7 April 1947; GAKO R297.1.102.77, 16 May 1947.

¹⁷ GARF A259.6.4544.34, no date [late 1946].

schools was similar, although the German children received less instruction in history and geography (subjects considered too politically sensitive to be trusted to the German teachers without proper training).¹⁸

Teacher training was an issue for all schools in Kaliningrad. Because there were not enough Soviet citizens who could speak German, teachers had to be recruited from among the local population. Although a few teachers had previously taught in schools (a few during Weimar), many had no classroom experience. Lucy Falk became one of these teachers after having worked a variety of odd jobs, including working as a radio announcer for the German radio hour on Kaliningrad Radio, where she read classics of Russian literature in German translation. Soviet teachers in Russian schools were also underprepared. The first teachers were demobilized soldiers, only a few of whom had been teachers before the war, and of the 930 new teachers who arrived in Kaliningrad in 1946, only 294 had begun or completed higher education; fifty-two had not finished middle school).¹⁹ Soviet teachers worked primarily in the Russian-language schools, although some Soviet teachers were stationed in non-Russian schools as Russian language teachers and supervisors.²⁰ In response to the lack of training, a report in late 1946 noted the “real necessity” of opening a pedagogical school in Kaliningrad to train both Russian and German teachers.²¹ In the meantime, pedagogical training took place in special workshops for each group. Falk participated in workshops about the history of the Soviet state and the cultures and peoples of the USSR, and began to learn Russian so that she could coordinate lesson plans with her supervisors.²²

The biggest issue for German parents remained the fear of foreign indoctrination. In his diary, Deichelmann reported rumors about blatant propaganda and ideological enforcement at school. Such rumors soon became common currency, convincing many nervous German parents that school was absolutely the worst place for their children—where they faced the danger of being Sovietized in all of the wrong ways. Some of the biggest concerns were about religion. Deichelmann reported a story about one teacher's approach to atheist education:

I want to show you what the dear God can do. Close your eyes and open your hands, as if you want to pray, and say: Dear God, send me a bonbon! And once more everybody: Dear God, send us a bonbon! And so open your eyes. Do you see a bonbon anywhere? No—and so we can see, how much God can do. And so we want to try something else. Close your eyes again,

¹⁸ GAKO R313.1.5.27-8, 2 January 1947. At the Non-Russian Seven-Year School no. 1, for example, subjects taught included Russian and German language, arithmetic, algebra, sciences, geometry, physics, chemistry, drawing, and physical education; other subjects were not taught, for various reasons (generally because of the inability to find qualified and properly vetted teachers): literature, geography, history, and the Stalin Constitution.

¹⁹ GAKO R297.1.102.77, 16 May 1947.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ GARF A259.6.4544.34, no date [late 1946].

²² Her direct supervisor, B. S. Spivak, whom Falk refers to in her diary simply as “Frau Spiwak,” was not as impressed with Falk’s Russian skills as Falk was herself, and in school reports in early 1948 listed Falk as one of the few German teachers who still required a translator to take part in school meetings. GAKO R313.1.5.23, no date [late 1947 or early 1948].

you don't need to fold them this time, they can stay in your lap. And say; "Dear Papa Stalin, send us a bonbon!" This time you only need to say it once. Open your eyes! Look, each of you has a big, beautiful bonbon, that you can eat right now.²³

Whether this story is true or not, atheism was not a top priority. The director of the Non-Russian 7-Year School No. 1, Spivak (the same school where Falk was a teacher), began her annual report by clarifying the school's mission statement, which she wrote by hand in a children's practice notebook:

Seven-Year Non-Russian School No. 1 was the first to be organized. The following assignments were given: remodel the building and start lessons. Point out that the Soviet state pays great attention to national education, spread the Russian literary language of the great Russian nation, the language of government acts and cultural communication, the language of the press, of theater, of schools, of artistic and academic literature.

The school's main mission, in other words, was neither proletarian internationalism nor atheism, but the demonstration of the Soviet Union's commitment to national education and the celebration of the Russian people and the Russian language. The German children were allowed to study in German, but the message was that in order to succeed in Kaliningrad, they would need to learn Russian as quickly as possible.²⁴

Lucy Falk, who found a new passion for teaching, never wrote in her diary (published in West Germany in the 1960s) of indoctrinating the children with overt Soviet propaganda, although she was asked to enforce the short haircut rule, a perennial issue for Soviet supervisors (a report in April 1947 complained that all of the boys had "bangs à la Hitler").²⁵ But Falk herself may have begun to believe in Soviet ideology, or at least learned to speak a little Bolshevik: after her supervisor gave a lecture on International Women's Day in March 1948, that supervisor reported that "after the speech, the teacher Falk said that in Germany she did not have the same rights as a man and would not have had the opportunity to become a school director" like her boss had.²⁶ Actually, Falk still did not have that opportunity, no longer because she was a woman, but because she was German. Although the German schools taught German children and hired mostly German teachers, the school principals of the Non-Russian Schools were required to be Soviet citizens, as the Head of the Oblast' Civilian Affairs Administration noted in a report to Moscow in April 1947.²⁷

Although the programs to care for and educate German children were the most extensive, there were also numerous programs and organizations designed to rehabilitate adults. The longest-lasting and most significant was the Antifascist Club, which began in early 1946 under the provisional military administration. The Antifascist Club had a central location in the city, where meetings and lectures were held, along with a lending library of socialist-friendly German literature and translations of Lenin's works. Branches of the club

²³ Deichelmann, *Ich sah*, 129 [20 November 1946].

²⁴ GAKO R313.1.5.1, no date [late 1947 or early 1948].

²⁵ Falk, *Ich blieb*, 98 [20 November 1946], [1 December 1946]; GAKO R313.1.4.54, 7 April 1947.

²⁶ GAKO R313.1.5.23, [no date, late 1947 or early 1948].

²⁷ GARF A259.6.3923.138, 7 April 1947.

also appeared in workplaces, invariably under the direct supervision and sponsorship of the Soviet administration. The club was designed to be, as Deichelmann quoted, an “asset for the defeat of fascism in all its forms, for the establishment of a true democracy and for the creation of peace among nations.”²⁸ It proposed to change Königsbergers into Kalinin-graders through the dissemination of antifascist ideology.

Recruitment posters for the club were printed and displayed throughout the city, calling particularly on Königsberg’s intellectual elite (teachers, doctors, engineers, and other well-educated professionals) to join.²⁹ Despite their optimistic advertisements, however, Soviet administrators found little support from the German populace. At a time of constant interrogations, disease, and the threat of starvation, the cause of antifascism seemed to be the least of the Germans’ concerns. Deichelmann found the whole effort to be ridiculous. Even among those (such as himself) who recognized the danger of Nazism, it seemed “unclear how a constructive solution to a big problem can be founded on an ‘anti’-principle.”³⁰ After initial recruitment failures, the Antifascist Club changed its name to the more inclusive “German Club” (since it turned out to be easier to be a German than an antifascist). The German Club offered political meetings and talks, a public library, music nights (Wieck played violin for the dance band, although Russian soldiers were usually the only ones who felt like dancing),³¹ and sports teams—intramural soccer games allowed German and Russian teams to compete according to clear and transparent rules. The most important part of the German Club, however, was its intelligentsia section. Falk, Lehdorff, and Deichelmann were all invited to join. An invitation meant an obligation, and obligation meant few benefits from participation but many negative consequences from abstention. In their regular meetings and lectures, Königsberg’s new antifascist *Intelligenz* heard about their responsibility and guilt for the war and learned more about how their directed collective effort would build a bastion of democracy on the Baltic Sea. The German Club, besides the frequent propaganda lectures, was a place for Germans to meet, enjoy themselves, and engage in semi-open public discussions about the social and political situation of Germans in Königsberg.³²

Königsberg’s few remaining German communists, usually blue-collar workers (the bourgeois political dissidents had fled long before the siege), worked for the club as propagandists; by April 1947, five German lecturers hired by the Oblast’ Department of Culture and Enlightenment had presented 983 talks throughout Kaliningrad and the oblast’, to a reported total of 120,650 attendees with titles such as “The Stalin Constitution: The Constitution of Victorious Socialism,” “Fascism, the Worst Enemy of Humanity,” “The Five-Year Plan for the Establishment and Development of the Economy from 1946 to 1950,” “On the Democratic Restructuring of Germany,” “Lenin: Leader and Teacher of Workers across the World,” and “The Soviet Electoral System: The Most Democratic in the World.” As of April 1947, the club had also presented numerous entertainment programs (approved by the cen-

²⁸ Deichelmann, *Ich sah*, 84 [15 February 1946].

²⁹ Deichelmann, *Ich sah*, 84 [15 February 1946].

³⁰ Deichelmann, *Ich sah*, 84 [15 February 1946].

³¹ Wieck, *A Childhood*, 208.

³² GAKO R289.7.4.10, 28 November 1946; GAKO R289.7.7.11, December 1946; GAKO R289.7.7.12, December 1946; GAKO R289.7.7.13, 17 December 1946; GAKO R289.7.7.14, December 1946; GAKO R289.7.7.14, December 1946; GAKO R83.1.4.10, 1 May 1947.

sors), including 171 concerts throughout the oblast', with a total German audience of 50,000.³³

Another organization that catered to Germans was the *Neue Zeit* newspaper, a translation of *Pravda* with additional special interest stories for the German residents of Kaliningrad. In many ways, *Neue Zeit* was just another formulaic party organ, but the German population had still eagerly awaited its release, hoping that the newspaper would provide them more information about their situation and perhaps hint at future plans regarding their fate. Deichelmann wrote that when the first issue was released, Germans reportedly "snap[ped] it up greedily," only to be quickly disappointed by formulaic stories of socialist labor.

It is just great that the fitter Steppat is a strong, efficient man; but that 10 lines is devoted to this fact certainly exceeds the public interest. What does it matter to us that Sovkhoz 27 has over-fulfilled its goals by 23.15 percent and that the Five Year Plan is secured[?] Those of us here in the land of the free workers have known for a long time already that the western democracies are not true democracies. But when do we finally find out whether food rations will really be increased? We are admittedly not mature enough for this new newspaper. We don't want to be lectured about how the Soviet Union is being rebuilt, but how Germany is.³⁴

But after this initial frustration, many Germans kept reading, if only in the hope of deciphering some hidden messages between the lines. In the early months of the newspaper, many German names were attached to local interest stories, such as M. Schmidtke's short article "Successes of Tractor Drivers" ("tractor drivers from the 5th Brigade Erwin Deglau and Hermann Alt work especially well [...] they over-fulfill their shift assignments on a daily basis").³⁵ Articles about international politics filled half the pages and were invariably translations from *Pravda*.

There were a few instances in which local Germans wrote about subjects other than heroic work efforts. In February 1948, Falk, the school teacher, published a short story, "A Quick Decision," a perfect specimen of Kaliningrad socialist realism. In the story, a mother in Kaliningrad keeps her young daughter, Rosmarie, out of school so the girl can protect their room from thieves while the mother is away at work. One day, a letter arrives from the father, a hard-working socialist role model in the Soviet Zone. He writes that he is working hard and earning well, and offers advice to his daughter. Since she was already a big girl, eight years old, could she write him a letter to say hello? The most important duty of a parent, he explains, is to provide children with education because "schooling is the foundation on which we will later build our entire lives." Reading the letter, the mother is stricken with guilt: "How can she give her husband a little letter from Rosmarie when the child has not been to school a single day? How could she justify that? Would her husband not reproach her for keeping her eight-year-old daughter at home as a guard for their room?" The em-

³³ GARF A259.6.3923.138, 7 April 1947. Because the reported number of attendees was higher than the total German population of the oblast', the numbers, in addition to being significantly inflated for accounting purposes, must reflect individuals attending multiple lectures.

³⁴ Deichelmann, *Ich sah*, 173 [16 July 1947].

³⁵ M. Schmidtke, "Erfolge der Traktorführer," *Neue Zeit*, 7 November 1947.

barrassment only grows for the mother when Rosmarie's young friend announces that she has learned to read and write well after her second year at the German school. The mother, now convinced to put her daughter's future ahead of their short-term material benefit, allows Rosmarie to start school the very next day.³⁶



Neue Zeit: The Newspaper for the German Population of Kaliningrad oblast', 24 August 1947. Besides international news, the newspaper mostly focused on socialist work example, promising bonuses (and a sense of belonging) for those who overfulfilled the plan.

By New Year's Eve 1947, Deichmann, looking back in frustration at the previous two years and forward to the upcoming one, summed up the life of the Germans as he imagined it described by the official Soviet bureaucracy of Kaliningrad. According to the official presentation, he wrote, the military administration had provided all of the population with work and had provided bread cards for free to those who could not work—children, the elderly, and the ill. Later an antifascist club was erected, which became the "German Club" to attract a wide base of participants. German personnel were allowed to remain

³⁶ Lucy Falk, "Ein schneller Entschluß," *Neue Zeit*, 12 February 1948.

working at the German hospital, and religious organizations could continue their activities. Orphanages were also established for the care of young German children. Under the civilian administration, steps were taken to establish equality for the Germans; they received wages and ration cards for their work, just as other Soviet citizens did. The cultural mission was furthered through the establishment of German schools and a German-language newspaper. Legally employed workers were entitled to annual vacations and guaranteed the same healthcare as the Russians. A special city attorney was assigned to secure the protection of workers' rights, and special stores were set up, along with convalescent homes for the elderly. "And so it was reported to Moscow," Deichelmann wrote.³⁷

And so it was. Eight months before, in April 1947, the Head of the Civilian Affairs Administration, Borisov, ended a report on reconstruction efforts in Kaliningrad Oblast' with a brief, almost afterthought discussion "on the legal situation of the German population." It included a list very similar to Deichelmann's: equal pay for equal work, native language schools, orphanages and nursing homes, medical care, and continuing antifascist education through lectures, news papers, radio programs, clubs and leisure activities.³⁸ Yet most of these benefits existed primarily on paper. Considered as a whole, the efforts made by Soviet officials appeared to the unwilling German participants to be arbitrary and contradictory, sometimes superfluous, and usually ineffective. B.L., a former German soldier who lived in Gumbinnen (Gusev) until 1948, testified in 1952 that the Soviet people and their government had developed an uncanny combination of oppression and neglect in their treatment of German civilians: "the Russian," he explained, only bothered "the German" when "he wanted our dwellings, or clothes or other things. For these were then his property." Other than that, it was "all the same to him whether we lived, starved, were in want, were ruined or died."³⁹ "The German here has absolutely no rights," wrote Ewert angrily in 1946. "He has to work without exception, and if he can't do that, then he'll die. I often wonder about who I should hate, the Russians or our government, which unleashed the war" [*den Krieg vom Zaun brach*]?⁴⁰

Ewert's reflection was uncommon—most of those writing at the time chose to focus more on their personal sorrows and the tragedy of the German people and did not reflect much in their diaries about the role that National Socialism had to play in the unmaking of Königsberg. Even Ewert herself considered National Socialism to be something distant from her own life and actions. In letters and reports written by Germans from inside Kaliningrad or shortly after the German expulsion, few explicit traces of remorse for Nazism appear. The Nazi regime was understood to be an impostor government of buffoons that steered Germany away from greatness and was followed by even greater misery inflicted by the Soviet regime in Kaliningrad. No Germans in Kaliningrad blamed themselves; when they

³⁷ Deichelmann, *Ich sah*, 206-7 [31 December 1947].

³⁸ GARF A259.6.3923.137-8, 7 April 1947.

³⁹ B.L., "Eyewitness report," 205.

⁴⁰ Ewert, "Tagebuch," 37 [1946].

blamed the Nazis, it was for allowing the Red hordes to overrun civilization.⁴¹ As the West German scholarly commission later reported, with little self-reflection, “the victims of repeated interrogations, tortures, and arrests” in Kaliningrad “were often not only *former members of the Party who had done nothing wrong*, but also many who were wrongly suspected.”⁴²

As a result of the Soviet government’s attempts to convince Germans of the superiority of socialism, some Germans became even more staunchly nationalist. Decades later, Käthe Hielscher wrote about how she saw a group of German soldiers marching from their POW camp on “the anniversary of the German capitulation” in 1947, when Russian men and women gathered to drink, dance by way of jumping and squatting, and sing in “shrill high tones” to celebrate their victory. The German soldiers began to sing the *Wehrmacht* marching song, “Erika,” which filled Hielscher with joy, since the song “had been sung so often during Hitler’s time.”

They walk raggedly, side by side, with heads held high. Suddenly all eyes are on them. The Russian song is being drowned out by the German soldiers’ song. It does not matter how hard the accordion player presses on his buttons. It was as if two fronts came together here. The Russians react with angry looks, Russian curse words and spitting. The Germans’ guards have to intervene. They scream “Stop!” The German soldiers keep marching, singing more and slowly move away from the raging Russian celebration. It warms my heart. That is Germany! That is national pride! Even in defeat, the soldiers [*Landser*] will not be beaten down. What a feeling to be German!⁴³

Hielscher promised never to allow herself to be subjected, and preserved her sense of “national pride” for decades to come. Hielscher’s response to her antifascist education was similar to that of many of Kaliningrad’s Germans.⁴⁴

Why did the socialist message fail to take root? Was it because it had not been spread sufficiently? Although the more educated (or at least more centrally-positioned) diarists inside Königsberg, such as Falk and Deichelmann, wrote about their experiences with Soviet propaganda organs, many diarists and memoirists claim that the Soviet government made absolutely no effort to help or educate them. Olga Golobova (formerly Klein), a German woman who managed to stay in Kaliningrad after the majority of the German population left, recalled that

⁴¹ GStPK HA XX, Rep. 99c, Nr. 219; GStPK HA XX, Rep. 99c, Nr. 186; GStPK HA XX, Rep 99c, Nr. 216; HA XX, Rep. 99c, Nr. 218. Correspondence between the University of Königsberg in exile and hundreds of East Prussia’s German expellees in the late 1940s (both those who left before the siege and those who left Kaliningrad later) reveals the consensus that the Nazi rule in Königsberg had been the reign of buffoons, and that the destruction of the city had been brought about solely by Hitler, his advisors, and Koch’s henchmen in Königsberg. Few mentions were made of the university’s own Rector Grünberg, the academic who straddled the two worlds of Nazi leadership and university life seamlessly, nor of the complicity of the many professors who now sought testimony from their colleagues that they had not been among the ‘ideological Nazis’ of their departments, in order to speed their reintegration into de-Nazified West Germany.

⁴² *Expulsion*, 70. Emphasis mine.

⁴³ Hielscher, *Als Ostpreußin*, 149.

⁴⁴ See also Kalusche, *Unter dem Sowjetstern*; Anneliese Kreutz, *Das grosse Sterben*; Lehnert, *Die Russen*; Lehndorff, *Token*.

No kind of social or political work was carried out with the Germans. Who would have needed it? I never heard anything about the newspaper *Neue Zeit*. There were no artistic performances or dances for the Germans. We were not thinking about dances but about oats and saltbush [*lebeda*], of how to survive.⁴⁵

Many of the government's antifascist efforts only reached children or those workers working in major industries where they were required to attend educational lectures, but many Germans, such as Golobova, worked in smaller organizations or on the black market. As a cashier in a hair salon, Golobova may never have been part of any organized reeducation campaign.

For others, the problem was not that they had not been sufficiently exposed to rehabilitation efforts but that the message seemed suspiciously familiar. The German communists hired by the German Club worked as agitators in some of the more prominent industries and workplaces in Kaliningrad, and, as Deichelmann pointed out, these communists shared some uncanny similarities with Königsberg's previous political zealots.

The hospital has got a "Political Boss" (Paul). Naturally a communist, formerly a Pillau waterman, very simple, primitive man, about fifty. With a formal, pompous voice he delivers a personal speech for everyone, which sparkles with talk about work for the community, preservation of our German national culture (*Volkstums*) and similar phrases. With some difficulty I suppress a "Heil Hitler," so much did it remind me of the wholly identical speeches of my former *Blockleiter*.⁴⁶

Neither the German communists nor the Soviet administration were talking much about true internationalism; while the German communists were trying to preserve German culture through communism, they were also instructed to talk about the superior accomplishments of the Soviet Union as a product of Russian culture.

Increasingly, the German communists themselves were caught between advocating for the German population and acting as the German face of Soviet rule. Requests for sacrifices and "restructuring" were often conveyed through these German communist representatives; for example, in August 1946, German communists were put in charge of collective furniture distribution in many workplaces. In order to meet quotas and fulfill the needs of the new Soviet settlers, Paul, the German communist at Deichelmann's hospital, announced that much of the hospital's furniture had been illegally "procured?" (*organisiert*) from private possessions, and as the rightful property of the state, it was subject to redistribution. As Deichelmann complained,

But Paul needs the hospital furniture for the Russians. It doesn't matter that everything someone has dragged in here should now become his private property; then the entire hospital could get gradually sold off. Thus he moves from room to room, paints numbers on furniture, writes inventory lists, changes them, puts together new lists, paints new numbers, and whenever a

⁴⁵ Ol'ga Leopoldovna Golobova [sic: Golobova] (Klein), *Collected Interviews*, v. 11, 12-3.

⁴⁶ Deichelmann, *Ich sah*, 83.

new Russian comes, he appeals to this protocol and pulls furniture, carpets, lamps, etc. out of the rooms accordingly.⁴⁷

The trouble was that while the German communists were talking about preserving German national culture, they seemed to be serving Russian interests.

German communists themselves were also conflicted about the uneasy role they played in Kaliningrad; the same month that Deichelmann's political boss confiscated the hospital furniture, a group of three German communists in another district wrote a scathing letter to complain about the difficult task they faced in defending the progressiveness of the Soviet system when the German population hardly benefitted from it. The complaint centered around a particularly capricious District Commandant, Pirov, who had instructed his "*Blockleiter*" (the German communists had also become accustomed to using the Nazi term for party cell leaders) to collect all of upholstered furniture in the district, with the warning that anyone who did not comply would be arrested. But ultimately, all furniture was collected, not just the upholstered, with no regard to whether Germans had anywhere to sleep or sit. Even worse, Pirov decided arbitrarily to grant exemptions (usually to beautiful young women), and even allowed some Germans to pick out the best furniture for themselves to take home (including the wife of a former Nazi party leader who had been in charge of the Königsberg Economic Office). Meanwhile, because the confiscated items had been so haphazardly stored, rain had leaked through and destroyed up to half the furniture. In their letter, the German communists tried to explain to the Head of the Civilian Affairs Administration Borisov exactly what was at stake:

We are submitting these facts to the responsible authority because we believe that these abuses discredit the Soviet Union and its political presence among the population, and the implementation of such [arbitrary] actions are not in accordance with the responsible authority. The current political situation demands that every individual who holds a position of authority keep the political face of the Soviet Union free of blemishes, even when it is only the Commandant of a District. [...] The population of the Fifth District feels that the Commandant of the Fifth District [Pirov] is a despot who acts arbitrarily without any political or economic basis, to apply repressive measures against the population. This hinders the desire to work and damages the political image of the Soviet Union that we have shared with the population. [...] We ask that the Commandants in Kaliningrad redress these grievances.⁴⁸

The three German communists ended their letter by asserting their antifascist credentials (all three had served jail time under the Nazis), and insisted that they were fully ready to help provide for the needs of new Russian settlers. If the socialist distribution of property were better explained to the German population, they insisted, they would be much more amenable to "downsizing voluntarily, and giving over what each could afford to spare."⁴⁹ The German communists in their letter touched on a number of broader problems: how could they spread the message of antifascism if the Germans were perpetually victims of

⁴⁷ Deichelmann, *Ich sah*, 115-6 [3 August 1946].

⁴⁸ GAKO R237.1.1.22, 27 August 1946.

⁴⁹ GAKO R237.1.1.22, 27 August 1946.

the government? How could they be expected to give up everything, receive nothing in return, and be forced to listen to lectures about how it was for their own benefit?

The Germans were not allowed to participate in the Soviet government and were not allowed to create institutions among themselves. Allowed no independent initiative, they were expected to rely on a government that advertised benefits that they, as non-Soviet citizens, were not entitled to receive. In practice, they had no social security or benefits from being members of the society: no guarantee of housing, food, medical care, employment, living wage, or vacation time. The polarity between survival and starvation was the common German experience for three years. When Russian civilians broke into the apartment where a few German women lived, they stole all of the clothing, including the shirts off the women's backs. Left naked, the women were unable to go to work the next day, and so their supervisor fired them. They had been the victims of the crime but were the ones who were punished, left with no jobs, no money to buy clothes, and no means to eat.⁵⁰ Erna Ewert, who lived in nearby Cranz, struggled for months to find a steady job to feed her two children and finally found work as a night guard. She was fired from her job soon after, however, because she could not learn to pronounce Russian commands quickly enough; one of her sons starved to death soon thereafter.⁵¹ In this borderland of socialism, any sort of disability could mean disaster. For A. Riemann, a gardener from Ludwigsort, the inability (or perhaps, refusal) of the Soviet administration to provide social welfare remained "inconceivable considering this form of government, which pretends to be the most progressive and the most social that exists."⁵² Riemann had watched in September 1945 as his greenhouse (his primary means to feed himself and his family) was dismantled and shipped to Russia.

"In vain I ask myself the question," Deichelmann wrote in December 1947, "to what degree is this murderous tyranny the work of Bolshevism or the work of the Russian national character? Put another way, what would Russia look like without Bolshevism?" But that question, he understood, could not be answered from the perspective of Kaliningrad; Russian acquaintances told him repeatedly that life in the rest of Russia was much better,⁵³ just as Falk's supervisor had promised her that "next summer" would bring well-furnished classrooms, vacations on the beach, and plenty to eat for everyone.⁵⁴ Still, Deichelmann remained unconvinced, and he decided that if the iron curtain had not descended, the fate of Kaliningrad would have become the fate of all the world—"Asia would overrun Europe."⁵⁵ The suffering of Königsberg's Germans in Soviet Kaliningrad was "not so much the fate of a despised opponent, but Russian everyday life, experienced from the point of view of the weak."⁵⁶

⁵⁰ GAKO R231.1.1.13, no date [after August 1946].

⁵¹ Ewert, "Tagebuch," 37-42.

⁵² A. Riemann, "Eyewitness report of the gardener A. Riemann of Ludwigsort, district of Heiligenbeil in East Prussia. Original. January 1953. 8 Pages. Printed in part," in *Expulsion*, 200-1.

⁵³ Deichelmann, *Ich sah*, 210 [31 December 1947].

⁵⁴ Falk, *Ich blieb*, 122 [17 August 1947].

⁵⁵ Deichelmann, *Ich sah*, 211 [31 December 1947].

⁵⁶ Deichelmann, *Ich sah*, 209 [31 December 1947].

Contamination and Marginalization

According to the official story, Soviets and Germans were to be treated equally under the law, but image and reality consistently diverged in Kaliningrad. In his diary, the doctor Hans Deichelmann, working at one of Kaliningrad's city hospitals, was constantly reminded of the most basic evidence of differential treatment: when there were shortages, it was only the Germans who starved. In the fall of 1947, when the city had become more crowded, however, he noticed that even a few of the new Soviet settlers came to the hospital with malnutrition. Deichelmann asked himself a series of rhetorical questions. Why was it that, until the fall of 1947,

it was mainly only Germans who starved? That now perhaps for every 100 Germans, one malnourished Russian comes in [to the hospital]? Is it equality that here all the Russians more or less quickly acquire possessions while the Germans lose more and more? Is it equality when women and children are deprived of ration cards, [since] it's known that they must continue to work if only for the heated workplaces?¹

The Soviet settlers, Deichelmann believed, were victims of communism just as the Germans were. But sometimes it was hard to tell apart what was communist and what was Russian—and anyway, most Germans felt they had been victims of both. Did Kaliningrad's Germans receive worse treatment because they were still contaminated with fascism, or was the socialist system itself broken? In Kaliningrad, the hospital was the place where disease and contamination were more than a metaphor. From 1945 to 1948, the hospital was a center of constant interaction between Germans and Soviets (as both patients and staff), and an exceptional place to study physiological and ideological disease. After Königsberg's Germans began to repopulate the city in summer 1945, the German Central Hospital was formed as the main hospital for the German population, serving the majority of the city's sick.²

¹ Deichelmann, *Ich sah*, 207 [31 December 1947].

² GAKO R59.1.2.1, January 1947; GAKO R330.2.5.23-8, 26 April 1946. The German Central Hospital was the main facility in town with over half of the total patients; the next largest hospital was the German Infection Hospital, followed by the smaller St. Katherine and St. Elizabeth hospitals. This paper focuses only on the German Central Hospital, which soon became the Oblast Hospital.

As was the case for most remaining organizations, the hospital was in a state of complete disarray. It was housed in a six-story brick building, one of the few facilities in the center of town that had not been destroyed completely by the bombing raids and siege, but it had lost a good deal of its inventory (furniture, linens, medicine, and supplies) during the Red Army's victory raids, and so mismatched furniture and ersatz supplies had been collected from various abandoned buildings throughout town.³ The provisional military administration recognized the need to maintain hospitals for the German population but could not consistently provide the funds, and the hospital found itself frequently without medicine, soap, or basic supplies. By spring 1946, conditions had gotten so bad that an average of 80 Germans in the city were dying each day of starvation (never even making it to the hospital), and that the 3,000 patients in various hospitals were receiving less than 200 to 400 grams of bread a day (often going days with no food at all). The German staff had not been paid for almost four months and many of the doctors and nurses threatening to leave the hospital for more reliable jobs in industry.⁴

Lieutenant Panafidin, the military supervisor for health in Königsberg (and later head of the Oblast Health Department), wrote several times to Moscow to resolve the fiscal and bureaucratic status of medical facilities in the region, including the German Central Hospital, but only in April 1946, with the official formation of Königsberg Oblast (after July 1946: Kaliningrad Oblast) did Panafidin's request for permanent funding succeed.⁵ Soon, the German Central Hospital was put on the books and transformed into the "Soviet Hospital for the German Population." Panafidin called for an improvement in the food supply for patients and four months of back pay for the German staff (a total of 1.8 million rubles).⁶ The formation of the oblast hospital brought in the first Soviet oversight committee, whose job it was to reorganize the facilities to conform to Soviet standards of healthcare.⁷ The new administrators created an image of Soviet medicine as modern, clean, efficient, and progressive, as opposed to the German sanitary model, which in its 1945 state seemed disorganized, diseased, anti-modern, and backward. Whereas the German Central Hospital had operated through improvisation, the Soviet hospital would conform to standard practices.⁸

³ GAKO R59.1.2.2, January 1947.

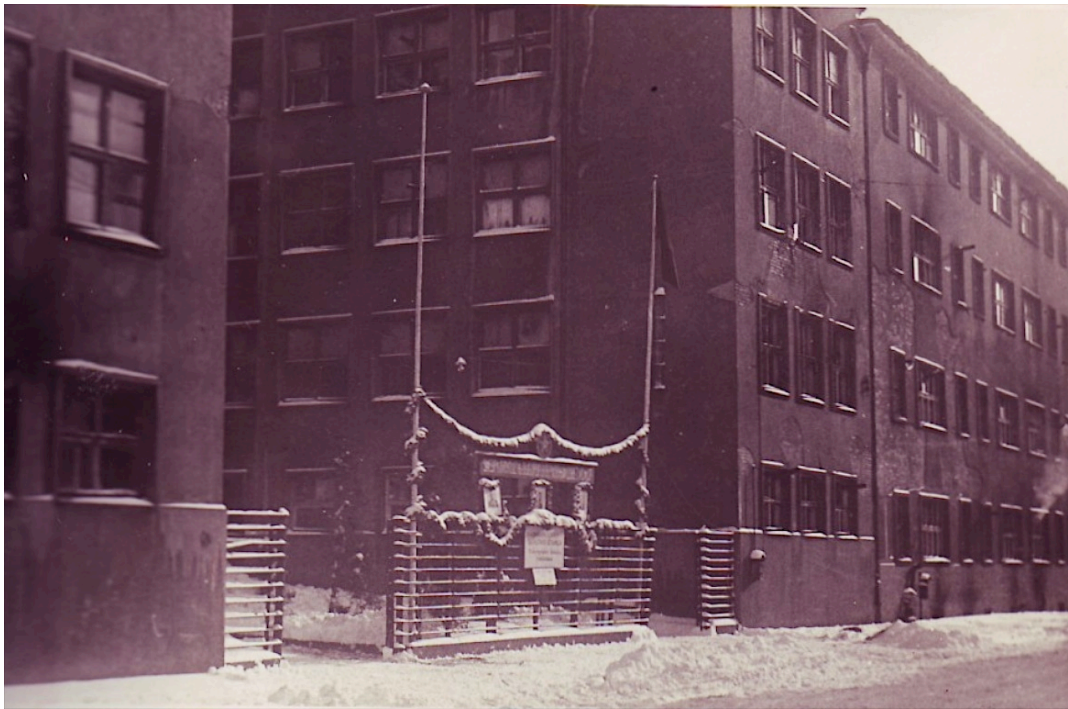
⁴ GAKO R330.1.7.31, 30 July 1945; GAKO R330.2.3.61, 20 March 1946; GAKO R332.2.5.17, 19 April 1946.

⁵ GAKO R332.2.3.37-38, 22 February 1946; GAKO R332.2.5.23-38 26 April.1946.

⁶ GAKO R330.2.3.61, 20 March 1946; GAKO R330.2.5.23-8, 26 April 1946.

⁷ GAKO R330.2.5.23-8, 26 April 1946.

⁸ This interpretation of German medicine as anti-modern compared to progressive Soviet practices differed, of course, from earlier perceptions of German medicine. Soviet and German scientists and healthcare professionals had a long tradition of "doing medicine together" before the Second World War; the interpretation of German medicine as backward in 1945 was both ideologically driven (the defeat of Germany signified the defeat of the German way of doing things) and based on actual observation (the German hospitals indeed seemed to be in a sorry state to those Soviet healthcare workers who arrived to the city in the months after the war). Concurrent German impressions of Soviet medicine in Kaliningrad revealed parallel "anti-modern" biases against Soviet medicine, sometimes on the same terms. For more on Soviet-German medical cooperation, see Susan Gross Solomon, ed. *Doing Medicine Together: Germany and Russia Between the Wars* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006); Susan Gross Solomon, "The Soviet-German Syphilis Expedition to Buriat Mongolia, 1928: Scientific Research on National Minorities," *Slavic Review* 52, no. 2 (Summer 1993): 204-232.



The hospital building during Weimar and in 1946. A guard post has been erected to control entry to the hospital.⁹

⁹ GAKO R298.1.2.26, January 1947.

The material conditions at the hospital were of first concern for the new administration; over a year after the end of the war, the hospital was still lying in decay. The roofs had not been repaired and windows had not been installed, leading to freezing drafts and leaks throughout the building; the steam boilers were not being used because of coal shortages, charring the rooms with soot and ash from make-shift dutch ovens; electric supply was only intermittent, severely limiting treatment; the telephone system had still not been established; shortages of beds and linens contributed to unhygienic conditions; and there was not enough food to feed the patients “due to the absence of vegetables and potatoes” in the hospital stores.¹⁰

But the new Soviet hospital was beset not only with material difficulties, but also with problems of human resources. Soviet administrators complained that the German Central Hospital had been not a real medical facility but an “almshouse” [*dom ubogikh*]. The hospital was overfilled with 1,742 patients (as of July 1946, all of them German); those patients were not only the acutely ill, but also various invalids and the elderly, homeless and abandoned children, the chronically ill, and many people suffering from dystrophy (*distrofiia*, the Soviet medical euphemism for starvation).¹¹ Not only were these “untreatable” patients living in this “almshouse,” but also the German medical staff occupied several beds of the hospital due to a shortage of living space in town, as did several people unaffiliated with the hospital (neither patients nor doctors). Even worse, some Lutheran nuns lived at the nearby Infection Hospital and formed part of the nursing staff of the hospitals in town.¹² The German Central Hospital had been a bunkhouse, a soup kitchen, an orphanage, and a church.

But despite the high number of sick and infected Germans in the oblast, the oblast administration did not call for an increase of supplies for the current patients, which would have been both practically and politically unfeasible, given the oblast’s endemic shortages, but instead called for the rapid decrease of the number of patients in the hospital’s care. “In order to bring order to the hospitals,” the report demanded that the hospitals be inspected immediately to clear out all people who were not patients or who were not truly in need of treatment, in this case, meaning those who were not curable with the resources at hand—the malnourished and the chronically ill. By late October 1946, up to 250 invalids and elderly without families were to be shuffled into the elder home system, and up to 100 homeless children (age 3-12) sent to the newly organized oblast orphanages. The administration also called for the removal of patients who were deemed capable of working (and therefore, in theory, of obtaining ration cards for their own food supply) and those who were not capable of working but who had living relatives in the city.¹³

The next step in the pursuit of administrative efficiency was to streamline bureaucratic and treatment operations. First and foremost, that meant the appointment of full “Russian leadership” [*russkoe rukovodstvo*], the transfer of administration work to Soviet

¹⁰ GAKO R298.1.8.54, 15 October 1946.

¹¹ GAKO R59.1.2.2, January 1947.

¹² The Lutheran order of the Königsberg Deaconess of the Sisters of Mercy lived and worked mainly at the German Infection Hospital; the October 1946 report complaining about the state of Oblast hospitals does not make clear whether Lutheran sisters also worked at the Oblast’ Hospital. GAKO R298.1.8.54 15 October 1946.

¹³ GAKO R298.1.8.54, 15 October 1946.

employees, and the gradual expansion of the hospital to include Soviet medical personnel and staff.¹⁴

The new Soviet administrators were dismayed by the free-for-all improvised system established by the existing German staff (who in July 1946 comprised 22 doctors and 115 nurses),¹⁵ in which patients were not separated according to illness but according to the doctors who treated them. Three beds might be overseen by Doctor Hensel [*Gensel*], the next three by Doctor Fuehrer, and the next by Doctor Schaum, and so forth. This flexibility of the German treatment scheme was especially frustrating in the case of doctors such as Schaum, who worked both as a general practitioner and as an ear specialist. Different kinds of patients with the most unexpected kinds of diagnoses all found themselves in his care; a pneumatic operative sarcoma patient might be lying next to someone with a middle-ear infection and a recovering post-appendectomy patient. Indeed, post-op patients frequently lay next to the other ill if only because the consulting doctor happened to be a surgeon. Even worse, the medical staff kept their own beds often in the very same rooms.¹⁶



*German doctors and nurses examine patients in the overcrowded Pediatrics Ward, late 1946. The 1946 hospital report photos did not show any of the numerous patients suffering from malnutrition, although the report discussed them explicitly.*¹⁷

¹⁴ GAKO R59.1.2.3, January 1947.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁷ GAKO R59.1.2.29, January 1947.

As part of the reorganization process, the Soviet administration established a new system of hospital wards “according to profile,” that is, separated by the type of illness, by the end of 1946. At the same time, as the Soviet (mostly Russian) population of the oblast increased, and greater number of Soviet citizens needed hospital treatment, the Kaliningrad Oblast Hospital for the German Population was “expanded to include the admission of Soviet citizens.” Originally few in number (the total Soviet population in Königsberg in October 1945 was less than 5,000),¹⁸ Soviet citizens were first treated at the former St. Elizabeth hospital, which was reformed as City Hospital No. 1 for the Soviet Population.¹⁹ But the City Hospital only held around 300 beds, and as settlement increased, there were an equal number of German civilians and Soviet citizens in Kaliningrad by the end of 1946, and the Soviet patients were mixed in with the Germans at the Oblast Hospital out of necessity. But suspicion and mistrust on the part of the Russian patients (who had developed “an anti-German attitude”) and misunderstandings based on language difficulties led to conflicts. Many of the Russian patients became “exceptionally nervous” about being treated by Germans, leading the hospital administration to demarcate treatment wards not only by diagnosis, but also by nationality.²⁰ The first unit of each ward would treat exclusively Soviet (“Russian”) patients, while the second ward would be reserved exclusively for the treatment of Germans. By the end of 1946, the hospital had established segregated wards for surgery, optometry, ear-nose-throat (otolaryngology), and, as the year-end report noted with special emphasis, for venereal disease. The report noted that “conflicts were reduced dramatically” after the switch to segregated service.²¹

The call for the isolation of the German from the Soviet (“Russian”) patients was first justified by the need to placate nervous Soviet patients who did not understand German, but the practice of separation did not mean that Soviet patients were treated by Soviet medical staff, but that Soviet patients were separated from German patients. Throughout 1946, the Soviet patients at the hospital were still treated by a mostly German staff (both doctors and nurses). At the beginning of 1947, there were only 12 Soviet (“Russian”) doctors and 12 nurses on staff, although later in the year several recent nursing-school graduates arrived. The new Soviet nurses were overwhelmingly inexperienced; out of the total 54 Soviet nurses, 34 had been working for less than one year.²² Because of shortages and inexperience of newly arriving Soviet personnel, Germans continued to form the majority of the hospital staff until late 1947.²³ In an imperfect world, it was deemed better to give the Soviet patients separate facilities, even if they would still be supervised by German doctors and nurses.

¹⁸ GAKO R330.2.6.39, 29 October 1945.

¹⁹ GAKO R330.2.5 .23-8, 26 April 1946.

²⁰ GAKO R59.1.2.5, January 1947.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

²² GAKO R59.1.3.4, no date [early 1948].

²³ *Ibid.*, 3.



A German doctor conducts a vision examination with an elderly German patient. The 1946 hospital report, written in January 1947, included several photos of doctors and patients, all of whom appear to be German by their dress and features, but no mention of their nationality is made in the captions.²⁴

Because the hospital had already been operating above capacity, the original plan of discharging German patients, children, and the elderly not in need of treatment did not lead to better food supply and the better allocation of supplies for the remaining German patients; the decreasing number of total patients in the facility was countered by the increasing proportion of Soviet patients competing for the hospital's resources. Whereas on 1 October 1946 there were 1,262 German patients (almost 500 fewer than in July) and only 173 Soviets, by the 31 December 1946 there were only 657 Germans compared to 245 Soviets,²⁵ even though Germans still constituted the overwhelming majority of inhabitants of the oblast and a dramatically higher percentage of the ill. The result of this administrative reshuffling was the reduction of the total population of the hospital by half by the end of 1946: from 1742 in July, to 1,262 by the beginning of October, to 902 in late December. As the Soviet population of the oblast already outnumbered the German population by January 1947 and grew exponentially over the next several months, in 1947 the hospital treated just

²⁴ GAKO R59.1.2.30, January 1947.

²⁵ GAKO R59.1.2.4, January 1947.

as many Soviet patients as Germans (a total of around 2,518 Soviets to 2,530 Germans over the course of the year), while still reducing the hospital capacity to a total of 650 beds.

Because Germans were still receiving half of the allotted beds in the hospital, despite being only a small minority of the city's total population, at first glance it seems as if Germans, not Soviet citizens, were receiving special favor at the hospital. Yet a much higher percentage of the German population needed medical care. The original drive toward administrative efficiency led to the institution of a separate-and-unequal regime of admission, feeding, and medical care; by allotting the same number of beds to Soviet and to German patients, the administration legitimated a process by which it would be easier to justify the exclusion of many new German patients from the hospital. While many Germans were redirected to other facilities in town (which also began turning away patients because of lack of funds), no Soviet citizen, the 1947 year-end report assured, had been denied admission. The hospital administrators presented the discrepancy once again as a matter of bureaucratic procedure: since December 1946, a system of filtration happened to have been established for the German population to limit the number of patients entering the hospital to those needing treatment, but no such system had been set up for the Soviet patients, which meant that "every Russian needing treatment was admitted to the hospital without refusal." In that sense, the report wrote, "the bulk of rejections [...] fell mainly on those of German nationality."²⁶ All of the incidents of refusal had to do with "cases that did not fit into the [established] illness profiles"—a euphemism for untreatable starvation.²⁷

By streamlining the operations of the hospital and turning out hungry Germans in the name of administrative efficiency, the oblast administration understood that they were liberating these terminal cases not only from hospital accounting but from their remaining chance of survival. The hospital administration did, however, note in the 1946 year-end report that it had not yet been possible to turn away all of those patients "not in need" of treatment—with a measure of apologetic compassion, the report's author noted that the onset of cold weather at the end of the year meant that "such a measure would have forced the homeless, invalids, and those without families onto the street." Instead, tighter policies were established for admission into the hospital; despite the "large influx of German patients" to the hospital given the conditions of winter, the total number of admitted patients was still effectively reduced.²⁸ During the Winter Famine of 1946-7, Kaliningrad Oblast' was suffering to an even greater extent than elsewhere in the Soviet Union from a shortage of food and supplies, and in this economy of shortages, the Germans found themselves last in line.

Besides the practical struggle for access to treatment and resources, a major factor underlying the segregation of Soviet and German patients was fear of contamination. Much of this fear was born out of practical concerns: Germans in the hospital suffered from different complaints from their Soviet counterparts. Whereas Soviet citizens were more likely to come into the hospital because of acute injury and accident (a gunshot wound, a fall, alcohol poisoning, a mine explosion), Germans often found themselves there because of epi-

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 19-20.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 20. The report noted that those who were turned away because of diseases not fitting the hospital's profiles were diverted to other care facilities, but in practice, these patients found themselves in administrative oblivion.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

demics and generalized infections related to malnourishment. Soviet patients and staff may have (understandably) feared the possibility of contamination present in being bedded next to a German with a dysentery, a distended abdomen, and festering wounds.

But the fear of contamination was not always motivated by practical concerns. In the case of the Venereal Disease Ward, for example, the hospital followed the general policy to separate Soviet and German patients. Although the ward had originally been allotted only 100 beds, the exceedingly high number of patients entering the hospital with stage one and two syphilis meant that the VD Ward had to make space for 250 beds by late 1946 for patients “whom it was necessary to isolate.” The ward was heavily overburdened; 1452 patients visited in six months, 430 of them Soviet citizens with syphilis (plus 4 with gonorrhea). Indeed, the outbreak was so serious that VD patients accounted for almost 36 percent of all Soviet hospital visits that year.²⁹ Despite the overall shortage of Soviet medical personnel, however, the hospital assured already in 1946 that “Soviet doctors and staff serve Soviet patients, German doctors serve German patients.” The VD Ward was the first place to be effectively segregated both in terms of patients and staff—because of the intimate nature of the infection, it was even more necessary to ensure that no German medical staff would be responsible for treating the Soviet patients. The unspoken irony of the venereal disease outbreak, of course, was that this epidemic had started precisely because of personal contact (either voluntary or involuntary) between Soviets (mostly Red Army soldiers) and Germans (mostly women). By the time the patients reached the hospital, separation would do them no good. Their post-admission segregation was more symbolic than practical.

In some cases, the danger of contamination was ideological, not physical; in other cases it was difficult to distinguish between the two. At the blood collection station, for example, blood was collected from donors of both nationalities. Almost 48 kg of blood were collected between May 1947 and January 1, 1948, but in accordance with a directive from the Oblast Health Department, “Russian patients were only given transfusions of blood from Russian donors, Germans from German.” According to the official hospital report, the Russian donors outshone their German peers; although 59 Germans had donated and only 39 Russians, each individual Russian had managed to donate more, as the report explained, leading to a total of 26.85 kg Russian blood collected compared to only 21.14 kg by the Germans.³⁰ The possibility of cross-national medical contamination combined with taboos of purity; in this case, Russian superiority was determined not only by the quality of blood, but also its quantity.

In the first year of the Soviet administration at the hospital, however, the German staff did not experience marginalization to the same degree as the German patients. They did receive inconsistent wages (sometimes not paid for months at a time), poor housing conditions (often still inside the hospital building), and had occasionally difficult relations with their Soviet bosses and fellow doctors, but overall, the hospital administration made a serious effort to include the German staff into the practice of Soviet medicine. In 1946, for example, when the new Soviet administrators noted some ideological conflicts with their employees, they also described their committed efforts to assimilate them into the Soviet

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 17-8. Thirty percent of all venereal disease patients were Soviet in the 1946 reporting period, although Soviets only accounted for 21 percent of the total hospital visits in that year.

³⁰ GAKO R59.1.3.27, no date [early 1948].

treatment regime. German and Soviet doctors had frequent clashes especially over the establishment of periodic official medical conferences, which served as a forum for doctors to improve their skills through the detailed investigation of differential diagnoses. The 1946 hospital report explained how conflicts lay in the fact that these conferences took place with “doctors of two different nationalities” because it was revealed that German doctors had a “fundamental difference” in their approach to the treatment of patients. German doctors, the hospital report explained, preferred the outpatient approach—that is, forming a diagnosis based on personal examination, without the consultation of modern, objective means of diagnosis (laboratory studies, x-ray technology and detailed collection of medical records, investigating incidents of fatality). Instead, the German doctors seemed to suffer from general routinization [*avtomatizm*] in regards to the treatment of patients.³¹ Although the Soviet doctors in late 1946 contemplated not including German doctors in their medical conferences because of the language barrier and differences in approach, the decision was made eventually to include them, “which turned out to be the right course of action,” because despite the various differences of approach, progress was being made as “the German doctors began to assimilate” Soviet standards of treatment. For example, the German pediatrician Dr. Erbsen had treated one patient for acute gastritis based on the symptoms, but “our Russian doctor,” finding blood in the stool of the patient, would have immediately sent it to the infection hospital to determine the proper diagnosis (in this case, dysentery). It was only thanks to the combined Soviet-German conferences, the report noted with a note of triumph, that doctors such as Erbsen became informed about Soviet policies.³²

But despite these positive developments of assimilation through re-education, conflicts remained and throughout the first two years of the hospital’s existence, administrators frequently blamed the German staff for failures in the hospital’s performance. In particular, the Soviet administration and medical staff were frustrated about the general German refusal to recognize the value of Soviet self-criticism; in the 1946 doctors’ conferences, for example, it happened that in the first week, it was only the German doctors’ performances that were singled out for scrutiny. The Germans, not understanding the value of self-criticism, became angry, asking, “How is it possible to work when here German medicine and German doctors are so stringently criticized? We go to these meetings with a terrible dread.” Soviet doctors were then forced to explain to the Germans that they were not targeting the Germans specifically. Only when Russian doctors were criticized next time, did “the Germans appear more interested in taking part in the conferences.”³³ The old Soviet rhetoric (and practice) of internationalism seemed to be surviving in the hospital, at least among the staff, and the Soviets seemed to believe that their German colleagues might be successfully rehabilitated by example.

But by early 1947, relations with the German staff also began to deteriorate. The shift seems to date to a February 1947 investigation of the assistant administrative director of the hospital, Comrade Freidinov. Freidinov had been among the first Soviet administrators hired in October 1946 to “Sovietize” the Oblast’ Hospital; along with Head Doctor Kuz’menko, his task was to organize the hospital staff, oversee the financial and administrative operations, and supervise the repair of the facilities. While relations between the two

³¹ GAKO R59.1.2.23, January 1947.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

supervisors were good during the first couple of months of work, by early 1947, the two developed a personal conflict so intractable that it drew the attention of the Oblast' Civilian Affairs Administration. Although the ostensible purpose was to look into the conflict between Freidinov and Dr. Kuz'menko, the resulting investigation instead criticized the operations of the hospital as a whole, noting the poor state of facilities and inventory, shortages of food and supplies, and continuing disorganization of hospital operations.³⁴

One particularly glaring example was the food shortage problem: the hospital had received 72 tons of potatoes in October 1946, but by February 1947—at the height of the Winter Famine—they had already run out completely, meaning that food for the patients had to be diverted from the rationed supplies provided by the Oblast' Trade Department [*Obltorgotdel*]. According to the hospital record books, however, only 61 tons of potatoes had been distributed, leaving 11 tons of potatoes unaccounted for. But even though these problems continued to plague Soviet institutions (inefficiency and potato theft were daily occurrences throughout the oblast'), by early 1947, wartime destruction could no longer be called on to explain ongoing poor performance. The dynamic of self-criticism now demanded that *people* be held responsible, and Freidinov was thrown up to take the blame. Although the Civilian Affairs report could not definitively pin the blame for the shortages on Freidinov, it implied his guilt by noting that “measures were not taken to collect vegetables and potatoes in October, when there were great possibilities to do so.” This statement is unreasonable on a number of levels (Freidinov himself was only hired that same month; there were not “great possibilities” to collect vegetables in October, given that there was already a food shortage across the oblast'; the hospital did receive 72 tons of potatoes in October to start with), but someone needed to take the fall, and that man was Freidinov.

In particular, the investigation implied that these shortcomings at the hospital were the result of Freidinov's poor ideological constitution, which manifested itself in his unhealthy loyalty to the German staff. As of February 1947, the Civilian Affairs Administration report complained, of the 454 people on the staff, only 43 were Russians (the other 411 German), and only four Russians were working in the administration, despite calls to fill the hospital with Russian leadership. Even worse, all of the administrative work and internal hospital materials were prepared in German and translated into Russian after the fact; indeed, the entire “internal life of the hospital takes place [...] in the German language.” Freidinov, the report criticized, dealt with the question of strengthening the Soviet staff with disdain, justifying his decision only to hire Germans by claiming that “Russians swindle and steal more than Germans.” Freidinov supposedly even tried fire his newly appointed assistant, Iakolev, because he feared difficulties the German staff. Moreover, Freidinov was in “friendly relations” with certain Germans at the hospital, inviting them to dine and drink with him on more than a few occasions. Because of his good knowledge of the German language Freidinov “was able to get closer” to the Germans, which made it possible to entrench these Germans in their administrative positions.³⁵ By spring 1947, interactions with the German population had become a litmus test for political loyalty, and Comrade Freidinov, still speaking the old language of internationalism, had failed.

After Freidinov's removal, the atmosphere in the hospital changed entirely, and interactions with the German staff no longer focused on their re-education and assimilation

³⁴ GAKO, R297.1.107.128, 17 February 1947.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 128.

into Soviet practice, but on their exclusion. At that same time, the dynamic of segregation and marginalization of the German patients became more pronounced. But this unequal treatment could also not go entirely unnoticed; in an interesting twist, this same drive toward administrative efficiency, which marginalized the German population, also led to calls for increased accountability of the hospital's performance as a whole. Despite the unequal segregation of the hospital population and the gradual firing of the German staff (in some cases before Soviet staff could be found to replace them, causing labor shortages and poorer care for patients), the hospital administration, for its year-end accounting report to the Ministry of Health in Moscow, was still supposed to demonstrate improved rates of treatment success for the hospital as a whole.

The German patients, however, presented a particular difficulty for hospital accounting, because the overall measurable success rate was linked to two factors: fatality rates and average length of hospital stays. Because of the nature of their illnesses and the reduced access to supplies, German patients occupied hospital beds for a much longer time than their Russian counterparts, and because of the chronic, "untreatable" nature of some of their illnesses, they were much more likely to leave those beds by dying than by recovering. The total death rate at the hospital in its first reporting period (the second half of 1946) was 7.5 percent, well above the RSFSR average of 3 percent for that same period—out of a total of 5,974 patients, 451 died. Needing to account for the extraordinarily high death rate (itself far lower than the death rate of Germans outside the hospital), the author of the report noted that "a clearer picture would emerge" if the deaths were broken down by nationality. In those six months, only 40 Soviet citizens had died out of a total of 1204 patients; the other 411 deaths had come from the 4,770 German patients. The German death rate of 8.5 percent was indeed high, but the death rate for Soviet citizens was only 3.3 percent, very close to the RSFSR national average. The report justified the high rate of German deaths by noting that they were mostly "the chronically ill, invalids, dystrophy patients, tuberculosis patients," and many of them occupied the beds and drained hospital resources for a long time, reducing the turnover of beds.³⁶

The task of justifying the death rate for the next year, 1947, was much more difficult, however. Despite the dramatic restructuring of the hospital that year (the number of patients was reduced to only a third of those living in the "almshouse" of July 1946), the hiring of Soviet employees, and the ostensible "Sovietization" of the hospital's administration and treatment regime, the death rate for the hospital was noticeably *higher* than in the previous year. The annual report for 1947 noted 472 deaths out of 5,048 patients³⁷ and a total 10.5 percent fatality rate (versus a 7.5 percent total fatality rate from the year before).³⁸ Once

³⁶ GAKO R59.1.2.8, January 1947.

³⁷ The hospital treated less than half the number of patients in 1947 as in 1946; despite the similar numbers (5974 in 1946, 5048 in 1947), the 1946 numbers account for only the number of patients for the last six months of the year (since the official formation of the Oblast hospital).

³⁸ GAKO R59.1.3.1, no date [early 1948]. The numbers cited in the report vary; most likely the number of total patients includes not the total hospital population for the year 1947 but only the number of people admitted that year (which would exclude those admitted to the hospital in late 1946. The reported number of 5048 patients and 472 deaths, for example, would yield a 9.3 percent fatality rate for the year, as opposed to the 10.5 percent rate listed in the reports; the total number of deaths must include all patients in the hospital in 1947, while the total number of patients must refer to the total number *admitted* in 1947.

again, the report broke down the death rate by nationality, but the Soviet patients still suffered a 4.1 percent fatality rate, almost a full percentage point higher than the previous year, presumably due to the hardship of the Winter Famine. The German death rate, meanwhile was a dramatic 14.5 percent, much higher than the previous year's 8.5 percent. Only 22 percent of the total number of deaths at the hospital were of Soviet patients, while German patients constituted almost 78 percent of those who died (368 of the total 472 deaths).

Looking into the individual causes of death for 1947 is useful for understanding not only the different experiences of Soviets and Germans within the hospital, but also their different experiences of life and death in Kaliningrad. Despite the fact that over the course of that year the same number of Soviets visited the hospital as Germans, Germans constituted 78 percent of the total fatalities. Moreover, the causes of death differed dramatically. Surgery-related deaths, for example, accounted for about one-third of total deaths but two-thirds of all Soviet deaths; meanwhile, surgery deaths accounted for only 29 percent of German deaths. Of the 68 Soviets to die in surgery, 30 died within the first 24 hours of their arrival, mostly from gunshot wounds (12) or accidents (11). But of the 106 Germans to die in surgery, only 18 died in the first 24 hours. Fewer Germans came to the hospital because of accidents; as the report noted, "a majority of them were *distrofiks*" who died slowly, usually from festering wounds or complications of general infection.³⁹ In the therapeutic ward, however, the fatality rates were reversed; only 36 Russians died in the Therapy Ward (no total number of patients listed), versus 155 Germans (out of a total of 584). The most frequent diagnosis in the German Therapy Ward, again, was "dystrophy" (214 cases, 89 of whom died).⁴⁰ Overall, most of the German deaths occurred in the Therapy Ward (155), Surgery (106) or in Pediatrics (71).⁴¹

If the hospital had only bad news to report for fatality rates, it had somewhat better news to report about the staff. Soviet ("Russian") employees at the hospital began to replace Germans in 1947, and by the end of the year, there were 21 Russian doctors and 54 Russian nurses. (The report apologized, however, that "it was still necessary" to keep 7 German doctors and 42 German nurses on the books for 1948.)⁴² The report did admit, however, that the new Soviet cadres were inexperienced and "did not always have the opportunity to get all of their work done in the allotted time," and that the quality of their work was "sometimes unsatisfactory," meaning it was necessary to "fire certain personnel."⁴³ The earlier tone of socialist cooperation between Soviets administrators and German doctors was absent from the 1947 report; the authors (one of whom was Head Doctor Kuz'menko) blamed some of the discipline failures of the *Soviet* staff on the *Germans*, noting how "the peculiar conditions of work in the hospital with the presence of German personnel," among other factors, "created an environment for some disciplinary tensions," leading to bad discipline and laziness.⁴⁴ Cases of differential diagnoses were also still high at the hospital, but the report noted that German doctors had a greater rate of incorrect diagnosis based on the autopsies

³⁹ GAKO R59.1.3.23-5, no date [early 1948].

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 23, 44, 83.

⁴² GAKO R59.1.3.3, no date [early 1948].

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 5. The hard work of the hospital party organization and the administration had, the report assured, raised the discipline level to "a satisfactory state" by the end of the year.

than Soviet doctors (37.4 percent German versus 27 percent Soviet in the General Therapy Wards; 23.4 percent German versus 15.1 percent in the Surgery Wards) as a partial explanation for the discrepancy.⁴⁵ Although the new Soviet cadres were inexperienced, they were demonstrably better than the Germans.

For reasons of political expediency, the 1947 year-end hospital report could not blame the high death rate of the German population on oblast-wide food shortages (which would have assigned blame to the oblast administration or even to Moscow). The hospital reports from both 1946 and 1947 explained the high German death rates by describing the different nature of German disease, without seriously making an effort to combat the cause. By the end of 1946, German patients found themselves increasingly marginalized inside the "Oblast Hospital for the German Population," and soon the Oblast Hospital ceased to be *for* the German population at all. Whereas hospital administrators could originally blame the "primitive conditions" at the former German Central Hospital for poor performance, by 1947, the dynamic of "self-criticism" demanded that *people* be held responsible, and those people were both the German staff (as ideological contaminants) and the German patients (as physical contaminants). When identifying the cause for the high fatality rate at the hospital, explaining that the deaths were mostly Germans served as justification enough. "Dystrophy" had become synonymous with "German," and the German disease had become untreatable.

By the summer of 1947, the German patients were seen as untreatable, a drain on the resources of the hospital and a blot on its treatment record. Meanwhile, the German staff had become an ideological contaminant, untrustworthy, and an obstacle to the successful "Sovietization" of the hospital. Fascism had so contaminated the German population that the disease was deemed incurable.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 8-9. The report did note fairly that the majority of cases of differential diagnoses (for doctors of both nationalities) "did not have to do with the main diseases" but with unexpected rare diseases of the heart, lungs, and liver which had been undetectable despite the use of modern laboratory investigations. Presumably the chronic nature of the German diseases would have made exact diagnosis more difficult.

Exclusion

The German population was expelled from Kaliningrad two and a half years after the end of the war. The order came from Moscow on 11 October 1947, and the majority of Kaliningrad's Germans were resettled to the Soviet Zone of Occupation over the course of the following year. Although the final decision came from above, the drive to expel the Germans began in Kaliningrad, as the result of a process of exclusion that had already begun. The outcome was not predetermined, however. The two tendencies in Soviet socialism, calling for internationalist inclusion and nationalist exclusion, continued to overlap in Kaliningrad for three years. The dialogue that emerged in response to conditions in Kaliningrad incorporated both tendencies to varying degrees, and several factors converged to promote the nationalist rhetoric that came to dominate discussions about the German population and eventually led to their expulsion.

Immediately after the war, the internationalist tendency dominated the provisional military administration's handling of the German question. In the summer of 1945, meetings of the Political Division of the provisional Administration for Civilian Affairs sought to address the German question by focusing on the need for the Germans to be reeducated and for the Soviet military administrators, soldiers, and officers to demonstrate their moral uprightness as a living example of the path to socialism. At the Closed Party Meeting of the Civilian Affairs Administration in Königsberg on 20 June 1945, for example, speakers emphasized the positive role that Germans could play in improving their own future and discussed ways to incorporate Germans into productive labor to improve the dire postwar conditions. One speaker, Shedov, called on communists to act as role models in order to "demonstrate culture to the German population," and another speaker, Livshits, emphasized that communists should start the process by first focusing on themselves:

At this point in time, the outward appearance of officers, including communists, is not entirely good, and that has to do with the fact that some communists do not subject themselves or their subordinates to discipline. We communists need to fight to fulfill daily orders, thereby increasing labor discipline, including military discipline. We communists need to take the struggle to the German population to strengthen labor discipline.¹

¹ GANIKO 121.1.1.23, 21 June 1945.

In February 1946, during the first winter in Königsberg, in which many Germans starved because of food shortages, the head of the Königsberg Special Military District, Galitskii, and his assistant, Guards General Major Kulikov, issued a resolution on the “material-economic situation of the German population.” Galitskii and Kulikov rationalized the ongoing shortages by explaining that the harsh battles during the invasion, the mass evacuation of the German population, and the shortage of labor for reconstruction efforts and for agriculture in 1945 all contributed to the “general lowering of living standards of all strata of the German population.” The administration’s job, the report explained, was to reconstruct the economy as quickly as possible. The German civilian population, meanwhile,

are given ample opportunities to improve their material situation through honest and conscientious labor in reestablished factories and in agriculture. Already at the current time, tens of thousands of Germans, working honestly in industry and on farms, are receiving pay and a good supply of food; the material well-being of these workers and their families depends on the quantity and quality of their work.²

Speaking the language of labor and internationalism, Galitskii and Kulikov implied that those Germans who worked toward socialism could become socialist themselves as the beneficiaries of their own labor. But while provisional military administration had originally blamed food shortages on the destruction of the war, Galitskii and Kulikov’s report shifted some of the blame. Some “individual Germans,” they explained,

were still not freed from the influence of lying Nazi propaganda, setting the German population against the Soviet government and the Red Army. By sabotaging the implementation of economic activities of military and civilian authorities, this part of the population harms itself and hinders the implementation of measures to improve the economic status of the entire German population.³

The assignment of agency to the German population was a subtle shift of responsibility away from the administration. In other words, starvation among the German population was now cast as the result of ideological obstinacy, and the German population’s living conditions would only improve once all Germans had rid themselves of fascist influence.

In the first year, most party rhetoric continued to focus on the need to provide better guidance. In the summer of 1945, in the wake of the mass rape and spontaneous violence against the German civilians during the invasion, many party speakers used the familiar tools of Bolshevik self-criticism in order to smooth relations between victors and vanquished. A speech by one communist, Major Gran, during the provisional administration’s Primary Party Organization meeting in late March, 1946, emphasized the need for communists to live according to high principles. Communists, he explained, “come in contact not only with Russians, but also with the German population and should not forget about that,

² GAKO R332.1.1.25-6, 15 February 1946.

³ Ibid.

and should work so as not to discredit themselves.”⁴ Another speaker, Captain Veselov, similarly identified the problem of poor work ethic as a failure to educate.

The implementation of comrade Stalin’s instructions consists in the economic incorporation of the territory of former East Prussia and increased labor productivity of the German population. The distribution of the workforce needs to be reevaluated. Repatriates do not work very well because we are not sufficiently educating them about labor.⁵

Veselov, focusing on all civilian laborers—both German civilians and Soviet repatriates—considered each group to be capable of rehabilitation through proper instruction.

The provisional military government transitioned into a civilian government beginning in April 1946 with the foundation of Königsberg Oblast’ (after 4 July 1946: Kaliningrad Oblast’). The change in administration happened gradually, however, and tensions between party, civilian, and military organizations thwarted the new Civilian Affairs Administration’s efforts to assert control, while ongoing budget shortages and administrative confusions delayed reconstruction. The new oblast’ was not incorporated into the USSR’s post-war five-year plan, which meant that Kaliningrad continued to fall through the cracks of the Soviet budget. Even more striking was the delayed introduction of the Communist Party infrastructure to the new oblast’. Although individual communist cells operated within military units, in individual industries, and in the Civilian Affairs Administration, there was no overarching Communist Party chain of command in Kaliningrad until Oblast’, City, and District Party Committees were finalized upon the arrival of the Kaliningrad Oblast’ First Party Secretary, Petr Andreevich Ivanov, in March 1947.⁶ The decentralization of Communist Party cells in Kaliningrad before that time had the dual effect of both sending mixed signals with regards to the treatment of the German population, and leading to greater frustration about the inability of any individual organization to work out a solution.

Whereas the provisional Administration for Civilian Affairs had been established to oversee the affairs of the German population, the new oblast’ Civilian Affairs Administration increasingly understood itself as an administration, first and foremost, for Soviet citizens. A clear division was made between citizens of the Soviet Union and non-citizens from the beginning; in July 1946, when new identification papers were issued to everyone in the oblast’, Soviet citizens were given new passports or updated registration details in their old ones; Germans were given only locally-valid identification papers, printed both in German and Russian. The original draft of the order called for the Germans to be issued “passports,” but the word was later crossed out and replaced with the phrase “temporary identification” [*vremennoe udostoverenie*], reflecting the indeterminate status of the Germans in the new oblast’.⁷

At the same time that the new civilian government began its first efforts to incorporate the Germans into the Soviet system by integrating them into Soviet budgets and creating institutions for their social welfare and reeducation, some party members began heading in the opposite direction. In response to reconstruction delays, speakers at the July 1946

⁴ GANIKO 121.1.16.64-5, 21 March 1946.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 65.

⁶ Kostiashov, “Stalin,” 60-1.

⁷ GAKO R298.1.4.9-11, 12 July 1946.

meeting of the Primary Party Organization of the Civilian Affairs Administration, addressed ways to improve. One speaker, Comrade Chirkin, complained about failings among communists, but the message was subtly different from the previous one. Fusing patriotism and calls for revolutionary alertness, Chirkin explained that

Our [Communists] have recently slackened their educational work, do not study the principles of Marxism-Leninism. That has blunted their vigilance. Our party members and candidates have forgotten and have gotten used to people who are hostile to us. The Germans are working for us, but we are not actually controlling them. They take advantage of that and have a mercenary attitude toward work, do not fulfill their quotas. Our revolutionary vigilance has slackened. Control over hiring of the members of the German population must be thorough. We need to oversee their labor on a daily basis.⁸

A year after local communists had issued calls to “demonstrate culture to the German population,” Bolshevik morality in Kaliningrad focused on maintaining “revolutionary vigilance” against the Germans. And unlike Galitskii’s and Kulikov’s report from earlier in the year, Chirkin’s speech made no differentiation between good Germans and bad Germans; the difference was between Germans and Soviets. In Chirkin’s speech, Germans were no longer presented as the ideological or material beneficiaries of their own labor. Even as typhus epidemics and malnutrition debilitated the population, their low productivity became evidence of their opposition to socialist reconstruction.

Rhetoric and practice remained inconsistent, however. Even as efforts were made to integrate the Germans and to convince them of the superiority of socialism, the Germans were increasingly seen as part of the reason that socialism had not yet been realized. Several factors converged, beginning in the fall of 1946, however, to tip the scales gradually toward nationalism and exclusion. The first was the incorporation of Königsberg into the RSFSR, and along with it the process of renaming streets, parks, rivers, towns and cities with Russian names, which led to the growth of the idea that Kaliningrad was a Russian territory, in which Germans were now foreigners. The second was the introduction of standard Soviet Russian institutions, whose assignment it was to serve Soviet citizens and regulate their affairs. The development of these institutions increased the drive toward standardization and accountability, leading to a search for scapegoats to explain failure. Third, the centralized settlement campaign in the fall of 1946 radically altered the demographic profile of the oblast’, as the Soviet population quintupled in the second half of 1946. By January 1947, there were already 278,000 new Soviets in the province, and Germans went from being a strong majority to becoming a vulnerable minority, only a third to a quarter of the total population. Even as new programs were being created for the material and educational benefit of the German population, increasing competition for scarce resources perpetually left Germans last in line.

Attitudes toward the German population continued to harden in party rhetoric, and by the end of 1946, Germans were increasingly discussed as a collective, organized threat to the security of the oblast’. One of the first significant articulations of this new depiction came during the first Kaliningrad Oblast’ Party Activists’ meeting in December 1946. The meeting, held in preparation for Kaliningrad’s first staging of USSR-wide elections in Feb-

⁸ GANIKO 121.1.16.13, 10 July 1946.

ruary 1947, marked one of the first centralized gatherings of leading communists in the oblast' before the official establishment of the Oblast Party Committee in March. Responding to frustration about ongoing failures, shortages, and delays, Evgenii Rudakov, the head of the Oblast' MGB (formerly NKVD), turned the discussion to the hunt for internal enemies. Following a familiar script from the Soviet purges of the late 1930s, Rudakov cast the German population as a fifth column. He demanded increased vigilance during preparation for the elections, because Kaliningrad, he reminded his listeners, "differs a little from other cities" that had already staged them.

It differs because we find ourselves in somewhat different conditions from other cities in the Soviet Union. Those conditions include, first, [...] the fact that a pretty significant number of Germans live here—our open enemies, and following that, there could be all kinds of surprises. For that reason, we need especially to strengthen our vigilance during the preparations for the elections and raise security of city enterprises.

The kinds of surprises Rudakov had in mind included several forms of industrial espionage. Rudakov described the conditions at the milling plant, "where a large number of people from the German population" worked as a potential target for arson and "all kinds of sabotage that would be of interest to the enemy." As evidence, Rudakov pointed out that security at the plant was weak, and every day thieves were stealing food and supplies. One guard there (presumably a Soviet citizen, although Rudakov did not specify) had even conspired with "German crooks" to smuggle 10 sacks of white flour from the plant, and security was so lax that all kinds of Germans were able to wander the grounds. Rudakov insisted that food production sites in Kaliningrad were targets of terrorism, and that the enemy stood to benefit from sabotaging the Soviet elections. Rudakov made no mention that Germans who had been caught stealing flour and bread were starving to death, a fact that was well known to anyone living in Kaliningrad. He transformed the hunger-motivated petty crimes of individual Germans into a collective conspiracy to hinder the construction of socialism. What is striking is the banality of the crimes that Rudakov used as evidence. Theft and pilfering were rampant in Kaliningrad, but those crimes were not limited to Germans. By late 1946, however, the quotidian tactic for survival in Kaliningrad became a specifically German crime of sabotage against the Soviet state.⁹

Rudakov played on existing fears in Kaliningrad. Although relations between Germans and Soviet citizens improved dramatically by the end of 1946, when animosities had turned into friendships, and some friendships had even turned into love, many new settlers continued to fear violence from the German population, and increasingly so as the Germans became more desperate and destitute from hunger. In other cases, powerful rumors spread elsewhere in Russia that Kaliningrad was a dangerous frontier outside Soviet control. In the fall of 1946, for example, the Ministry of the Interior reported that potential new settlers

⁹ GANIKO 2.1.1.82, 5 December 1946; GAKO R332.2.3.21, 21 January 1946. In January 1946, a military tribunal convicted three workers, two of them German and one Russian, for "systematic misappropriation" [*khishchenie*] of flour and bread from the bread factory. When the Russian was asked to name his co-conspirators, however, he answered that he would "have to name almost all the workers at the plant." He saw one worker take five or six loaves of bread one night, but no one said anything because he had arranged it with the leaders of the workshop.

from Iaroslavl Oblast' had heard that Russians were killed by the dozens and were attacked by German bandits who stole all of their property; near Kalinin, rumors flew that Germans were preventing new settlers from staying.¹⁰ A particularly potent rumor claimed that Germans had hanged a Russian soldier on the outstretched arm of the Kaiser-Wilhelm monument on the anniversary of the October Revolution; on his chest, they had hung the defiant sign that "Königsberg was and shall remain!"¹¹ A mood report from the spring of 1948 blamed the Germans in part for Soviet workers' desires to leave Kaliningrad: "a lot of discontent has been expressed," the report noted, "about the fact that [Soviet citizens] have to stand in the same lines with Germans. 'Our husbands,' say wives in the town of Ladushkin, 'died for our country, and now we have to stand behind these accursed fiends.'"¹² Fears also spread in Kaliningrad and among potential settlers elsewhere that the territory would not remain Soviet, and rumors grew as international tensions increased in the late 1940s.¹³ The police chief of Mordovian Autonomous Republic reported that several potential new settlers refused to be resettled Kaliningrad because they feared that they would find themselves in a battle zone.¹⁴ One of the engineers for the city's printing press claimed that even Aleksei Kosygin, the Soviet Minister overseeing Kaliningrad's development, had admitted he was openly hesitant about dedicating resources to Kaliningrad because it might eventually end up back under German control.¹⁵

Despite these fears of crime and sabotage, however, there is little evidence that the Germans posed any conspiratorial threat. Although many of them harbored strong resentments, Germans in Kaliningrad were generally marked by their *lack* of resistance, either organized or individual.¹⁶ Even German children learned to adapt to their status as an underclass, learning not to react or defend themselves when Soviet children became angry with them, threw rocks, or cursed at them as fascists.¹⁷ Crime reports from 1946 and 1947 confirm this general passivity, and there were very few documented cases of violence or theft by Germans against Soviet citizens. Over the course of 1946, twice as many crimes were reported against Soviet citizens than against German victims, but Germans were rarely named as the perpetrators. German victims, fearing entanglement with the state and sensing the general futility of appealing to the system, reported crimes far less frequently, and violence against them was underreported. In crimes against Germans that were reported, the victim often died as a result of brutal force: Germans were found murdered in their apartments so that the perpetrator could steal their property, usually clothing, bed linens, and kitchen utensils. When Germans themselves were arrested, it was almost invariably for theft; their primary "anti-state" and "counter-revolutionary" crime was stealing potatoes.¹⁸

¹⁰ Kostishov, "Russen und Deutsche," 163; GARF R9479.1.304.99, 208-9.

¹¹ Kostishov, "Obratnichestvo," 217; GAKO R293.11.9.55.

¹² GANIKO 2.1.42.7, 11 March 1948.

¹³ For fears of capitalist encirclement in the Soviet Union, see Zubkova, *Russia*, 83-6.

¹⁴ Kostishov, "Russen und Deutsche," 163; GARF R9479.1.304.40.

¹⁵ GANIKO 1.1.58.3.

¹⁶ Kibelka, *Ostpreussens Schicksaljahre*, 189. The historian Ruth Kibelka attributes the passivity to the loss of hope among the German population that the region would be returned to Germany. But German resistance, or the lack thereof, would have been based not on organized resistance against Soviet rule, but on individual resistance to the living conditions they experienced over the next three years.

¹⁷ Kostishov, "Russen und Deutschen," 167.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 165-6.

After the December 1946 meeting of the Party Activists, the full establishment of Soviet Communist Party institutions came in March 1947 with the appointment of Petr Andreevich Ivanov as Kaliningrad's First Secretary of the Oblast Party Committee. Ivanov arrived from Leningrad in March 1947, and was shocked about conditions in the borderlands of socialism. Compared to elsewhere in the Soviet Union after the war, very little had been done to reconstruct the cities, resurrect agriculture, or rebuild the economy. Tens of thousands of Germans were starving, many of them dying on the streets in plain view. New settlers, complaining about poor living conditions, were fleeing the province as quickly as they could. Existing industries were failing consistently to meet any targets for production. The party and state had little control over the populace, and relations between the civilian government and the military were tense. The army, occupying the best land, carried out military maneuvers and exercises, complete with gunfire, tank attacks, and trench digging, which gave the impression that a new World War was being waged against the land. Over the course of these drills, crops were spoiled, cattle stolen or killed, haystacks burnt, and sometimes the drills even took place in villages where people were living. Ivanov complained to Moscow that the military generals looked upon him as if he were a precocious child who was trying to encroach on their "blood-won" rights and privileges.¹⁹

Frustrations only grew after Rudakov's speech at the December 1946 Party Activists Meeting, and they came to a head at the first Oblast' Party Committee Activists Meeting at the end of March 1947, less than a month after Ivanov's arrival. Rudakov, the head of the Oblast' Ministry of State Security (MGB), joined Trifonov, the Oblast' Party Secretary for Propaganda, to issue a vitriol against the German population even more passionate than at the elections meeting the previous December. Quoting Stalin for support, Rudakov and Trifonov cast the Germans as active threats to the security of the oblast' and constant saboteurs of any attempts to rebuild the city.²⁰ In particular, they attacked the new First Party Secretary Ivanov, their superior. During his speech, Ivanov, as a newcomer to Kaliningrad, had made the fateful mistake of referring to the Germans in the old internationalist mode. Rudakov and Trifonov accused Ivanov of going soft on the Germans, and presented him as being inept at dealing with Kaliningrad's problems. Ivanov sounded shaken, but reminded Rudakov and Trifonov that the fate of the German population was an issue not for Kaliningrad, but for Moscow to decide.²¹

Rudakov and Trifonov, as the local representatives of the two of the most important ideological institutions in Kaliningrad, the Ministry for Internal Affairs and the party's Propaganda Department, had already begun their own expulsion campaign behind the scenes. The coalescence of anti-German rhetoric at the Party Activists meeting in December, 1946, coincided with worsening conditions for the German population during the Winter Famine, including mass death from hunger, increased crime, child prostitution, and twelve reported cases of cannibalism. Kaliningrad party officials began to write to Moscow in January 1947, citing German criminality as a negative influence on the moral constitution of the Soviet population.²² The first evidence in the Moscow archives of discussions among Kremlin officials appears in late January 1947, in response to reports sent from Kaliningrad.

¹⁹ Kostiashev, "Stalin," 61.

²⁰ GANIKO 1.1.26.38-9, 25 March 1947.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Arbušauskaitė, "Das tragische Schicksal," 16.

One representative from the RSFSR Council of Ministers, A. Shubnikov, wrote to the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Andrei Smirnov in early February 1947, pointing out the “utmost necessity for immediate decisions on a number of questions concerning the legal situation of the German population of Kaliningrad Oblast’ and the carrying out of political work among them” [underlined in original]. As Shubnikov wrote, recent discussions in the RSFSR Council of Ministers had revealed, among other things, that the Germans were apparently convinced that the oblast’ was only “temporarily occupied by the USSR” and that Americans and British were organizing the Germans’ transport from Kaliningrad in March 1947.”²³ Smirnov in turn wrote to Molotov, expanding on Shubnikov’s letter and casting the presence of the German population in Kaliningrad as politically dangerous. Over 100,000 Germans lived in Kaliningrad, and in some parts, “the number of Germans significantly exceeds the number of newly-settled Soviet citizens.” The Germans’ presence, Smirnov explained,

should be considered dangerous since the large number of the Germans living on the territory of Kaliningrad oblast’ is creating a mood of uncertainty among Soviet citizens, and among the Germans there is the impression that the Soviet Union’s occupation of this territory is only of a temporary nature.²⁴

Smirnov requested that Molotov appoint a special representative of the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Civilian Affairs Administration in Kaliningrad Oblast’ “to study various questions connected to the existence of a German population in Kaliningrad oblast’ and the incorporation of the oblast’ into the USSR.”²⁵

Germans themselves played no small part in calling attention to their precarious situation. In early 1947, numerous petitions came from the Allied Zones of Occupation and from Germans inside Kaliningrad to allow individual Germans to leave Kaliningrad to be reunited with their families further west, as the Minister for Internal Affairs Sergei Kruglov reported in correspondence with the Minister for Foreign Affairs Molotov on 31 January 1947. When permission was granted for a 286 Germans to leave, word spread among the expellee community in the Allied Zones, and soon requests began pouring in.²⁶ While no plans were made to resettle the German population as a whole, as many as 3,400 individual Germans were given permission to leave by the beginning of summer.²⁷

Meanwhile, officials in Kaliningrad construed these requests as evidence that the German population was hostile to the Soviet Union and constituted a threat. The head of the Kaliningrad Oblast’ Ministry for Internal Affairs (MVD), General Major Trofimov, had allied with the MGB Head Rudakov and the Secretary for Propaganda I.P. Trifonov to lead the anti-German charge among oblast’ party leaders. Trofimov wrote to the USSR Minister

²³ GARF A612.1.1.1, 1 February 1947.

²⁴ GARF A612.1.1.26, no date [spring of 1947].

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ GARF 9401.2.172, 44, 31 January 1947. GARF 9401.2.172.303-4. The Minister for Internal Affairs Kruglov wrote to Minister of Foreign Affairs Molotov explaining that several Germans had written from the Allied Zones, requesting that their relatives in Kaliningrad be allowed to return; at the time Kruglov supported the idea, but did not pose the larger question of eventual German resettlement. For two examples in the Kaliningrad state archives, see GAKO R246.2.13.12, no date [early to mid-1947]; GAKO R246.2.1.120-4.

²⁷ Kostiashev, “Vyselenie nemtsev iz Kaliningradskoi Oblasti v poslevoennye gody,” *Voprosy Istorii* 6 (1994), 187 [186-188].

of Internal Affairs, Sergei Kruglov, to describe the low capacity to work, high crime rates, cases of industrial sabotage, outbreaks of venereal disease, and the potential for espionage from German-Soviet cohabitation. Unlike previous letters to Moscow, Trofimov did not request that the ambiguity of the Germans' status be resolved or that questions about their political reeducation be decided. Instead, he declared that the Germans were a negative influence and expressly requested their resettlement to the Soviet Zone.²⁸

But nothing had been decided by the end of the spring, and it seemed that Moscow had forgotten about Kaliningrad's German problem. After Ivanov's difficult first two months as First Secretary of the Oblast' Party Committee, he wrote a desperate letter to Stalin on 28 May, 1947, which detailed obstacles to the reconstruction of Kaliningrad. Ivanov focused on Kaliningrad's special character to rationalize its failures in reconstruction and industrial output, requested Stalin's direct intervention. Other parts of the RSFSR, Ivanov complained, sent their dregs to Kaliningrad—the youngest, least qualified workers and cadres, many of whom were invalids or drunks. Continual low output made it difficult to reestablish industry, and looting by soldiers left the new oblast' with few supplies. Abandoning his earlier tone of internationalism, Ivanov adopted the rhetoric of those who had attacked him in March. He described the German population as enemies and obstacles to the construction of socialism, presenting hunger-motivated crimes as calculated sabotage. He pointed to the arrest of 700 Germans attempting to cross the border into Lithuania, obscuring the fact that they had gone to find food and implying that the border crossings were attempts to infiltrate the Soviet Union. Unlike Trofimov's bold suggestion to Kruglov to resettle the Germans, Ivanov refrained from suggesting his own solution to Stalin. Instead, he made the modest request that a commission be formed to study Kaliningrad's problems and form a plan for its future development.²⁹

The tone of Ivanov's letter was desperate in its honesty, but it turned out to be a grave political mistake. Stalin summoned Ivanov to Moscow for a personal meeting, where on 9 June 1947, the Politburo of the Central Committee met in private to discuss the letter. Afterwards, Ivanov was invited into the room, along with Kaliningrad Oblast' Executive Committee Director and Head of Civilian Affairs Borisov and the Oblast' Party Committee Personnel Secretary S.A. Brovkin, where they met with Stalin and the Politburo for an hour.³⁰ Meanwhile, a committee was formed by the head of the Council of Ministers' Bureau for Trade and Light Industry, Aleksei Kosygin, to investigate the economic development of Kaliningrad Oblast. The committee soon arrived in Kaliningrad, where they stayed for the next week. Ivanov remained in isolation during that week.³¹ On 18 June 1947, the eve of the summary meeting of the committee before the Oblast Party Committee, Ivanov reportedly shot himself with his own pistol. At the meeting the next morning, Kosygin, with no mention of the incident, swiftly appointed Vladimir Vasil'evich Shcherbakov, who had served as the Chairman of the Central Committee in Lithuania, as the new First Secretary of the Kaliningrad Oblast' Party Committee.³²

²⁸ Arbušauskaitė, "Das tragische Schicksal," 16.

²⁹ GANIKO 1.1.62.4-9, 28 May 1947.

³⁰ "Posetiteli kremlevskogo kabineta I.V. Stalina" *Istoriceskii arkhiv* 4 (1996), 14, cited in Kostiashev, "Stalin," 62.

³¹ Kostiashev, "Stalin," 62.

³² *Ibid.*, 63.

The result of Kosygin's visit was a series of resolutions, signed into effect by Stalin on 21 June 1947 as the "Stalin Plan." The plan included 150 pages of guidelines for the development of Kaliningrad Oblast' in 1947–1948 (in some sectors, till 1950), promising an impressive 700 million rubles of support for the development of the economy, including ship building, paper production, amber mining, fishing, energy, transport, and agriculture.³³ According to reports from contemporaries, the roads to Kaliningrad were soon clogged with new combines, tractors, and farming equipment heading to collective farms, and local news and radio programs bragged about the wealth of supplies and teams of new specialist workers arriving daily to the city. The enthusiasm was short-lived, however, and by the end of 1947, the familiar problems of disorganization and bottleneck shortages reemerged to hinder reconstruction.³⁴ The Stalin Plan had led to increased funding for Kaliningrad, but also higher targets for reconstruction and industry to match. When it became clear that neither Kaliningrad nor Moscow could fulfill the ambitious goals, the matter was quietly hushed and soon forgotten. The fate of the First Party Secretary Ivanov served as a lesson to Kaliningrad's future leaders, however. From that point on, Shcherbakov and other party leaders handled themselves delicately, suppressing the true state of affairs when reporting to Moscow. The "Stalin Plan" was the last special attention Stalin gave to Kaliningrad in his lifetime. After the "Stalin Plan," Kaliningrad was left, at least for the next several years, on its own again.³⁵

The announcement of the plan hastened the process of using the German population a scapegoat for failure. Increasingly over the course of 1947, and even more after the announcement of the Stalin Plan, party members and the heads of individual organizations called for the replacement of German workers with Soviet workers, and in the absence of measurable economic productivity, the elimination of Germans from the workforce became a benchmark for measuring Kaliningrad's successful Sovietization. The first session of the Kaliningrad City Soviet in December 1947, for example, celebrated the greatest victory in healthcare in the city, not as the supply of new medicine or improved treatment (indeed, most of the session was spent discussing continuing inefficiencies), but the replacement of German medical personnel with "Russians."³⁶ By November of that year, there were no longer any Germans working at Shipbuilding Plant 820, the former Schichau.³⁷ Yet even though Germans became scapegoats for the failure of Kaliningrad to meet the requirements

³³ Ibid., 63–4; Iu. V. Kostiashev, "Kaliningradskaia Oblast' v 1947–1948 gg. i plany ee razvitiia," *Voprosy Istorii* 2008, Nr. 5, 109–11. The plan provided for the establishment of 178 industrial enterprises, the reconstruction of German rail lines according to Soviet standard track width, the reconstruction of sewage systems, the establishment of a fishing fleet, guidelines for the construction of housing, public buildings, and roads; plans for the construction and expansion of public works for gas, telephone, and radio service; plans to send 20,000 families to the oblast' to work in agriculture, and increased food rations for workers. The most thorough paragraph of the plan outlined the secret seventh point of the decree, which supplied extra rations and supplies specifically to Kaliningrad's administrative elite.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Kostiashev, "Stalin," 64; GAKO R19.1.6.94–6, 15 August 1947. Local news reports on the radio and in *Kaliningradskaia Pravda* throughout 1947 and 1948 featured frequent vignettes about hard workers supplying residents with new services, and invariably highlighted slated shipments of new resources and employees to the oblast'. A report from mid-August 1947 boasted 20 new buses, communal bathing facilities, and hair salons.

³⁶ GAKO R216.1.2.5–13, 30 December 1947.

³⁷ GAKO R180.1.26 [entire folder], 1 November 1947.

of the new Stalin Plan, their absence, too, became a scapegoat for poor performance. In 1948 and 1949, a number of annual industrial reports rationalized failure to fulfill the plan by referring to the large numbers of workers who had left the oblast'. The Shipbuilding Plant, in particular, had low rates of production—only 41.8 percent of the yearly plan.³⁸

Germans had been cast as contaminants and as saboteurs, but it was not until the fall of 1947 that discussions of the German problem fused fully with the Soviet-wide emergent rhetoric of “capitalist encirclement” and “bourgeois infiltration.” The shift came at a meeting of the city’s Komsomol Activists in mid-September 1947, in response to the public reprimand of two cancer researchers, Nina Kliueva and Grigorii Roskin, in June, 1947, for allegedly allowing secret Soviet research to be revealed to the Americans.³⁹ While not convicted of a crime, the researchers were reproached for having been insufficiently patriotic. In a closed letter from July 1947, the Central Committee encouraged the ruling to be discussed in institutions throughout the Soviet Union, signaling a turn toward heightened patriotism and anti-western vigilance as a part of the larger *Zhdanovshchina* of the early Cold War. At the Komsomol Activists meeting in Kaliningrad, the Oblast Party Committee Secretary for Propaganda, Trifonov, used the charges against Kliueva and Roskin to incorporate his previous attacks on the German population into the broader context of the incipient Cold War. Kaliningrad, as a peculiarly-situated border oblast', he asserted, needed to serve as a Soviet outpost of pure socialism against the rising capitalist tide. But threatening that mission, he argued, were the large numbers of outsiders—Soviet repatriates and Germans—contaminated during the war with false ideology and misled by the superficial appeal of bourgeois comforts.

It means, finally, that, before, during, and after the war, our people found themselves abroad, but not all of these people understood what they saw there. And some of them are ready to bow before bourgeois comforts, and here in the oblast', on territory which not long ago (just two years ago) was bourgeois territory, this worship of bourgeois comforts is in full force.⁴⁰

By the Komsomol Activists' meeting of September 1947, all talk of performing ideological work among the German population had ceased. The party's job was now to protect Soviet citizens from the German—now cast as bourgeois—contamination. This contamination was not only ideological, but physical.

There is no need to be specific about certain facts, since they are common knowledge. Here in our oblast' there are many cases of cohabitation and friendships between our Russian people, even some of our comrades, with German men and women. That fact bears witness to the elementary betrayal of interests of one's Russian nation, interests of one's country. This is tantamount to forgetting that the people with whom some representatives of our

³⁸ GAKO R180.1.10.58, 13 January, 1948. In January 1948, a report about the industrial output for 1947 to the GosPlan SSSR for Kaliningrad Oblast' discussed various deficiencies in production by referring vaguely to the high number of workers who left the oblast' in 1947, particularly those who left in November (a implicit reference to the German population).

³⁹ Zubkova, *Russia*, 120-1; Nikolai Kremontsov, *The Cure: A Story of Cancer and Politics from the Annals of the Cold War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 115-33.

⁴⁰ GANIKO 197.1.31.166, 16 September 1947.

institutions, including the party, form such close relationships are people of a hostile ideology.⁴¹

Trifonov declared that the party needed to increase its diligence in fighting the sources of potential contamination, including such seemingly innocuous things as German street signs, wall placards, and any traces of the city's German past (not only the nefarious signs of "Entrance for Jews Prohibited," but also the apparently innocent ones, such as "Hans Hecker, Public Prosecutor). "Take the matter into your hands," Trifonov said, and "wipe out the Prussian spirit from this land once and for all." A voice from the audience agreed, "Yes, Comrade Trifonov, we will do it."⁴²

The drive to rid Kaliningrad of Germans coincided with efforts to rid Kaliningrad of all former traces of Germanness and the "Prussian spirit" from the landscape. The discourse infused not only closed party meetings, but all public governmental meetings, with mundane discussions of municipal services taking on increasingly ideological tones. At the Second Session of the Executive Committee of the Kaliningrad City Soviet in February, 1948, discussions about sewage veered into talks about a different kind of contamination, when one member, A. Ia. Burakov, interjected that the most important sanitation of the city should be *political*. In reply to a speech by Comrade Serov about public health and hygiene, Burakov reminded the audience that part of the effort to transform Kaliningrad into "one of the bright and cultured cities of the Soviet Union" was to remove any trace of Germanness from the city's outward appearance.

How can we talk about improving city services and not mention the city's external appearance, which we have not done virtually nothing to change. In fact, comrades, wherever you go, you see reminders of fascist Prussia. How many signs, plaques, and emblems do we have with Nazi swastikas all over the city? True, some citizens are trying to learn German from these signs and street signs, but it's not really possible. I think it's time that we remove all of this junk and throw it on the garbage heap. We don't need them and don't use them—the city is Russian, and therefore the signs and street signs should be Russian. [...] And we, comrades, have the power to clear away all of it.⁴³

Four years later, another party speaker pointed out that there were still numerous German signs and scripts across the city and the oblast'.⁴⁴ The past—and the West—proved more difficult to purge than Comrade Burakov had imagined.

⁴¹ GANIKO 197.1.31.171, 16 September 1947.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ GAKO R216.1.2.91, 14 February 1948.

⁴⁴ GANIKO 1.11.17.109f, 30 May 1952.



*Soviet children pose with fallen Nazi emblem, late 1940s.*⁴⁵

Beyond ideology, continuing shortages of funds, labor, and supplies hindered the efforts to improve the material and ideological condition of the German population. Official incentives to encourage socialist work discipline among the German population were often scaled back, either due to shortages that made offering the incentives impractical, or (especially later) because publicly rewarding individual Germans was politically dangerous. Food remained always in short supply, and the hunger-motivated crimes of the German population seemed to validate the rhetoric that the Germans were hostile to the Soviet Union. Schools, orphanages, and hospitals were always understaffed, underfunded, and increasingly marginalized over the course of 1947. The activities of the Anti-Fascist Club (renamed the “German Club” already by December 1946, a back-slide from its original ideological purpose and a tacit recognition of the precedence of nationality over ideology or class) had to be scaled back because there were not enough trustworthy people (Soviets) in the oblast’ who could speak German to do the cultural-ideological work among the population. Because there were not enough resources, the oblast’-wide club only had branches in

⁴⁵ Photo posted to Kenig.Ru Kaliningrad city history forum, photographer unknown, <http://forum.kenig.org/download/file.php?id=4739&mode=view> (accessed 13 August 2013).

Kaliningrad, meaning that only half of the Germans living in the oblast' had consistent access to its events and resources.⁴⁶ Most importantly, the arrival of new Soviet settlers meant that an increasing number of Germans were pushed out of their jobs—their only legal means of procuring food rations—to make way for new Soviet employees.

The shift toward vigilance against Germans and the threat of contamination by Germanness did not mark the end of the internationalist-liberationist impulse to see the German population as potential beneficiaries of socialism however. To surviving Königsbergers, the liberationist rhetoric might have seemed like empty sloganeering, but its continued use at the height of the xenophobic campaign is significant. Although anti-German rhetoric had become a consistent feature of the oblast' city and party meetings, the actual treatment of the German population still incorporated overlapping, often inconsistent tendencies of inclusion and exclusion, both of which were inherent in postwar Soviet socialism. Even after the summer of 1947, the local government continued to enact policies designed for the benefit of the German population and based on the assumption that they were capable of being redeemed. Even amidst the increasing political, material, and ideological marginalization of the German population in 1947, however, local organizations continued to make pleas for funds to expand services for the German population. The *Neue Zeit* newspaper only came into publication in August 1947, at the height of anti-German rhetoric and just two months before the order was issued for resettlement, and the paper continued operation until the last mass resettlement was finished in November 1948.⁴⁷

Even the highest Kaliningrad officials had no foreknowledge of the expulsion order, and after silence from Moscow in the late summer of 1947, began to revive their efforts to incorporate the Germans into the system. Little more than a week before the order was announced, the Oblast' Head of Civilian Affairs Borisov and the First Secretary of the Oblast Party Committee Shcherbakov sent letters to Moscow requesting supplies for schools, orphanages, and daycares, referring specifically to the dire need of supplies for German orphanages. Borisov and Shcherbakov gave no indication that they anticipated that the Germans would be leaving; they even requested more German-speaking teachers to teach specialized subjects in German middle schools, and requested more food for German orphans.⁴⁸ Even after the first waves of expulsion, when it had already become clear that the segment of the German population would be expelled after the 1948 harvest, the Secretary of the City Party Committee, Bulgakov, wrote to the Prisoner of War GUPVI MVD SSSR explaining the important pedagogical role of Kaliningrad's Anti-Fascist Club in carrying out important work among the German population. Bulgakov requested more literature to be sent to the club from the POW camps to help with the lecture groups, "given the importance of the club's task of providing political education in the spirit of democratic consciousness to the German population in the oblast', encouraging a friendly attitude toward the USSR."⁴⁹

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⁴⁶ GAKO R289.7.7.14, no date [December 1946].

⁴⁷ GARF R9425.2.112.147, 23 October 1948.

⁴⁸ GAKO R291.1.110.40-1, 1 October 1947.

⁴⁹ GANIKO 2.1.42.3, 23 January, 1948.

The NKVD secret order to resettle Kaliningrad's Germans to the Soviet Zone of Occupation came on 11 October 1947. The timing was no coincidence, coming less than three weeks after Zhdanov's speech in Poland, "On the International Situation," at the moment of the creation of the Cominform. The speech, co-authored with Stalin, unveiled a new political line for the Communist Party and a radical shift in Soviet foreign policy by formally proclaiming that the world had been divided into two camps, the anti-imperialist democratic camp, led by the Soviet Union, and the anti-democratic imperialist camp, led by the United States. In Eastern Europe, this shift launched new hardline policies leading to single-party communist control and Sovietization.⁵⁰ In Kaliningrad, the speech was read aloud in party meetings across the oblast' during the period of the first expulsion, from 17 to 31 October 1947 and it was after that time that the anti-German rhetoric in Kaliningrad began to be discussed consistently in terms of imperialism and capitalist encirclement.⁵¹

During subsequent party meetings, evidence of a party member's contact with members of the German population, even from long before, was increasingly deployed as a litmus test for political reliability. Those who had made the mistake of having shown sympathy for Germans, having gone soft, or (worst of all) having cohabitated with them, were singled out in a local manifestation of Zhdanov's anti-cosmopolitan campaign. Over the course of a few meetings in November and December of 1947, a number of individual communists were publicly ridiculed for "having gotten close to Germans," and speakers at party meetings now presented the German population as a unified threat, drawing attention to the fact that there still over "800 former members of the NSDAP," and even suspect international organizations still in operation (the speaker was referring to the order of Lutheran sisters working as nurses at the hospital and the continuing existence, under the protection of the law on religious freedoms, of a number of Lutheran and Catholic churches).⁵² On 13 November, the NKVD reported to Moscow about the capture of two Canadians five kilometers across the border into Kaliningrad—they claimed to have made a wrong turn during a diplomatic mission between Olsztyn and Gdansk, but their ill-timed appearance only confirmed suspicions of international conspiracy.⁵³

Germans began to hear rumors of their impending resettlement in the spring of 1947,, at the same time that a few hundred Germans had been allowed to leave Kaliningrad to be reunited with their families. The Lutheran minister Hugo Linck told an NKVD agent [MVD: Linck uses the old term] that the Germans wanted to leave Kaliningrad because of their poor living conditions, and the agent seemed genuinely surprised that so many Germans wanted to go.⁵⁴ Many Germans recalled surprise on the part of Soviet officials that they wanted to leave; expellees from Tapiiau (Gvardeisk) later also expressed their exasperation that local officials feigned surprise that Germans did not want to be part of the "Soviet paradise" (a term that had also been used with irony in Nazi Königsberg).⁵⁵ When the teen-

⁵⁰ Geoffrey Roberts, *The Soviet Union in World Politics: Coexistence, Revolution and Cold War, 1945–1991* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 25-7.

⁵¹ GANIKO 1.1.58.17, October 1947; GANIKO 2.1.12.4, 23 October 1947; GANIKO 2.1.12, 23-24 October 1947; GANIKO 2.1.2.69-71, 15-16 November 1947.

⁵² GANIKO 2.1.2.69, 15-16 November 1947.

⁵³ GARF R9401.2.174, 13 November 1947.

⁵⁴ Linck, *Königsberg*, 129.

⁵⁵ *Dokumentation*, vol. II, 857, cited in Hoppe, *Auf den Trümmern*, 29.

age women Käthe Hielscher went that spring to be registered for a new work permit, the Soviet officials at the registration office told her that there were plans for the Germans to leave Kaliningrad soon. After years of rumors promising the imminent arrival of Swedish ships and Red Cross missions, she heard the news with skepticism.

At first we thought we hadn't understood correctly. None of us had learned Russian. The antipathy to this harsh language is too great. And that is the little wave of national pride that has stayed with us. No, we despise this language down to the deepest abyss, and the "nix verstehen" had gotten us out of some of the most terrible situations. But we allow ourselves to understand more and more that it is true: We will soon be allowed to leave Königsberg.

That glimmer of hope, Hielscher writes in her memoir, gave the strength to the city's remaining German population to do everything they could to survive until their resettlement.⁵⁶

Even those who harbored deep resentments, such as Hielscher, had to admit that conditions became better for many Germans by the summer of 1947. Although many Germans were being pushed out of higher profile jobs in government and industry, others, such as Hielscher, found better job security. German workers in the spring and summer of 1947 were filtered into vocational training, and Hielscher found that with her new career as a trained brick mason, she could buy plenty of food with her wages and have enough left over for a new pair of shoes (the first real pair she had worn since fashioning ersatz shoes while working on a collective farm two summers before).⁵⁷ Even as party rhetoric hardened against the Germans, the state continued its efforts to incorporate them. By the summer of 1947, it seemed to the Germans, as it did to Soviet officials, that plans for resettlement had been shelved indefinitely, and that Germans and Soviets would continue to live together in Kaliningrad. Hielscher recalled making preparations for the next winter with the intention to stay, and the teacher Lucy Falk wrote in her diary in May 1947 that "it does not look like we will be leaving Königsberg anytime soon".⁵⁸

Both Germans and Soviet officials were surprised when the order came suddenly on 11 October 1947, outlining plans for "the Resettlement of Germans from Kaliningrad Oblast' to the Soviet Zone of Occupation in Germany." On 14 October, the Minister for the Interior Kruglov signed the top secret deportation order Nr. 001067.⁵⁹ The First Vice Minister of Internal Affairs, Ivan Serov, oversaw the operation personally, after having supervised the internal deportations of Chechens, Ingush, Kalmyks, Crimean Tatars, and other groups at the beginning of the war. The Germans were counted for the last time, with a total reported population of 105,558. The first transport took place on 22 October from Königsberg, and subsequent transports were carried out on the 24th, 26th, 28th, and 30th, a total of 11,352 Germans resettled in October. An additional 10 transports took place in November. By 30 December 1947, Kruglov reported to Stalin, Molotov, Beria, and Kosygin that a total of 30,283 Germans had been expelled. The first to be resettled were invalids, orphans, and the elderly, but also those Germans living near border and coastal regions. The expulsion began

⁵⁶ Hielscher, *Als Ostpreußerin*, 144-5.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 158.

⁵⁸ Falk, *Ich blieb*, 116 [25 May 1947].

⁵⁹ GARF 9401c.12.229.104-6, 14 October 1947.

again in the spring of 1948, at the same time that settlement from the Soviet Union increased in pace.⁶⁰ According to official records, a total of 102,125 Germans were expelled in 48 separate transports (the actual number was certainly lower, with the inflated number obscuring the high death rate). According to official orders, each German family was allowed to take up to 300 kilograms of personal property, with the exclusion of special equipment and valuables not allowed by customs. (In practice, no Germans in Kaliningrad owned very much, let alone had the ability to transport it to the train station.) Each passenger was also supposed to be supplied with enough food to last 15 days, according to the ration norms set for industrial workers. The expellees reportedly received food worth a total of 3,082,000 rubles, and 17,647 people were given a total of 641,221 rubles to buy food on their journey if they had nothing to bring with them from home.⁶¹

Hielscher and her mother heard about the transports in October 1947, when all Germans were instructed to report to the nearest military command office to register for permission to leave. They were both passed over during the initial round of expulsions, and became nervous upon hearing rumors that the young and able-bodied would be kept in Kaliningrad or sent to work in Russia. They finally received their papers on 14 March 1948, with orders to report to the train station the next morning by 6:00 am. With not enough time to complete the paperwork to receive her final paycheck, Hielscher and her mother had to buy food for the trip with her mother's wages alone. (No German memoirist recalled receiving any of the 641,221 rubles supposedly set aside for them; some passengers died of malnutrition on the trip).⁶²

Germans from each train car, either heads of families or the most senior passenger, were instructed to write thankful letters to Stalin, praising the organization of the transport, although the letters were almost certainly dictated by the organizers of the expulsion.

We hereby extend our heartfelt thanks to the Soviet Union for the support during the time we lived under its leadership. We also thank the security organs for the support, and we have received sufficient food [for the journey]. With a great thank you, we say farewell to the Soviet Union. Wagon Nr. 10.⁶³

According to official Soviet records, forty-eight people died en route. German memoirs and oral testimonies insist the number was much higher.

The next order to continue the resettlement came on 15 February 1948, calling for the resettlement of all remaining Germans. Expulsions took place that spring and fall, resettling 67,000 more Germans to the Soviet Zone of Occupation. Finally, on 30 November, 1948, the Ministry of the Interior reported that the operation had been a success. Yet not all Germans had left Kaliningrad: specialists, particularly those working in industry, had to remain in Kaliningrad for three more years, until they were finally resettled in 1951.⁶⁴ And in 1949, a year after the last mass transport from Kaliningrad, another 1,384 "Kaliningrad Germans" who had been apprehended in Lithuania (many of whom had escaped to work on small farms there back in 1946-47 during the Winter Famine), were still being detained in camps

⁶⁰ Kostiashev, "Vyselenie," 188.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Hielscher, *Als Ostpreußerin*, 164.

⁶³ quoted in Arbušauskaitė, "Das Tragische Schicksal," 17-8.

⁶⁴ Kostiashev, "Vyselenie," 188.

in Kaliningrad until Stalin ordered their expulsion in September of that year; another order to seek out East Prussians in Lithuania came in January 1951, leading to the expulsion of another 3690 East Prussians from Vilnius to Frankfurt an der Oder.⁶⁵

МВД — БССР

РАВНЕНИЕ МВД ПО КАЛИНИНГРАДСКОЙ ОБЛАСТИ

1947 г. № _____ г. Калининград

С П Р А В К А

Выдана: фамилия Немцу / Немке
Имя _____
Год и место рождения _____

на что ему разрешается беспрепятственный переезд из Калининградской области в советскую зону оккупации Германии: к месту жительства
Маршрут следования: КАЛИНИНГРАД — ПОЛЬША — КИОРТИН
Совместно с ним следуют дети: _____

Справка действительна в течение 3-х месяцев со дня выдачи.

**НАЧАЛЬНИК УПРАВЛЕНИЯ МВД
КАЛИНИНГРАДСКОЙ ОБЛАСТИ
ГЕНЕРАЛ-МАЙОР**

(Трофимов)

Фото 33х
фотокарточка

*MVD registration form template for Germans leaving Kaliningrad for the Soviet Zone of Occupation, signed by the Head of the MVD, General-Major Trofimov, 1947.*⁶⁶

Slowly, and at first almost imperceptibly, Kaliningrad had separated itself from Königsberg, a process which had begun already in the first days after the war, long before the first Germans left the city. Wieck, recalling his confusion and amazement, noted how

More and more Russians were arriving in Königsberg, and we observed East Prussia becoming Russian. We hadn't really expected anything else but still, every day we were flabbergasted by what we saw. Strange clothes and uniforms, typical Russian wooden fences, the banners displaying the faces of Stalin, Lenin, Marx, Kalinin, and who knows who else. Large loudspeakers at practically every corner often emitted wonderful music as well as impressive songs of Russian soldier choruses, all of which visually and acoustically de-

⁶⁵ Arbušauskaitė, "Das Tragische Schicksal," 18.

⁶⁶ GARF 9415.3.1395.212, early 1947, reprinted in Brodersen, "Am Weitesten," 104.

fined the character of the streets, to the extent that you could believe you were actually living in the Soviet Union.⁶⁷

To the West German scholarly commission, however, the birth of Kaliningrad was not an international festival of socialism with banners and parades. The German population, according to the commission, watched as “the traits of an old European civilization disappeared, and the people saw their home developing into something strange and uncanny before their very eyes.”⁶⁸ But this turn to the “strange and uncanny,” however unsettling for the Königsberg’s last Germans, was the first development in Kaliningrad’s independence and the triumph, however brief, of a new civilization.

⁶⁷ Wieck, *A Childhood*, 166-7.

⁶⁸ *Expulsion*, 70.

Conclusion

Königsberg-Kaliningrad is unique in the history of the twentieth century as the only city to be claimed as its own by both the Nazis and the Soviets. Both revolutions sought redemption through the total refashioning of society: National Socialism, through race, and Soviet Communism, through class. This dissertation is about what became of these revolutions when they were applied to one cityscape and one group of human beings.

In both Königsberg and Kaliningrad, the local governments operated in conditions of semi-isolation as exclaves of larger states. The *Gauleitung* in Nazi Königsberg and the Civilian Affairs Administration and later Oblast' Party Committee in Soviet Kaliningrad maintained a high degree of autonomy, particularly during the first years of their rule. Both operated under severe financial constraints as a result of living in a periphery, and both appealed to the city's special outpost character in order to receive support from the capital. Despite radically different ideological claims, the combination of local events, particularly economic hardship and the legacies of a world war, combined with fears of contamination and the threat of encroachment to foster radical politics and the exclusion of internal enemies in both Königsberg and Kaliningrad. After allowing for local authority to dictate conditions on the ground, the revolutions' two leaders, Hitler and Stalin, each intervened personally into the administrative process, changing the course of events from above. There were significant differences in the way local prerogatives came in contact with national prescriptions, due to the different structures of power in Nazi and Soviet regional administration. When Hitler intervened to reinstate *Gauleiter* Koch to his dual position as *Gauleiter* and *Oberpräsident* after conflicts in East Prussia led him to be temporarily removed from power, he left the content of Koch's rule to Koch, trusting that the *Führerprinzip* would guarantee loyalty up the chain of command. Königsberg created its own economic plans and local initiatives to develop East Prussia as an agricultural settler outpost and a nexus for Eastern trade partnerships, but it also depended on Berlin's funding and international politics, and over the course of the 1930s, the city was compelled to alter its plans as it became Germany's launching point for war against its neighbors—a triumph of national ideology over local economic interests. In Kaliningrad, local administrators in the provisional Administration for Civilian Affairs and Oblast' Civilian Affairs Administration had significant autonomy in the first two years of rule, but with few resources available, they had little opportunity to create longterm plans or carry them out. Stalin's intervention into Kaliningrad's af-

fairs was more dramatic than Hitler's, leading to Ivanov's suicide (perhaps murder) and resulting in the dispatch of a Moscow committee to make a "Stalin Plan" for Kaliningrad Oblast'. As much as local party officials and state administrators had worked on the ground to rebuild Kaliningrad's economy, it was only with intervention from the highest authority that any financial or political decisions concerning the central budget could be made.

A defining problem in Nazi rule in East Prussia throughout the 1930s was the difficulty negotiating National Socialism's celebration of individuality and private property on the one hand, and the imperative to provide, first and foremost, for the welfare of the collective, on the other. In Soviet Kaliningrad, where the interests of the individual were more clearly understood to be met only through providing for the collective, the German population was deemed, partly because the state had been unable to provide for them, to be ineligible as members.

Both ideologies were complex and contradictory to begin with, and the tensions only increased during the war. For the Nazis, as the war dragged on, and especially as it neared the German border, the talk of defending Western Civilization, and not just the German nation, grew in importance. The end of the war signaled the collapse of European Civilization and perhaps of the German nation. For the Soviets, as the war went on, and especially as it approached the "lair of the beast" in East Prussia, Russian national heroism came to dominate over proletarian internationalism, culminating at the end of the war in Stalin's toast to the Russian people on 24 May 1945.

When the Soviets set out to transform the ruins of Königsberg into Kaliningrad, they were not sure what this meant in practice. The most fundamental question was whether the Germans, as the former enemy, were redeemable. This question could only be resolved within the logic of the Soviet administrative structure. One model, followed during the annexation of the Baltic Republics (Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia) was based on the foundational Soviet logic of incorporation along ethnic lines, with each people entitled to its own territorial unit in the expectation of eventual class-based redemption. Another model was the isolation and deportation of ethnic groups determined to be untrustworthy, as in the case of Soviet internal deportations (including the exile of Volga Germans) and postwar population exchanges in Eastern Europe (including the expulsion of Germans living east of the Oder-Neisse line). In the case of East Prussia, the key event was the incorporation of the territory into the Russian Republic, which excluded the creation of a fourth Baltic national republic. The possibility remained, however, that the Königsberg-Kaliningrad Germans might eventually become worthy of Soviet citizenship, either as an "autonomous" entity within the Russian Republic or as individuals cleansed of fascism.

Without clear direction from above, the new Soviet government of Königsberg-Kaliningrad treated the Germans as both former fascists to be controlled and punished and liberated civilians to be reeducated in the spirit of international socialism. Meanwhile, perpetual shortages of food, labor, and supplies continuing from the wartime invasion led tens of thousands of Germans to die from starvation and epidemic disease, up to forty percent of the population by the time of their resettlement.

The German historical commission set up in the immediate postwar period to publicize the victimhood of the Germans expelled from the territories East of the Oder-Neisse line was run by Königsberg historians from the Albertina, Werner Conze and Theodor Schieder. Both were students of the conservative nationalist (and Jewish) historian Hans Rothfels, and both remained at the Albertina after Rothfels' purge in 1934. They consoli-

dated a collective understanding of the treatment of the German civilian population in Königsberg after the war that presented the three years of German-Soviet cohabitation in Königsberg as a period of intentional retribution and calculated slave labor. According to this understanding, the Soviet government deliberately used the German civilian population to rebuild the city at starvation wages and expelled them when their labor was no longer needed. The standard Soviet story about the expulsion of the Germans from Kaliningrad, on the other hand, was that it was the delayed but already agreed-upon fulfillment of the Potsdam treaty; only in the mid-1980s did that story undergo any sort of revision. Another explanation, common in Russian historiography today, focuses on policies dictated “from above,” arguing that the expulsion of the Germans from Kaliningrad was dictated by Moscow as an ideological campaign against local wishes and in conflict with economic rationality.

Indeed, the expulsion of the Germans was not due to the influx of new settlers who pushed Germans out of their jobs; local authorities did warn that rapid expulsion would be detrimental to Kaliningrad’s economy because Germans still formed the majority of the work force in several major industries, and their expulsion beginning in October 1947 did create labor shortages and declines in industrial output. A letter written on 7 March 1947 by the Head of Civilian Affairs Borisov to the Council of Ministers warned that the rapid resettlement of the Germans would prove detrimental because Germans made up 48 percent of the work force of the oblast’, and up to 90 percent in some specialized industries.¹ In the aftermath of the first expulsions, the Oblast’ First Party Committee Secretary Shcherbakov complained to the Central Committee that Kaliningrad’s farms and industries had suffered a great shortage of labor, caused to a considerable degree by the resettlement of the Germans.² Historians of Kaliningrad have used this economic argument to claim that Moscow’s decision to expel the German population was against the wishes of the local administration; Bert Hoppe, commenting on Shcherbakov’s complaint, notes that “it would not be the last time that the interests of the state leadership in Moscow stood in diametrical opposition to the authorities in Kaliningrad.”³ But Hoppe’s argument fails to take into account the local dynamic of marginalization that was already taking place within Kaliningrad. Local organizations were desperate to find Russian workers so that they could lay off Germans; agencies in Kaliningrad used the Germans in the work force as scapegoats for not being able to fulfill the plan, only to use their expulsion as an excuse for plan underfulfillment in subsequent years. Marginalizing the Germans from individual industries, particularly health care, where contact between Germans and Russians had become highly charged, became a leverage tool as the party and city leaders appealed to Moscow for more workers in order to fulfill output plans.

Although the final order to expel Kaliningrad’s Germans came from Moscow, it was prepared locally. Local conditions, both material and ideological, affected the development of anti-German sentiment in Kaliningrad and made the central decision easier. The path was not predetermined, however. The continuing wartime tensions between liberation and conquest, between rehabilitation and excision, and between Great Russian nationalism and Soviet internationalism played out in local officials’ handling of the “German question” in

¹ Hoppe, *Auf den Trümmern*, 32; Kostiashev, “Vyselenie,” 187.

² Hoppe, *Auf den Trümmern*, 33.

³ *Ibid.*

Kaliningrad. While the provisional military administration treated the Germans as a conquered population, it considered them a population demanding filtration, rehabilitation and socialist reeducation. But the incorporation of the territory as Königsberg (soon after, Kaliningrad) Oblast' in the spring of 1946 led to a 'tipping of the scales' and resulted in heightened rhetoric of internal danger.

Several objective factors converged, starting in late 1946, to resolve the ideological dilemma and produce the local drive to expel the German population. The incorporation of the oblast into the RSFSR and the massive settlement campaign bringing in Soviet citizens from all over the Russian federation (as well as Ukraine and Belarus), led to the subtle shift in conception of the administration of Kaliningrad from a province perhaps for the German population to one for Soviet citizens understood as non-Germans. The incorporation of the oblast led to the introduction of several Soviet-wide institutions, increasing the drive toward standardization and accountability. Over the course of the first year of the oblast', the failure of the new organizations to fulfill reconstruction orders, reestablish city services, and increase industrial output according to dictated plans led to the need to explain failure, and gradually a discourse emerged in which Kaliningrad's German population became central in scapegoating the delays in building the Soviet Union's newest city. The Winter Famine of 1946-7 compounded the problem of shortages, leading to mass death among the German population, as the losers in the competition for scarce resources. The epidemic of disease and starvation that winter was seen by Soviet officials as a problem requiring a solution, prompting appeals to Moscow to decide the legal situation of the German population. The introduction and expansion of party organs beginning in late 1946 was especially influential in the development of this new approach. Only in the fall of 1947 did the local rhetoric of scapegoating the German population begin to fuse fully with the then-emerging Soviet-wide discourse of nationalism and xenophobia and cast the German population in Kaliningrad as a capitalist contaminant and an active enemy of socialism.

The great irony is that the Red Army conquered East Prussia in the name of international solidarity; Soviet Kaliningrad was modeled both locally and internationally as an anti-Königsberg: a socialist city that would rise from the ruins of fascism; a home where a "friendship of the peoples" would triumph over racism, and the land where freedom would defeat all forms of oppression. But, as *Kaliningradskaiia Pravda* explained in November 1948 (the month of the final mass expulsion of the German population), the victory in the war also had another meaning: the judgment of history over Prussian militarism and the final return of "ancestral Slavic lands back to their true homeland."⁴ The Soviets annexed Königsberg to replace the ethnic exclusivity of fascism with the internationalist ideology of socialism, but they erected Kaliningrad as a Russian national homeland, complete with a Slavic myth of origin and ethnic requirements for membership. Soviet Kaliningrad destroyed Nazi Königsberg, only to rebuild it on the same foundations.

How is it possible to reconcile the fate of Kaliningrad's Germans with that of the Germans in the Soviet Zone of Occupation? Unlike in Kaliningrad, where Germans lived as second-class citizens, were denied representation in city affairs, received slave wages (when they could find jobs), were increasingly marginalized, and were eventually expelled entirely, Germans in the Soviet Zone of Occupation were deemed liberated from fascism, and even those seen as indirectly complicit were put through an anti-fascist treatment program

⁴ *Kaliningradskaiia Pravda*, 17 November 1948.

on the path to becoming good citizens. One explanation is that it was only possible to trust those Germans who had been completely uncontaminated by the experience of National Socialism, i.e. the KPD émigrés who had spent the war years in Moscow and were sent on assignment to Berlin to build communism for the rest of the German people. But that answer is not entirely satisfactory; Kaliningrad, too, had its card-carrying communists among the German civilian population, but those Germans were not allowed participation in the organs of local government and functioned only as the propaganda lecturers for the city's feeble "Antifascist Club" (soon renamed the "German Club," as antifascism, too, became segregated along ethnic lines).

A better explanation may lie in the nature of the Soviet Union's nationalities policy, in which individuals could only be redeemable as part of a nation.⁵ Despite the internationalist rhetoric, any member of a nation whose "homeland" lay outside the Soviet Union was considered suspect—a potential traitor or saboteur based on the presumed pervasiveness of national loyalties. The shift in the Soviet administration's treatment of Kaliningrad's German population occurred shortly after the region was declared an oblast of the RSFSR, that is, a province of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic. Another factor, of course, was the onset of the Cold War and Stalin's anti-cosmopolitan campaigns; fraternization with the local German population, while necessary for good working relations in the first year of Soviet Königsberg's existence, became a liability in Kaliningrad and a political litmus test. By 1947, the Germans of Königsberg, as the active carriers of ideological and physical disease in Kaliningrad, could only be helped by expulsion to East Germany, where Germanness was the norm and "German fascism" was curable.

The ruins of the Königsberg Castle remained in Kaliningrad until the late 1960s, and the construction of a Grand House of Soviets did not begin until the early 1980s. The project, abandoned halfway through its construction because of budget problems and poor foundations (the skyscraper could not be sustained on weak marshy soil and former underground networks built beneath the castle), and became the embarrassment for Kaliningrad's residents after the collapse of communism—they voted it, only half jokingly, the ugliest Soviet building ever constructed, and found no shortage of symbolism in the fact that it remained unfinished, unwanted, and abandoned.

Talk about "ancient Slavic lands" faded into absurdity not long after Stalin's death, but anti-Prussianism did remain an important part of the founding myth of Kaliningrad, where East Prussia always remained the "lair of the fascist beast." In the decades after the war, Kaliningraders began to wonder about the civilization they had destroyed. In the historic center of the city, Kant's tomb and the ruins of the Lutheran cathedral on the Kneiphof Island served as a continuing reminder of the Königsberg that once was. As Polina Kaganova wrote in her 1972 poem, "On the Road to Berlin,"

Kaliningrad is not a Prussian city

⁵ See Yuri Slezkine, "The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism," *Slavic Review* 53, no. 2 (Summer 1994), 414-452; Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005); Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin, eds., *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin* (Oxford University Press, 2001).

You can't get to Königsberg from there [...]
...do you know, people, do you know
how our Soviet lieutenant
cried out to the fascists: don't shoot!
The great Kant is buried here!
And in that same instant as the lieutenant
[in a wave of fire...]
fell upon Kant's grave,
it became doubly sacred.⁶

Kaganova's reflection on the lieutenant's death at Kant's grave reveals the deep ambiguity that Kaliningrad Soviets felt toward the legacies of Königsberg. Thirty years after the war, it was a Soviet soldier who defended Kant, greatest legacy of Königsberg, from fascism.

⁶ Polina Kaganova, "Dorgoi na Berlin," *Zvezda* 2 (1972), 120.

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