

Moving West:  
German-Speaking Immigration to British Columbia, 1945–1961

by

Christian Lieb  
M.A., University of Maine, 1999  
M.A., Gerhard-Mercator-Universität, 2001

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

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**ABSTRACT**

Germans are among the largest ethnic groups, both in Canada as a whole and in British Columbia. Nevertheless, neither nationally, nor provincially, has this group received much academic attention, especially for the years between the end of the Second World War and the building of the Berlin Wall when about 200,000 German-speaking persons arrived in Canada. Based on the life stories of fifty German immigrants interviewed in British Columbia, published biographies, and archival records from Germany and Canada, this study reconstructs the conditions in interwar and postwar Europe that led to the mass-emigration of Germans in the late 1940s and the 1950s. It argues that this migration movement was not only influenced by government policies and the support of humanitarian organizations, but also by the existence of earlier settlement facilitating chain migrations to Canada. From the port of entry, the dissertation follows the immigrants' adaptation and integration into Canadian society. Though the vast majority of them did not speak any English, or know much about their adopted country,

except that it must be better than what they left in war-torn Europe, Germans are generally ranked among the best integrated ethnic groups in Canada.

Yet, despite this assessment, the picture emerging from the sources strongly questions the existence of a singular German immigrant identity in Canada. The distinct self-perceptions of German nationals and ethnic Germans based on their experiences in Europe during the Second World War created striking differences in their patterns of immigration and adaptation to life in Canada which are still discernible after over half a century of settlement in North America.

## **Table of Contents**

Supervisory Committee.....	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	v
List of Tables and Figures.....	vii
List of Illustrations.....	viii
Acknowledgements.....	ix
Chapter 1: Introduction and Historiography.....	1
Chapter 2: German diaspora communities in Europe and Canada, 1918–1939.....	28
2.1 Germany and Austria.....	32
2.2 German diaspora experiences in Eastern Europe between the wars.....	40
2.3 The German community in Canada before the Second World War.....	47
2.4 Sudeten German settlement in Saskatchewan and the Peace River.....	55
Chapter 3: Resettlement and Displacement, 1940–1946.....	60
3.1 Precedents of population transfers and expulsions, 1920–1945.....	61
3.2 Organized Resettlement Schemes of Ethnic German Groups, 1939–1943.....	67
3.3 Ethnic German Groups resettled to the Warthe District, 1940.....	70
3.4 Flight and expulsion of ethnic Germans and German nationals, 1944–1946...	75
3.5 Expulsions and Population Transfers from Eastern Europe, 1945–1950.....	83
Chapter 4: Postwar Conditions in Germany and the increasing Emigration Interest.....	92
4.1 German-speaking refugees in Western Germany.....	93
4.2 German emigration interests after the Second World War.....	110
4.3 Emigration fever and the transmission of information.....	118
4.4 Choice of Destination – Why Canada?.....	127
4.5 Discrepancy between interest in leaving and actual emigration.....	133
Chapter 5: German Government influence on migration.....	136
5.1 Emigration Policy in Imperial Germany and the Weimar Republic.....	137
5.2 Emigration Restrictions under Allied Occupation, 1945–1949.....	141
5.3 The Establishment of a West German Emigration Policy, 1949–1951.....	148
5.4 German-Canadian Negotiations on Migration.....	160
5.5 Germany’s attempts to influence emigration, 1954–1959.....	173

Chapter 6: Canada's immigration policy, 1945–1962.....	180
6.1 Canada's immigration policy in the early postwar years, 1945–1947.....	189
6.2 Opening the Door for German immigration, 1947–1950.....	203
6.3 Canada's assisted passage scheme, 1947–1957.....	214
6.4 PICMME / ICEM and other financial support for German migration.....	216
Chapter 7: Migration to Canada.....	227
7.1 Visa application procedure.....	230
7.2 Processing of Applications at Canadian Visa Offices.....	236
7.3 The Trans-Atlantic Voyage.....	246
7.4 Arrival and First Impressions of Canada.....	256
Chapter 8: Ethnic support networks in British Columbia.....	261
8.1 Accommodation.....	265
8.2 Employment arrangements.....	269
8.3 Informal support networks.....	282
8.4 Formal support networks.....	292
Chapter 9: Life in Canada – adjustment and integration.....	305
9.1 Failure and Re-Migration.....	306
9.2 Adapting to the way of life.....	314
9.3 Improving employment and upward mobility.....	324
9.4 Patterns of Integration.....	329
9.5 Marriage patterns.....	343
Chapter 10: Becoming Canadian?.....	348
Conclusion.....	366
Bibliography.....	378
Appendix.....	400

## List of Tables and Figures

Figure 2.1: Annual German emigration as an average per decade, 1871–1937.....	37
Figure 2.2: Immigration of German Nationals to Canada, 1922–1931.....	51
Table 4.1: German emigration from West Germany to Canada, 1953–1956.....	105
Table 5.1: German Immigration to Canada, 1951–1953.....	171
Table 6.1: PICMME / ICEM supported migrations.....	219
Figure 9.1: Total Immigration from Germany to Canada and Re-Migration.....	310
Table 9.2: Language retention of fifty German-speaking immigrants interviewed in British Columbia.....	338
Table 9.3: Marriage patterns among fifty German-speaking interviewees.....	344
Table 10.1: Acquisition of Canadian citizenship among Ethnic Germans and German Nationals.....	349
Table 10.2: Time elapsing between arrival in Canada and application for citizenship.....	350
Table 10.3: Self-Identification of Ethnic Germans and German Nationals.....	357

## List of Illustrations

### Maps:

Map 2.1: Place of Birth of German-speaking immigrants interviewed in British Columbia in 2005–2007.....	33
Map 3.1: Resettlements of Ethnic German Groups with areas of origin and destinations, 1939–1941.....	67
Map 3.2: Division of Germany at the Potsdam Conference.....	81
Map 3.3: Movements of German-speaking refugees and expellees in Central and Eastern Europe between 1944 and 1948.....	85
Map 4.1: Place of residence of later immigrants to Canada in 1947.....	100
Map 7.1: First Destinations of German-speaking immigrants in interview sample.....	260
Map 9.1: Location of Interviews with German-speaking immigrants in British Columbia, 2005–2006.....	347

### Photographs:

Picture 6.1: Papers for passage on MS Fairsea.....	221
Picture 6.2: Total amount of loan for Fallot family.....	222
Picture 7.1: Fallot Family taking a meal at the <i>Bremer Überseeheim</i> before embarkation, July 1953.....	247
Picture 7.2: Fallot family ready to embark on <i>MS Fairsea</i> in Bremerhaven, July 17, 1953.....	249
Picture 7.3: Pipke family posing in their Sunday best on deck of the <i>MV Beaverbrae</i> , July 1950.....	252



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## Introduction

In 2005 alone, 144,815 persons left the Federal Republic of Germany. In the German press, this number evoked comparisons to the last great wave of mass emigration in the decade and a half after the end of the Second World War when almost 780,000 Germans migrated to overseas destinations, with a peak of just over 90,000 in 1952.<sup>1</sup> As an article in the German news magazine *Der Spiegel* observed in the fall of 2006, “some were driven abroad by a sense of adventure. Others were fed-up with typical German habits, for example the tendency to invent rules where none are needed. Some were simply looking for a sunnier place. Often, however, the most important motivation to move is economic in nature: they do not see occupational opportunities in Germany and want to build a new existence in a place where their labour is still in demand.”<sup>2</sup> The prolonged economic crisis and high unemployment rates after the unification of Germany in the 1990s encouraged more German nationals to seek their fortunes in other parts of Europe or overseas.

My interest in the subject is personal as well as academic since I am part of this most recent wave of emigration from Germany. I came to Canada in the summer of 2001, originally as an international student and with no concrete plans to settle permanently in North America (though certainly aware of the option). Since then, however, I decided to

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<sup>1</sup> Alexander Freund, *Aufbrüche nach dem Zusammenbruch. Die deutsche Nordamerika-Auswanderung nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg*. (Osnabrück: V&R unipress, 2004), 394–396. The immigration and emigration statistics use different definitions of the term “German”. The numbers here represent those with German citizenship at the time of emigration (though not necessarily at the time of birth), while the number of foreigners emigrating from Germany during the same period was 710,300, mostly Eastern European displaced persons. Among those, however, were also thousands of German speakers who had not become German citizens at the time of emigration.

<sup>2</sup> Julia Bonstein, Alexander Jung, Sebastian Matthes, and Irina Repke, “Migration: Und tschüs ...” *Spiegel Online* October 30, 2006 (<http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/0,1518,445857,00.html>, November 2, 2006).

apply for immigration in 2005 and received my landed immigrant status at the end of 2007. In retrospect, a sense of adventure certainly played a part in my decision to apply for the History program at the University of Victoria, but more important were considerations with respect to my academic interest in German immigration to North America. Given the political climate there in 2001, the United States was not my first choice as a destination. In the four years between arriving in British Columbia and applying for landed immigrant status, I built friendships and adjusted to life in Canada. Inadvertently, this became the centre of my life while visits to Europe showed first signs of estrangement that could be described as mild cases of reverse culture shock.

In terms of my research, then, questions arose about the reasons for migration and the personal and external factors influencing the decision making process. Who exactly were the people leaving Germany in the postwar period? Why did they leave? And how exactly did they decide to come to Canada? Immigration statistics can reveal the places of origin, the numbers who came, gender, marital status, occupation, destination, etc. but they say nothing about personal motivations and expectations of these immigrants, nor about the difficulties of adjusting to a new social environment, in most cases without speaking the language or knowing much about the host society and the country in general. To approach these questions concerning the personal experiences of the migration process and integration into the host society, this dissertation relies strongly on a number of published biographies and more importantly, fifty interviews I conducted with German-speaking immigrants in British Columbia in 2005 and 2006.

The United States and Canada have long been among the most important immigration countries in the world. Among the millions of people who came to North

America in search of a better life and as refugees in the nineteenth and twentieth century were significant numbers from the German-speaking areas of Central and Eastern Europe. The story of the early German immigrants to Canada is fairly well known and Germans remained the largest non-British, non-French ethnic group in Canada from the first census in 1871 to the end of the twentieth century. During the last major emigration wave from Germany between the end of the Second World War in 1945 and the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961, over 200,000 German immigrants arrived in Canada, while Canada was the second most important destination, after the United States, and well ahead of Australia. This influx of German-speakers, however, has not received much attention in Canadian historiography.

Even before the Second World War, significant numbers of German speakers migrated to Canada. Yet, since the census data did not allow multiple ethnic responses or the answer “Canadian” until recently, these numbers do not reflect the actual size of the ethnic community, nor do they indicate that a majority of these interwar immigrants were actually born in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, while only a minority came from within the pre-Second World War boundaries of Germany. In addition, the negative stereotyping of Germans and internment of several thousand under the enemy alien legislation especially during the First World War meant that tens of thousands of persons with German ancestry declared their ethnic background to be Dutch, Swiss, or Russian in the census of 1921.

Scholars have studied a number of aspects of the German community in Canada including the reasons for the numerically low immigration to Canada from Germany

itself before the Second World War,<sup>3</sup> to general settlement patterns, and the impact of the First World War on German cultural life in Canada.<sup>4</sup> The interwar years, including the response of the German diaspora to Hitler's rise to power<sup>5</sup> and the later settlement of the Sudeten Germans in Northern British Columbia and Saskatchewan<sup>6</sup> have also received significant attention. To this point, however, Heinz Lehmann's 1930s study of Germans in Canada remains the most comprehensive work on this particular ethnic group, despite the noticeable biases of the time.<sup>7</sup>

Surprisingly, the significantly larger wave of immigration to Canada after the Second World War has not attracted nearly the same attention. Ron Schmalz' dissertation analysing the Canadian government's policies that facilitated the German immigration boom between 1950 and 1957 is the most detailed work on the topic to date while most

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<sup>3</sup> Jonathan Wagner, *A History of Migration from Germany to Canada, 1850–1939*. (Vancouver, Toronto: UBC Press, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> Art Grenke, "The German Community of Winnipeg and the English-Canadian Response to World War I," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 20, no. 1, (1988), 21–44. Grant W. Grams, "Der Verein für das Deutschtum im Ausland and its Observations of Canada prior to World War One," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 33, no. 2, (2001), 117–125. Gerhard P. Bassler, "Silent or Silenced Co-Founders of Canada? Reflections on the History of German Canadians," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 22, No. 1, (1990), 38–46. For studies with a regional focus, see Werner Bausenhardt, *German Immigration and Assimilation in Ontario, 1783–1918* (New York, Ottawa, Toronto: Legas, 1989); Gerhard P. Bassler, "The Enemy Alien Experience in Newfoundland 1914–1918," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 20, no. 3, (1988), 42–62; and Geoffrey Hayes, "From Berlin to the Trek of the Conestoga: A Revisionist Approach to Waterloo County German Identity," *Ontario History* 91, no. 2, (1999), 131–149.

<sup>5</sup> Art Grenke, "From Dreams of the Worker State to Fighting Hitler: The German-Canadian Left from the Depression to the End of World War II," *Labour / Le Travail* 35, (1995), 65–105. Jonathan F. Wagner, *Brothers Beyond the Sea: National Socialism in Canada*. (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1981).

<sup>6</sup> Jonathan F. Wagner, "British Columbia's Anti-Nazi Germans: The Tupper Creek Refugees," *BC Studies* 39, (1978), 3–19. B. A. Gow, "A Home for Free Germans in the Wilderness of Canada. The Sudeten German Settlers of Tupper Creek, British Columbia," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 10, no. 1, (1978), 62–74. Andrew Amstatter, *Tomslake. History of the Sudeten Germans in Canada*. (Saanichton, BC and Seattle, WA.: Hancock House Publishers Ltd., 1978). Margaret Drysdale, "Three Times Betrayed. The Sudeten Germans of Tomslake, B.C." (M.A. Thesis: University of Victoria, 2005).

<sup>7</sup> Heinz Lehmann, *The German Canadians, 1750–1937. Immigration, Settlement & Culture*. Translated, edited, and introduced by Gerhard P. Bassler. (St. John's, Newfoundland: Jespersen Press, 1986). The translation is based on two studies published in the 1930s, which are at least partly influenced by the nationalist and racial perceptions of the time.

publications on Canadian immigration policy hardly mention Germans.<sup>8</sup> Only two articles by Angelika Sauer investigate Canadian government policy with respect to Germans in detail for the earlier period from 1945 to 1952.<sup>9</sup> Finally, two important works on the topic appeared in German; Johannes-Dieter Steinert wrote a well-researched and comprehensive book from a German perspective covering the immigration policies of the three major destination countries, the United States, Canada, and Australia,<sup>10</sup> while Alexander Freund explored the circumstances and conditions of German emigration to North America after the end of the Second World War.<sup>11</sup>

However, the studies of Schmalz, Sauer, and Steinert remain focussed on government policies and do not provide a detailed analysis of how immigration regulations affected the experiences of migrants. Alexander Freund, in contrast, published a comprehensive study of German postwar immigration to North America based on over sixty personal interviews and primary research in archives in Germany, Canada, and the United States. The work skilfully examines and interprets the circumstances creating a massive emigration interest after the war, the actual application processes, and finally the immediate migration experience. In contrast to the studies mentioned so far, in this dissertation, I will use the fifty personal interviews with postwar

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<sup>8</sup> Ronald E. Schmalz, "Former Enemies come to Canada: Ottawa and the Postwar German Immigration Boom, 1951–57," (Ph.D. Dissertation: University of Ottawa, 2000) and his subsequent article: "A Statistical Overview of the German Immigration Boom to Canada, 1951–1957," *Deutschkanadisches Jahrbuch / German-Canadian Yearbook* 16, (2000), 1–38. One other short study is Wolfgang G. Friedmann, *German Immigration into Canada*. (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1952).

<sup>9</sup> Angelika E. Sauer, "A Matter of Domestic Policy? Canadian Immigration Policy and the Admission of Germans, 1945–50," *Canadian Historical Review* 74, no. 2 (1993), 226–263. Angelika E. Sauer, "Christian Charity, Government Policy and German Immigration to Canada and Australia, 1947 to 1952," *Canadian Issues* 18 (1996), 159–180.

<sup>10</sup> Johannes-Dieter Steinert, *Migration und Politik . Westdeutschland – Europa – Übersee 1945–1961*. (Osnabrück: Secolo Verlag, 1995). Johannes-Dieter Steinert, "Drehscheibe Westdeutschland: Wanderungspolitik im Nachkriegsjahrzehnt," in: Klaus J. Bade (Ed.), *Deutsche im Ausland – Fremde in Deutschland. Migration in Geschichte und Gegenwart*. (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1992), 386–392.

<sup>11</sup> Freund, *Aufbrüche nach dem Zusammenbruch*.

German immigrants, all conducted in British Columbia, as life stories to cover a longer time span starting with the participants' childhood. From there, the chapters follow the experiences of the interviewees through the Second World War, the decision to emigrate, arrival in Canada, and the long process of integrating into Canadian society. In this respect, this dissertation goes beyond the examination of government policies and the immediate migration decisions and experiences and uses approaches based on life-cycle analyses similar to Dirk Hoerder's study of immigrants in Canada<sup>12</sup> and more recently, Johannes-Dieter Steinert and Inge Weber-Newth's studies on German postwar immigration to Britain.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, Marlene Epp wrote an excellent history of the migration of Mennonite women from the Soviet Union to Canada and Paraguay based at least partly on thirty-four interviews.<sup>14</sup> The goal in these studies – and in this dissertation – is to write a history of immigration to Canada that provides a broad narrative while integrating and preserving the wide range of individual experiences.

As a migration study, this dissertation was initially stimulated by Marianne S. Wokeck's work on the nineteenth-century German and Irish migrations to the United States.<sup>15</sup> She argues that apart from the anticipated opportunities in the United States, changed migration patterns in Europe itself and the expansion and availability of trans-Atlantic shipping were significant factors for the beginning of mass immigration to North

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<sup>12</sup> Dirk Hoerder, *Creating Societies: Immigrant Lives in Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000). Hoerder uses life writings (diaries and biographical accounts) instead of interviews.

<sup>13</sup> Johannes-Dieter Steinert and Inge Weber-Newth, *Labour and Love. Deutsche in Großbritannien nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg*. (Osnabrück: secolo Verlag, 2000). Inge Weber-Newth and Johannes-Dieter Steinert, *German Migrants in Post-war Britain. An enemy embrace*. (London and New York: Routledge, 2006). These studies are based on forty interviews with German immigrants to Britain in the postwar period and have a strong focus on the arrival and integration into British society.

<sup>14</sup> Marlene Epp, *Women without Men. Mennonite Refugees of the Second World War*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000).

<sup>15</sup> Marianne S. Wokeck, *Trade in Strangers: The Beginnings of Mass Migration to North America*. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999).



America. Even closer to the approach in my dissertation, Franca Iacovetta's *Such Hardworking People* on the Italian postwar immigration to Toronto demonstrates a continuity of personal identities and loyalties. Though these had to be adjusted during the migration process that transferred persons from a rural environment in Italy to an urban setting in Canada, the support structures of family and village connections remained intact and recognizable.<sup>16</sup>

Both studies emphasize the background of the immigrants while Iacovetta especially stresses the continuity of social patterns from the old world to the new, explicitly refuting Oscar Handlin's notion that the migration movement "uprooted" people.<sup>17</sup> Thereby, she followed more in the footsteps of American revisionist scholars like Rudolph J. Vecoli, Kathleen Neils Conzen, and John Bodnar.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, the interviews I conducted with German-speaking immigrants residing in British Columbia strongly suggest that the adjustment to the new living environment was only gradual, while the migration itself did not terminate group and family connections on either side of the Atlantic. The immigrants in this sample were certainly not uprooted by their move to North America.

In the 1950s, immigration from Germany (and Italy) was very important to fill Canada's manpower needs after a decline in the pool of displaced persons could not be balanced with increased immigration from preferred countries like Great Britain.

Germans were numerically the second largest ethnic group arriving in Canada between

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<sup>16</sup> Franca Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People. Italian Immigrants in Postwar Toronto*. (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992). Also Bruce Elliott, *Irish Migrants to the Canadas: a new approach*. (Kingston, Ont.: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988).

<sup>17</sup> Oscar Handlin, *The Uprooted*. (2<sup>nd</sup> enlarged Ed., Boston, Toronto: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1973).

<sup>18</sup> Rudolph J. Vecoli, "Contadini in Chicago: A Critique of the Uprooted," *Journal of American History* 51, no. 3 (1964), 404–417; Kathleen Neils Conzen, "Immigrants, Immigrant Neighborhoods, and Ethnic Identity: Historical Issues," *Journal of American History* 66, no. 3 (1979), 603–615; John Bodnar, *The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985).

1951 and 1957 after the British and were only overtaken by the very high Italian immigration after 1957 and most decidedly in the 1960s when the recovery of the German economy significantly reduced the volume of overall emigration.<sup>19</sup>

Though Germans have historically been and still are one of the largest ethnic groups, not only in Canada as a whole, but after the Second World War also in British Columbia, even fewer studies of German immigration focus on the Pacific province where, according to Statistics Canada, close to a quarter of all German postwar immigrants now reside.<sup>20</sup> This places British Columbia second only to Ontario and well ahead of the Prairie Provinces and signals a shift away from the traditional German immigration to Waterloo County, other parts of Ontario, and the farming areas in the Prairies. While the overall numbers of German immigration declined significantly after the 1950s, the Pacific Coast became the preferred destination.<sup>21</sup>

Since British Columbia's prewar German community was relatively small, in contrast to their counterparts on the Prairies and in Southern Ontario with their comparatively well-developed ethnic organizations, it had very few benevolent institutions and other social networks at the time new immigrants arrived in the 1950s. In

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<sup>19</sup> Canada, *Immigration and population statistics*. (Ottawa: Ministry of Manpower and Immigration, 1974), 32–33. Between 1946 and 1957, 199,689 immigrants came from the Federal Republic of Germany and 186,431 from Italy. Between 1958 and 1967, however, the number of German immigrants had dropped to 89,569, while 222,983 Italians arrived during this period. See also Franca Iacovetta, *Gatekeepers. Reshaping Immigrant Lives in Cold War Canada*. (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2006), 6.

<sup>20</sup> Canada, *Immigration Research Series, Profiles Germany. German Immigrants in Canada*. (Ottawa: Government Publication, 1996), 1 & 4. 22% of postwar German immigrants resided in British Columbia. There is a similar scarcity of studies on postwar German immigration to Ontario and the Prairies, apart from: Andrea Koch-Kraft, *Deutsche in Kanada – Einwanderung and Adaption. Mit einer Untersuchung zur Situation der Nachkriegsimmigration in Edmonton, Alberta*. (Bochum: Universitätsverlag Dr. N. Brockmeyer, 1990).

<sup>21</sup> Canada, *Citizenship and Immigration Statistics 1996*, Table IM13. (Ottawa: Government Publication, 1999), 58; the focus of German immigration has increasingly shifted away from the traditional areas of German settlement in Ontario and the Prairies. For example in 1996, of a total of 1,683 persons, 690 came to British Columbia and 469 to Ontario followed by Alberta with 224. In addition, many earlier German immigrants later migrated from other locations in Canada to the Pacific Coast, either because of the climate, employment, or for retirement.

British Columbia, the new immigrants themselves established most of the German churches, clubs, and choirs in the 1960s. Neither the establishment of these ethnic organizations, nor the question of which groups supported them has yet received academic attention. In the case of the Germans on the West Coast, at least, it appears that ethnic Germans were the driving forces behind these clubs and churches, while German nationals were less likely to identify with German organisations in Canada.

Some studies, like Bettina S. Steinhauser's contribution on the Austrian immigration to Canada in the postwar period, seem to prefer a "national" approach since she bemoans the fact that Canada only recognized Austrians as a distinct ethnic group in 1953, while "the various subtleties of ethnic identity under the larger German-language umbrella were not always clear to Canadian officials."<sup>22</sup> She is certainly right about this, but because few Canadians could distinguish between the places of origin of the various German-speakers they encountered meant that the experiences in Canada were similar for German nationals, ethnic Germans, and Austrians. At the same time, German nationals and Austrians showed many similarities in their reasons for emigration, as well as migration patterns, and these were quite different from those of ethnic Germans who shared many common traits in migration patterns and self-perception with displaced persons. Though Austrians and Swiss-Germans often founded their own ethnic organizations in Canada, they were certainly part of the informal support and marriage networks of German-speaking immigrants and are therefore included in this study.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Bettina S. Steinhauser, "Post-War Austrian Immigration to Canada," in: Frederick C. Engelmann, Manfred Prokop and Franz A.J. Szabo (Eds.), *A History of Austrian Migration to Canada*. (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1996), 101–122 (quote on p. 101).

<sup>23</sup> For example Louis Schibli, *Stories of Swiss Settlement in the Bulkley Valley, 1910–1960*. (Telkwa, BC: Bulkley Valley Swiss Club, 2006). This collection of stories from Swiss immigrants in Northern British Columbia also includes a few German-born women who became part of the Swiss community by marriage.

Despite the significance of British Columbia as a destination of German-speaking immigrants, few studies exist for the postwar period.<sup>24</sup> Among them is Ruth Gump's work on German-language retention in Vancouver, which, being largely based on census and immigration data, does not allow distinctions of identities within the larger ethnic group.<sup>25</sup> Alexander Freund's M.A. thesis, in contrast, is based on interviews with German domestics in Vancouver in which he explores the women's strategies to reconcile the hopes and ambitions for a new life with the reality of domestic service and later marriage.<sup>26</sup> Apart from Andrea Koch-Kraft's study of postwar Edmonton, none of these studies looks at the diverse backgrounds of the German-speaking immigrants to Canada and the ways in which their past influenced their identity and integration in their new homeland. Yet, though Koch-Kraft distinguishes between ethnic Germans and German nationals, she does not relate the findings to differences in the identity construction of the two groups.<sup>27</sup>

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Also, Interview with Herbert Schwab, conducted by Monika Schmid in Vancouver, Summer 2004. Schwab was born in Weilersdorf near Linz in Austria in 1923.

<sup>24</sup> This includes a short study of persons in British Columbia with German ancestry by Bruce Ramsay, *A History of German-Canadians in British Columbia*. (Winnipeg, Man.: National Publishers, 1958), and Peter Liddell, "Germans on Canada's Pacific Slopes: A Brief Survey of German Discovery, Settlement and Culture in British Columbia, 1778 to the Present," *The Yearbook of German-American Studies* 16 (1981), Reprint for Germanica 88.

<sup>25</sup> Ruth Gump, "Ethnicity and assimilation: German postwar immigrants in Vancouver 1945–1970." (M.A. Thesis: University of British Columbia, 1989) and her article: "Language Loss and Language Retention among German Postwar Immigrants in Vancouver, 1945–1971," *Deutschkanadisches Jahrbuch / German-Canadian Yearbook* 14 (1995), 75–88. Also Beatrice Stadler, *Language Maintenance and Assimilation: The Case of Selected German-Speaking Immigrants in Vancouver*. (Vancouver: CAUTG, 1983). Shorter discussion of the German-language situation in British Columbia, see Michael Hadley, "Die Deutsche Sprache in Britisch-Kolumbien," in: Leopold Auburger, Heinz Kloss, Heinz Rupp (Eds.), *Deutsch als Muttersprache in Kanada. Berichte zur Gegenwartslage*. (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1977), 47–49.

<sup>26</sup> Alexander Freund, "Identity in Immigration: Self-Conceptualization and Myth in the Narratives of German Immigrant Women in Vancouver, BC, 1950–1960." (M.A. Thesis: Simon Fraser University, 1994). Some of the results were then published in *BC Studies*, Alexander Freund and Laura Quilici. "Exploring Myths in Women's Narratives," *BC Studies*, nos. 105-106 (Spring / Summer 1995), 159–182.

<sup>27</sup> Andrea Koch-Kraft, *Deutsche in Kanada – Einwanderung and Adaption. Mit einer Untersuchung zur Situation der Nachkriegsimmigration in Edmonton, Alberta*. (Bochum: Universitätsverlag Dr. N. Brockmeyer, 1990).

In general, this dissertation contributes to interdisciplinary migration research with a main focus on the history of German immigration to Canada in the early postwar period. It traces the life experiences of the immigrants from their homes in diverse locations in Europe during the interwar years and the Second World War to their immigration to Canada and settlement in British Columbia. It asks questions about the cultural, economic, and social circumstances leading to the decision to migrate, which influenced the patterns of adjustment to life in Canada and later integration into the host society. In addition to pointing to the distinct backgrounds of ethnic Germans and German nationals, this study also argues that the differences in self-perception and experiences before and during the Second World War strongly influenced their adjustment and identity in North America.

Indeed, this dissertation will argue that the immigration of German-speakers to Canada between the end of the Second World War and the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961 consisted of two distinct movements – ethnic German refugees and German nationals. The term ethnic Germans is used here to describe those persons who were part of German-speaking minority groups born in Eastern Europe outside of the 1937 borders of Germany and Austria, but who spoke German at home and identified as being ethnically German. In contrast, German nationals were born within the 1937 borders of Germany and were therefore German citizens. Though these two migration movements largely coincided chronologically, ethnic Germans from Eastern Europe shared many characteristics with the greater postwar migration of displaced persons. This movement was generally characterized by patterns of chain migration as extended families and friends came to Canada after losing their homes as a result of the war. In contrast, most

German nationals were either young single immigrants or arrived in small family units who left most often for economic reasons, a sense of adventure, and other considerations similar to those described in the *Spiegel* article cited at the beginning of this introduction.<sup>28</sup>

Based on my personal interviews, published biographies, and archival research in Canada and Germany, this study therefore contributes specifically to the works on German immigration to British Columbia and Canada in the postwar period. More generally, it adds to our understanding of different migratory behaviours in refugee (and displaced persons) groups and those who could be called “voluntary migrants” since they left their homes in search of a better future rather than being forced by circumstances beyond their control. Since this study includes an exploration of the conditions in central and Eastern Europe in the interwar period and during the Second World War that influenced the later migration, it also contributes to the field of migration studies and will add another component to the existing literature on the postwar trans-Atlantic migrations to Canada by other ethnic groups like the Dutch, Scandinavians, and Italians. In addition, this dissertation explores the process of integration, language acquisition, and social mobility and thereby also contributes to work in the field of ethnic studies.

In the past, many immigration histories have either focussed very strongly on the settlement and integration of ethnic groups after their arrival with little regard to the circumstances and reasons for their emigrations, or listed the first arrivals of members of

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<sup>28</sup> However, since Germany lost a significant portion of its territories in the East, the refugees from East Prussia, Pomerania, and Silesia – though strictly speaking German nationals – shared many experiences with ethnic Germans, like the fact that they had permanently lost their homes. For the situation of ethnic Germans and expellees in West Germany, see Wolfgang Benz, “Fremde in der Heimat: Flucht – Vertreibung – Integration,” in: Klaus J. Bade (Ed.), *Deutsche im Ausland – Fremde in Deutschland. Migration in Geschichte und Gegenwart*. (Munich: C.H.Beck, 1992), 374. Other German speakers who were neither ethnic German, nor German nationals were Austrians and Swiss Germans who rarely identified as German after emigration.

a particular ethnic group, stressing the significance of their contributions to the culture, economy, and development of their host countries. In the Canadian case, this is especially true for the government-sponsored “generation series” of the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>29</sup> Though numbers and statistics will be used to illustrate the nature of the postwar migration, this dissertation is neither concerned with the size, nor contributions of German immigrants to Canada, but focuses on the social, economic, and political factors that shaped their migration and their integration into Canadian society.

Given the diverse geographic backgrounds of the immigrants listed as “German” in Canadian immigration and census data, in this study I will use “German-speaking immigrants” as the defining category, while the participation of the interviewees depended on self-identification as belonging to this group. Despite the wide range of individual backgrounds, reasons for leaving Europe, and responses to the challenges of immigration found in the personal interviews, patterns emerged that strongly suggest that the distinct self-identification of ethnic Germans and German nationals made the latter more likely to integrate quickly into Canadian society. Despite the limits imposed by the size of the interview sample and the geographic focus on British Columbia, an oral history approach is an effective way to explore the life experiences and the identity construction of immigrants that is neither available through accumulated immigration and

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<sup>29</sup> Jean R. Burnet with Howard Palmer, “*Coming Canadians*”. *An introduction to a history of Canada’s peoples*. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1988). Examples of books in the series are: Ken Adachi, *The Enemy that Never Was. A History of Japanese Canadians*. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1991, first published 1976). Herman Ganzevoort, *A Bittersweet Land. The Dutch Experience in Canada, 1890–1980*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1988. Surprisingly, despite the emphasis on the size and contributions of ethnic groups in Canada, there had been no study of Germans in this series, though one might have been commissioned and never delivered or printed. The series published by the Canadian Historical Association uses a similar approach. In this series, a short booklet on Germans exists: K. M. McLaughlin, *The Germans in Canada*. Canada’s Ethnic Groups, no. 11. (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1985).

census data, nor clearly explicable while focussing on integration patterns after the arrival in the host country.

As such, this study also includes aspects of studies in oral history and memory. This includes, for example, Robert G. Moeller's study arguing that a consensus emerged in 1950s West German society remembering the Second World War in terms of the victimization of expellees and prisoners of war in Soviet camps.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, though interviews are certainly a very rich source of information helping us to understand the wide range of different experiences, memories are always selective and subjective in their representation of past events. The victimization described by Moeller is only one example in which West Germans prefer to remember the cruelty and perceived injustices committed by the Soviet armies than admit to the prior brutality towards oppressed peoples by the German aggressors.

In the same sense, the immigrants' life stories have certain personal and collective biases. In David William Cohen's words: "Our knowledge of past is always at risk, essential pieces of knowledge of essential moments have been effaced, the most critical elements may have been made to disappear, but most important, ... what comes down to us as knowledge from the past has been subjected to all kinds of suppression."<sup>31</sup> Certainly, postwar German immigrants in Canada felt a need to address their memories of the Second World War in response to implicit or putative accusations of Nazi collaboration or personal experiences with Jews.<sup>32</sup> In addition, Selma Leydesdorff points

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<sup>30</sup> Robert G. Moeller, *War Stories. The Search for a Usable Past in the Federal Republic of Germany*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). On the same topic of identity construction see also Mary Fulbrook, *German National Identity after the Holocaust*. (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1999).

<sup>31</sup> David William Cohen, *The Combing of History*. (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), xiii.

<sup>32</sup> Alexander Freund, "Troubling Memories in Nation-building: World War II Memories and Germans' Inter-ethnic Encounters in Canada after 1945," *Histoire Sociale / Social History* 39, no. 77 (May 2006),



out in her study on the Jewish proletariat in Amsterdam before the Second World War that interviewees “defended their individual accounts of their lives and vocabularies against the stories they assumed I knew. And at the same time they anticipated questions they expected me to ask. The stories were shaped according to a collective memory that was supposed to be part of what they thought I expected.”<sup>33</sup> My interviews also suggest that my personal identity and background shaped the interviewees’ responses.

For Canada, of course, immigration had a long history and remained an important political and economic issue after 1945. For Germany, the situation was quite different. From the end of 1944 to 1950, East and West Germany received about 12 million German-speaking refugees from Eastern Europe (ethnic Germans) and the territories Germany lost after the end of the war (expellees). In addition, the imposition of communist rule in the Soviet zone of occupation that later became the East German state triggered an additional wave of refugees that lasted until the East German government closed the last exit route to the West by building the Berlin Wall in 1961. Therefore, this study covers the experiences of immigrants arriving during the entire span of the German refugee crisis. For most ethnic Germans and German nationals, however, emigration from the destroyed and overcrowded country only became possible after the United States reopened the German immigration quota in 1947, later followed by Canada and Australia in the fall of 1950. During the following seven years, hundreds of thousands of mostly

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129–155. For the diverging memories of Jews and Germans in the postwar period, see Frank Stern, “Antagonistic Memories. The Post-War Survival and Alienation of Jews and Germans,” in: Luisa Passerini (Ed.), *Memory and Totalitarianism*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 21–43. Also the other chapters in this volume present interesting case studies on oral history and memory based on events in the postwar Soviet Union, the Hungarian uprising, and Franco’s dictatorship in Spain. On the topic of memory and war see also Alessandro Portelli, *The Battle of Valle Giulia. Oral History and the Art of Dialogue*. (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1997).

<sup>33</sup> Selma Leydesdorff, “A Shattered Silence. The Life Stories of Survivors of the Jewish Proletariat of Amsterdam,” in: Luisa Passerini (Ed.), *Memory and Totalitarianism. International Yearbook of Oral History and Life Stories*, vol. 1. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 160.

young and healthy Germans left for overseas destinations. This seemed to pose a direct threat to the economic and social recovery of West Germany after the war, so politicians tried unsuccessfully to discourage emigration.

Despite the fears voiced by members of the German government and the press, emigration did not have any major negative repercussions for the economic recovery especially since the high immigration from East Germany and the already present refugee population supplied a sufficiently large workforce. Until 1957, when a booming economy discouraged emigration, Germany was simultaneously an immigration and emigration country. The so-called economic miracle produced quasi full employment in the second half of the 1950s. This boom lasted largely uninterrupted into the 1970s and turned Germany from a major emigration country that nevertheless experienced a massive influx of German-speaking refugees to an immigration country that opened its borders for hundreds of thousands of workers, especially from Southern Europe, Turkey, and North Africa. Yet, the government did not expect the “guest workers” to stay permanently and therefore Germany did not perceive itself as an immigration country.

Chapter 2 will focus on the situations in Germany, Austria, and the areas of ethnic German settlement in Eastern Europe in the interwar period to explain differences in identities, economic, and occupational backgrounds of the future immigrants. This section will also briefly explore the nature of immigration from German-speaking areas of Europe to Canada between the two world wars that built the foundations for the distinct migration patterns of ethnic Germans and German nationals after 1945.

Chapter 3 will provide a short overview first of the emerging idea of population transfers to create homogeneous nation states as a means to ensure future peace after the

First World War before focussing on the implementation of the concept in the resettlements and expulsions during and after the Second World War, particularly as it affected ethnic German refugees and German nationals who became expellees. Despite this emphasis on Germans, it should be kept in mind that earlier German deportations and expulsions, especially of Slavs and Jews, were excessively brutal. Ultimately, the barbarous Nazi dreams of *Lebensraum* and racial purity resulted in many millions of deaths, especially, but not exclusively, in the Holocaust. The treatment of people under German occupation certainly set a clear precedent for the later atrocities committed by Russians, Poles, and others. In late 1944 and early 1945, not only ethnic Germans, but for the first time large numbers of German nationals became refugees when the Red Army swept through Poland and eastern parts of Germany on its way to Berlin.

In the 1940s and 1950s, Germany lay in ruins, housing and food were scarce in the early years, while unemployment was high especially between 1948 and 1950.<sup>34</sup> Germany was a destroyed and occupied country with little appeal to many young people and refugees who had lost their homes in Eastern Europe and in the territories ceded to Poland and the Soviet Union at the Potsdam Conference. Therefore, chapter 4 will explore the situation of ethnic German refugees and expellees in the context of early postwar Germany to show how a combination of loss of homeland and property through resettlement and expulsion made members of these groups more likely to emigrate than West Germans who also suffered economic hardships, but generally still had a home or at least established local family and friendship networks. Ethnic Germans were clearly disadvantaged in the early postwar years, not only in their access to accommodation, but

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<sup>34</sup> Hans-Ullrich Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte, vol. 4: Vom Beginn des Ersten Weltkriegs bis zur Gründung der beiden deutschen Staaten, 1914–1949*. (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 2003), 972.

also with respect to employment. Part of this was structural, based on the fact that many refugees were first directed to rural areas that were less affected by the war to alleviate the housing situation in the destroyed cities. Although many refugees had a farming background, little agricultural land was available. Yet, because the jobs in the re-emerging industries were located in urban areas like the Ruhr, unemployment rates among refugees remained significantly higher than for persons who had grown up in what became West Germany.

Given these economic and material factors, and the cold reception that ethnic Germans received in Germany, the decision to emigrate was not too difficult, especially for refugees with relatives who had emigrated to Canada in the 1920s and were in a position to sponsor them. This pattern of chain migration brought entire extended families to North America. German nationals also immigrated in significant numbers to overseas countries, including Canada, but were more likely to leave Europe for adventure or economic opportunity and usually came as single immigrants or as a nuclear family unit. Therefore, not only the patterns of emigration, but also the reasons for the migration differed between ethnic Germans and German nationals. This section will also challenge the ideas that a combination of push and pull factors are generally responsible for migration movements. This dichotomy generally applies to an economically motivated migration, but does not explain refugee movements or those driven by a sense of adventure or other personal reasons.

Despite the difficult situation at the end of the war, the Allied Control Council's Order No. 161, issued in 1945, generally prohibited the emigration of Germans. In any case, so soon after the end of the war, no potential host country was willing to accept

German immigrants. This started to change in April 1947, when the United States re-opened its German quota.<sup>35</sup> Canada permitted ethnic Germans sponsored by close family members to enter the country in 1947/48, at least partly because of the labour needs of the booming postwar economy. By September 1950, Canada widened the categories of admissible persons by revoking the enemy alien status for German nationals in response to the heightened labour needs produced by the outbreak of the Korean War.

A majority of the interviewees left Germany between 1948 and 1961 because they hoped for a better economic future, some went because they had family in Canada, and others left Europe because they feared that a new war might break out in the tense Cold War climate. Yet, some saw migration as part of an adventure to see something of the world, or they wanted to learn English. Some planned to stay only for a limited time before returning to Germany. Though the reasons for migration were as varied as the life stories of the interviewees, it is nevertheless safe to say that economic considerations and safety from another potential military conflict were the two most important factors in the early postwar period.

Since international migrations are subject to governmental regulations, the following two chapters examine the impact of German and Canadian policies on the nature of the immigration movement. However, despite Canada's manpower shortages and Germany's refugee crisis, the governments of the two countries did not agree on the nature of the migration movement. Canada wanted young, single men and women or small families. Germany, however, preferred the emigration of large ethnic German families with an agricultural background, and widows with children, while the loss of

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<sup>35</sup> Karin Neger-Focke, *Die deutsche Amerikaauswanderung nach 1945. Rahmenbedingungen und Verlaufsformen*. (Stuttgart: Verlag Hans-Dieter Heinz, 1995), 11.

millions of soldiers during the war had created a serious gender imbalance that would be aggravated by the emigration of young men.

Though the German government tried to influence emigration based on its own economic interests, its means were limited to prohibiting direct advertisement and recruitment by the major immigration countries and to a pre-selection process through the local employment offices in the case of Canadian “bulk orders” of labourers and domestic servants. However, since the German constitution guaranteed freedom of movement, the government’s success was ultimately very limited. As an immigration country, Canada was therefore largely free to implement its own criteria for selecting immigrants. Chapters 5 and 6 will show how the emigration and immigration policies in Germany and Canada, and the work of humanitarian aid organizations like the Canadian Christian Council for the Resettlement of Refugees (CCCRR), helped to perpetuate the distinctions between West German and German refugee emigration in terms of timing and composition.

Chapter 7 draws largely on archival records and interviews with immigrants to examine the visa application process. All immigrants to Canada were screened to determine their desirability for the job market. This process included examinations of the applicants’ health and their political and criminal record. Initially, Canada was particularly interested in agricultural workers and domestics, but later opened categories for skilled and unskilled labourers. In contrast to immigration policies today, language skills were not required and higher education was not an advantage. In terms of health, the most common reason for immigrants to be denied entry to Canada was “black spots” on the chest x-rays as a sign of tuberculosis, which was fairly widespread in Europe after

the Second World War. Other diseases and injuries were only a problem if they were contagious or impeded the immigrants' ability to work in Canada. In the last category, individuals without a criminal record and no proof of active participation in the NSDAP or other Nazi organizations were usually accepted. In the 1950s, as international tensions increased during the Cold War, membership in communist organizations or suspected affiliation and cooperation with the ruling East German socialist party (SED) was more likely to lead to rejection than a Nazi past.

Though the occupational and ethnic composition of the immigrants to Canada has certainly changed significantly over the past five decades, the process itself remains recognizable. The ostensibly unbiased point system introduced in the 1960s replaced the older list of preferred countries and thereby made it possible for immigrants from all continents (and not just from Europe) to move to Canada, but the basic premises remained in place. Apart from asylum applications, there are basically two ways to enter Canada – family sponsorship (also sponsorship of spouses) and the admission under the “skilled workers” category for immigrants with occupations in demand in Canada. Though the background of immigrants has shifted away from agriculture and unskilled labourers in the 1940s and 1950s to those with more education and transferable skills, the policy remains based on the demands of the Canadian labour market.

Even the medical examinations have changed very little since the 1940s and 1950s. Like the immigrants I interviewed, I had to present myself to a government approved physician for my examination. The process included a chest x-ray to check for tuberculosis, a questionnaire on the medical history, and the basic physical exam. The only part that has really changed since the Second World War was the introduction of an

HIV / AIDS test. In the end, the doctor announced that I am healthy and will likely be able to work in Canada until my retirement without posing a risk of becoming a liability to the Canadian state. This, too, is an element of the medical exam that has not changed for the past half century.

After discussing the details of the application process, the chapter will describe the trans-Atlantic voyage and the first impressions of the new homeland. Many were struck by the differences between Canada and Europe, especially the enormous size of the country, the low population density, and differences in housing. While the experiences of the immigration process and the trans-Atlantic voyage were similar for all the German-speaking immigrants, differences between ethnic Germans and German nationals again became obvious after their arrival in Canada. Though in most cases the lack of English skills meant that many recent immigrants had to accept work in underpaid, exploitative labouring positions, at least for most men improving their language skills allowed for upward mobility at the workplace and a better integration into Canadian society. For women, however, occupational upward mobility was less likely, even if they did not stay at home to care for their children. Though most immigrants initially made at least some use of informal and – where they existed – formal ethnic networks<sup>36</sup> to find accommodation, work, and learn about the Canadian way of life, many German nationals started to distance themselves from the German community after they

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<sup>36</sup> In this dissertation, the term “informal network” describes all the connections within and outside the ethnic community that helped immigrants to get established in Canada. This includes the spread of information about jobs by word of mouth among immigrants, provision of accommodation to compatriots, etc. The “formal networks” are ethnic clubs, choirs, and churches that bring members of an ethnic group together. Yet, the distinction is certainly not very clear since even the formal networks were forums for informal information exchanges. Nevertheless, the distinction is important because it would be misleading to limit the immigrants’ support networks to formal organizations.



got established in the new country, while ethnic Germans were greatly overrepresented in ethnic clubs and churches in British Columbia.

Over time, the postwar immigrants started to consider themselves as well-integrated, an assessment that is generally shared by most Canadians.<sup>37</sup> After they had paid back loans for the passage and established themselves in British Columbia and elsewhere, they started to found German choirs, clubs, and churches, which not only provided a sense of belonging far from home, but also functioned as a support network bringing together people who experienced the same difficult stages of adjustment to a new environment, culture, and language.

While the main focus of chapter 8 is on the early years of immigration and the ways in which the immigrants adjusted to life in Canada, particularly on the importance and strategies of language acquisition, ethnic social networks, and finally self-perception as major factors in the integration process, chapter 9 explores the integration process that was generally marked by gradually increasing economic and social security in the new country. Some immigrants decided not to stay in Canada, either for personal reasons, or because they failed to establish themselves in the new country. Some went back to Europe, while others moved on, most often to the United States. For the majority who stayed in Canada, however, improved language skills allowed increased interactions with English-speaking Canadians, while the birth of children and their school experiences formed a new link to Canada. School children, however, often had classmates challenge

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<sup>37</sup> This view that German immigrants integrated quickly is also common in studies on the topic. See for example Gerhard P. Bassler, "Silent or Silenced Co-Founders of Canada? Reflections on the History of German Canadians," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 22, no. 1 (1990), 38–46. Gerhard P. Bassler, *The German Canadian Mosaic Today and Yesterday. Identities, Roots, and Heritage*. (Ottawa: German-Canadian Congress, 1991). Also Udo Sautter, "Deutsche in Kanada," in: Klaus J. Bade (Ed.), *Deutsche im Ausland – Fremde in Deutschland. Migration in Geschichte und Gegenwart*. (Munich: Verlag C.H.Beck, 1992), 185–197.

their German identity. Yet, the children also brought the English language as well as Canadian friends and customs into the homes, furthering the integration of immigrant families.

At the end of the study, however, the question remains: did the German-speaking immigrants who arrived between 1945 and 1961 and integrated well over time also assimilate into Canadian society? Did they truly become Canadian? Here, again, different patterns of self-identification appear in which ethnic Germans were far more likely to say that they were German or German-Canadian than German nationals who most often stated that they were Canadian. Yet, all the immigrants who arrived in Canada as adults continued to speak English with an accent and therefore remained distinguishable from the Canadian-born population.

Given the diverse backgrounds of German immigrants to Canada at the time, the category of “German-speaking” is the most useful to include the range of birthplaces and citizenships. As a result, the interview sample of fifty German immigrants<sup>38</sup> includes twenty people who had been born within the German borders of 1937, of whom eleven came from what later became the Federal Republic of Germany and nine were expellees from the areas Germany lost in the East in 1945 or had fled from the Soviet-controlled East Germany. The other thirty interviewees were ethnic German refugees from Eastern Europe. Though they were born as Soviet, Polish, Rumanian, and Hungarian citizens, they strongly identified as German and spoke German as their home language despite the

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<sup>38</sup> Note that this sample consists of 49 personal interviews with German immigrants and Frank Oberle’s two-volume biography which was so detailed that it answered all the questions on my three-page questionnaire (see appendix) so that it became possible to integrate it into the comparative data sample. In addition, I interviewed Joy Moulds, an English immigrant who ran a boarding house in Vancouver that saw a significant number of German tenants, and Michael Hadley who worked for the Canadian Immigration Missions in London, Vienna, and Cologne in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Also, Helmut Godau’s English wife contributed a wealth of detail to her husband’s interview, including perceptive reflections on the differences and similarities of her own immigration experiences.

fact that some of the settlements, like those of the Baltic Germans and Transylvanian Saxons, were established during the Middle Ages. In addition, I used twenty-three interviews conducted by Monika Schmid in Vancouver, of which twenty-one are German nationals; one was a Yugoslavian German and one an Austrian. Furthermore, some immigrants have published their memoirs or autobiographies in recent years.<sup>39</sup> A few interviews deposited at the BC Archives and letters to the German embassy available at the National Archives in Ottawa complemented the life experiences of German-speaking immigrants to Canada, as did access to the unpublished diary of the Giannelia family from Austria.<sup>40</sup>

Since the personal interviews conducted in British Columbia constitute the most important single source of information throughout this dissertation, it is necessary to say a few words about the process of finding the interviewees and the recording of the persons' memories. I used a number of different approaches to find volunteers for the interviews. First, I contacted German churches and clubs in Victoria and Vancouver, but though members in some places were very willing to share their personal life stories informally, most did not want to submit to an interview, despite offers to protect their identities. Though this method in the end yielded a handful of interviews, it was not enough for this study. Therefore, I widened the approach to short advertisements in local newspapers in Victoria, the Lower Mainland, and the Okanagan. In Victoria and

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<sup>39</sup> Bernd W. Baumgartel, *Mit den Wölfen heulen. Deutsche Einwanderer in Kanada erzählen*. (Herdecke, Germany: Scheffler-Verlag, 1999). Frank Oberle, *Finding Home. A war child's journey to peace*. (Surrey, BC: Heritage House, 2004). Eckehart J. Priebe, *Thank you, Canada. From Messerschmitt Pilot to Canadian Citizen*. (West Vancouver, BC: Condor Publishing, 1990). Erna Rudolph, *The Landscape of my Life*. (Garibaldi Highlands, BC: Harmony House, 2004). Yvonne Schmidhauser, *Otto Mueller: A Life between Stalin and Hitler*. (Nanaimo, BC: Loonbook, 1999).

<sup>40</sup> Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC) MG31-H39, Kurt von Cardinal fonds, vol. 1, Correspondence Immigration II. BC Archives, *Germans in British Columbia Collection*, Interviews conducted by Elizabeth M. Mayer, in 1981. BC Archives, *The Story of the Victoria Edelweiss Club*. Interviews conducted by Elizabeth M. Mayer in 1983. For the Giannelia family see footnote below.

Vancouver this was, again, not very successful, in contrast to the Okanagan, from where I received at least ten phone calls before the process snowballed when Hedi Lattey, and especially Pastor Patricia Giannelia, spread the word in the German communities in Vernon and Kelowna. During a research trip in October 2005, Pastor Giannelia also generously provided space at the Christ Lutheran Church where my partner Jenny Clayton and I conducted interviews over four consecutive days. Pastor Giannelia also shared copies of her parents' diary.<sup>41</sup>

With the help of Judy Hagen of Courtenay, I was able to conduct another six interviews in Courtenay, Comox, and Black Creek at the end of April 2006. In addition, the spread of my search by word of mouth provided further contacts in Victoria, Sidney, Duncan, Vancouver, and Richmond bringing the total number of interviews to fifty-one.

I set up the interview process to include quantitative and qualitative information. The interviews were recorded (except for one case) and later transcribed, while copies were sent to the participants. In the beginning, I asked the interviewees to tell me about their background and their migration to Canada. This allowed them to decide which parts of the story were most significant and gave them the opportunity to develop their own account of the course of events. However, to allow a quantitative analysis of the stories, I also needed material that was comparable between all the interviews. For this purpose, I had a three-page catalogue of questions (see appendix) which I would start to fill out while listening to the stories. When the interviewees ended their accounts, I would ask all those questions that had remained open.<sup>42</sup> Depending on the amount of detail, the

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<sup>41</sup> Johann Giannelia, unpublished journals, 1956–1958. Kianga Giannelia, “The Giannelias. My Story.” Transcribed family story (limited edition, 2004).

<sup>42</sup> Similar approach used in Freund, “Troubling Memories in Nation-building,” 134.

interviews would last from 45 minutes to three hours, but most were roughly one and a half hours long.

Finally, for many of the people interviewed, immigration to Canada was only one step in a series of forced and voluntary migrations. All the ethnic Germans at least experienced one migration that brought them to Germany, though a majority had been affected by earlier resettlements. When they left Germany to come to Canada, it was a move from one foreign country where they were perceived as outsiders to another foreign country where they could at least hope for a better future in a less crowded and more stable economic and political environment. Many German nationals had also experienced internal displacement as a result of the war, caused by territorial changes and the effects of wartime bombings. Others had become prisoners of war in Allied countries. Even after their arrival in Canada, almost all the interviewees had moved at least once. Sometimes the distances were short, like from Victoria to Courtenay, others moved several thousand kilometres from Toronto to Vancouver or from Winnipeg to Kelowna. By the time the interviews for this study were conducted, most of these people had settled down for good, though some still contemplated moving to a smaller apartment, another town, or even another province to be closer to their children. A few, like Hedi Lattey, the oldest person in the sample, have already passed away. All of them however, successfully made their homes in Canada and effectively adapted to the English-speaking culture that surrounds them. But have they truly become Canadians? Is it actually possible for first generation immigrants, even if they are not part of a visible minority, to become Canadian in any other way than nominally by adopting the citizenship of the country?

## Chapter 2

**German diaspora communities in Europe and Canada, 1918–1939**

Before the Second World War, a majority of German-speaking immigrants to Canada did not come from the territories of Imperial Germany or the Weimar Republic, but were ethnic Germans from diaspora communities, especially in Eastern Europe.<sup>1</sup> These prewar immigrants had a strong influence on the migration movement after 1945 through family sponsorship. Thus, this history of German-speaking migrants to Canada after the end of the Second World War cannot be limited to a history of migration from Germany. While most of the individuals I interviewed arrived in Halifax, Quebec City, and Montreal directly from West Germany, the move to Canada was not the first migration but rather one stage of an itinerary that often started in ethnic German communities in Eastern Europe; somewhere in the vast areas between the mouth of the Danube and the northern coasts of the Black Sea in the South and East and the small Baltic States in the North. For example, Adina Frank was born in Tsaritsyn (later renamed Stalingrad) in 1916 because her parents had been expelled from their homes in

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<sup>1</sup> The term “diaspora” is used here not in the context of the Jewish Diaspora forcefully scattered across the world since Roman times. For most of the German groups in Eastern Europe, the original migration was voluntary and they were generally able to retain their culture, language, and religion because of privileges of self-administration, the right to their own schools and churches, and partly based on their conscious maintenance of a German identity. After the First World War, however, their exposure to assimilationist tendencies in most of the new Eastern European nation states helped to strengthen a distinct diaspora identity. During and after the Second World War, their ethnic and cultural background led to a dispersal of the groups to Siberia and Kazakhstan in the East (esp. Volga Germans), to Germany and from there to the Americas in the West. Their treatment in North America during and after the world wars was generally more benign, but experiences ranging from incidences of mob violence between 1914 and 1918 and a general hostile atmosphere often hastened assimilation. Therefore, in this context, the term “diaspora” is used for a minority group with a distinct ethnic identity, culture, and language that was exposed to experiences ranging from hostility by the majority group to expulsion from their homes. Yet, a clear and universally applicable definition of “diaspora” remains problematic; see Donald Harman Akenson, “The Historiography of English-Speaking Canada and the Concept of Diaspora: A Sceptical Appreciation,” *Canadian Historical Review* 76, no. 3 (September 1995), 377–409.

an ethnic German settlement in the then Russian province of Volhynia, Western Ukraine in 1915 by Grand Duke Nikolaj Nikolajewitsch in response to advances of the Central Powers on the Eastern Front. After the war, the family returned to Western Volhynia, which had been part of the border region contested by Poland, the Ukraine, and Bolshevik Russia. After the Peace of Riga ended the Polish-Russian War on March 18, 1921, it became part of the new state of Poland.<sup>2</sup>

Like the family of Adina Frank, many of the ethnic German communities witnessed the massive territorial changes in Eastern Europe after the First World War and the emergence of new nation states on territory formerly claimed by the defeated German Empire, the dissolved Austria-Hungarian Empire, and revolutionary Russia (See Map 2.2: Territorial Changes in Eastern Europe and Places of Birth of Interviewees). Despite the territorial changes and continuing emigration either to Germany, Austria, or overseas destinations – especially the United States and to a lesser extent Canada – the German communities in Eastern Europe remained largely intact throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Though numbers are difficult to verify, Gerhard Reichling estimates that at the end of 1937 well over eight million ethnic Germans lived outside of the borders of Germany and Austria in ten different eastern European countries.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Adina Frank Interview, Kelowna, BC, October 14, 2005. Similarly Leonhard Lange Interview, Comox, BC, April 21, 2006. His parents had been deported from East Volhynia to Siberia during the First World War and could not return for about two years. East Volhynia remained part of the Ukraine in the interwar years in contrast to Polish West Volhynia. Also Detlef Brandes, “Die Deutschen in Rußland und der Sowjetunion,” in: Klaus J. Bade (Ed.), *Deutsche im Ausland – Fremde in Deutschland. Migration in Geschichte und Gegenwart*. (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1992), 123: In 1915 / 16, settlers of German ancestry living in Volhynia had to sell all their property within 10–14 days and were then moved to the interior. See also Friedrich Rink (transl. by: J. M. Richey), “Expulsion of the German Colonists from Wolhynia, 1915–1916,” *Heritage Review* 25, no. 1 (1995), 19–22. Also Ortfried Kotzian, *Die Umsiedler. Die Deutschen aus West-Wolhynien, Galizien, der Bukowina, Bessarabien, der Dobrudscha und in der Karpatenukraine*. (Munich: Verlag Langen Müller, 2005), 50–51.

<sup>3</sup> Gerhard Reichling, *Die deutschen Vertriebenen in Zahlen. Teil 1, Umsiedler, Verschleppte, Vertriebene, Aussiedler 1940–1985*. (Bonn: Kulturstiftung der deutschen Vertriebenen, 1986), 16–17.

Since most of the interviewees were born and grew up in the interwar years, this chapter will briefly explore their experiences in the German-speaking countries and in Eastern Europe between 1918 and 1939, before discussing some of the existing links to German communities in Canada. The chapter concludes with an account of the settlement of the Sudeten Germans in British Columbia and Saskatchewan, the last German-speaking immigrants to arrive in Canada as refugees from Nazism.

Between the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 and the outbreak of the Second World War, the primary German-language areas were Germany, Austria, and most of Switzerland. Directly adjacent to this central linguistic bloc were Alsace in eastern France, parts of South Tyrol in northern Italy, the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia, communities in Upper Silesia and former West Prussia and Posen (Poznan) in Poland, and the Free City of Danzig (Gdansk) that was under a League of Nations mandate. Smaller German-speaking groups lived in the Memel district of Lithuania, North Schleswig in Denmark, and Eupen / Malmedy in eastern Belgium, all territories Germany had ceded after the end of the First World War.

In addition to the Sudetenland and South Tyrol, within the former borders of the dissolved Austro-Hungarian Empire, islands of German-speaking settlements existed in Slovenia, Galicia, Slovakia, Hungary, and along the old military frontier with the Ottoman Empire in Yugoslavia and Rumania. Among the latter, the Transylvanian Saxons were the oldest established German-speaking group. Their origins go back to the 12<sup>th</sup> and early 13<sup>th</sup> century when the Hungarian kings Géza II and Andreas II, seeking to strengthen their control of the plateau in the bend of the Carpathian Mountains, granted them far-reaching autonomy rights in the southern border districts. This gave



Transylvanian Saxons a status similar to that of the Hungarians and closely related Székelys. Their community remained largely intact well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>4</sup>

Further east, German communities had existed within the pre-1914 borders of Russia since the Middle Ages. Their presence in the Baltic States was an extension of the German eastern colonization in general and a result of the conquests by the Teutonic Knights in the eastern Baltic region particularly in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. This first long period of eastern settlement ended with the great plague of 1348 / 49, when a loss of one third of the population in central Europe relieved the demographic pressure that had driven the colonization movements.<sup>5</sup>

Between the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> and the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, however, Russian Tsars, especially Peter the Great, Catherine the Great, and Alexander I invited many German settlers to take up land, first around St. Petersburg and Moscow, but more importantly along the Volga River (Volga Germans), in the Ukraine (Mennonites and Black Sea Germans), in Volhynia and Bessarabia.<sup>6</sup> Despite high emigration rates starting in the 1870s, these communities had become firmly established and generally preserved their linguistic and religious identity until the 1930s and early 1940s, despite the after-effects of the Russian Revolution, including the often violent collectivization of landholdings and Stalinist purges. The agreements on resettlement in the Hitler-Stalin

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<sup>4</sup> Holm Sundhausen, "Deutsche in Rumänien," in: Klaus J. Bade (Ed.), *Deutsche im Ausland – Fremde in Deutschland. Migration in Geschichte und Gegenwart*. (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1992), 37–42.

<sup>5</sup> Volker Press, "Von der mittelalterlichen zur frühneuzeitlichen Ostsiedlungsbewegung – ein Rückblick," in: Klaus J. Bade (Ed.), *Deutsche im Ausland – Fremde in Deutschland. Migration in Geschichte und Gegenwart*. (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1992), 29–35.

<sup>6</sup> Brandes, "Die Deutschen in Rußland und der Sowjetunion," 85–92 and 101–104.

Pact of August 1939, Soviet deportations to Siberia after the German attack in 1941, and finally Germany's defeat in 1945, however, led to their dissolution.<sup>7</sup>

In contrast to emigration from Germany and Austria proper in the interwar period, the relatively high emigration from Eastern Europe between the 1890s and the onset of the Great Depression in 1929 formed a core for later patterns of chain migration of ethnic German refugees to Canada and other countries.<sup>8</sup> Since the postwar migration was at least partly shaped by these interwar movements, it is important to sketch the situations in Germany and Austria, Eastern Europe, and conditions in Canada before the outbreak of the Second World War.<sup>9</sup>

## **2.1 Germany and Austria**

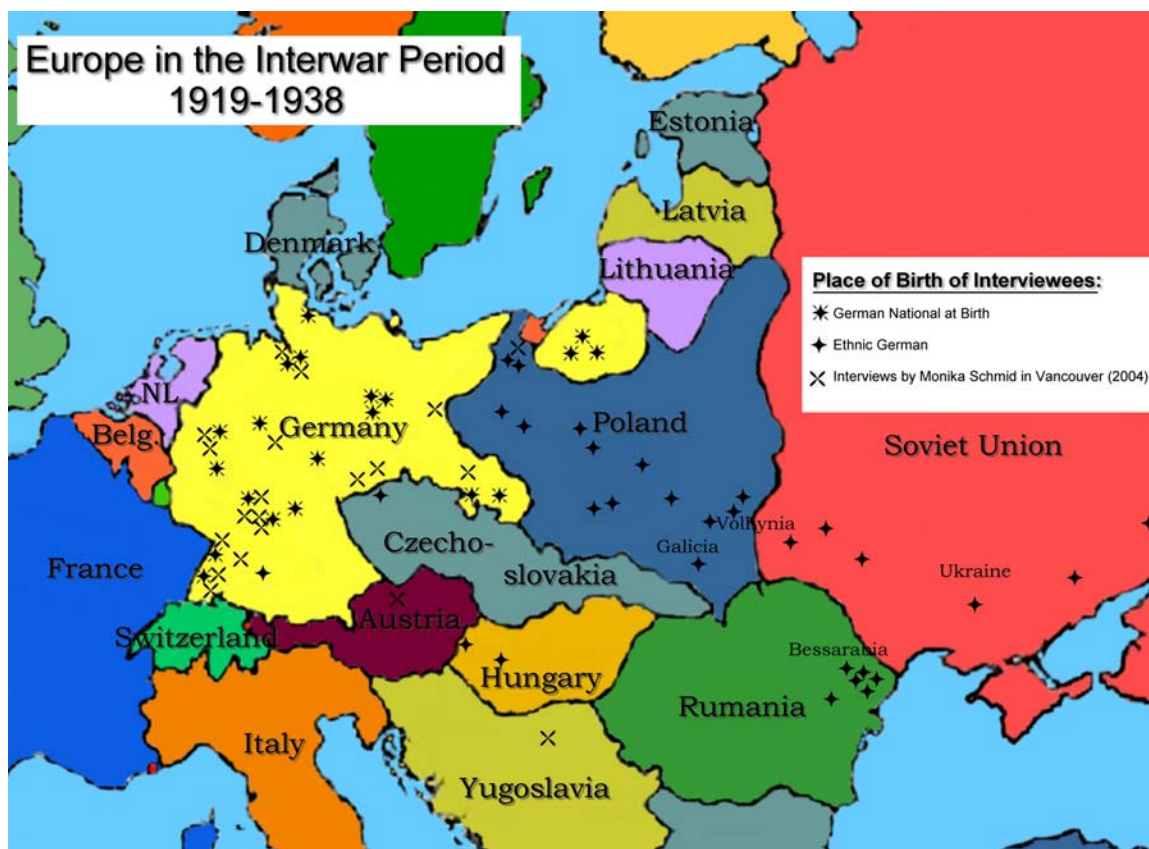
As Map 2.2 shows, only twenty out of fifty interviewees were born within the German borders of 1937 and therefore were German citizens. A slight majority (11) lived in the western half of the country, particularly along the Rhine River and its tributaries like the Main and Ruhr Rivers, and the port cities of Hamburg and Kiel. One of the remaining two was born in the city of Hannover; the other in the state of Bavaria. Of the nine born in the eastern half of the country, three were born in Berlin, one in Thuringia, three in East Prussia, and two in Silesia.

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<sup>7</sup> Hans Werner, *Imagined Homes. Soviet German Immigrants in Two Cities*. (Winnipeg, Manitoba University Press, 2007), 17–32.

<sup>8</sup> This major emigration, like that from the Ukraine, was generally driven by high rates of population increase coupled with the lack of new agricultural lands. Industry had not developed sufficiently in Eastern Europe before 1914 to absorb the landless population. Therefore, emigration was a tempting option. For some groups, like the Mennonites, the loss of old privileges (notably exemption from military service) was an additional reason for emigration before 1914, while the upheaval of the Russian Revolution was a further factor during the 1920s.

<sup>9</sup> Freund suggests that the postwar emigration from Germany was “economically, politically, socially, and culturally connected to earlier, simultaneous, and later migration streams.” Alexander Freund, *Aufbrüche nach dem Zusammenbruch. Die deutsche Nordamerika-Auswanderung nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg*. (Osnabrück: V&R unipress, 2004), 509–510.



**Map 2.1:** Place of Birth of German-speaking immigrants interviewed in British Columbia in 2005–2006, including interviews with mostly German nationals by Monika Schmid conducted in Vancouver in 2004.<sup>10</sup>

The above map with its fixed dots of vastly dispersed places of birth only illustrates part of the complex picture of origin, identity, and mobility. For example, though Hedi Lattey, the oldest person in the sample, was born in Berlin in February 1913, her parents had moved to the city of Würzburg on the Main River before the outbreak of World War I. Before she was nine years old, they had moved to Frankfurt am Main, Heidelberg, and finally to Hannover, where she stayed from age nine to sixteen. After finishing school there, she went to Edinburgh, Scotland around 1929 to learn English (with a Scottish accent, as she says). She went back to Hannover for a while before returning to England, first as a nanny for four children and then to study nursing at

<sup>10</sup> Map created by author based on information from interviewees.

King's College Hospital in London, where she became an enemy alien when World War II broke out. Here, she had also met her later husband Mike Lattey, a British citizen who moved to Winnipeg after finishing his medical degree. In the meantime, her parents had moved to Brazil fleeing Nazism because one of Hedi's grandmothers was Jewish. Hedi Lattey joined them in Rio de Janeiro after the beginning of the war. There, at the British Embassy, she married Mike who had made his way to Brazil for this purpose. Together, they came to Canada in 1944 via Barbados and Bermuda. She entered the country with a so-called Nansen Passport for stateless persons.<sup>11</sup>

Christian Stieda's experiences also show that the place of birth as a static mark on the map sometimes belies a more complex reality. He was born in 1930 in the city of Jena in Thuringia to Baltic German parents who had left Riga around 1919 to escape the turmoil created by the post-revolutionary struggle between Russia and the newly independent Baltic states. When Christian Stieda was four years old, the family moved to Stettin at the mouth of the Oder River, where he spent most of his childhood and youth. When aerial bombings started during the war, he was sent to the rural town of Parsewalk. In the spring of 1945, the family fled across the Baltic Sea to Denmark where they spent two years in refugee camps before moving to Bremen in Western Germany. Though born a German citizen, Christian Stieda remained strongly aware of his Baltic German

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<sup>11</sup> Hedi Lattey Interview, Vernon, BC, October 12, 2005. The Nansen Passport was a travel document created by the High Commissioner of the League of Nations, Fridtjof Nansen on July 5, 1922 in response to the wave of stateless refugees in the wake of the Russian Revolution and the Armenian Genocide. It was not the equivalent of a passport since it did not allow for re-entry to the issuing country, unless explicitly stated on the document. Canada, however, reserved the right to deport refugees to the issuing countries within the first five years, which essentially undermined the idea to provide international protection for stateless persons. In the 1930s and 1940s the Nansen Passport was also used for Jewish refugees after the Nazi government decided to revoke their German citizenship, leaving them de facto stateless. Hedi Lattey had a Jewish grandmother which meant that in the perverted Nazi ideology of racial purity, she was "Quarter Jewish." For Nansen Passport, see Isabel Kaprielian-Churchill, "Rejecting 'Misfits,' Canada and the Nansen Passport," *International Migration Review* 28, no. 2 (1994), 283–285 and 292. See also Klaus J. Bade, *Europa in Bewegung. Migration vom späten 18. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart*. (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 2000), 279.

background. His decision to immigrate to Canada, in fact, was partly informed by the connections between the Baltic German community and the then Governor General of Canada, Alexander of Tunis, who had commanded a British expeditionary force in 1918 / 19 that had cooperated with the local German *Landwehr* troops to stop the Russian invasion of Latvia and Estonia.<sup>12</sup>

The cases of Hedi Lattey and Christian Stieda are unusual examples of mobility and divergent identity between 1919 and 1945. Most of the interviewed German nationals grew up amid family and friends in only one location during the 1920s and 1930s. Only the beginning of aerial bombardment of larger cities led to forced mobility during the “*Kinderlandverschickung*,” the removal of school children to rural boarding schools or to cities not threatened by bombing.<sup>13</sup> Rolf and Brigitte Ullrich from Cologne and Kiel respectively, first met as teenagers in one of these schools in Dresden, and married in Canada more than a decade later.<sup>14</sup> In many such cases, the war created not only a mobility away from the familiar home, but also a separation and alienation from parents, relatives, and friends. In some cases, however, the evacuees developed lasting new friendships and relationships.

In general, the entire period of the Weimar Republic between the November Revolution of 1918 and Adolf Hitler’s rise to power in 1933 was marked by political and economic upheaval. The first postwar crisis occurred in 1923 with the continued threat of

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<sup>12</sup> Christian Stieda Interview, Victoria, BC, August 5, 2005. Earl Alexander of Tunis was the last British Governor General of Canada from 1946–52.

<sup>13</sup> Frank Oberle, *Finding Home. A war child’s journey to peace*. (Surrey, BC: Heritage House, 2004), 45. Frank Oberle wrongly assumes that only boys were sent to the rural areas. Oberle’s parents moved to Lodz in Poland from their home near Germany’s western border after the beginning of the war. Frank’s experiences at the end of the war were similar to those of other refugees from the East. Separated from his parents, he was one of the millions of refugees moving across Europe in 1945 when he traveled back to his hometown in the state of Baden.

<sup>14</sup> Rolf and Brigitte Ullrich Interview, Victoria, BC, August 9, 2005.

leftist uprisings, Hitler's failed rightist coup in Munich, the French and Belgian occupation of the Ruhr and the resulting, state-orchestrated passive resistance. These domestic and foreign policy crises had a devastating effect on the German economy and especially on the stability of the German currency. The resulting hyperinflation basically eliminated all the savings, especially of the middle classes. At the end of September 1923, one American dollar was already worth 160 Million marks. Following an even more rapid decline in the value of the mark and the resulting shortages of basic necessities, hunger riots broke out.<sup>15</sup>

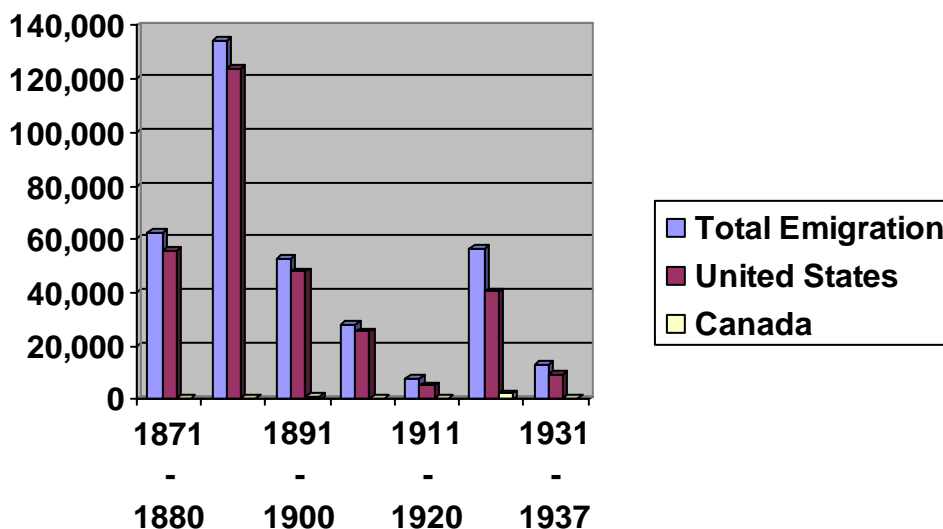
Such political, social, and economic instability created far-reaching effects on personal insecurity and a generally pessimistic outlook for the future. Thus, it is not surprising that emigration from Germany peaked in 1923 at around 120,000, reaching levels that had not been seen since the last wave of mass-emigration in 1891 / 92. The number dropped to 65,000 in 1926 and then to just over 37,000 in 1930 before emigration declined further as receiving countries such as Canada imposed restrictions because of the Great Depression.<sup>16</sup> Over the entire decade from 1921 to 1930, about 567,290 persons emigrated from Germany, but only 23,290 of them came to Canada.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Klaus Schwabe, "Der Weg der Republik vom Kapp-Putsch 1920 bis zum Scheitern des Kabinetts Müller 1930," in: Karl Dietrich Bracher, Manfred Funke, and Hans-Adolf Jacobsen (Eds.), *Die Weimarer Republik, 1918–1933. Politik, Wirtschaft, Gesellschaft*. (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1998), 104–113. For a detailed discussion of the reasons and results of the inflation, see Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte. Vierter Band: Vom Beginn des Ersten Weltkriegs bis zur Gründung der beiden deutschen Staaten, 1914–1949*. (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 2003), 244–249.

<sup>16</sup> Reinhard R. Doerries, "German Transatlantic Migration from the Early Nineteenth Century to the Outbreak of World War II," in: Klaus J. Bade (Ed.), *Population, Labour and Migration in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Germany*. (Leamington Spa, Hamburg, New York: Berg Publishers, 1987), 127–130.

<sup>17</sup> German Statistical Office, "Auswanderer in den Jahren 1871 bis 1954," in: *Statistisches Jahrbuch 1954*. (Wiesbaden: Statistisches Bundesamt, 1956), 68 (table 30a). Also Jonathan Wagner, *A History of Migration from Germany to Canada, 1850–1939*. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006), 164–165. Wagner uses a slightly higher estimate of 600,000 emigrants for the entire period.



**Figure 2.1:** Annual German emigration as an average per decade, 1871–1937.<sup>18</sup>

As Figure 2.1 shows, the United States was by far the single most important receiving country for Germans in the seven decades before the Second World War, mostly because of the long-standing migration patterns. Emigration to Canada was very limited mainly because Canada primarily advertised for farmers and agricultural labourers while a highly industrialized Germany was trying to maintain its agricultural sector in view of its need to import food since before the First World War. Therefore, to a large degree, the potential emigrants from Germany were unsuitable for Canada's settlement needs.<sup>19</sup> Canada nevertheless received almost 25,000 German citizens between 1919 and 1939. This constituted a larger number than during any comparable period in the decades before the Great War.<sup>20</sup> In the same time period, another 6,000 German-

<sup>18</sup> Table based on German Statistical Office, "Auswanderer in den Jahren 1871 bis 1954," *Statistisches Jahrbuch 1954*. (Wiesbaden: Statistisches Bundesamt, 1956), 68 (table 30a).

<sup>19</sup> For a detailed discussion of the nature of immigration from Germany, see Wagner, *A History of Migration from Germany to Canada*, 168–175.

<sup>20</sup> German Statistical Office, "Auswanderer in den Jahren 1871 bis 1954," *Statistisches Jahrbuch 1954*. (Wiesbaden: Statistisches Bundesamt, 1956), 68 (table 30a). For a more detailed discussion of German emigration in the interwar period, see Grant Grams, *German Emigration to Canada and the Support of its 'Deutschtum' during the Weimar Republic. The Role of the 'Deutsches Auslands-Institut', 'Verein für das*

speaking immigrants came from Austria, where the economic, social, and political situation was hardly better than in Germany.<sup>21</sup>

Bernhard Dinter's father, Fritz, was one of the approximately 25,000 German nationals who arrived in the interwar years. He disembarked in Quebec City on August 31, 1930 at the age of 37 hoping to redeem himself after the estate he had managed in Silesia went bankrupt at the beginning of the World Economic Crisis. Because of the depression, he was unable to establish himself firmly enough to bring his wife and son to North America and the family was separated until 1950, when he sponsored his wife and arranged Bernhard's sponsorship the following year.<sup>22</sup> The evidence from the interviews strongly suggests that the interwar immigration was far more important for establishing patterns of chain migration for the ethnic Germans than for German nationals, since Bernhard Dinter was the only German national with pre-World War II family connections to Canada.

With the World Economic Crisis that started with the Stock Market Crash on Wall Street on October 24, 1929, most industrialized countries experienced a major depression with high levels of unemployment. Because of its dependency on exports and foreign investment and its need to repay loans to cover reparation payments, Germany was especially hard hit by the crisis. Official unemployment rates reached a high of thirty

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*Deutschtum im Ausland' and German-Canadian Organizations.* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2001), 79–84.

<sup>21</sup> Gertrud Neuwirth and John de Vries, "Demographic Patterns of Austrian Canadians, 1900–1991," in: Franz A.J. Szabo (Ed.), *Austrian Immigration to Canada. Selected Essays.* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1996), 34–39. For more detail on the economic and political situation in Austria, see Michaela C. Schober, "Austrian Immigration between the World Wars," in: Frederick C. Engelmann, Manfred Prokop, and Franz A.J. Szabo (Eds.), *A History of the Austrian Migration to Canada.* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1996), 59–61.

<sup>22</sup> Bernhard Dinter Interview, Duncan, BC, October 23, 2005. Also LAC RG76 - Immigration, series C-1-a, volume 18 (1930), 264. Fritz Dinter arrived on the North German Lloyd ship *Köln*. Dinter's parents divorced in the early 1940s, but remarried shortly after his mother's arrival in Canada.



percent in 1932, while, as Hans-Ulrich Wehler points out, the real rates were likely higher.<sup>23</sup> Because of the world wide nature of the depression and the protective measures taken by all countries, the number of migrants dropped significantly in the 1930s.

Similar to tendencies in Eastern Europe and to a degree in Japan, the economic and social crisis contributed to the disenchantment of large segments of the German population with market capitalism and liberal democracy. The depression therefore helped pave the way for Adolf Hitler and his National Socialist Party (NSDAP) to gain about a third of the popular vote and become the strongest political force in the elections of 1932 and 1933.<sup>24</sup> President von Hindenburg made Hitler the German Chancellor in January 1933.

Hitler's coming to power dramatically affected the rest of Europe. Initially, it left a very strong mark on the domestic political climate and precipitated the emigration of several large groups of refugees. Before September 1939 about ninety-five percent or an estimated 450,000 to 600,000 emigrants from Germany, and later from annexed Austria and Czechoslovakia, were German-speaking Jews;<sup>25</sup> the remaining 25–30,000 were mainly political refugees. These refugees first fled to other countries in Europe, but with the outbreak of the war, many tried to reach safe overseas destinations. The United

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<sup>23</sup> Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte. Vierter Band: Vom Beginn des Ersten Weltkriegs bis zur Gründung der beiden deutschen Staaten, 1914–1949*. (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 2003), 260; generally on the effects of the Great Depression in Germany, 257–262.

<sup>24</sup> At the Reichstag election of July 1932, the NSDAP won 37.3% of the popular vote and then lost two million voters in the new election of November 1932 (33.1%). Nevertheless, Hitler became chancellor on January 30, 1933 as the leader of the strongest party in parliament. Albrecht Tyrell, "Auf dem Weg zur Diktatur: Deutschland 1930 bis 1934," in: Karl Dietrich Bracher, Manfred Funke, and Hans-Adolf Jacobsen (Eds.), *Deutschland 1933–1945. Neue Studien zur nationalsozialistischen Herrschaft*. (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1992), 18–19.

<sup>25</sup> Werner Röder, "Die Emigration aus dem nationalsozialistischen Deutschland," in: Klaus J. Bade (Ed.), *Deutsche im Ausland – Fremde in Deutschland. Migration in Geschichte und Gegenwart*. (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1992), 348. Data is somewhat uncertain because significant numbers of emigrants crossed the borders illegally. Yet, there is a major discrepancy to the number of about 70,000 German Jews who emigrated in the 1930s cited in: Wagner, *A History of Migration from Germany to Canada, 1850–1939*, 164–165.

States, which remained a non-belligerent until December 1941, became the most important receiver of these refugees; Canada had generally refused to admit Jews fleeing from Nazi persecution. Stuck in Europe, when rapid German military advances between 1939 and 1941 overtook their new homes, such would-be refugees were usually deported first to ghettos especially in German-controlled Poland and later to death in concentration camps.<sup>26</sup>

## **2.2 German diaspora experiences in Eastern Europe between the wars**

German revisionism after 1919, peaking in the Munich Agreement of 1938 and especially in aggressive territorial expansion during the Second World War had far-reaching effects on many ethnic German communities in Eastern Europe. By creating many new states in eastern and south-eastern Europe based on a selective application of U.S. President Wilson's idea of national self-determination, the Treaty of Versailles had left millions of people as minorities in new countries, creating perpetual challenges to the new nation states. Though the League of Nations tried to guarantee minority rights, it had no effective means to enforce them, while the states concerned did not have much interest in abiding by them.<sup>27</sup> Since governments often saw minority groups as disloyal, they believed either in assimilating them or removing them to create stability and prevent revisionist aspirations by groups inside and outside the new borders.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Bade, *Europa in Bewegung*, 280–283.

<sup>27</sup> On the League of Nation's minority protection, see Martin Scheuermann, *Minderheitenschutz contra Konfliktverhütung? Die Minderheitenpolitik des Völkerbundes in den zwanziger Jahren*. (Marburg: Verlag Herder-Institut, 2000), esp. 18–30. Also Philipp Ther, "A Century of Forced Migration: The Origins and Consequences of 'Ethnic Cleansing,'" in: Philipp Ther and Ana Siljak, *Redrawing Nations. Ethnic Cleansing in East-Central Europe, 1944–1948*. (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001), 49–50.

<sup>28</sup> Norman M. Naimark, *Fires of Hated. Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), for Ottoman Turkey's policy towards the minorities of Armenians

By establishing the principle of national self-determination as one of the guidelines for the re-organization of borders, the Treaty of Versailles opened the door for minority groups within the new countries to demand recognition of their distinct ethnic backgrounds. That in turn threatened the territorial integrity of the newly formed states whose minorities often comprised between ten and over thirty percent of the total population. For example, in Rumania, only about 68% of the population were Rumanians; the remainder consisted of Magyars, Jews, Germans, Ukrainians, and Bulgarians.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, according to the official census of 1921, the majority population of 69.2%, or 18.8 million, of Poland's population consisted of Poles, Masurians, and Kashubians. The largest minority were the Ukrainians with 3.9 million (14.3%), followed by 2.8 million Jews (10.5%), 1.1 million Germans (3.9%), 1.1 million White Russians (3.9%) and 200,000 others (0.9%).<sup>30</sup> Despite the size of minority groups, the new eastern European states had been created as nation states, not multi-ethnic ones. Therefore, a constant conflict remained between assimilation of minorities and the official minority protection set up in treaties under the auspices of the League of Nations.

After the Treaty of Versailles, several million ethnic Germans remained as minorities in the newly created eastern European countries. They included the approximately 3.5 million Sudeten Germans who made up one quarter of the multi-ethnic state of Czechoslovakia. Because of their numbers, Sudeten Germans demanded autonomy rights, similar to those of the smaller Slovak ethnic group. The repeated

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and Greeks in Anatolia, 1915–1923, see esp. 27–35 and 44–52; for Poland's treatment of Ukrainians, Jews, and Germans at the end of the Second World War, see 122–136.

<sup>29</sup> Martin Scheuermann, *Minderheitenschutz contra Konfliktverhütung? Die Minderheitenpolitik des Völkerbundes in den zwanziger Jahren*. (Marburg: Verlag Herder-Institut, 2000), 18–21 and Section on Rumania.

<sup>30</sup> Scheuermann, *Minderheitenschutz contra Konfliktverhütung?* 88.

rejections of these demands by the Prague government gave rise to a number of real and imagined grievances. The world economic crisis further aggravated the situation since it had a stronger impact on the Sudetenland than on other parts of the country.

Some Sudeten German groups subsequently aligned themselves with the increasingly aggressive German foreign policy pursued by the Hitler dictatorship after 1933 as a promising way to escape Czech rule.<sup>31</sup> This and Hitler's expansionist foreign policy ultimately led to the Munich Agreement of 1938 whereby Britain, France, Italy, and Germany agreed to separate the Sudetenland from Czechoslovakia, handing it to Hitler without a fight. Czech nationalists, like President Edvard Beneš, interpreted this as a betrayal by the Sudeten Germans and starting in 1941, while in exile in London, he called for an expulsion of the entire German population from the Sudetenland. London, Washington, and Moscow soon endorsed the idea.<sup>32</sup> As will be discussed later, the plight of some Sudetenlanders had an impact on Canada.

The ethnic German communities (among many others) in other newly created nations including the Baltic States, Poland, Rumania, Yugoslavia, and, to a lesser extent Hungary, were similarly exposed to new pressures from governments trying to create homogeneous nations from a patchwork of diverse communities that had existed in the

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<sup>31</sup> For a discussion of the instability or insecurity of these eastern European borders caused by national rivalry between the new states and especially German revisionism that did not accept the finality of its eastern borders, see Peter Krüger, "Der Wandel der Funktion von Grenzen im internationalen System Ostmitteleuropas im 20. Jahrhundert," in: Hans Lemberg (Ed.), *Grenzen in Ostmitteleuropa im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert. Aktuelle Forschungsprobleme*. (Marburg: Verlag Herder-Institut, 2000), esp. 51–55. In the case of the creation of conflicting national identities and territorial claims on the Balkans that complicated the drawing of stable borders after the end of the First World War, see Edgar Hösch, "Die 'Balkanisierung' – Vor- und Schreckbilder der Entstehung neuer Nationalstaaten, in: *Ibid.*, 79–94.

<sup>32</sup> Rudolf Jaworski, "Die Sudetendeutschen als Minderheit in der Tschechoslowakei 1918–1938," in: Wolfgang Benz (Ed.), *Die Vertreibung der Deutschen aus dem Osten. Ursachen, Ereignisse, Folgen*. (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1995), 32–44. Also Alfred M. de Zayas, *Nemesis at Potsdam. The Expulsion of the Germans from the East*. (3<sup>rd</sup> revised Ed., Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), 24 - 32. However, de Zayas' study, though detailed, is very one-sided with respect to his emphasis on the victimization of the German populations, especially in Poland and Czechoslovakia, and his attempts to blame Britain and the United States for their involvement in the process.

multi-ethnic empires of Russia and Austria-Hungary. All of these countries, in varying degrees, attempted to favour members of the majority group in government and business, and to abolish separate schools in favour of mandatory instruction in the new national language.<sup>33</sup> For example, Reinhold Ponto went to Rumanian school in Chucorowa for two years before the family was resettled to Germany in 1940. Adina Frank, from Volhynia, similarly commented that “most of the subjects [in school] were in Polish, but Religion and German were the only classes in German.” She emphasized however that they “always spoke German at home, never Polish.”<sup>34</sup> In contrast, Erwin Kirsch, born in Moragy in western Hungary in 1919, had quite a different experience. Asked about the area where he was born, he stated:

It was an area of German settlement with an autonomous status. We had German schools and German churches. In our village the population was about 800 and there was not a single Hungarian in the town. Once in a while there would be some Hungarians moving through to find work on the farms, but that was it.<sup>35</sup>

The nationalism in many of the new countries of Eastern Europe created new stresses for the ethnic minority groups, including the Germans. This increase in the emigration, either

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<sup>33</sup> For examples in the cases of Rumania and Yugoslavia, see Holm Sundhaussen, “Deutsche in Rumänien,” and “Die Deutschen in Jugoslawien,” in: Klaus J. Bade (Ed.), *Deutsche im Ausland – Fremde in Deutschland. Migration in Geschichte und Gegenwart*. (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1992), 48–50 and 64–67. For the case of German-language schools in Volhynia and Galicia in Poland, see Ortfried Kotzian, *Die Umsiedler. Die Deutschen aus West-Wolhynien, Galizien, der Bukowina, Bessarabien, der Dobrudscha und der Karpatenukraine*. (Munich: Verlag Langen Müller, 2005), 52–53 (Volhynia) and 87–88 (Galicia). Based on Günter Schödl, German and Hungarian nationalisms in Hungary in the interwar period were not quite as exclusionary as in other parts of Eastern Europe based on the long history of symbiotic cooperation in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. See Günter Schödl, “Die Deutschen in Ungarn,” in: Klaus J. Bade (Ed.), *Deutsche im Ausland – Fremde in Deutschland. Migration in Geschichte und Gegenwart*. (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1992), 70–84. This assessment is strongly supported by Erwin Kirsch’s example. Despite his ethnic German background, Erwin Kirsch was strongly attached to the Hungarian state and decided to serve in the Hungarian Army during the Second World War, though he could have joined the German Army, like many other ethnic Germans. Erwin Kirsch Interview (pseudonym), Vernon, BC, October 11, 2005.

<sup>34</sup> Adina Frank Interview. Also Sara Belter Interview, Vernon, BC, October 12, 2005 (similar comment to that of Adina Frank) and Reinhold Ponto Interview, Kelowna, BC, October 16, 2005.

<sup>35</sup> Erwin Kirsch Interview.

to Germany and Austria or to overseas destinations, especially in the Americas, laid the foundations for post-World War II patterns of chain migration.

Though hardly any Eastern European states fully observed the international agreements on minority rights and some perceived it as a limitation of their national sovereignty, most transgressions were limited to structural and administrative discrimination. The historian Hans Lemberg argues that the League of Nations should have expanded its efforts to ensure the coexistence of diverse ethnic groups in Eastern Europe rather than focussing on solving the minority issues by attempting to create homogeneous nations through population transfers.<sup>36</sup> However, the growing nationalist radicalism in Central and Eastern Europe in the 1930s led to the increased acceptance of border changes and large-scale resettlement schemes to solve ethnic conflicts.

The difficulties of the populations in Russia (after 1922 the Soviet Union) were significantly more severe with the post-revolutionary upheaval, the civil war and great famine, collectivization of agriculture in the 1920s, and finally Stalin's terror and purges in the 1930s. Here the threat to the ethnic communities did not derive from assimilation pressures but from the re-distribution of property and the brutal state suppression of any resistance to the new political and economic order.

German-speaking settlers had been emigrating from Russia to the United States and Canada since 1871, when the Russian government's ending of privileges to German-speaking populations coincided with the desire of the United States and Canada for settlers for their Wests. After the introduction of a universal military draft about 15,000

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<sup>36</sup> Hans Lemberg, "Grenzen und Minderheiten im östlichen Mitteleuropa – Genese und Wechselwirkungen," in: Hans Lemberg (Ed.), *Grenzen in Ostmitteleuropa im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert. Aktuelle Forschungsprobleme*. (Marburg: Verlag Herder-Institut, 2000), 169–170. For details on the details of the League of Nations' minority protection agreements signed by states in Eastern Europe, see Scheuermann, *Minderheitenschutz contra Konfliktverhütung?* 22–30.

Mennonites, whose religious tenets included pacifism, emigrated to North America by 1880. Around the same time, emigration from the Black Sea German communities in the Ukraine and from Bessarabia increased because an increased population had run out of land. Mobilization for the Russo-Japanese War in 1904 / 05 inspired a new wave of German-speaking emigrants, including both Mennonites and other ethnic Germans.<sup>37</sup>

Between the October Revolution in 1917 and the end of the civil war in the early 1920s, an estimated 120,000 Russian-Germans immigrated to Germany. From there, a significant number migrated further to North America.<sup>38</sup> For example, David Pauls, Leonhard Lange's uncle, a native of Karolinka near Zhitomir in the Ukraine, went to Germany at the end of the war and then immigrated to Canada in 1926. As Lange explains, his uncle, then a young boy, "never told anybody and just left. His mother had heard that he had gone to Germany, but did not know any details. He immigrated to Canada in the 1920s." In 1951, this uncle sponsored Leonhard Lange's family after they re-established contact through a small newspaper ad in the *Vancouver Sun*.<sup>39</sup>

For those who stayed in Russia in the interwar period, the civil war and subsequent great famine in the early 1920s caused enormous suffering. By 1928, after a few years of recovery in the mid-1920s, the Communist Party started to attack religious organizations, arresting pastors and closing churches. The forced collectivization that began the next year hit the large landowners among the Black Sea Germans especially hard. The combination of the world economic crisis, resistance to collectivization and the

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<sup>37</sup> Brandes, "Die Deutschen in Rußland und der Sowjetunion," 115.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>39</sup> Leonhard Lange Interview. According to the Canadian immigration listings, David Pauls arrived in Saint John, New Brunswick on November 28, 1926 as a 22-year old Russian national. RG76 – Immigration, Series C-1-c, 1926 vol. 4, p. 136 (Microfilm reel: T-14848). David Pauls must have been 15 or 16 years old when he left his home to go to Germany.

state's brutal enforcement of it resulted in a further famine in the years 1932–1934 followed by Stalin's purges in the years immediately before the Second World War.<sup>40</sup>

Caroline Leitner, born into a Mennonite community in the southern Ukraine near the Sea of Azov in 1928 remembers from her childhood how food was always scarce in the ongoing post-revolutionary terror. The only warm meal of the day, if they had food at all, consisted of a couple of potatoes. Her father was deported under Stalin in 1938 and the family never heard from him again. So they welcomed the German troops who occupied the area in 1941 as liberators. Caroline Leitner, like many others was glad to have escaped Stalin's terror.<sup>41</sup> The situation was even worse for Siegmund Geist, born in the Ukraine. He had been orphaned as a small child and recalls:

I have no parents, or anybody. The only thing I know is that there was an aunt of mine, but she could not feed me since there was starvation at the time in the 1930s. So, somebody came and took me to an orphanage. ... There was no food and the children were dying by the dozens. I saw them through the window when they put the corpses into a big garage. Then a horse-drawn cart would come and they would throw the bodies on it with pitchforks, to bring them to the cemetery.<sup>42</sup>

Siegmund Geist was adopted by foster parents, but his foster father, who had been in the Soviet army, was arrested in the late 1930s under charges of having conspired to overthrow Stalin. As in the case of Caroline Leitner's father, they never heard from him again. Later, in 1943, when the Red Army pushed the German forces out of the Ukraine, a soldier helped Siegmund Geist and his foster mother get on a train to Austria. Though the immediate families of all the ethnic Germans interviewed had remained in Eastern

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<sup>40</sup> Brandes, "Die Deutschen in Rußland und der Sowjetunion," 126–128.

<sup>41</sup> Caroline Leitner Interview (pseudonym), Sidney, BC, August 25, 2005. For a detailed description of the situation in the Mennonite communities in the Ukraine during the 1930s, see Marlene Epp, *Women without Men. Mennonite Refugees of the Second World War*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 17–27.

<sup>42</sup> Siegmund Geist Interview, Vernon, BC, October 11, 2005.



Europe between the wars, high emigration to North America before the First World War and in the 1920s gave many ethnic Germans family connections in the United States and Canada that would be re-activated after the Second World War, creating a pattern of chain migration that was largely absent in the case of German nationals.

### **2.3 The German community in Canada before the Second World War**

The First World War not only disrupted previous immigration patterns, but also seriously affected the identity of German-Canadians and the interest in German organizations and newspapers. About 8,600 enemy aliens, including just over 2,000 Germans (citizens of other enemy countries were from Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, and the Ottoman Empire) were interned during the war.<sup>43</sup> Anti-German sentiments reached a peak in 1915 following the sinking of the *Lusitania*, which saw mob violence against German businesses and clubs, such as the raiding of Leiser's German bakery and the damaging of the Kaiserhof hotel in Victoria.<sup>44</sup> Despite these incidents, Mary Magdalene Bergbusch, born in Winnipeg in 1904 to German-born Lutheran pastor Martin Ruccius, remembers few cases of discrimination during the war, though she reported some uncomfortable memories.<sup>45</sup> Though some children might have been sheltered from discrimination in ethnically homogeneous families and neighbourhoods, it seems more likely that they suppressed these memories. Experiences of immigrants from the 1950s

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<sup>43</sup> Grams, *German Emigration to Canada*, 41.

<sup>44</sup> Gerhard P. Bassler, *The German Canadian Mosaic. Today and Yesterday. Identities, Roots, and Heritage*. (Ottawa: German-Canadian Congress, 1991), 61–67. For the identity change in Waterloo County, Ontario from German to Pennsylvania Dutch and Swiss-German, see Geoffrey Hayes, "From Berlin to the Trek of the Conestoga: A Revisionist Approach to Waterloo County German Identity," *Ontario History* 91, no. 2, (1999), 136.

<sup>45</sup> BC Archives, *Germans in British Columbia Collection*, Mary Magdalene Bergbusch Interview conducted by Elizabeth M. Mayer, August 7, 1981, tape 3880:1.

suggest that ethnic stereotyping in school was quite common, so it would be surprising if the situation during and after the First World War was different in this respect.

The generally hostile mood during and immediately after the war is well expressed by a Mr. Ramsay, a hardware merchant from Hamilton, Ontario who sent a clipping from a spring issue of the *Toronto Mail and Empire* to the Canadian Minister of Immigration in 1919. The article described the formation of an association in Germany to promote emigration to Canada as an attempt at “peaceful penetration of the Dominion” after German troops “had little success against the Canadians on the western front.” In the same spirit, Mr. Ramsay’s only comment on the page was handwritten advice to the Minister of Immigration to “tell the ‘Huns’ to go to Hell.”<sup>46</sup> Many in the German community responded to this hostile mood by professing their loyalty to Canada. Members voluntarily dissolved many German organizations, while citizens assented to the renaming of Berlin, Ontario into Kitchener in 1917 (after the British Secretary of War who was lost when a ship carrying him to Russia struck a mine). In the census of 1921, many Germans changed their ethnic origins to Dutch or Swiss, and in the case of ethnic Germans, likely to Russian, all in response to the wartime experiences.<sup>47</sup>

Given the hostile public opinion during and immediately after the First World War, Germany, like Austria and the Eastern and Southern European states, remained

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<sup>46</sup> LAC RG76, vol. 611, Mr. Ramsay to Minister of Immigration in Ottawa, May 13, 1919.

<sup>47</sup> F.H. Lacey (Ed.), *Historical Statistics of Canada*. (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Ottawa: Canadian Government Publishing Centre, 1983), Series A125–163: Origins of the population, census dates, 1871 to 1971. The number of persons claiming a German ethnic background in the Canadian census dropped from 403,417 in 1911 to 294,635 in 1921 and then increased dramatically to 473,544 in 1931. In the absence of any major immigration, the Dutch population in Canada was 55,961 in 1911, but more than doubled to 117,505 in 1921. Though some of the changes were certainly due to immigration and high birth rates, neither the precipitous drop among the German population, nor the simultaneous increase for the Dutch can be explained without a re-declaration of Germans in Canada to hide their ethnic origins. There is also a similarly clear increase in the Russian population in Canada from 44,376 in 1911 to 100,064 in 1921, followed by a drop to 88,148 in 1931. For some ethnic Germans, the fact that they or their ancestors had been citizens of Russia also provided an alternative option for self-identification.

“non-preferred” countries even after Ottawa lifted their enemy alien status in 1923. Because immigration was largely limited to agriculturalists<sup>48</sup> intended to settle the West, the number of German immigrants from 1923 to 1926 was fairly low, despite significant overall emigration from Germany.<sup>49</sup> Few of the Germans arriving at the time were not part of the general agricultural settlement that was advancing the “farming frontier” mostly in northern parts of the Prairie Provinces and especially around Edmonton. Rev. Julius Bergbusch, who would become involved with postwar immigrants in Victoria in the 1950s, was one of the few without a farming background. He arrived in Halifax on April 3, 1926 to work as a German-speaking pastor for the Lutheran congregation in New Surrepta, near Edmonton, where he stayed until 1949.<sup>50</sup>

When Canada could not cover its manpower needs through immigration from Britain and the United States in 1926, Ottawa introduced a new permit system that allowed the recruitment of continental European immigrants, including Germans, if they had skills in demand in Canada. This change in Canadian immigration policy explains the significantly higher numbers of new arrivals from Germany (See Figure 1.2 below).<sup>51</sup> In addition, Germany, in contrast to Austria, became a “preferred” country for Canadian recruitment in 1927. As a result, the German-speaking immigrants from Austria and Eastern Europe remained predominantly agriculturalists; tradesmen, industrial workers,

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<sup>48</sup> The term “agriculturalist” is used in the context of Canadian immigration policy for persons with experience in farming who would either work for some time as agricultural labourers before acquiring their own homesteads or persons with enough money to buy a farm upon arrival.

<sup>49</sup> Grams, *German Emigration to Canada*, 81.

<sup>50</sup> Immigration information, LAC RG76 – Immigration, series C-1-b (1926), vol. 4, p. 60 (Microfilm Reel: T-14804) and BC Archives, *Germans in British Columbia Collection*, Mary Magdalene Bergbusch Interview conducted by Elizabeth M. Mayer, August 7, 1981, tape 3880:1.

<sup>51</sup> Ninette Kelley and Michael Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic. A History of Canadian Immigration Policy*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 194–197. Also Grams, *German Emigration to Canada*, 82.

office clerks, and others arrived from the Weimar Republic<sup>52</sup> and headed primarily to the urban and industrial centres of Canada. Yet, this heightened immigration from Germany lasted only from 1927 to 1930.

The dramatic drop in immigration in 1931 was due to the effects of the Great Depression and the resulting restrictive immigration legislation put in place by Ottawa after R.B. Bennett's Conservative party won the federal election of 1930. The new legislation introduced in March 1931 essentially limited immigration to healthy persons from Britain, its predominantly white dominions, and the United States, who had sufficient means to pay for their living expenses until they could secure employment. In addition, healthy agriculturalists with enough money to buy a farm and start operating it were generally admissible. Apart from these two categories, only sponsored wives and underage children of Canadian residents, who had enough funds to support dependents, could hope for visas.<sup>53</sup> As a result, overall immigration to Canada dropped dramatically from an annual high of 160,000 at the end of the 1920s to a low of 11,000 in 1936. At the same time, deportations from Canada increased to unprecedented levels, reaching a total of 25,000 between 1930 and 1937.<sup>54</sup> Immigration dwindled to a trickle in comparison to

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<sup>52</sup> Heinz Lehmann, *The German Canadians, 1750–1937. Immigration, Settlement & Culture*. Translated, edited, and introduced by Gerhard P. Bassler. (St. John's, Nfld.: Jespersion Press, 1986), 155–160. Austria also tried to be categorized as a “preferred” country but was largely unsuccessful. Therefore, the occupational structure of the Austrian immigrants to Canada given by the Austrian statistical office in 1929 was as follows: 79.8% in agriculture or logging; 10.9% were dependents; 7% domestic servants; 1.4% industrial workers; see Michaela C. Schober, “Austrian Immigration between the World Wars,” in: Frederick C. Engelmann, Manfred Prokop, and Franz A.J. Szabo (Eds.), *A History of Austrian Migration to Canada*. (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1996), 61–62. Also Hartmut Fröschle, *Die Deutschen in Kanada. Eine Volksgryppe im Wandel*. (Vienna: Österreichische Landsmannschaft, 1987), 30–31.

<sup>53</sup> Wagner, *A History of Migration from Germany to Canada*, 164–167. Also Schober, “Austrian Immigration between the World Wars,” 62.

<sup>54</sup> Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 189 and 216–217. For a more detailed discussion of Canada's deportation policies in the 1930s, see Barbara Roberts, *Whence they came: Deportation from Canada, 1900–1935*. (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1988), 159–194. According to Grant Grams, 683 Germans were deported from Canada between 1926 and 1932, most after the beginning of the Great Depression; see Grams, *German Emigration to Canada*, 278–279.

earlier years after the beginning of the World Economic Crisis. This situation continued until after the end of the Second World War.

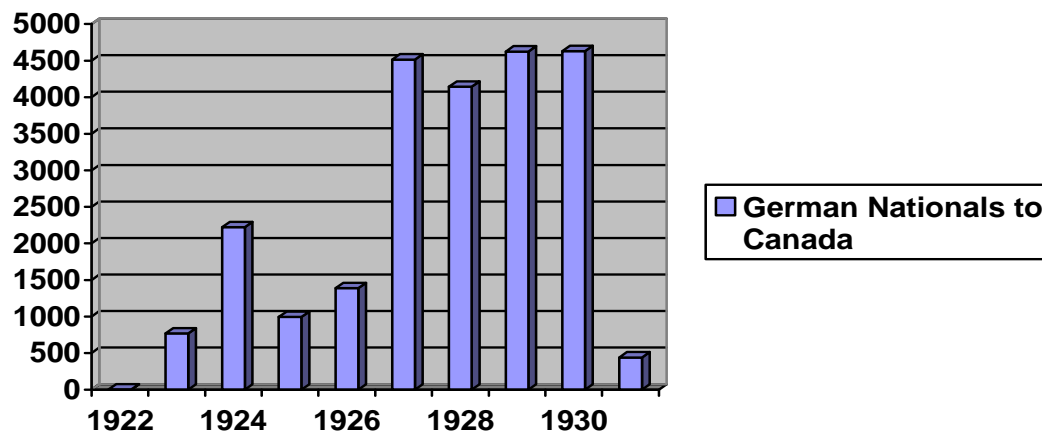


Figure 2.2: Immigration of German Nationals to Canada, 1922–1931.<sup>55</sup>

The available data suggests that only about a third of the immigrants listed in Canada as German actually came from the Weimar Republic. This is nevertheless a significantly higher percentage of German nationals than the roughly twelve percent coming from Germany proper that Heinz Lehmann estimates for the pre-World War I period.<sup>56</sup> He cautions, however, that a fairly high percentage of these German nationals came to Canada to wait until they could get an American visa. American immigration legislation that introduced the Quota Act in 1921 and then further reduced the numbers of immigrants in the Johnson Bill of 1924 and the National Origins Law of 1927 made direct entry to the United States difficult.<sup>57</sup> Lehmann quotes an unspecified official gazette describing the process as follows: “Immediately upon their arrival, they had their

<sup>55</sup> Data for the table based on Lehmann, *The German Canadians, 1750–1937*, 156.

<sup>56</sup> Lehmann, *The German Canadians*, 130.

<sup>57</sup> Klaus J. Bade, “Labour, Migration, and the State: Germany from the Late 19<sup>th</sup> Century to the Onset of the Great Depression,” in: Klaus J. Bade (Ed.), *Population, Labour and Migration in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Germany*. (Leamington Spa, Hamburg, and New York: Berg Publishers, 1987), 80. Also Leslie Page Moch, *Moving Europeans. Migration in Western Europe since 1650*. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992), 162.

names placed on the waiting list of a United States consulate in Canada and usually left, after a ten to twelve month waiting period. This movement ceased in the fall of 1930 after the United States imposed a virtual closure of all immigration.”<sup>58</sup> The Canadian census data supports this observation since the number of people born in Germany only increased from 25,266 in 1921 to 39,163 in 1931, despite the official in-migration of 25,000 German citizens.<sup>59</sup> Only part of this can be explained by mortality rates; at least several thousand likely went to the United States.

Yet, Dirk Hoerder rightfully points to the impossibility of using Canadian census data to determine the size of the German community in the country.<sup>60</sup> Inquiries into the size of the pre- and post-World War II immigration movement of German speakers are not only frustrated by the nature of immigration statistics, but also by the diverse national and religious backgrounds in ethnic settler communities in Eastern and South Eastern Europe, refugee movements, and secondary migrations.

The composition of the interwar migration wave from Europe becomes apparent by looking at the family connections of interviewees who arrived in Canada after the Second World War. Out of thirty ethnic Germans in the sample, twenty-six had family members in Canada at the time of arrival, while three of the remaining five had friends here. Of these twenty-six with family in Canada, fifteen had relatives – mainly aunts and uncles – who had emigrated in the 1920s as in the case of Leonhard Lange or Roswitha Vetter from Novi Sad in Yugoslavia whose uncle had immigrated to Winnipeg in 1928

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<sup>58</sup> Lehmann, *The German Canadians, 1750–1937*, 157.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 156–157.

<sup>60</sup> Dirk Hoerder, “German-Speaking Immigrants of Many Backgrounds and the 1990s Canadian Identity,” in Franz A.J. Szabo, *Austrian Immigration to Canada. Selected Essays*. (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1996), 11–31.

while the remaining relatives arrived after the war.<sup>61</sup> This means that close to half of the later ethnic German immigrants interviewed had family members who had arrived in Canada before 1930. In many cases, these earlier immigrants acted as sponsors, establishing a pattern of chain migration connecting the interwar with the postwar immigration movement to Canada.

For German nationals, the situation was very different. Fewer than half, or nine out of twenty-one persons, had family members in Canada at the time of arrival and only Bernhard Dinter's father had immigrated to Canada before the war. Unfortunately, no statistical records of immigration and sponsorship exist to indicate how representative my sample is, but family sponsorship among ethnic Germans was certainly significantly higher than that for German nationals based on the nature of the interwar migration.

It is also difficult to establish how closely the statistical data and the evidence from the interviews represent the actual composition of German-speaking immigrants in the interwar period. For example, the Canadian Department of Citizenship and Immigration counted 62,490 German immigrants between 1920 and 1929,<sup>62</sup> while the German statistical office registered only 23,290 German emigrants to Canada between 1921 and 1930.<sup>63</sup> The latter number is consistent with Heinz Lehmann's data which shows in a breakdown for each year that German immigration to Canada basically restarted in 1923 when 768 persons arrived after Ottawa lifted the enemy alien status. It is possible that Canada used the categories of last permanent residence or ethnic origin for

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<sup>61</sup> Accumulated data from fifty personal interviews conducted in British Columbia between August 2005 and October 2006. Also Roswitha Vetter Interview conducted by Monica Schmid, Vancouver, BC, Summer 2004.

<sup>62</sup> Department of Citizenship and Immigration, Immigration Statistics 1896–1989, cited in Ron Schmalz, "A Statistical Overview of the German Immigration Boom to Canada, 1951–1957," *Deutschkanadisches Jahrbuch / German-Canadian Yearbook* 16, (2000), 2.

<sup>63</sup> German Statistical Office, *Statistisches Jahrbuch 1954*. (Wiesbaden: Statistisches Bundesamt, 1956), 66.

its numbers, which would include many ethnic German refugees from the Soviet Union and other parts of Eastern Europe, while Germany only registered the emigration of German citizens.<sup>64</sup> In this case, about two-thirds of the German-speaking immigrants to Canada in the interwar period would have been ethnic Germans.

Despite its uncertainties, the numbers based on the 1951 Canadian census support such a conclusion with respect to German-speaking immigrants during the interwar period: 34.5% (27,230) came from Russia, 33.5% (26,285) from Germany, 10.3% (8,163) from Poland, 6% (4,745) from Austria, 4.5% (3,530) from Rumania, 2.5% (1,950) from Hungary, 2.2% (1,735) from Yugoslavia, and 1.4% (1,106) from Czechoslovakia. The remaining 5.1% arrived either from Britain or other European countries.<sup>65</sup> Given the general absence of immigration by German nationals from 1930 to September 1950 when the enemy alien status was lifted, these numbers similarly suggest that roughly two-thirds of the German-speaking immigrants arriving in the 1920s did not come from Weimar Germany, but from eastern and south-eastern Europe.

Yet, the fact that there was an influx of several thousand ethnic Germans between 1939 and the end of 1950 slightly shifts the numbers in favour of ethnic German immigration. For example, the number of German speakers from Czechoslovakia corresponds fairly closely to the number of Sudeten German Socialists who arrived in Canada in 1939. In accordance with existing immigration legislation, Ottawa settled these refugees from Nazi persecution on agricultural lands in Saskatchewan and the Peace River area in British Columbia though almost all of them came from urban backgrounds.

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<sup>64</sup> Grams, *German Emigration to Canada*, 83. Out of 74,462 ethnically German immigrants entering Canada between 1919 and 1932, 23,994 were German nationals.

<sup>65</sup> LAC MG31-E29, Frank Belle fonds, vol. 2, File: Unpublished Articles re. Austrians and Germans in Canada, no date, p. 2.



## **2.4 Sudeten German settlement in Saskatchewan and the Peace River**

The only major group of German-speaking immigrants admitted to Canada in the late 1930s were some one thousand Sudeten-German socialists who had fled from their homes after the Munich Agreement of September 29, 1938 transferred the Sudetenland from Czechoslovakia to Germany.<sup>66</sup> Despite the huge mass of German-speaking Jewish refugees in Europe trying to find a safe refuge, Canada wavered little in rejecting refugees, especially Jewish ones who, it argued, were not agriculturalists and therefore not admissible under Canadian immigration law. When international pressure to help alleviate the refugee crisis grew at the end of the 1930s, the Canadian Immigration Branch decided to accept the mostly Catholic Sudeten Germans rather than Jewish refugees in keeping with the racial hierarchies of preferred immigrants that remained largely in place with a few alterations (notably the belated admission of Jews after the Second World War) until the 1960s.<sup>67</sup> Like the rejected Jewish refugees, however, few of the Sudeten Germans had an agricultural background.

When German troops occupied the Sudetenland within days of the Munich agreement, thousands of Sudeten German Socialist refugees fled into the interior of the Czech state to escape political persecution by the Nazis. Many countries in Europe and overseas were unwilling to accept larger numbers of Sudeten Germans in light of the already massive Jewish refugee crisis. The emigration of Sudeten Germans was also hampered by the slow processing of travel documents in Prague. Each of the

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<sup>66</sup> Despite Hitler's claim that he was bringing the Sudeten Germans "Heim ins Reich," Robert Luft argues that the borderline set in the Munich Agreement for the Sudetenland was based on economic and strategic criteria rather than strictly ethnic or linguistic ones. See Robert Luft, "'Alte Grenzen' und Kulturgeographie: Zur historischen Konstanz der Grenzen Böhmens und der böhmischen Länder," in: Hans Lemberg (Ed.), *Grenzen in Ostmitteleuropa im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert. Aktuelle Forschungsprobleme*. (Marburg: Verlag Herder-Institut, 2000), 131–132.

<sup>67</sup> On this topic, see Irving Abella and Harold Troper, *None is too many. Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1933–1948*. (3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Toronto: Lester Publishing, 1991). For the case of Sudeten Germans, see esp.: 48–50.

Scandinavian countries accepted between 50 and 230 of the refugees; Belgium 300; and Britain originally provided visas for 350 men while negotiating with Canada, Australia, and New Zealand to settle larger numbers.<sup>68</sup> In late November 1938, Britain announced that Canada would accept 5,000 refugees. While the immigration office insisted that the strict 1930s criteria for agricultural settlement and health regulation would still apply, the number was reduced to 3,500. In any case, only just over 1,000 of the Sudeten Germans arrived in Canada, mostly because the remaining refugees were trapped in Europe when the German military occupied all of Czechoslovakia in March 1939. Many of those who were not able to escape or who were later caught in exile in Belgium or Scandinavia were sent to concentration camps.<sup>69</sup>

The Canadian Pacific Railway settled about half of these Sudeten German refugees (152 families and 37 single men) at Tomslake in the Peace River district of northern British Columbia, while the Canadian National Railway placed the other half (148 families and 34 single men) near St. Walburg in Saskatchewan. They were supposed to become farmers since they had been officially admitted as agriculturalists under the restrictive Canadian immigration laws of 1930, even though almost all of them had an urban background.<sup>70</sup> These conditions were especially harsh for the group in Tomslake,

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<sup>68</sup> Andrew Amstatter, *Tomslake. History of the Sudeten Germans in Canada*. (Seattle, Wa. and Saanichton, BC: Hancock House Publishers, 1978), 50–52. Also Margaret Drysdale, “Three Times Betrayed. The Sudeten Germans of Tomslake, B.C.” (M.A. Thesis: University of Victoria, 2005), 49–51.

<sup>69</sup> Drysdale, “Three Times Betrayed,” 49–51. On the negotiations between members of the Sudeten Germans and representatives of the British and Canadian governments in London, see Willi Wanka, *Opfer des Friedens. Die Sudetensiedlung in Kanada*. (Munich: Langen Müller, 1988), 65–79.

<sup>70</sup> Jonathan F. Wagner, “British Columbia’s Anti-Nazi Germans: The Tupper Creek Refugees,” *BC Studies*, no. 39 (Autumn 1978), 7; and Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 262–264. Willi Wanka provides a detailed list of all the Sudeten German refugees in the two settlements including names, age at arrival, date of transport, and original country of refuge. His numbers are slightly higher than those provided by Margaret Drysdale, but the ages and arrival times of her interviewees coincide with Wanka’s list, see Willi Wanka, *Opfer des Friedens. Die Sudetensiedlungen in Kanada*. (Munich: Langen Müller Verlag, 1988), 307–340.

placed on land that had never been farmed and that was at best marginal for agriculture<sup>71</sup> given the short growing season in the Peace River, as a picture of a snow covered field in August 1941 in Willi Wanka's book *Opfer des Friedens* demonstrates.<sup>72</sup>

When war broke out in September 1939, all Germans and other enemy aliens (most notably the Italians, but also Austrians and Czechs) who had arrived in Canada after 1922 were declared 'Enemy Aliens' and had to report to the RCMP once a week under the War Measures Act of September 1939. Though the Sudeten Germans had arrived as refugees from Nazi persecution, they also became 'Enemy Aliens' until their protests were successful in getting an exemption from state surveillance in June 1940.<sup>73</sup>

Yet, despite their difficult beginnings, some of these immigrants were later involved in the Sudeten Committee, organizing relief efforts and immigration sponsorship as part of the Canadian Christian Council for the Resettlement of Refugees (CCCRR), after the end of the Second World War.<sup>74</sup> In that capacity, they took an active part in the lobbying and support for German immigration to Canada after 1948.

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<sup>71</sup> For a good description of the hardships of the early settlement and the problems arising with the responsible settlement company (Canadian Colonization Association), based on personal interviews, see Drysdale, "Three Times Betrayed," 71–76.

<sup>72</sup> Wanka, *Opfer des Friedens*, 129–152; Photograph between pages 208 and 209. Specifically for the Peace River Settlement, see also Amstatter, *Tomslake*, 83–106.

<sup>73</sup> Amstatter, *Tomslake*, 104. On the 'enemy alien' status for German immigrants, see Udo Sautter, "Deutsche in Kanada," in: Klaus J. Bade (Ed.), *Deutsche im Ausland – Fremde in Deutschland. Migration in Geschichte und Gegenwart*. (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1992), 196. For the process of planning measures in case of war and the differences in the treatment of the Japanese and European "enemy aliens," see Daniel Robinson, "Planning for the 'Most Serious Contingency': Alien Internment, Arbitrary Detention, and the Canadian State 1938–39," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 28, no. 2 (Summer 1993), esp. 8–11. Defence of Canada Regulations of September 1939 required unnaturalized enemy aliens to "register with the police, to carry identification cards, to report monthly to the police, to secure police permission for travel and to surrender firearms." Quoted in Howard Palmer, "Ethnic Relations in Wartime: Nationalism and European Minorities in Alberta during the Second World War," in: Franca Iacovetta with Paula Draper and Robert Ventresca (Eds.), *A Nation of Immigrants: Women, Workers, and Communities in Canadian History, 1840s–1960s*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 456.

<sup>74</sup> Groups organizing the CCCRR, see Johannes-Dieter Steinert, *Migration und Politik. Westdeutschland – Europa – Übersee 1945–1961*. (Osnabrück: secolo Verlag, 1995), 80. The Canadian Lutheran World Relief was organized in 1946 for relief work in Europe after the end of the war. In cooperation with German Baptists, Catholics, and Mennonites, the Lutheran World Relief founded the CCCRR in May 1947 to help

Jewish refugees, the Sudeten German Social democrats, and other political opponents of the Nazis were only the first of many groups across Europe who had to leave their homes as a result of Nazi ideology and the war Hitler unleashed. In the case of German-speakers, these interwar migrants laid the foundations for the massive postwar wave of immigrants by lobbying Ottawa to lift the enemy alien status after 1945, organizing relief efforts and immigration support for refugees, and by sponsoring family members to come to Canada. Yet despite these connections between the two migration movements, there are noticeable differences caused by the massive dislocations of populations during and after the Second World War.

The interwar immigrants from agricultural ethnic German communities in Eastern Europe, who left mostly because of the unsettled conditions in the newly created nation states and in post-revolutionary Russia, generally did so voluntarily in search of a better future. Therefore, not only linguistically and culturally, but in terms of their reasons for emigration, they had much in common with the agricultural settlers from Germany and Austria who migrated at the same time.

Ethnic Germans still outnumbered German nationals moving to Canada by a wide margin during the interwar period, but immigration quotas imposed by Washington to limit admission to the United States, the single most important destination for German nationals before 1914, made Canada a more attractive country for citizens of Weimar Germany than it had been before the First World War. Until 1926, the vast majority of German-speakers admitted by Ottawa were agriculturalists, but legislative changes extended the categories of admissible foreigners to include all professions and skilled

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ethnic German refugees excluded by the IRO mandate to immigrate to Canada. See LAC, MG 28-V 120, vol. 30, Canadian Lutheran World Relief fonds, introduction.

trades needed in Canada. Because of the social and economic structure of industrialized Germany, the numbers of German nationals immigrating to Canada increased noticeably in 1927, now including industrial workers, tradesmen, and urban professionals, while agriculturalists continued to dominate the migration from Austria and Eastern Europe. With this widening of categories, immigration of German nationals remained comparatively high for four years until the beginning of the World Economic Crisis and the imposition of immigration restrictions in Canada and other countries after 1930.

Though Hitler's aggressive anti-Semitic policies and his territorial expansionism created a formidable refugee crisis in Europe in the second half of the 1930s, Canada accepted only about a thousand Sudeten Germans in 1939 and settled them on agricultural lands in Saskatchewan and Northern British Columbia. This, then, was the first group of ethnic German refugees to reach Canada. They had to leave their homes permanently in 1938 / 39 because of their political beliefs. Many millions of people across Europe were resettled, expelled, and killed after the outbreak of the Second World War, for reasons of religion, political persuasion, and ethnic origin. The following chapter, therefore, will focus in particular on the experiences of ethnic German refugees and German nationals expelled from their homes in the East during the war, laying the foundations not only for the reasons for later immigration to Canada but also for the differences in self-identification between German nationals and ethnic Germans.

## Chapter 3

**Resettlement, Flight, and Expulsion, 1939–1946**

The Sudeten Germans who settled in Canada just before the beginning of the Second World War were, like the Jewish refugees at the same time, one part of a long succession of political and religious refugees fleeing to North America. Yet their numbers were small in comparison to the migrations that took place during and after the Second World War, especially in Eastern Europe. These migrations included both planned and ostensibly ‘voluntary’ population transfers and resettlements, as well as expulsions and deportations,<sup>1</sup> flights from the fighting, evacuations from bombings, and forced and voluntary labour migrations, to name just the most prevalent. None of the war-related reasons for migration were new when the Second World War started and neither were the ideas of population transfers that were aimed at creating homogeneous nation states.

Migration historian Klaus J. Bade has estimated that approximately 9.5 million refugees and forced migrants, such as those transferred between Greece and Turkey without their consent in 1922–23, were resettled in the years following the First World War. The defeated Germany received about 1.35 million people, including about 850,000 from Poland, 150,000 from the former German territory of Alsace-Lorraine, and 120,000 Russian-Germans who fled the upheavals of the Russian Revolution and the subsequent

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<sup>1</sup> Philipp Ther defines both expulsions and deportations as acts of ethnic cleansing. He states: “If ethnic cleansing is carried out over existing or newly erected state borders, it is most often termed ‘expulsion,’ whereas if it is carried out within state borders, it is termed ‘deportation.’ In most cases, expulsion and deportation are irreversible.” See Philipp Ther, “A Century of Forced Migration: The Origins and Consequences of ‘Ethnic Cleansing,’” in: Philipp Ther and Ana Siljak, *Redrawing Nations. Ethnic Cleansing in East-Central Europe, 1944–1948*. (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001), 43.

civil war.<sup>2</sup> These refugees represented about two percent of Germany's population after 1919. In comparison with the situation in Austria after the war, where ten percent of the population had been born outside its borders, and in particular compared with the situation in Europe after the Second World War, the number of refugees remained relatively small after the end of the First World War. This chapter, then, will focus on the impact of war, ideology, and territorial changes on the ethnic settlements in the East between 1939 and 1945. The resettlement of ethnic Germans and later expulsion of these settlers and German nationals from the East produced a major refugee crisis in postwar Germany that ultimately helped create a climate facilitating mass emigration in the second half of the 1940s and during the 1950s.

### **3.1 Precedents of population transfers and expulsions, 1920–1945**

In the wake of the First World War nationalism remained a major political force in Europe (and elsewhere). The problems were especially serious in the southeastern and eastern parts of the continent from the Balkans to the Baltic, where the multi-ethnic Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian, and Russian Empires had given way to the creation of a long string of medium-size nation states on territories where ethnically and often religiously diverse populations had lived side by side, in many cases for centuries. The attempts by the majority group to create linguistic and cultural homogeneity threatened

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<sup>2</sup> Klaus J. Bade, *Europa in Bewegung. Migration vom späten 18. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart*. (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 2000), 277–278. Smaller groups of Germans came from the colonies and other areas of German settlements in the Baltic and Southeastern Europe. For the case of the Greek and Turkish population transfer, see also Klaus-Dietmar Henke, “Der Weg nach Potsdam – Die Alliierten und die Vertreibung,” in: Wolfgang Benz (Ed.), *Die Vertreibung der Deutschen aus dem Osten. Ursachen, Ereignisse, Folgen*. (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1995), 58–60. Discussion of resettlements as a tool for the creation of homogenous nation states, see also Ortfried Kotzian, *Die Umsiedler. Die Deutschen aus West-Wolhynien, Galizien, der Bukowina, Bessarabien, der Dobrudscha und in der Karpatenukraine*. (Munich: Verlag Langen Müller, 2005), 18–20.

the traditional identities of minority groups, which in turn questioned the majority's self-ascribed program of nation-building.

Many examples demonstrate that aggressive assimilation measures by the state usually alienate the targeted minority groups and strengthen their sense of "otherness." Prussia's 'Germanization' of its significant Polish minority on the Eastern border before the First World War was largely unsuccessful,<sup>3</sup> as were Poland's attempts to assimilate its Ukrainian, Jewish, German, and Lithuanian minorities in the interwar period. Where assimilation failed, governments started to perceive minorities as obstacles to their nation-building endeavours.<sup>4</sup> Yet, as Winston Chu noted, using the example of the German minority in Poland, even the minority groups were still very diverse in the interwar years. In Poland, there were marked differences (and partly dislikes) between the former German nationals in West Prussia and around Posen, and the old German settlers in other parts of Poland, including groups in central Poland, Volhynia, and Galicia.<sup>5</sup> Under pressure of assimilation, however, the identity of these Germans (and others, like Ukrainians and White Russians) became a more homogeneous "other," though they did not form a unified organizational structure before the outbreak of war in 1939. Therefore, the ethnic composition of many of the eastern European states sparked internal tensions and at the same time made it easy for revisionist states like Germany to use these

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<sup>3</sup> David Blackbourn, *History of Germany, 1780–1918. The Long Nineteenth Century*. (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Oxford, U.K.: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 196. For the construction of identity and "otherness," see also Linda Colley, "Britishness and Otherness: An Argument," *Journal of British Studies* 31, no. 4 (1992), 309–329.

<sup>4</sup> Martin Scheuermann, *Minderheitenschutz contra Konfliktverhütung? Die Minderheitenpolitik des Völkerbundes in den zwanziger Jahren*. (Marburg: Verlag Herder-Institut, 2000), esp. 88–90. Also Kotzian, *Die Umsiedler*, 52–53. And Philipp Ther, "A Century of Forced Migration," 46–49.

<sup>5</sup> Winston Chu, "'Volksgemeinschaften unter sich.' German Minorities and Regionalism in Poland, 1918–39," in: Neil Gregor, Nils Roemer, and Mark Roseman (Eds.), *German History from the Margins*. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006), 104–121.



minorities to point to the shortcomings of the Treaty of Versailles and to demand border adjustments, as in the Munich agreement of 1938.

However, since peaceful border changes are rather an exception, other means to address perceived problems with minority groups were population transfers to “unmix” the ethnic settlement patterns and thereby create, politicians believed, more peaceful and stable nation states. The idea of forced resettlement schemes based on nationality (however defined) originated in the First World War and was first put into writing by the Swiss anthropologist Georges Montandon in 1915.<sup>6</sup> It was most notably put into action in the Treaty of Lausanne signed on July 24, 1923, when Greece and Turkey agreed to exchange their respective ethnic populations under the surveillance of the League of Nations. Though this solution to the Greco-Turkish conflict created horrendous hardships, cultural alienation, and many deaths among those slated for resettlement, the treaty provided a blueprint, not only for Hitler’s agreements with Italy, the Soviet Union and other countries, but also served as a justification for expelling Germans from post-World War II Poland and Czechoslovakia.<sup>7</sup> Though the British Foreign Secretary Lord Curzon, who headed the British delegation at the conference in Lausanne, unsuccessfully fought against the agreement, European public opinion declared the population exchange

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<sup>6</sup> Hans Lemberg, “Grenzen und Minderheiten im östlichen Mitteleuropa – Genese und Wechselwirkungen,” Hans Lemberg (Ed.), *Grenzen in Ostmitteleuropa im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert. Aktuelle Forschungsprobleme*. (Marburg: Verlag Herder-Institut, 2000), 167–169. At the time, politicians saw these population transfers primarily as humanitarian strategies to solve ethnic conflicts. Yet, because of the hardships involved for the populations, it was not applied to eastern central Europe until Hitler used it for his “Heim ins Reich” and eastern settlement plans after the beginning of the Second World War.

<sup>7</sup> Norman M. Naimark, *Fires of Hatred. Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), 108–111. For a discussion of the Treaty of Lausanne and the effects for the resettled populations, see Naimark, 54–56. He judges: “On both sides of the exchange, it took the refugees ... generations to acculturate, establish family roots, and reach a stage where they considered themselves finally to be at home.”

a great success.<sup>8</sup> Human suffering, it seems, was less important than the goal of creating homogeneous nation states at any cost.

The Second World War created involuntary migration movements that were unprecedented in their scale. In the midst of this upheaval of flight and destruction, the National Socialist ideology of opening up *Lebensraum*, or living space in the East, for German settlers precipitated a number of planned resettlement movements and ethnic cleansings to make space for them. Beyond these various forms of resettlement schemes, labour demands and the actual fighting created an enormous upheaval during and after the Second World War. Though numbers are certainly difficult to verify, reasonable estimates assume that some fifty to sixty million Europeans became refugees or were deported at one point or another during the conflict. Of these, about half permanently lost their homes.<sup>9</sup> This includes the millions of European Jews who were deported to labour and concentration camps. In addition to these, about one million were killed in mass shootings in the Soviet Union. Hence about six million Jews were murdered for no other reason than Nazi racial ideology.<sup>10</sup> But these movements also included millions of prisoners of war on all sides, forced labourers used especially in the German war economy and by the Soviet Union after 1945, and refugees of all belligerent nations fleeing from the fighting.<sup>11</sup>

Before focussing on the resettlement and expulsion of ethnic Germans and German nationals between 1939 and 1950, it should be made clear that the ultimate

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<sup>8</sup> Kotzian, *Die Umsiedler*, 18–19. Lord Curzon declared that the Treaty of Lausanne was “a thoroughly bad and vicious solution for which the world would pay a heavy penalty for a hundred years to come.” Naimark, *Fires of Hatred*, 55.

<sup>9</sup> Ther, “A Century of Forced Migration,” 44. Also Klaus J. Bade, *Europa in Bewegung. Migration vom späten 18. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart*. (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 2000), 284–292.

<sup>10</sup> For a detailed discussion of the genocidal motivations of the Nazis and the ideological justifications, see Naimark, *Fires of Hatred*, 57–84.

<sup>11</sup> Bade, *Europa in Bewegung*, 284–292.

treatment of Germans in the East was largely determined by Germany's brutal occupation of neighbouring countries and that its racial policies, especially towards Jews and Slavs, created the conditions for ethnic cleansings. The extremely high numbers of civilian casualties in Poland, Yugoslavia, and the Soviet Union, where millions of people died during the German invasions and occupations were a clear expression of Nazi ideology characterizing Slavic peoples as subhuman and therefore "expendable."<sup>12</sup> Though ethnic German communities experienced assimilation pressures in many Eastern European countries before the Second World War, their identification with the Nazi cause during the war, especially by Poles and Czechs, seemed to justify their expulsion.

Although the estimated civilian casualties – roughly two million – resulting from expulsions from five eastern and south-eastern European countries was significantly less than the number of people killed by the German occupiers and their Allies, the brutality of the expulsions from Poland, which accounted for just over half of the total fatalities (around 1,084,000), suggests equally unimaginable orgies of violence.<sup>13</sup> The Soviet Union also deported about one million Germans as forced labourers to work in the mines, in factories, and in reconstruction, as part of Germany's "reparation payments," but here too, the numbers were significantly less than the estimated eight million labourers from

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<sup>12</sup> On the German plans for Poland and the treatment of Poles during occupation, see Benz, "Der Generalplan Ost," 46–48. This is consistent with a speech Hitler gave to Wehrmacht generals on August 22, 1939 just over a week before the invasion of Poland. He said: "Our war aim is not to attain a particular line [in the east], but the physical destruction of the enemy." See Naimark, *Fires of Hatred*, 57. Also Robert G. Moeller, *War Stories. The Search for a Usable Past in the Federal Republic of Germany*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 11–12.

<sup>13</sup> Gerhard Reichling, *Die deutschen Vertriebenen in Zahlen. Part 1: Umsiedler. Verschleppte, Vertriebene, Aussiedler, 1940–1985*. (Bonn: Kulturstiftung der deutschen Vertriebenen, 1986), 36. However, numbers are difficult to verify for this period and differing definitions of casualties as a result of the actual fighting versus casualties of the expulsion process are used. For a description of local evidence of the effects of the expulsions and conditions in Polish labour camps, see also Naimark, *Fires of Hatred*, 124–132.

twenty-six countries brought to Germany during the war, 2.8 million of them from Russia and 1.7 million from Poland.<sup>14</sup>

Before looking at the process of resettlement and later expulsion of Germans from the east, it must be emphasized that these acts of violence were largely a result of the total war started by Hitler's Germany and rooted in a climate of racial hatred that left little room for distinguishing between guilt and innocence on either side.<sup>15</sup> Based on the precedent of the Treaty of Lausanne and the sheer scale of destruction during the Second World War, the Allied powers saw the removal of ethnic German minorities from Eastern Europe in particular, and the creation of ethnically homogeneous states in general, as a means to ensure future peace. At the same time, the expulsion of millions of Germans from their traditional homelands within the 1937 borders of Germany appears as a collective punishment of the aggressor and a means to compensate Poland for its losses of territory to the Soviet Union in the East.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Bade, *Europa in Bewegung*, 287–289 and 297. However, numbers cited by Ulrich Herbert for 1944 are noticeably lower with 5,295,000 civilian foreign workers (not all of them were forced labourers) and an additional 1,831,000 prisoners of war used as labour, see Ulrich Herbert, “‘Ausländer Einsatz’ in der deutschen Kriegswirtschaft, 1939–1945,” in: Klaus J. Bade (Ed.), *Deutsche im Ausland – Fremde in Deutschland. Migration in Geschichte und Gegenwart*. (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1992), 354. For the treatment of Soviet prisoners of war in Germany, see Jürgen Weber, *Germany 1945–1990. A Parallel History*. (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2004), 1–2.

<sup>15</sup> For a detailed analysis of the developing idea of expelling the German populations in Eastern Europe during the Second World War, see Klaus-Dietmar Henke, “Der Weg nach Potsdam – Die Alliierten und die Vertreibung,” in: Wolfgang Benz (Ed.), *Die Vertreibung der Deutschen aus dem Osten. Ursachen, Ereignisse, Folgen*. (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1995), 58–85.

<sup>16</sup> Since Stalin refused to return the territories to Poland that he had acquired as a result of the Hitler-Stalin Pact of August 1939, the Allies agreed to compensate Poland by moving it westward at the expense of Germany.

### 3.2 Organized Resettlement Schemes of Ethnic German Groups, 1939–1943



Map 3.1: Resettlements of Ethnic German Groups with areas of origin and destinations, 1939–1941.<sup>17</sup>

The long series of resettlement negotiations began before September 1939 involving about 75,000–100,000 Germans from South Tyrol, which Austria had ceded to Italy after the First World War. As part of the “Berlin Treaty” signed on June 23, 1939, Adolf Hitler and Italian dictator Benito Mussolini agreed that they would resettle the

<sup>17</sup> Kotzian, *Die Umsiedler*, 25. This is a Nazi map printed in 1941 to show the progress of resettlements.

ethnic Germans from Northern Italy to Austrian Tyrol and Carinthia. The details were finally established in a bilateral treaty on October 21, 1939.<sup>18</sup> However, the war and the lack of Germany's enthusiasm to resettle a German-speaking population living immediately south of the Austrian border prevented the full execution of the plans. Those South Tyroleans who were pressured to leave settled in the Austrian part of Tyrol and in the adjacent province of Carinthia.<sup>19</sup> In contrast to the situation in Eastern Europe, where resettlements and expulsions became generally irreversible, many South Tyrolians were able to return to their old homes after the end of the war.

During the Second World War, millions of people were resettled, or in most cases rather expelled, in the pursuit of the Nazi plans of creating *Lebensraum* in the East between 1939 and 1944. Roughly one million of these were ethnic Germans who were brought "Heim ins Reich" (literally "Back into the Empire"), a slogan used earlier to justify the German claim for the Sudetenland and the Memel District, the latter of which had been lost to Lithuania after the First World War. In a propaganda speech, Hitler argued on October 6, 1939 that the resettlement of ethnic German groups from all parts of Eastern Europe was intended to remove the potential for ethnic conflict by creating "clearer lines of separation" by manufacturing homogeneous populations within the borders of nation states.<sup>20</sup> Yet, in contrast to this statement, these ethnic German "re-

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<sup>18</sup> Kotzian, *Die Umsiedler*, 28. This case was the only resettlement in which Hitler agreed, for political reasons, to the relocation of an ethnic German group that was living in a territory directly adjacent to German-speaking areas. All the other resettlement schemes were focussed on isolated islands of ethnic German settlement, especially in Eastern Europe and the Balkans.

<sup>19</sup> Bade, *Europa in Bewegung*, 292. For a detailed study of the German resettlement plans during the Nazi period, see Robert L. Koehl, *RKFDV: German Resettlement and Population Policy 1939–1945. A History of the Reich Commission for the Strengthening of Germandom*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957).

<sup>20</sup> Hans Lemberg, "Grenzen und Minderheiten im östlichen Mitteleuropa – Genese und Wechselwirkungen," in: Hans Lemberg (Ed.), *Grenzen in Ostmitteleuropa im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert. Aktuelle Forschungsprobleme*. (Marburg: Verlag Herder-Institut, 2000), 171–172.

settlers” were actually intended to advance territorial claims by changing the ethnic composition of occupied areas and were therefore mostly moved to West Prussia and the region around Posen, also called the “Warthegau” (“Warthe District”). These were approximately the territories Germany had lost to Poland after the First World War, with significant new annexations to the east (See Map 3.1). Meanwhile, dispossessed Polish landowners who did not stay on their former farms as labourers were often sent to Germany for forced labour or left destitute in German-occupied rump-Poland.<sup>21</sup>

In most cases the resettlement process was similar. Generally, the transfers of ethnic German populations between 1939 and 1942 were based on state treaties, first with Italy, the Baltic States, then the Soviet Union, Rumania, and finally other Balkan states like Croatia, Serbia, and Bulgaria. These treaties allowed German officials to register the ethnic German populations as part of the bi-lateral cooperation and use propaganda to convince them to agree to the resettlements.<sup>22</sup> Though the registration was officially voluntary, the combination of German propaganda, the hope for a better future under German control, and the fear of living under Stalin’s rule in the Soviet Union combined to create a climate that induced the vast majority of the German minority groups in the new Soviet territories to agree to the population transfers. It remains questionable whether the process could therefore be characterized as a voluntary migration. This

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<sup>21</sup> Bade, *Europa in Bewegung*, 292. “Rump-Poland” in this context is the area of Poland that was not directly annexed to Germany and the Soviet Union in 1939. It was the territorially shrunken remainder of the Polish state which was under German control. See also Moeller, *War Stories*, 8–9.

<sup>22</sup> Kotzian, *Die Umsiedler*, 94–101. See also the discussion of the combination of German propaganda and offers of incentives to convince the ethnic German populations to agree to the resettlements. The fear of Soviet repression was also an effective tool to convince those who hesitated, Koehl, *RKFDV: German Resettlement and Population Policy*, 90–96.

confusion is reflected in the fact that some ethnic German interviewees referred to the migration as forced, while others said that it was voluntary.<sup>23</sup>

### **3.3 Ethnic German Groups resettled to the Warthe District, 1940**

In their non-aggression pact of August 23, 1939 (Hitler-Stalin Pact or Nazi-Soviet Pact), Hitler and Stalin generally agreed to cooperate in resettling ethnic minorities in their spheres of influence stretching from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea.<sup>24</sup> In October 1939, both countries signed protocols and a treaty to resettle ethnic Germans from Estonia and Latvia, which had become part of the Soviet sphere of influence. This initially included 13,000 persons from Estonia and 51,000 from Latvia, while a new agreement with the Soviet Union on January 10, 1941 added some 12,000 persons from the former two and an additional 51,000 from Lithuania, bringing the total to almost 130,000 ethnic Germans from the three Baltic states (See Map 3.1).<sup>25</sup> Many of them were moved to West Prussia (former Polish Corridor) and to the Warthe District. To make space for the Baltic Germans and subsequent movements of German settlers into these areas, about 1.2 million Poles, including about 500,000 Jews, were dispossessed and expelled in 1940–41 and many of the latter were killed in the Holocaust. In their place,

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<sup>23</sup> For example: Personal Interviews with Sara Belter, Vernon, BC, October 12, 2005, Hilda Knopf, Kelowna, BC, October 16, 2005, Pauline Leimert, Kelowna, BC, October 17, 2005, and Reinhold Ponto, Kelowna, BC, October 16, 2005. Sara Belter says that this was a resettlement arranged between Hitler and Stalin in which the people did not have the choice to stay in Volhynia. Hilda Knopf, born in Poland, similarly claims that her family was forced to relocate to the Warthe District, near Posen, as was the case for Reinhold Ponto, born in Rumania. Yet, Pauline Leimert, born in Bessarabia, said it was not a forced resettlement: “people could stay if they wanted, but maybe two women stayed in the village who were married to people outside the German community. All the others left. Hitler had sent a delegation to take everybody’s names. We left in the fall of 1940.”

<sup>24</sup> For the text of the original secret agreement and the content of the Border and Friendship Treaty between Berlin and Moscow of September 28, 1939 which included a clause on the “voluntary” resettlement of ethnic Germans into the German sphere of influence and of White Russians and Ukrainians into the Soviet Union, see Kotzian, *Die Umsiedler*, 23–24.

<sup>25</sup> Kotzian, *Die Umsiedler*, 26–35.



the Baltic Germans were among the first to arrive in these former Polish territories. All told, beginning in 1940, 370,000 people from ethnic German groups and 350,000 German nationals settled on this land.<sup>26</sup>

Similar to the Baltic Germans, in the winter of 1939–40, some 65,500 Volhynian Germans and about 57,000 Galician Germans who resided in the new Soviet border provinces taken from Poland in September 1939 were resettled in the former Polish territories of West Prussia and the area around Posen.<sup>27</sup> Sara Belter’s example is typical. She was born in Jutschin in the district of Rowno in Volhynia. In 1940, after the defeat of Poland, the family was moved to the town of Schadek, near Posen, when Volhynia became part of the Soviet Union. She remembers that the farms were simply assigned. “They removed the Polish owners from the farms. The ones that could work were sent to Germany, while the others were placed elsewhere. After that, our family, like many others, were then settled on these farms.”<sup>28</sup> Caroline Scholz explicitly described her family’s move from the District of Stanislaw-Lemberg in Galicia, where she had been born in 1922, to Poland in 1940:

At the end of the Polish war, my father and I walked all the way from Stanislaw to the German border, while my mother and the smaller children were able to get on a cattle railway car. Then we were in Litzmannstadt [Lodz] for a whole year while our records were checked to make sure that we were Germans, before we became German citizens. But we lost everything we owned during the process. Then we experienced how the

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<sup>26</sup> Wolfgang Benz, “Der Generalplan Ost. Zur Germanisierungspolitik des NS-Regimes in den besetzten Ostgebieten 1939–1945,” in: Wolfgang Benz (Ed.), *Die Vertreibung der Deutschen aus dem Osten. Ursachen, Ereignisse, Folgen*. (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1995), 45–47. Also Bade, *Europa in Bewegung*, 292–293; and Elizabeth Harvey, *Women and the Nazi East. Agents and Witnesses of Germanization*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 78–87. Harvey argues that the numbers of Poles expelled from the Warthe District by the end of 1943 was over 500,000 with significantly smaller numbers expelled from West Prussia and Upper Silesia.

<sup>27</sup> Bade, *Europa in Bewegung*, 293. Also Detlef Brandes, “Die Deutschen in Rußland und der Sowjetunion,” in: Klaus J. Bade (Ed.), *Deutsche im Ausland – Fremde in Deutschland. Migration in Geschichte und Gegenwart*. (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1992), 128.

<sup>28</sup> Sara Belter Interview.

Poles were thrown off their farms by the Germans before we were settled there. It was awful. One Polish family stayed with us and my parents were very Christian, so they treated them well and offered their son work so that he was not sent to Germany to work in the factories.<sup>29</sup>

Though it is unclear to what extent the outcome of the war and the feeling of guilt influenced this interpretation of injustice towards the Polish population by the Germans and her parents' "Christian charity," it was nevertheless this son who rescued Caroline's mother, grandmother, and the smaller children by guiding them to the German border when the Red Army approached.

As in Caroline's example, in the case of Volhynia and Galicia, women, children, the old and sick were moved by train, while the rest travelled westward by wagon trek, since this allowed them to bring more of their belongings. The population was then sent to resettlement camps with headquarters in Lodz (or "Litzmannstadt" in German) to process their personal information and assess their "racial purity." Those who met the Nazi standards received their German citizenship and were then settled on formerly Polish farms, while the military drafted the young men. Those who were not approved, including Baptists and Mennonites, were sent to Germany or Austria for a probation period in re-education and observation camps.<sup>30</sup> In the same way as other German groups, 93,500 Germans from Bessarabia and 95,000 from Bukovina were resettled after the Soviet Union had demanded the cession of these territories from Rumania in June 1940. Another 25,000 came from the Dobrudscha and central Rumania. The experiences

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<sup>29</sup> Caroline Scholz Interview, Kelowna, BC, October 16, 2005. Caroline Scholz concludes this topic with the words: "This is how it is – if you treat others well, it will be repaid. My family was rescued while many of the people we knew were shot, beat up, or their eyes put out. They did not make it."

<sup>30</sup> Harvey, *Women and the Nazi East*, 86. Also Kotzian, *Die Umsiedler*, 56–57. And Hans Werner, *Imagined Homes. Soviet German Immigrants in Two Cities*. (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2007), 30–31.

of Bessarabian, Bukovina, and Dobrudscha Germans were similar to the Baltic, Volhynian, and Galician examples, though they had to travel a significantly longer distance from the Black Sea, up the Danube River into Germany. Here, again, they usually stayed in resettlement camps while their German citizenship was processed, before government officials assigned farms to them in the former western parts of Poland, roughly corresponding to what they had given up in Bessarabia. As in the case of Caroline Scholz, this process could take a year and longer.<sup>31</sup> Overall, it seems that more than two thirds of the ethnic Germans affected by the resettlements went to the former Polish territories, while between one quarter and one third were sent to Germany and Austria. In any case, conditions in the camps were certainly unpleasant and the often long waiting periods caused widespread dissatisfaction among the ethnic German groups, as did the fact that the old village communities were dissolved in the process of resettlement. This, however, was certainly quite deliberate, since the separation allowed for a greater influence of Nazi propaganda.<sup>32</sup>

Yet not all the migrations in the interwar period and the war years were part of organized population transfers. For example, in 1924, Henry Fehling's parents had originally planned to move from Bessarabia to Brazil, where they had relatives. However, after they had sold all their possessions to pay for the migration, the church minister who had handled the transactions absconded with their money. Subsequently, the family decided to move to the Banat area of Rumania, because of the milder climate, and they then migrated to Germany via Austria in 1939. After the Polish War, they put a down-

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<sup>31</sup> Pauline Leimert Interview. For a detailed description of the resettlement process in Bessarabia, see Kotzian, *Die Umsiedler*, 235–240.

<sup>32</sup> For the attempts to create a new German settlement frontier in the East and the state education drives to turn ethnic German settlers into “model Germans”, see Harvey, *Women and the Nazi East*.

payment on a farm in the district of Graudenz in the former Polish Corridor (West Prussia) which they owned until they fled from the Russian front in early 1945.<sup>33</sup> Unlike those people who were resettled following state treaties, Henry's family had to buy their farm rather than receiving one in compensation for property lost elsewhere. The Fehling family's experience of voluntary migration, however, was unusual among those interviewed.

The last major movement of ethnic Germans into these districts of former Polish territory came in 1943–44, when a quarter million ethnic Germans from Galicia, Transylvania, and the Ukraine arrived. This last resettlement, however, began as part of the movement of refugees trying to escape before the advance of the Red Army.<sup>34</sup>

Caroline Leitner's story is quite typical for many ethnic Germans from the Ukraine. When the war turned in 1943, the family, like many other ethnic Germans, left on foot to be resettled in the Warthe District. Most of her family members had to work on farms owned by Baltic Germans who had been settled there in 1940, but she had heart problems and was exempted.<sup>35</sup> In the fall of 1944, the Soviet troops crossed into East Prussia for the first time, sweeping before them an enormous wave of millions of refugees, now including both ethnic Germans and German nationals.

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<sup>33</sup> Henry Fehling Interview, Penticton, BC, October 9, 2005.

<sup>34</sup> Bade, *Europa in Bewegung*, 293 and 297. Detlef Brandes, "Die Deutschen in Rußland und der Sowjetunion," in: Klaus J. Bade (Ed.), *Deutsche im Ausland – Fremde in Deutschland. Migration in Geschichte und Gegenwart*. (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1992), 128–129: From the end of 1941 to 1944, 130,000 ethnic Germans from the Soviet Union arrived in Germany, while 220,000 were resettled to the "Warthe District." Many of the latter were overtaken by the Red Army and "repatriated" to the Soviet Union. This was also true for about 50,000 Russian Germans from all occupation zones of Germany. Siegmund Geist provides an example of Ukrainian Germans being captured by Russian troops in the American occupation zone near Altötting in Bavaria. Siegmund Geist Interview, Vernon, BC, October 11, 2005.

<sup>35</sup> Caroline Leitner Interview (pseudonym), Sidney, BC, August 25, 2005. These impressions were also confirmed in conversations with Ukrainian German and Russian German members of the Good Shepherd Church in Victoria. They, too, talked about the Stalinist terror and food shortages especially during the collectivization and the reception of German troops as liberators. Also Epp, *Women without Men*, 29–30. On the flight of Mennonites and other ethnic Germans from the Ukraine, see pp. 42–54.

When the Russian front approached the Warthe District in January 1945, Caroline Leitner's family was separated. Caroline and her sister managed to walk to Berlin, but their mother and her three brothers were caught by the Russians and deported to Siberia, as Caroline found out through the Red Cross eleven years later. In Berlin she was separated from her sister when she left the rubble of the bombed-out city for Brandenburg, but she had contracted typhus. In an act of kindness, two Russian soldiers took her to a hospital where she stayed for seven weeks.<sup>36</sup>

### **3.4 Flight and expulsion of ethnic Germans and German nationals, 1944–1946**

When Soviet troops broke through German defences in East Prussia on October 19, 1944, they set in motion a massive refugee movement to the West. Though German troops halted the first incursion near Nemmersdorf within two days, the Red Army had raped and massacred the population that had been unable to flee. News of this atrocity quickly spread through the eastern parts of Germany and aroused fears of falling into the hands of Soviet troops.<sup>37</sup> One interviewee who asked to remain anonymous told of being rounded up with another dozen German girls and women by Soviet soldiers who brought them into their camp as prostitutes. The person who related the story considered herself

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<sup>36</sup> Caroline Leitner Interview. Similarly, Peter and Elfrieda Dyck, comment on Mennonites from the Ukraine: "Having suffered grievously under the dictator Joseph Stalin, they welcomed the Germans as liberators. ... After the Germans' defeat at Stalingrad in 1943, many Mennonites chose to flee with the retreating German army rather than stay in the Soviet Union." See Peter and Elfrieda Dyck, *Up from the Rubble. The epic rescue of thousands of war-ravaged Mennonite refugees*. (Waterloo, Ont.: Herald Press, 1991), 53–54. Many observers at the time remarked on the contradiction between the generally harsh Russian occupation, including rapes, murders, and looting, and the friendliness and generosity of some soldiers, especially towards children and women. See Norman M. Naimark, *The Russians in Germany. A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945–1949*. (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1995), 82–83.

<sup>37</sup> For a discussion of the atrocities during the Russian advance into East Prussia and later Silesia, see Naimark, *The Russians in Germany*, 72–76. Details on Nemmersdorf and its use for Nazi propaganda, see Alfred M. de Zayas, *Nemesis at Potsdam. The Expulsion of the Germans from the East*. (3<sup>rd</sup> revised Ed., Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 61–69.

lucky, because the officers chose her and she was “only” raped sixteen times, while the other women were not so fortunate. The fact that rape, executions, suicides, physical mistreatments, dispossession, and starvation were almost universal experiences of those who remained in the east at the end of the war, is also documented in an entire collection of personal affidavits preserved at the Federal Archives in Koblenz.<sup>38</sup> Every interviewee who had lived east of the Oder and Neißer Rivers in 1944 and 1945 recalled the incredible hardships of these refugee treks in the middle of winter, even if they were fortunate enough to escape ahead of the front.

The refugee movement can be roughly divided into three stages. The first, which started in the fall of 1944 and continued to the end of the war, was composed of those fleeing before the advance of the Red Army. The second stage consisted of the so-called “wild expulsions” in Eastern Europe in the summer of 1945, which were violent and inhumane and proceeded without the sanction of international agreements. Finally, the third stage included the internationally agreed upon, but hardly less violent, “population transfers” from Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary after the Potsdam Conference.<sup>39</sup> This final phase was mostly finished by 1950, though smaller groups of refugees arrived afterwards.

The first phase, or the flight before the Red Army’s advance, usually included an attempt to escape either on foot, or with horse and wagon loaded with some moveable

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<sup>38</sup> Marlene Epp also discusses the wide-spread rapes of women on the Eastern front in her study of Mennonite refugees, see Epp, *Women without Men*, 58–62. Apart from the already mentioned four-volume documentation on the expulsion of Germans from the East, the Federal Archives in Koblenz have an even more substantial collection of personal reports (Bestand Ost-Dok.2 – Erlebnisberichte). Four representative reports written between 1951 and 1954 are printed in Josef Henke, “Exodus aus Ostpreußen und Schlesien. Vier Erlebnisberichte,” in: Wolfgang Benz (Ed.), *Die Vertreibung der Deutschen aus dem Osten. Ursachen, Ereignisse, Folgen*. (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1995), 114–131.

<sup>39</sup> Inge Weber-Newth and Johannes-Dieter Steinert, *German Migrants in Post-war Britain. An enemy embrace*. (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 15.

possessions and food while the remaining valuables were usually buried on the property or simply left behind. Since most of the able-bodied men had been drafted into the military, these refugee treks consisted disproportionately of women, children, and old men.<sup>40</sup> Depending on the locations of origin, the refugees either headed straight to the West or tried to reach the Baltic coast to be evacuated across the sea. Henry Less who was ten years old at the time, gives a representative description of the process:

At the end of the war we had to get out of there [Warthe District] or we would be shot. That is what one of the SS told us ... because the Russians were only seven kilometres away with their tanks ... So, we had to leave everything behind – the cows, the chickens, the ducks, everything on the farm. My dad could not even take the money from the bank. He told us that we would be back in two weeks or a month, but I have never seen it again. We left with three horses and a wagon which we loaded with feed for the horses and some food for ourselves. It was on January 22, 1945 and the temperature was minus 22 degrees Celsius. The wagon was open, there was no cover, but they tucked us children in under featherbeds. We were still frozen stiff because of the cold temperatures. ... We were on the wagon train for over two months until we reached West Germany.<sup>41</sup>

Given the situation and despite the hardships of food shortages and the bitter cold described by many, Henry Less, Sara Belter, and Henry Fehling were very lucky since their families were able to stay together during the flight to the west.<sup>42</sup> In many other cases that did not happen. For example, Henry Grub lost most of his family. The first separation occurred when the Red Army took Henry's father and shot him. Henry and his aunt managed to flee but his mother stayed behind in Poland with two small children. At the same time, according to Henry, forty-two of his family members were killed in the massive air raids on Dresden in February 1945, when the city was filled with refugees. In

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<sup>40</sup> Werner, *Imagined Homes*, 136–138.

<sup>41</sup> Henry Less Interview, Black Creek, BC, April 21, 2006.

<sup>42</sup> Sara Belter and Henry Fehling Interviews. Sara Belter and her family left the Warthe District on January 17, 1945 as the Red Army advanced into the area. They fled West with horse and buggy and arrived in Lower Saxony at the end of February.

1946, Henry found out about his mother and brought her and the two small children to the West, but the children, who were suffering from pneumonia, died within a week of each other.<sup>43</sup> Many, like Henry's mother, did not escape in time. Those, who stayed behind or returned to their homes after they were overtaken by the front, usually lost their property in the following months.

In April 1945, over four million Germans still resided in the territories occupied by Soviet and Polish troops. Furthermore, estimates suggest that more than one million returned to their former homes over the following three months, either because they hoped for protection in their old communities, or, after being overtaken by the Soviet advance, they had nowhere else to go. In the summer of 1945, however, so-called "wild expulsions" occurred in the Polish occupied areas and in Czechoslovakia. These generally violent expulsions of German populations without the backing of international treaties ended only with the signing of the Potsdam Agreement in August 1945. In addition, because of the unorganized character of the process, no serious provisions for food, transportation, or protection of the refugees were in place. These wild expulsions affected over one million Germans (800,000 in Czechoslovakia and 300,000 in Poland).<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Henry Grub Interview, Kelowna, BC, October 15, 2005. Similarly, Caroline Leitner and her sister were separated from the rest of her family when they successfully escaped to Berlin and Brandenburg. Her mother and three brothers were caught by the Red Army and all of them were deported to Siberia (Caroline Leitner Interview). Also, Adina Frank successfully fled during this first phase, while Leo Keller was actually born during the process in January 1945. In addition, Lydia Ponto and her later husband Reinhold Ponto, as well as Hilda Knopf, Richard Person, Caroline Scholz, Erika Riemer, Dieter Doberstein, Arnold Hirschhorn, and Willy Godlinski survived the trek ahead of the Russian advance. Lilly Matzigkeit and her sister Pauline Leimert fled to the Baltic coast around Danzig (Hel Peninsula) and then by ship to Lübeck in Germany while Christian Stieda escaped to Denmark via the island of Rügen. Therefore, in total 19 of the 50 interviewees survived the refugee treks to the West, while another 8 were overtaken by the front and came to Germany in phases two and three. The remaining ten interviewees who permanently lost their homes had been either part of earlier refugee movements to Germany in 1943–44 or had been in the German military at the time and became prisoners of war.

<sup>44</sup> Bade, *Europa in Bewegung*, 298.



The only person in the sample who left during the wild expulsions was Brunhilde Wiehler. At the time of the Russian advance, she was in East Prussia with her one-year-old baby. Her husband Horst was in the military. Unable to flee, Brunhilde stayed in the east, squatting in a little apartment in Marienburg on the Vistula River. At the end of the war, her husband cycled and hitch-hiked back to Danzig and eventually found them. They were near starvation and full of lice while her husband soon contracted typhus.

Brunhilde Wiehler summarizes their living situation as follows:

My daughter was so starved that she would chew on tree bark. In May it started to get hot, so there was a constant sweet smell in the air from the decaying bodies of dead soldiers, so the Russians rounded up the women and we had to get all the bodies out of the river and bury them. This is something I will never forget. Many women were raped, even old women who remained on the farms – it was horrible. However, the Russians had given the area to Poland, so when the Poles came, they would take everything from us, so Horst said that we should get out as quickly as possible. We rented a cart and went to the Weichsel [Vistula] River which we had to cross on a ferry. But right away, when the Poles found out that we were leaving, they came to take everything from us.<sup>45</sup>

In the end, they arrived in Berlin as part of a group of 18 refugees with no belongings. In the British sector of the city, they stayed in a refugee camp for over a year before being able to leave to the West.

The wave of refugees, especially from the Polish occupied areas of former eastern Germany and the Czechoslovakian Sudetenland, created major problems for the occupying powers that were not prepared to deal with feeding and housing millions of dispossessed, starving and sick people, in addition to coping with the already major difficulties of governing their occupation zones. Since these additional refugees exacerbated the existing problems in war-torn Europe in the summer of 1945, Britain and

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<sup>45</sup> Brunhilde Wiehler Interview, Kelowna, BC, October 17, 2005.

the United States tried to slow down the expulsion process to a more manageable pace at the Potsdam Conference, but with very limited success because Stalin's failure to cooperate rendered it impossible for the western powers to put pressure on the governments in Warsaw and Prague.

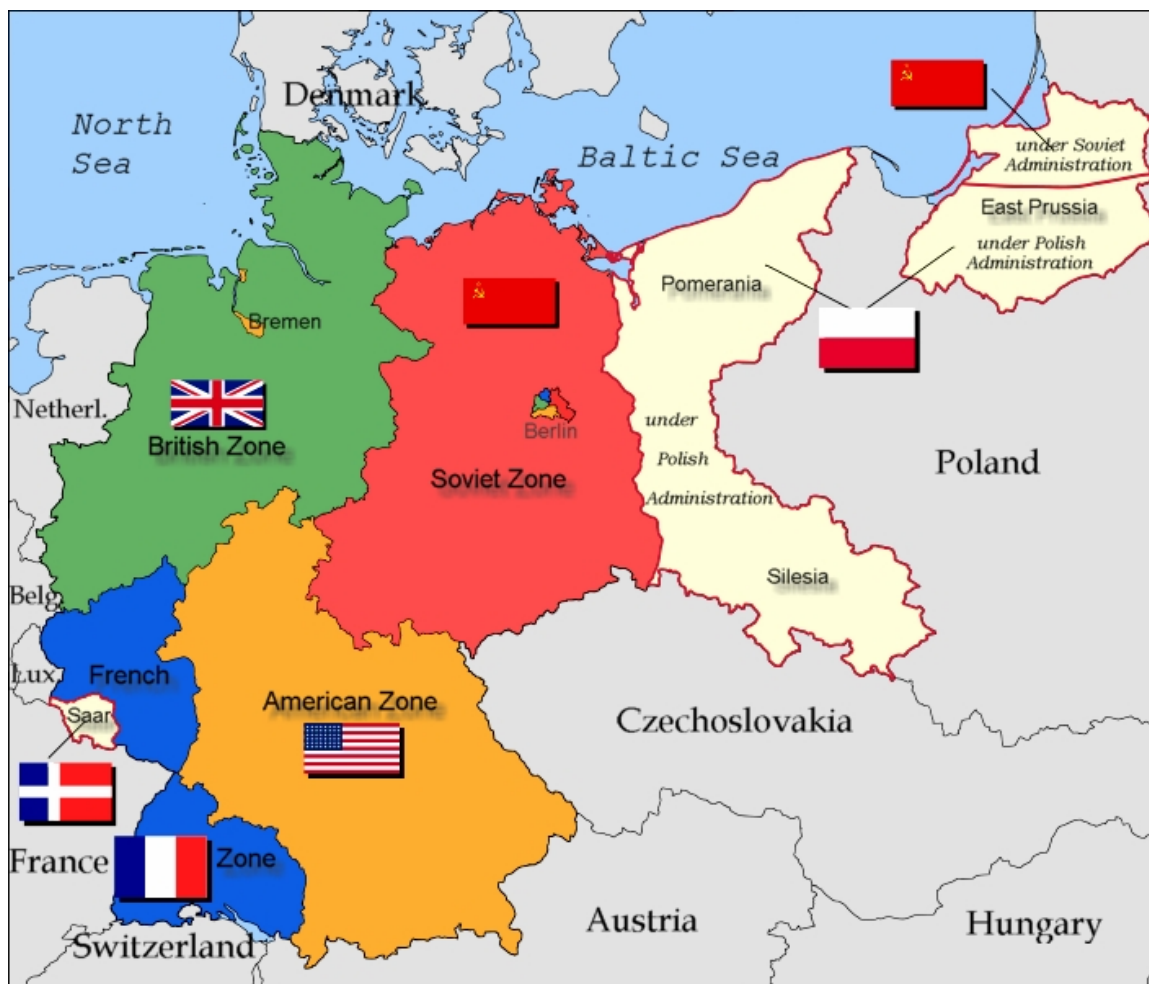
During the war, the three great powers, the Soviet Union, the United States, and Great Britain had reached a consensus that Poland would be compensated for its loss of territory in the East at the expense of Germany and that German populations would have to be removed from these areas to ensure a lasting settlement. However, they did not agree on the extent of the territorial compensation beyond East Prussia, Danzig, and Upper Silesia, at least until the Conference held at Potsdam, outside of Berlin, from July 17 to August 2, 1945.<sup>46</sup> At this last of the summits of the anti-Hitler coalition, the United States and Great Britain acknowledged Stalin's *fait accompli* to compensate Poland by placing southern East Prussia, all of Silesia, as well as eastern parts of Brandenburg and Pomerania to the Oder and Neißer Rivers, and the port city of Stettin, on the western side of the Oder River, under Polish administration.<sup>47</sup> Though the Western Allies insisted that a final settlement of the issue had to wait for a peace treaty, they agreed to the transfer of the remaining German population from these areas, as well as from Czechoslovakia and Hungary, to Germany. In the case of Poland, they thereby de facto acknowledged the

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<sup>46</sup> Henke, "Der Weg nach Potsdam," 61–80. On the idea of transfers of the German populations from Czechoslovakia and postwar Poland, especially in the British Foreign Office, see a short overview in Hans Lemberg, "Grenzen und Minderheiten im östlichen Mitteleuropa – Genese und Wechselwirkungen," in: Hans Lemberg (Ed.), *Grenzen in Ostmitteleuropa im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert. Aktuelle Forschungsprobleme*. (Marburg: Verlag Herder-Institut, 2000), 173–177.

<sup>47</sup> Though nationalist groups in Poland already demanded the Oder and Neisse Rivers as western border in 1939 and most other political parties as well as the government in exile in London followed this line, Polish politicians had little influence on the decision-making process from Yalta to Potsdam, despite the fact that the final settlement in the west basically coincided with the maximum demands for postwar territorial compensation. On this topic, see Włodzimierz Borodziej, "Die polnische Grenzdiskussion im Lande und im Exil (1939–1945)," in: Hans Lemberg (Ed.), *Grenzen in Ostmitteleuropa im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert. Aktuelle Forschungsprobleme*. (Marburg: Verlag Herder-Institut, 2000), 137–148.

permanent change of Germany's eastern border by accepting the removal of the German population.<sup>48</sup>



Map 3.2: Division of Germany at the Potsdam Conference.<sup>49</sup>

In November 1945, the Allied Control Council, which was responsible for the placement of the populations transferred from Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary based on Article XIII of the Potsdam Agreement, made a resettlement plan to ensure the humane transfer of the German populations from the East – the third and final phase of

<sup>48</sup> Henke, “Der Weg nach Potsdam,” 80–81. Also Karin Neger-Focke, *Die deutsche Amerikaauswanderung nach 1945. Rahmenbedingungen und Verlaufsformen*. (Stuttgart: Verlag Hans-Dieter Heinz, 1995), 21–23. On Poland’s actions to acquire these former German territories permanently, see Norman M. Naimark, *Fires of Hated*, 131–136.

<sup>49</sup> Base map adopted from “creative commons” (Wikipedia). Alterations made by author.

the expulsion process. According to this plan, the Soviet zone of occupation was supposed to receive 2,750,000 German refugees from Poland and Czechoslovakia, while the American zone should settle 2,250,000 from Czechoslovakia and Hungary. Another 1,500,000 refugees from Poland were to be settled in the British zone and 150,000 from Austria in the French occupied area. However, this plan was abandoned almost immediately because France did not abide by it and an orderly transfer of German refugees from the east proved to be impossible in the chaotic postwar conditions and without the active cooperation of the expelling countries.<sup>50</sup>

Though the population transfer was supposed to be humane and orderly according to the Potsdam agreement, Theodor Schieder's extensive four volume study for the Federal Ministry for Refugees,<sup>51</sup> documents how the bottled-up hatred from the years of brutal German occupation in Eastern Europe led, not surprisingly, to often violent actions of revenge against the German civilian population that had either stayed in the areas now under Polish control, or had been overtaken by the Red Army on the flight westward and had then returned to their former homes. These clashes played a prominent part in the life stories of the former refugees interviewed in British Columbia. Though most recall this time as one of physical abuse and exploitation, some also talk about the help they received from Poles and Soviet soldiers, as in the already mentioned stories from

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<sup>50</sup> Nerger-Focke, *Die deutsche Amerikaauswanderung nach 1945*, 23. For text of Potsdam Agreement, see Wolfgang Benz, *Potsdam 1945. Besatzungsherrschaft und Neuaufbau im Vier-Zonen-Deutschland* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1986), 207–225. Article XIII calls for a “humane and orderly” transfer of the German populations from Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary.

<sup>51</sup> Theodor Schieder (Ed.), *Die Vertreibung der Deutschen Bevölkerung aus den Gebieten östlich der Oder-Neisse*. (Bonn: Bundesministerium für Vertriebene, 1953–1961). See also Philipp Ther, “A Century of Forced Migration: The Origins and Consequences of ‘Ethnic Cleansing,’” in: Philipp Ther and Ana Siljak, *Redrawing Nations. Ethnic Cleansing in East-Central Europe, 1944–1948*. (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001), 55–56.

Caroline Scholz and Caroline Leitner. Some interviewees, however, skipped over this period because the topic remains too emotional.

### **3.5 Expulsions and Population Transfers from Eastern Europe, 1945–1950**

At the end of the war the approximately 3.5 million Germans in Czechoslovakia made up about one quarter of the country's population. Though the Beneš government in Prague professed in a note to the United States before the Potsdam Conference that it believed in the necessity of organized and orderly population transfers, the expulsions of the Sudeten Germans had started by June 1945, long before the Allied High Commission agreed on the distribution plan.<sup>52</sup> Around three million Sudeten Germans, like Erich Plonka, had to leave Czechoslovakia by 1950, with two thirds of them settling in West Germany.<sup>53</sup>

The actual death toll of the expulsion process is difficult to determine, partly because of the lack of documentation and partly because the categories of those who died may be limited to the victims of violence in some accounts, while other sources include suicides and death by starvation or disease after the actual expulsion, or include all who remained unaccounted for in the statistics. In any case, estimates of the numbers range from as low as 30,000 to about a quarter of a million casualties among the Sudeten Germans. This however, does not account for any of the non-fatal acts of violence like

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<sup>52</sup> Foreign Relations of the United States, Diplomatic Papers, The Conference of Berlin (The Potsdam Conference) 1945, vol. 1, 646, cited in Nerger-Focke, *Die deutsche Amerikaauswanderung nach 1945*, 25–26.

<sup>53</sup> Alois Harasko, "Die Vertreibung der Sudetendeutschen. Sechs Erlebnisberichte," in: Wolfgang Benz (Ed.), *Die Vertreibung der Deutschen aus dem Osten. Ursachen, Ereignisse, Folgen*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1995, 132–147. Also Erich Plonka Interview (pseudonym), Summerland, BC, Jan. 20, 2006. Born in the Sudetenland, he was forced to leave after the end of the war and settled in West Germany, where he experienced the hunger and poverty that was part of the life stories of most refugees.

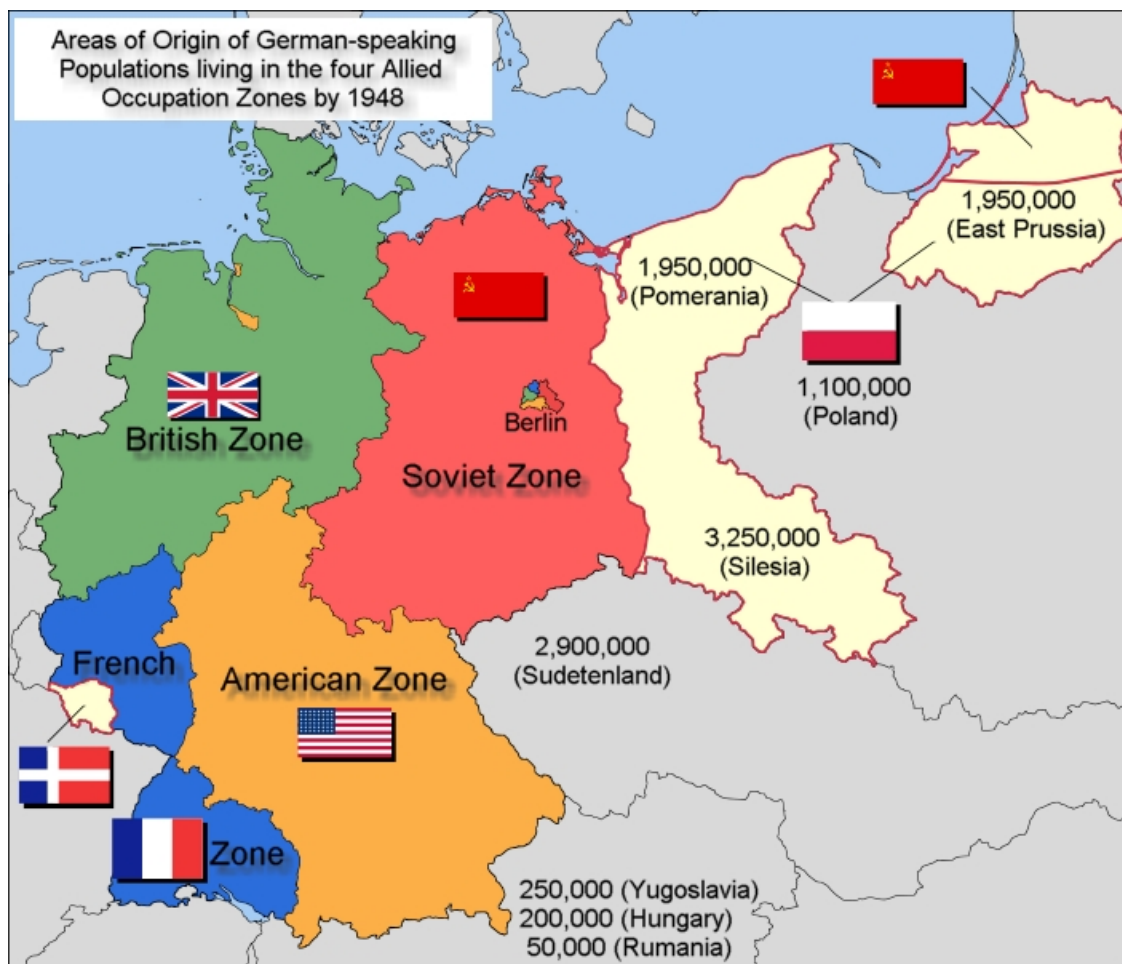
brutal beatings and the ever present rapes and gang rapes of women.<sup>54</sup> And because the refugees often had little notice before their expulsion and suffered the theft of their few possessions along the way, many arrived with the clothes they wore and were, in most cases, exhausted and undernourished.

Those German nationals who lost their homes in the formerly eastern German territories that had been placed under Polish administration – and in the case of Northern East Prussia under Soviet administration – were by far the largest group of refugees. The last pre-war census had counted just over nine million German citizens in these territories with an additional 388,000 in the formerly free city of Danzig.<sup>55</sup> Many successfully fled to the West ahead of the front, but more than half of them remained in the East after the Red Army took control of the area, either because the front overtook them or they had been unable to leave. Many who had remained in the east after the front moved over their area of residence, and who were not affected by the wild expulsions, were put to work on the now Polish farms and in households. Only through such labour could they get enough food to survive.

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<sup>54</sup> Reichling, *Die deutschen Vertriebenen in Zahlen*, 34. For a detailed discussion of the Czech motivations behind the expulsion of Sudeten Germans and the actual process, including cases of extreme violence that led to the death of at least tens of thousands of ethnic Germans in the summer of 1945, see Naimark, *Fires of Hated*, 112–122.

<sup>55</sup> Reichling, *Die deutschen Vertriebenen in Zahlen*, 26. However, the German literature makes strict distinctions between the terms expellees (*Vertriebene*): people who were expelled from their homes; refugees (*Flüchtlinge*): those who chose to flee before the Red Army; in-migrants (*Zugewanderte*): people who decided to leave Communist Eastern Germany to go to the West; and displaced persons: people who were outside of their countries of citizenship at the end of the war. Though repatriations reduced the numbers quickly, around one million people could not be repatriated after the end of the war either for political or ethnic reasons. Apart from survivors of concentration camps and slave labourers mostly from Eastern Europe, this group, strictly speaking, also included ethnic Germans, though organizations like the International Refugee Organization (IRO) or its predecessor, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), did not recognize them as such. However, in most contexts, I will use the term ‘refugee’ to include expellees and also in-migrants, since the latter term partly conceals a refugee movement from communist Eastern Germany to the west. Only where the experiences of these groups are distinct, will I use the terms in their more specific meaning. A similar approach is used in Nerger-Focke, *Die deutsche Amerikaauswanderung nach 1945*, 27–29.



**Map 3.3:** Movements of German-speaking refugees and expellees in Central and Eastern Europe between 1944 and 1948.<sup>56</sup>

Since all able-bodied men had been drafted to the German military, the remaining populations consisted mostly of women, children, and old people. Yet the interview with Albert Kropp born in pre-war Poland and resettled to the county (Kreis) of Obornik in the Warthe District in 1939 shows that this gender balance was not necessarily static. After a year in an American prisoner of war camp near Metz in France, he was repatriated to

<sup>56</sup> Numbers based on Philipp Ther and Ana Siljak (Eds.), *Redrawing Nations. Ethnic Cleansing in East-Central Europe, 1944–1948*. (New York and Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001), XII. For numbers of expellees and refugees in 1950, see Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte. vol. 4: Vom Beginn des Ersten Weltkriegs bis zur Gründung der beiden deutschen Staaten, 1914–1949*. (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 2003), 944. Former Eastern Provinces, 6.66 Mio.; Czechoslovakia, 3.06 Mio.; Poland, 2.1 Mio.; Yugoslavia, 238,000; Hungary, 210,000; Rumania, 133,000; Total: 12.45 Mio. German-speaking refugees in postwar Germany, while 1.71 Mio. died during the expulsions. Base map adopted from “creative commons” (Wikipedia). Alterations made by author.

Poland in early 1946, despite his ethnic German background. He remembers: “I spent one year in Poland where I was working on a Polish farm and was treated badly. Many of us Germans were beaten, no matter whether they [*sic.*] were guilty or not.”<sup>57</sup> At the end of 1946, he was allowed to leave Poland to go to Lower Saxony in West Germany, where his mother lived. All the other interviewees who left Poland between the end of 1945 and as late as the summer of 1947 similarly report continued hardship because of a combination of bad and crowded accommodation, hard labour, insufficient food, and frequent threats and mistreatment by Polish groups. Yet, some of them also remember Polish neighbours who protected them from harm, helped them out with food or supported their attempts to leave for Germany. Helmut Reither from Schreibendorf in Silesia states:

One day, I remember that Polish policemen came and brought a Polish family with them. They told us that they would be living on the farm from now on, so we had to move to a little room between our old living room and the barn, where originally the groom would have lived. So, the four of us lived in this room and we had no say on the farm any more. The Polish woman cooked and I remember that the only thing to eat was potato soup.<sup>58</sup>

However, the Polish family that had taken over his grandparents’ farm 500 metres away were friendlier, so there was usually something to eat there. When all the Germans of the village were expelled in August 1946, they were able to take some of their possessions with them.

The situation was more difficult for Lilli Grub, born in West Prussia. She was eleven years old at the time of the Russian advance. Her story makes quite clear that not all Poles felt ethnic hatred and a desire for revenge. From West Prussia, Lilli fled with

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<sup>57</sup> Albert Kropp Interview, Kelowna, BC, October 15, 2005. He does not specify what exactly he means with the word “guilty” but the context suggests that he is talking about German brutalities against Poles.

<sup>58</sup> Helmut Reither Interview, Richmond, BC, May 26, 2006.



horse and cart to Pomerania with her parents, grandmother, seven siblings and the two Polish farm hands. Then, her father, who was partly paralyzed and therefore was not drafted into the military, decided to return to the farm, so they waited for six weeks until the Russians arrived. When interrogated by the soldiers, the family claimed to be Polish and the farmhands vouched for them.

After their return home, Lilli Grub and her sister Alice Kropp, experienced both hardship and violence. Lilli remembers:

However, there the Poles took everything from us and beat my father and mother. One cousin of my father had been a policeman in the area during the war and he had treated the Poles badly. ... I had to go and work on a Polish farm as a maid. My mother had to clean the school and my father and the grandmother took care of the children. My father was good with his hands, so he built things and traded them for food.<sup>59</sup>

When they tried to leave in the fall of 1945 a group of Poles came and mistreated the parents and grandmother until a Polish neighbour came and stopped them. The father's beating resulted in permanent kidney damage and the mother's jawbone was broken. Lilli continues:

In January 1946 we were listed on the black board of the district town as asking to leave. Since nobody had anything against us, they finally let us go. Therefore, we got the release from the Polish state. We were supposed to leave on January 4, 1946, but the day before another group of Poles came and threatened to shoot us. They told us that they had done the same to another German family in a town called Oberrn. There was a struggle and my grandmother was badly beaten up, but finally they left. The next morning, our Polish neighbour, who was really an angel, came and brought us to the railway station in Leipe.<sup>60</sup>

The family reached Berlin from where the Red Cross sent them to a refugee camp in Thuringia in the Soviet zone. When typhus broke out in the camp, they fled across the

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<sup>59</sup> Lilli Grub Interview, Kelowna, BC, October 15, 2005.

<sup>60</sup> Lilli Grub and Alice Kropp Interviews, Kelowna, BC, October 15, 2005.

border to Lower Saxony in the British zone, although the grandmother and one younger sister died along the way.

Significant numbers of ethnic Germans were also expelled from Hungary, Rumania, and Yugoslavia after the war. Reichling estimates that there were 548,000 Germans in Hungary in 1945. Though the Hungarian government planned to expel 500,000 of them, only 210,000 were registered in Germany since many had already fled before the Red Army arrived or had left in order to avoid these expulsions. The vast majority of these refugees resided in West Germany in 1950.<sup>61</sup>

Some accounts from interviewees illustrate the story at a personal level. Erwin Kirsch was born in the German village of Moragy near Balaton Lake in western Hungary where his family owned a diversified farm with vineyards. Though Erwin had served in the Hungarian Army during the war, his family was dispossessed in 1946 and had to resettle in the western part of Germany.<sup>62</sup> Similarly, Irene Salamon, born in Oedenburg, Hungary, remembers the trauma she suffered as an eight or nine year old when her family was dispossessed and expelled by the Russians in 1946.<sup>63</sup> Others, like Rosi Vetter, born in Novi Sad in Yugoslavia, fled from the fighting in 1944, ending up in several refugee camps in Germany before her family was placed on a farm in Lower Saxony in 1946.<sup>64</sup>

Though the Potsdam Agreement did not sanction the removal of ethnic German populations from Rumania and Yugoslavia, Rumania expelled 133,000 of its

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<sup>61</sup> Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte, vol. 4: Vom Beginn des Ersten Weltkriegs bis zur Gründung der beiden deutschen Staaten*. (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 2003), 944. Also Reichling, *Die deutschen Vertriebenen in Zahlen, vol. 1*, 26.

<sup>62</sup> Erwin Kirsch Interview (pseudonym), Vernon, BC, October 11, 2005.

<sup>63</sup> Irene Salamon Interview, Kelowna, BC, October 14, 2005.

<sup>64</sup> Rosi Vetter Interview (conducted by Monica Schmid), Vancouver, BC, Summer 2004.

approximately half million German residents while Yugoslavia exiled 283,000 of 435,000. In both cases, about half of them resided in West Germany in 1950.<sup>65</sup>

According to the first postwar census taken in 1946, about 9,700,000 German refugees resided in the four occupation zones, with about two thirds of them living in the three western zones.<sup>66</sup> This number increased to eight million in the West and 4.4 million in the East in 1950. After that date, 200,000 refugees left Eastern Germany to go to the Federal Republic, which had been founded in 1949. An estimated 1.5 million former residents of East Germany joined them after the creation of the Communist German Democratic Republic before the building of the Berlin Wall sealed the last escape route between the two German states in 1961.<sup>67</sup>

Waldemar Belter, for example, was born in Volhynia and resettled to the Warthe District in 1940. From there he had fled to the eastern German state of Brandenburg at the end of the war. In 1947, a friend working in an office for the Soviet occupation forces tipped him off that he was on a list for forced labour in a Russian coal mine. Therefore, Waldemar fled towards the West by train, but was apprehended by East German police at the last railway station before the border. After a day in custody, he escaped, crossing the border to the western zones the same night.<sup>68</sup> Hilda Knopf and her family were also

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<sup>65</sup> Reichling, *Die deutschen Vertriebenen in Zahlen*, vol. 1, 26.

<sup>66</sup> Weber-Newth and Steinert, *German Migrants in Post-war Britain*, 15. Also Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte*. vol. 4, 244.

<sup>67</sup> Franz J. Bauer, "Aufnahme und Eingliederung der Flüchtlinge und Vertriebenen. Das Beispiel Bayern 1945–1950," in: Wolfgang Benz (Ed.), *Die Vertreibung der Deutschen aus dem Osten. Ursachen, Ereignisse, Folgen*. (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1995), 199–200. Also Nerger-Focke, *Die deutsche Amerikaauswanderung nach 1945*, 27.

<sup>68</sup> Waldemar Belter Interview, Vernon, BC, October 12, 2005. Waldemar Belter's parents and siblings fled from East Germany in 1954, five years after he had immigrated to Canada.

among these refugees, secretly crossing the border at night after bribing the East German border guards.<sup>69</sup>

Records about the numbers of people who stayed in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary or who died during the expulsions are unclear, but according to the Federal Ministry for Refugees, 2.72 million persons remained in their former homes, either because through their skills they made important economic contributions or because they were married to a citizen of the country in which they then resided. The study estimated that another roughly two million people died during or as a result of the expulsions.<sup>70</sup>

As this chapter has demonstrated, many ethnic groups in Europe suffered severely under the direct and indirect impact of Nazi ideology and the total war unleashed by Germany. In the quest to create living space in the East, hundreds of thousands of ethnic Germans and German nationals were resettled in conquered territories, especially in West Prussia and in the Warthe District, displacing the Polish and Jewish populations in an attempt to advance territorial claims by changing the ethnic composition of the region.

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<sup>69</sup> Hilda Knopf Interview. In Hilda Knopf's case, the father was already in the West, but at the first attempt to leave the East, they were arrested. The second time, however, they crossed the border successfully.

<sup>70</sup> Bundesministerium für Vertriebene, Flüchtlinge und Kriegsgeschädigte (Ed.), *Die Betreuung der Vertriebenen, der Flüchtlinge, der Kriegsgeschädigten, der Evakuierten, der Kriegs- und Zivilgefangenen, der Heimkehrer, der nichtdeutschen Flüchtlinge*. (Bonn: Bundesministerium für Vertriebene, 1966), 8, cited in Nerger-Focke, *Die deutsche Amerikaauswanderung nach 1945*, 25. Similarly: "On January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1949, the number of expellees in the American and British zone was 7.1 million, in the Russian zone 4.3 million and in the French zone only 200,000. This makes a total of 11.6 million expellees which under the Potsdam agreement have been expelled from eastern Germany, eastern and south-eastern Europe. In addition there lived in Bizonia (the combined British and American occupation zones), 841,000 people who have emigrated from Berlin and the Russian zone of occupation. Further there are 730,000 foreigners (mostly displaced persons) in Bizonia as well as over one million evacuees from devastated towns. In Bizonia alone therefore the people who have lost their home is 9.6 million. Into the smaller Germany west of the Oder and Neiß rivers nearly 12 million expellees and refugees have been squeezed." LAC MG28-V28, Canadian Society for German Relief funds, vol. 2, file: Monthly Bulletins, 1948-1954, *Monthly Bulletin* 2, no. 8 (September, 1949), 1. However, claims by authors like Alfred de Zayas and James Bacque that the casualty numbers of German expellees and the civilian population were significantly higher than those listed by the statistical office are exaggerated and unfounded. de Zayas, *Nemesis at Potsdam*, and James Bacque, *Crimes and Mercies. The Fate of German Civilians Under Allied Occupation, 1944-1950*. (Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1997), 130-135.

When the war turned in 1943 and the Red Army reached East Prussia in the fall of 1944, it set in motion an unprecedented wave of refugees. In the end, on an even greater scale than the German attempts to permanently claim Polish territory, millions of ethnic Germans and German nationals became subjects of expulsions from the new Polish state that had been moved westward by the Allied powers at the expense of Germany. In addition, the Beneš government in Prague expelled about three million ethnic Germans from the Sudetenland, while other south eastern European states followed these examples on a smaller scale. These people moved westward into the significantly smaller German territory under Allied occupation, after permanently losing their homes and usually all their possessions.

Many of the millions of German expellees and ethnic German refugees arriving in the destroyed and defeated Germany after the Second World War were first placed in refugee camps before a large number was distributed to stay with families, mostly in rural areas where war damage was less extensive than in the bigger cities. Yet, the limited housing, insufficient food supplies, and the competition for work created a difficult climate of resentment between the local populations and their new neighbours. As the following chapter will show, for young German nationals and especially for many of the expellees and ethnic German refugees who had lost everything in the process of resettlements and the expulsions, the harsh living conditions in Germany and the lack of economic opportunity in the early postwar years combined to create an atmosphere where emigration seemed to be a promising escape to a better future.

## Chapter 4

**Postwar Conditions in Germany and the increasing Emigration Interest**

In April 1950, the German magazine *Revue* wrote that twenty percent of Germans would like to leave the country after the United States, Canada, and Australia removed the restrictions on the immigration of former enemy aliens.<sup>1</sup> These numbers basically coincide with surveys conducted between 1947 and 1949. Similarly, Karl Götz, the author of a handbook for emigrants, wrote in 1951 that millions of people faced the difficult decision of leaving and characterized them as expellees who had given up the hope of returning to their former homelands and had difficulties starting a new life in the overpopulated western German state. They consisted of young people who had lost their homes; families that were unable to find accommodation; those who feared a new war in Europe; the dispossessed, raped, disenfranchised and bitter, unemployed and employees, rich and poor, and people who wanted to get ahead, adventurers, and dreamers.<sup>2</sup> Though Götz basically addressed his book to all segments of society – likely for marketing reasons – it is nevertheless apparent that the most significant groups in his list were those who had suffered emotional and material losses as a result of the Second World War and those who feared a new military conflict. Nevertheless, he acknowledged that a number of individuals would emigrate because of a sense of adventure or to experience the wider world.

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<sup>1</sup> Jan Philipp Sternberg, “Fernweh verwalten. Staatliche und kirchliche Auswanderer-Beratungsstellen nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg,” in: Jochen Oltmer (Ed.), *Migration steuern und verwalten. Deutschland vom späten 19. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart*. (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2003), 345.

<sup>2</sup> Karl Götz, *Auswandern? Ein Handbuch für alle Fragen der Auswanderung*. (Stuttgart: F. Vorwerk, 1951), cover text.

All of the groups mentioned by Götz were present in postwar Germany and many wanted to emigrate for economic and personal reasons, but some were also driven by a sense of adventure. Ethnic German refugees and expellees from the former eastern parts of Germany were overrepresented among those interested in leaving the destroyed country, where many neither felt at home nor were welcomed by the local population. After the war, however, many German nationals joined them in their desire to start a new life overseas, disillusioned after the Nazi dictatorship had destroyed the aggressor country along with all pretence of greatness and superiority of the German people. After exploring the conditions in Germany that contributed to the increased interest in emigration, this chapter will discuss the spread of information about migration by word of mouth and through the press. How did people find out about emigration and possible destinations? Given the enormous emigration interest at the time, the final section of this chapter will consider the factors that limited the actual emigration in the late 1940s and into the 1950s.

#### **4.1 German-speaking refugees in Western Germany**

One of the most pressing issues for the Allied occupation authorities, and after 1949 for the newly founded Federal Republic of Germany, was to relieve the strain created by the enormous wave of expellees from the territories ceded to Poland and Russia in the Treaty of Potsdam, and the ethnic German refugees from Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and other eastern and south-eastern European countries. The upheaval after the end of the war makes it difficult to determine exact numbers, but widely accepted

estimates assume that about 12.5 million refugees reached Germany after 1944.<sup>3</sup> This meant that almost twenty percent of the population of the Federal Republic of Germany were expellees or ethnic German refugees who had lost their homes in Eastern Europe.<sup>4</sup> In 1950, the population of western Germany alone reached 47.7 million, which was, despite the heavy human losses during the war and the low birth rates in its wake, an increase of about eight million over 1939. Until 1961, this number increased to 54 million, mostly driven by an additional 5.4 million immigrants, among them 3.5 million refugees from communist eastern Germany.<sup>5</sup> This latter group of refugees included both East German residents and Eastern European refugees who found themselves in the communist East at the end of the war.

During the Second World War, Allied bombing and the artillery bombardment that was part of the ground war in the last months before Germany's unconditional surrender in May 1945 destroyed large areas of Germany, especially in urban centres such as Berlin, Hamburg, and the cities of the Ruhr. Rural districts, where no major fighting had taken place, suffered less damage but their residents, like most Europeans, suffered from shortages of all the basic necessities of life, including housing, clothing, and food. In 1950, two thirds of the population of the northern state of Schleswig-

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<sup>3</sup> Alexander Freund, "Identity in Immigration: Self-Conceptualization and Myth in the Narratives of German Immigrant Women in Vancouver, BC, 1950–1960," (M.A. Thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1994), 13; also Jochen Oltmer, "Einführung: Steuerung und Verwaltung von Migration in Deutschland seit dem späten 19. Jahrhundert," in: Jochen Oltmer (Ed.), *Migration steuern und verwalten. Deutschland vom späten 19. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart*. (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2003), 29–30.

<sup>4</sup> Wolfgang Benz, "Fremde in der Heimat: Flucht – Vertreibung – Integration," in: Klaus J. Bade (Ed.), *Deutsche im Ausland – Fremde in Deutschland*. (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1992), 382. Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte, vol. 4: Vom Beginn des Ersten Weltkriegs bis zur Gründung der beiden deutschen Staaten*. (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 2003), 944.

<sup>5</sup> Johannes-Dieter Steinert, *Migration und Politik. Westdeutschland – Europa – Übersee 1945–1961*. (Osnabrück: Secolo Verlag, 1995), 127. Also Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte, vol. 4*, 944. Klaus J. Bade, "Fremde Deutsche: 'Republikflüchtlinge' – Übersiedler – Aussiedler," in: Klaus J. Bade (Ed.), *Deutsche im Ausland – Fremde in Deutschland. Migration in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Munich: Verlag C.H.Beck, 1992), 404. Bade's estimates for the time period of 1950–1961 are about 2.6 million.



Holstein, one third in Lower Saxony, and one quarter in Bavaria were refugees and expellees.<sup>6</sup> Admittedly, these three states had the highest refugee populations, but even for West Germany in general, close to one fifth of the population had been born outside the borders of the new country that was founded in 1949.

In the immediate postwar years, the influx of eastern German expellees and ethnic German refugees severely aggravated shortages of basic supplies because of the reduced yields of local agriculture and distribution difficulties of a ruined infrastructure. Moreover, approximately 66–70 million people – the equivalent of Germany’s pre-war population now resided in the four occupation zones, a territory that was a third less in area.<sup>7</sup> Most telling was the loss of the eastern provinces that had supplied a quarter of its agricultural production. Thus, Germany’s dependency on food imports rose from twenty percent before the war, to forty percent after 1945.<sup>8</sup> With almost no manufactured goods to export as a result of wartime destruction and the removal of machinery as reparations by the Allies, especially the French and Soviets, it remained unclear how Germany could purchase sufficient food on the world market to feed its population.

Some people improved their access to food by growing their own, dealing in the black market, or smuggling and “hamstern” (roughly translated as “foraging”) in farmers’ fields. Until the currency reform of 1948, people who depended entirely on ration cards, survived on minimal food. Because of food shortages in Britain, France, and the Soviet Union, as well as transportation and distribution problems, the amount of calories per day available in Germany varied from a low of 900 in the French zone to 1,330 in the

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<sup>6</sup> Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte*. vol. 4, 945.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., vol. 4, 944–945. Karin Nерger-Focke, *Die deutsche Amerikaauswanderung nach 1945. Rahmenbedingungen und Verlaufsformen*. (Stuttgart: Verlag Hans-Dieter Heinz, 1995), 35.

<sup>8</sup> LAC MG28–V28, Canadian Society for German Relief fonds, vol. 2, file: Monthly Bulletins, 1948–1954, *Monthly Bulletin* 2, no. 8 (September 1949), 1.

American zone. In the British zone, the daily calorie intake of about 1,050 was just below the levels of the Soviet zone. Translated into actual quantities of food this meant on average two slices of bread with margarine, one scoop of milk soup, and two small potatoes per day per person.<sup>9</sup> The desperation of these people and particularly those in the refugee camps, received considerable attention in the press in North America. As a result, humanitarian and religious groups and individuals undertook great relief efforts including the sending of CARE (Cooperative for American Remittances to Europe) packages and the distribution of food and clothing.<sup>10</sup>

The arrival of CARE packages or gifts from relatives, while relieving some food shortages, also increased the interest in emigration since food was evidently readily available elsewhere. Letters from relatives abroad or packages with food and luxury items like chocolate and coffee that were not affordable – if obtainable at all – in Germany were certainly proof of that. Willy Godlinski, an expellee from East Prussia captures this connection well when he recalls the time:

My mother then found the address – or remembered it – where her cousin lived in the United States. Of course, it was inevitable that we made contact with her. Now, that we were in a free Germany, especially in comparison to the years from 1933 to 1945, it was possible to write freely to the United States. As a result, we even got some parcels once in a while, not too often, but a few times a year. It was a real pleasure for me to eat a piece of chocolate. It was so special when I had a chocolate bar in my mouth in the evening that I wished it was possible to get some more of that. But it was hopeless in Germany. For once, there was not much chocolate available and the ones that were available were unaffordable for refugees. At least we

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<sup>9</sup> Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, vol. 4, 951.

<sup>10</sup> LAC MG28-V120, Canadian Lutheran World Relief fonds, vol. 30, Summary of work by Lutheran World Relief: “Canadian Lutheran World Relief was organized in 1946 to aid the people of war ravaged Europe. Active mainly in Germany and Austria, the organization distributed parcels of food, clothing and other necessities among the needy.” See also LAC MG28-V28, Canadian Society for German Relief fonds, vol. 2, file: Monthly Bulletins, 1948–1954, Monthly Bulletin, vol. 1, no. 1; July 1948, 1. Food situation in Germany (food rations for one month): Meat (1 lb.), Bread (20 lb.), Margarine (1½ ozs.), Butter (3ozs.), Sugar (1 lb.), Maize (½ lb.), Skim milk (1 qt.), Coffee (¼ lb.), Cheese (2 ozs.), Oatmeal (1 lb.), Soup – Powdered (½ lb.), Flour (½ lb.), Potatoes (15 lb.), No fruit or eggs.

could not afford it and neither could most others. And then the letters came and we heard about the nice cars and the good clothing, so we thought that it would be nice to escape the hopeless situation in Germany and go there. It was hopeless, which everybody will likely tell you.<sup>11</sup>

Significant improvements in the food situation came slowly. The year 1947 is generally remembered as the worst famine year in Germany, mostly because the arrival of more refugees and the return of millions of POWs outstripped the modest increases in food production and imports. The severe winter of 1946/47 aggravated the situation by tying up the transportation system and hindering the distribution of the food that was available. In the meantime, many refugees and much of the local population were left to their own devices to deal with hunger and disease as a result of under-nourishment and crowded, unsanitary living conditions. Typhus was an especially common and often deadly occurrence in the many refugee camps. In August and September of 1945, authorities in the Soviet occupation zone alone counted over 30,000 cases of typhus.<sup>12</sup> The undernourished refugees were hardly in a condition to fight off the disease.

Lilli Grub describes the situation in the refugee camp near Eisenach in Thuringia in the Soviet zone, where they stayed for six weeks, as follows:

We were close to starvation. We received only two slices of bread per day and a bowl of soup. During this time we also went “hamstern” [foraging], crawling under the fence and asking the local people for food. They sometimes gave us potatoes and other things for our meals. But then typhus

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<sup>11</sup> Willy Godlinski Interview, Vancouver, BC, May 27, 2006. Also Sara Belter Interview, Vernon, BC, October 12, 2005. She also remembers the arrival of food packages from North America as a sign that conditions must be significantly better there since people were in a position to spare food for relief in Europe.

<sup>12</sup> Philipp Ther, “A Century of Forced Migration: The Origins and Consequences of ‘Ethnic Cleansing,’” in: Philipp Ther and Ana Siljak, *Redrawing Nations. Ethnic Cleansing in East-Central Europe, 1944–1948*. (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001), 56. Several of the interviewees, like Caroline Leitner (pseudonym), Sidney, BC, August 25, 2005, Brunhilde Wiehler, Kelowna, BC, October 17, 2005, and Lilli Grub, Kelowna, BC, October 15, 2005, reported cases of typhus.

broke out in the camp, so we secretly escaped from the camp and crossed the border near Friedland.<sup>13</sup>

Though they escaped the typhus outbreak, her sister died of pneumonia shortly afterwards, before the family was settled on several farms in Richtern, Kreis Diepholz, south of Bremen.

The Wiehler family had similar experiences. When the Red Cross received them in the late summer of 1945, they were in deplorable condition. They stayed in army barracks in the British sector in Berlin for over a year where they received “a bowl of soup and in the morning a piece of bread every day” until they were able to leave the city. After arriving in West Germany, they stayed in another refugee camp in Segeberg in Schleswig-Holstein until they found out through an aunt that Brunhilde’s parents were in Glückstadt on the Elbe River. She recalls that “when we arrived in Glückstadt ... it turned out that my parents were staying with a teacher who did not have room for more people. But a nice lady in the town offered us her attic with no furniture. So, the town gave us two straw sacks to sleep on.”

Brunhilde, her husband, and baby stayed in this attic for three years until they immigrated to Canada in 1950. She explains that the difficult housing conditions were a major factor in their decision to leave: “we couldn’t stay in West Germany. We had only one single attic room and were not able to get two rooms anywhere. I had to go through my landlady’s kitchen to go to the outside toilet. There was no indoor plumbing. It was impossible to get a bigger place for our family, so we were still in that attic when we

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<sup>13</sup> Lilli Grub Interview. Also Alice Kropp Interview, Kelowna, BC, October 15, 2005, and Lydia Ponto Interview, Kelowna, BC, October 16, 2005. Lilli, Lydia, and Alice are sisters, but Lydia was raised by her aunt and was able to escape ahead of the Soviet advance. Therefore, in contrast to the rest of her siblings, she did not have the same expulsion and camp experiences as her family. Friedland was a refugee camp in the British zone, but is still in use as a processing facility for ethnic Germans arriving from the East, especially from Poland and the successor states of the Soviet Union.

were leaving for Canada.”<sup>14</sup> This case is not unusual and was a factor for many – not only refugees and expellees, but also for West Germans – to consider emigration since the housing shortages lasted well into the 1960s.

As this example and the previous chapter have shown, the end of the war did not end the high mobility of populations. Many refugees, such as Christian Stieda’s family that fled from Stettin before the arrival of the Red Army, were evacuated by ship across the Baltic Sea to Denmark at the end of the war. They remained in refugee camps, first near Copenhagen and later in a large one with about 10,000 people near Alborg in Jutland until 1947, when the family arrived in West Germany.<sup>15</sup> In total, about 170,000 German nationals who fled to Denmark at the end of the war had been interned there. Not surprisingly, the Danish government was eager to have them moved to Germany as soon as possible but the already desperate housing situation made a quick repatriation impossible.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Brunhilde Wiehler Interview.

<sup>15</sup> Christian Stieda Interview, Victoria, BC, August 5, 2005.

<sup>16</sup> Josef Foschepoth, “Potsdam und danach: Die Westmächte, Adenauer und die Vertriebenen,” in: Wolfgang Benz (Ed.), *Die Vertreibung der Deutschen aus dem Osten. Ursachen, Ereignisse, Folgen.* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1995), 102.



**Map 4.1:** Place of residence of later immigrants to Canada in 1947.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Map based on information from fifty interviews conducted in British Columbia in 2005/2006. Base map adopted from “creative commons” (Wikipedia). All labels and location markers inserted by author.

The extensive Allied bombing campaigns during the war destroyed four million of the sixteen million apartments and houses, or a quarter of all accommodation in Germany, and damaged an additional 2.5 million in the four occupation zones with slightly higher overall destruction rates in the western zones. Given these numbers, the major influx of refugees meant that on average two people lived in every room. The situation became even worse when the Allied countries started to release German soldiers from the Prisoner of War camps.<sup>18</sup> The desperate housing situation of refugee families in particular also becomes apparent in interviews with postwar immigrants to Britain conducted by Inge Weber-Newth and Johannes-Dieter Steinert. One of the interviewees, Gerhard, recalls: “We lost everything. My home was taken away, given to Poland. And my parents who remained in East Germany at that time, they lived in a little room with my brother and my sister. ... And so my father actually asked me one day ... if it was possible for me to remain [in Britain], for a while at least.”<sup>19</sup>

Only gradually did the situation improve – at least for some. By the fall of 1950, some seventy-seven percent of the local population in West Germany had their own apartments, but this was only true for thirty percent of the refugees. The remaining population lived either as sub-tenants, like Brunhilde Wiehler and her family, or in emergency shelters and refugee camps. As late as 1957, about 400,000 people still lived in some 3,000 refugee camps.<sup>20</sup> Though the situation improved significantly during the 1950s, the housing shortages lasted well into the 1960s. Therefore, it was not simply an

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<sup>18</sup> Nerger-Focke, *Die deutsche Amerikaauswanderung nach 1945*, 35–36. Also Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, vol. 4, 952–953.

<sup>19</sup> Inge Weber-Newth and Johannes-Dieter Steinert, *German Migrants in Post-war Britain. An enemy embrace*. (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 67.

<sup>20</sup> Freund, *Aufbrüche nach dem Zusammenbruch. Die deutsche Nordamerika-Auswanderung nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg*. (Osnabrück: V&R unipress, 2004), 92–93.

issue affecting only the refugees and the rural population, but became a lived or at least witnessed experience for the entire population. To aggravate the social upheaval, another approximately ten million people had fled from German cities into rural areas since 1941 to escape the Allied bombings. Even at the beginning of the 1950s, tens of thousands were still waiting to return to their former hometowns.<sup>21</sup>

Irene Juttner, the Canadian-born director of the Canadian Christian Council for the Resettlement of Refugees (CCCRR) office in Salzburg, gave a personal insight with respect to housing shortages that existed in Germany and in Austria in the fall of 1950. Her letter shows the influence of such factors on personal decisions. She wrote:

Dear Dr. Herzer:

Today I have a special piece for you. Mr. Hochleitner of our office and I are going to get married tomorrow morning. Although we have planned this for some months, nothing was definite as it has been so difficult, almost impossible to get suitable living accommodation in Salzburg. Quite unexpectedly, the other tenant in Mr. Hochleitner's present flat has moved out, so we decided to get married immediately and take possession of the vacated rooms before the Austrian authorities have a chance to foist another tenant on us. Believe me, it was not my intention to spring this piece of news on you as a complete surprise, but certain matters have moved so quickly that I scarcely had time to let you know in advance.<sup>22</sup>

Until then, Irene Juttner had been living in the medieval castle overlooking the city of Salzburg. As romantic as that might sound, it was likely a cold and drafty place.

Germans, even in the smaller towns, recall similar housing shortages and the social tensions arising from them. Frank Oberle recalled how his hometown of Forchheim in Baden had to accommodate hundreds of ethnic German refugees from the

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<sup>21</sup> Michael Krause, "Evakuierung im Bombenkrieg. Staatliche Interventionen zur Steuerung der Flucht aus deutschen Städten 1943–1963," in: Jochen Oltmer (Ed.), *Migration steuern und verwalten. Deutschland vom späten 19. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart*. (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2003), 222–223. See also Nerger-Focke, *Die deutsche Amerikaauswanderung nach 1945*, 28: At the time of the census of 1946, 2.1 million evacuees still lived outside of the zone of occupation where they used to reside.

<sup>22</sup> LAC MG28–V120, Canadian Lutheran World Relief fonds, vol. 30, file: CCCRR Correspondence with Austrian Office, 1950, Letter from Irene M. Juttner to T.O.F. Herzer, September 27, 1950.



east. “Officials of the newly appointed municipal government went from house to house, appraising the value, assessing the damage and, in accordance with a formula that had been worked out, designating any space that was surplus to the immediate needs of the occupants for the use of the newcomers.”<sup>23</sup> Similarly, Lucia Fallot from Steinau, north of Frankfurt am Main, remembered the role of the housing office:

After the war, we stayed in my parents’ house, but the top floor was rented out. My sister was living there, too with her husband, but they did not have any children, while I was pregnant with my third child. At this point, we had to send an application to the “Wohnungsamt” [housing office] which was responsible for the distribution of accommodation to refugees and those who were bombed out. Since the teacher who lived on the top floor by herself had three rooms to herself, while we were three families sharing the same number of rooms downstairs, we put in an application that would allow my husband, myself, and the three children to move into this space. When I received the suite, my sister was jealous, which created tensions in the family. I just wanted to have my peace, so the chance to emigrate was also a possibility to get away from these tensions.<sup>24</sup>

The housing shortages that influenced the emigration decisions of West Germans had an even greater impact on refugees, both ethnic Germans and expellees. Refugees often lived in barracks, cellars, attics, and barns, or were quartered in private houses, where social tensions often arose from crowded conditions like those mentioned by Lucia Fallot. The distinct customs and traditions and different dialects of the refugees created a basis for discrimination by the local population.<sup>25</sup> In sum, the three most important reasons for emigration mentioned by refugees were the bad economic situation; crowded housing; and, treatment as outsiders by the local population.

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<sup>23</sup> Frank Oberle, *Finding Home. A war child’s journey to peace*. (Surrey, BC: Heritage House Publishing, 2004), 126.

<sup>24</sup> Lucia Fallot Interview, Sidney, BC, August 9, 2005. Lucia gave this explanation when asked for her reasons to immigrate to Canada in 1953. At the time, her hometown Steinau had a population of about 2,500.

<sup>25</sup> Neger-Focke, *Die deutsche Amerikaauswanderung nach 1945*, 35–36. Also Freund, *Aufbrüche nach dem Zusammenbruch*, 93.

Emigration as well as internal migration programs sponsored by the federal government after 1949 to move refugees and expellees from the mostly rural areas of northern and southern Germany to the more industrialized regions created a high mobility among them.<sup>26</sup> While there was a shortage of skilled workers in the urban, industrial areas, especially in construction and mining, in rural areas the scarcity of jobs aggravated social tensions.<sup>27</sup> The imbalance in the availability of jobs and the concentration of refugees in the rural areas at least partly explains why expellees in West Germany formed 34.2 percent of the unemployed though they made up just under twenty percent of the total population.<sup>28</sup> At the same time, for many expellees this was also a structural problem since they had to change occupations to become employable. For the unemployed, the reviving job market and even labour shortages did not necessarily offer new opportunities. Many of the unemployed refugees and expellees had been farm owners, agricultural labourers or government employees. They had difficulties integrating into the West German labour market. Thus, re-training or emigration were the only viable options. This unemployment was naturally most evident in rural areas of states with high refugee populations.

While in 1939, 39.6 percent of the refugees had worked in the primary sector, mostly in agriculture, by 1950 only 14.6 percent were employed in agriculture because of the lack of agricultural lands in West Germany. In the same period, the number of industrial workers increased dramatically from 43.6 to 75.0 percent, while only 5.2

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<sup>26</sup> Nerger-Focke, *Die deutsche Amerikaauswanderung nach 1945*, 31–32. Also Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 126.

<sup>27</sup> Freund, *Aufbrüche nach dem Zusammenbruch*, 93. Also Nerger-Focke, *Die deutsche Amerikaauswanderung nach 1945*, 32.

<sup>28</sup> Nerger-Focke, *Die deutsche Amerikaauswanderung nach 1945*, 34.

percent had their own businesses, where it had been 16.0 percent previously.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, many expellees, particularly those who had owned their own farms or businesses, suffered a decline in social status, even if they found work. Added to the loss of the homeland and crowded living conditions, this certainly contributed to the desire to emigrate. As a result, ethnic German refugees were clearly overrepresented among German emigrants. The fact that all the ethnic Germans and expellees interviewed in British Columbia either had an agricultural background or had owned their own businesses strongly suggests a connection between declining social status and emigration interest.<sup>30</sup>

Year	Total German emigration to Canada	German nationals	Ethnic German refugees	Refugees from East Germany
<b>1953</b>	24,193 (100%)	12,567 (51.9%)	10,729 (44.3%)	897 (3.7%)
<b>1954</b>	24,456 (100%)	14,405 (58.9%)	9,360 (38.3%)	691 (2.8%)
<b>1955</b>	14,550 (100%)	8,971 (61.7%)	4,995 (34.3%)	584 (4.0%)
<b>1956</b>	21,192 (100%)	13,802 (65.1%)	6,502 (30.7%)	888 (4.2%)
Total German emigration to Canada, 1953 - 1956	84,391 (100%)	49,745 (58.9%)	31,586 (37.4%)	3060 (3.6%)
Percentage as part of overall German population	(100%)	(76.1%)	(17.9%)	(6.0%)

**Table 4.1:** German emigration from West Germany to Canada, 1953–1956.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Siegfried Bethlehem, *Heimatvertreibung, DDR-Flucht, Gastarbeiterzuwanderung*. (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1982), 35. Neger-Focke, *Die deutsche Amerikaauswanderung nach 1945*, 34.

<sup>30</sup> Based on fifty personal interviews conducted in British Columbia in 2005–2006.

<sup>31</sup> Based on data from German Statistical Office, *Statistische Jahrbücher, 1953–1956*. (Wiesbaden: Statistisches Bundesamt, 1954–57). The specific data for Canada is only available for these four years. Note that the number for 1953 only includes emigrants 16 years and older. For overall numbers of German overseas emigration see Freund, *Aufbrüche nach dem Zusammenbruch*, 402.

As Table 4.1 shows for the years 1953–1956, 17.9 percent of the population in West Germany were ethnic German refugees, but 37.4 percent of the German immigrants to Canada in these four years came from this group, while German nationals and refugees from East Germany were clearly underrepresented. Yet, the individual numbers for the years also show a tendency of approximation towards the national averages which suggests an increasing integration of the remaining ethnic German refugees into West German society and labour market in the second half of the 1950s. While 44.3 percent of the emigrants in 1953 were ethnic German refugees, this number declined to 30.7 percent in 1956 while the percentages for German nationals and East German refugees increased steadily during these years. Nevertheless, for the entire period from the end of the Second World War to 1961, ethnic German emigrants to Canada were overrepresented by roughly a factor of two. Based on the Canadian census of 1961, historian Hans Werner states that ethnic German immigrants represented 61,001 of a total of 234,300 Germans arriving in Canada during the decade and a half after the end of the war.<sup>32</sup>

Erwin Kirsch is a typical example of a refugee with an agricultural background. His family had owned a diversified farm in western Hungary, but when he came to Germany, he worked in a factory for seven years until he emigrated with his wife and two daughters. “I always had work and earned good money, but I always had the feeling that I wanted to own and build something, and not work in a factory for the rest of my life.”<sup>33</sup>

In Germany, owning his own farm was likely to remain a dream, but Canada offered him

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<sup>32</sup> Hans Werner, *Imagined Homes. Soviet German Immigrants in Two Cities*. (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2007), 65. Data based on the years 1946–1961. He states that most of the ethnic Germans arrived before 1954, while their share of the German migration declined thereafter. See also Alexander Freund, “Troubling Memories in Nation-building: World War II Memories and Germans’ Inter-ethnic Encounters in Canada after 1945,” *Histoire Sociale / Social History* 39, no. 77 (May 2006), 134–135. Freund suggests that one third of all German postwar immigrants to Canada were ethnic German refugees and expellees.

<sup>33</sup> Erwin Kirsch Interview (pseudonym), Vernon, BC, October 11, 2005.

this opportunity. For others, like Sara Belter, the absence of jobs in rural areas in the early postwar years strongly affected her family's emigration decision. They left Germany in 1950.<sup>34</sup>

Economic and material reasons were not the only factors determining emigration interest. Sara Belter explained quite clearly that her family emigrated because they did not see a future in Germany which “was just like every other country to us. We were refugees.”<sup>35</sup> So, apart from the economic explanation, we see a reasoning that suggests a two-fold alienation from their new place of residence in West Germany. She was a foreigner in the state of Lower Saxony with respect to nationality and dialects spoken, to name just two. In addition, since they were refugees, the local population did not recognize her family as belonging to their own community, but regarded such ethnic German refugees as Russians, Poles, or simply displaced persons. Leonhard Lange's family had very similar experiences on the farm in Schleswig-Holstein. The owner simply considered them to be Russian, not ethnic German refugees.<sup>36</sup>

Competition for such basic necessities as food and clothing and for housing and employment created many tensions between refugees and the local population. As Inge Weber-Newth and Johannes-Dieter Steinert explain, “nerves became frayed and tempers were often lost in the shared kitchen or bathroom.”<sup>37</sup> Though many former refugees clearly understand the underlying reasons for the hostility – at least in hindsight declared in the interviews – it was difficult for them to feel at home in a place where they were

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<sup>34</sup> Sara Belter Interview.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Leonhard Lange Interview, Comox, BC, April 21, 2006. “My dad, my two sisters, and my brother all worked on the farm along with a lot of other ethnic Germans. The owner, Mr. Kruse, referred to us as “Meine Russen” [my Russians]. Though we were ethnic Germans and spoke German, he considered us to be Russians.”

<sup>37</sup> Weber-Newth and Steinert, *German Migrants in Post-war Britain*, 15–16.

clearly not welcome. Irene Salamon captures these tensions well in her description of her arrival in Germany from her native Hungary:

When we got to Germany, it was not very nice, but I can understand the Germans who were resentful towards refugees because they had to give up rooms in their own houses to accommodate them. This was a big problem, so in the beginning they did not trust us. I mean, I don't blame them. The village where we stayed had not been bombed, but the population was at most 1,000 people and they had to accommodate 250 or more refugees. We slept in a single room with three people, my mother, her oldest brother, and I. For me it was also difficult because I did not understand the local dialect, so I simply did not speak German for a while.<sup>38</sup>

The situation was certainly hard on both sides, but while the local population at least had a sense of belonging and often had property and largely intact social networks, refugees were unwelcome foreigners in a foreign country, despite speaking the same language, albeit with significant variations in the regional dialects. They usually also strongly identified with their German heritage, which was the main reason for their expulsion in the first place. Like Irene Salamon, however, many of the refugees interviewed mention a cold reception meant they did not consider Germany their home. Yet, the tensions between refugees and local population only started to ease after the West German government introduced a massive house building program to relieve the crowded living conditions and after the recovering economy started to provide enough jobs during the 1950s.

Between 1949 and 1953, the Federal parliament provided public funds to stimulate the building of 1.8 million homes over six years and to spread the burden of the war by compensating refugees, expellees, war-widows, bombed-out persons, and those

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<sup>38</sup> Irene Salamon Interview, Kelowna, BC, October 14, 2005.

handicapped as a result of the war.<sup>39</sup> Until 1979, the Federal Republic paid 114 billion Deutschmarks in compensation to those who had sustained physical or material damages as a result of the war. Despite its enormity, it was only the equivalent of about twenty-two percent of the total material losses. Nevertheless, beyond the actual value of the compensation, the clear commitment of the government to deal with the situation of the refugees and expellees was an important factor in ultimately facilitating their fast integration.<sup>40</sup> In the long term, these equalization payments and the economic boom starting in the second half of the 1950s helped in the refugees' integration process – as might have the arrival of the first “guest workers” from Italy and later from Turkey who became the new “other” of postwar West German society. These new immigrant groups were culturally and linguistically more distinct than the ethnic Germans, allowing the latter to integrate more easily into the German mainstream.

By the time the new laws came into effect and the economic situation improved, many refugees – especially ethnic Germans, like Sara Belter, had already emigrated. As unemployment rates dropped rapidly during the 1950s, economic and material reasons became increasingly less important for emigration. Though about 780,000 people left Germany between 1945 and 1961 for overseas locations, well over ten million refugees and expellees stayed and integrated into the societies of the new German states. Given the refugee crisis and the difficult postwar conditions in Germany, emigration interest was significant, not only among refugees. Hence the number of persons leaving for overseas

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<sup>39</sup> Hans Georg Lehmann, *Deutschland-Chronik 1945 bis 1995*. (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1996), 96–103. (For example: Soforthilfe Gesetz, August 8, 1949; Heimkehrergesetz, June 19, 1950; Bundesversorgungsgesetz, Dec. 20, 1950; Bundesvertriebenengesetz, May 19, 1953). See also Jürgen Weber, *Germany 1945–1990. A Parallel History*. (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2004), 46, 52, and 56.

<sup>40</sup> Reinhold Schillinger, “Der Lastenausgleich,” in: Wolfgang Benz (Ed.), *Die Vertreibung der Deutschen aus dem Osten. Ursachen, Ereignisse, Folgen*. (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1995), 240–241. Also Benz, “Fremde in der Heimat,” in: Bade, *Deutsche im Ausland*, 384–385.

destinations remained comparatively small. Before turning to the influence of government policies, this chapter will assess the emigration interest and the ways in which information on migration spread among the population, both locals and refugees.

#### **4.2 German emigration interests after the Second World War**

Given political ruptures, enormous population pressure, housing shortages, social upheaval, and high unemployment as a result of the war, millions of Germans thought about emigration and many actively enquired about the possibilities to start a new life abroad. Yet, only around 780,000 Germans,<sup>41</sup> of a total population of about fifty million in West Germany actually left for overseas destinations between 1945 and 1961. This was a surprisingly small number in comparison to earlier emigration waves such as those of the nineteenth century. For instance, in 1854, a peak year, over 239,000 emigrants left Germany and in two other single years between 1880 and 1893 over 200,000 emigrated as part of a total emigration of about 1.8 million during the thirteen-year period.<sup>42</sup> What makes the relatively small numbers of post-World War II emigrants even more surprising was the need to integrate more than twelve million refugees into Western German society when the economic and housing situations were improving only very slowly.

The number of the so-called “*Auswanderungswillige*” (people with a desire to emigrate), however, was much greater. Alexander Freund ascertained that 2,404,292 persons went to one of the state or church run emigration information centres between

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<sup>41</sup> The term “German” will be used in its wider meaning for people who were either German nationals, spoke German as their mother language and/or identified as being ethnically German. Thus, it also includes ethnic Germans from parts of eastern and South Eastern Europe who had never been German citizens.

<sup>42</sup> Rheinhard R. Doerries, “German Transatlantic Migration from the Early Nineteenth Century to the Outbreak of World War II,” in: Klaus J. Bade (Ed.), *Population, Labour and Migration in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Germany*. (Leamington Spa: Berg Publishers, 1987), 122–125; and Klaus J. Bade, “Transatlantic Emigration and Continental Immigration: the German Experience Past and Present,” in: *ibid.*, 135.



1950 and 1958.<sup>43</sup> Surveys by EMNID and other polling companies suggest that an even higher number of people had at least toyed with the idea of emigrating, though they did not necessarily take any active steps in that direction. Since visits to the information centres were not mandatory and many people emigrated without seeking advice, it is impossible to establish specific numbers on the extent of the interest, especially since survey polls, such as those conducted by EMNID and Gallup, reflected immediate responses to economic and political conditions. People likely vented their frustrations without actually considering leaving everything behind and starting over in a place they did not know and the language of which they probably did not speak.

Nevertheless, between 1945 and the mid-1950s, a significant number of Germans had a desire to leave Europe. Among them, ethnic German refugees from Eastern Europe and expellees from the former eastern German territories were overrepresented because of their loss of home and property.<sup>44</sup> In addition, they were outsiders in West German society and were more likely to be unemployed, at least until the beginning of the so-called “economic miracle.” Yet, as the later discussion of reasons will show, the decision to emigrate and the choice of destination were not simply determined by economic push and pull factors but in many cases by general and often overly positive perceptions of life overseas and personal circumstances of family and friendship connections.

The economic reconstruction in the Federal Republic has often been labelled a “*Wirtschaftswunder*” or economic miracle, but in the early 1950s this development was

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<sup>43</sup> Freund, *Aufbrüche nach dem Zusammenbruch*, 245–252. None of the fifty persons interviewed in British Columbia had gone to an “*Auswandererberatungsstelle*” and the vast majority was not even aware that they existed. Therefore it seems doubtful how representative these numbers are. Yet, they certainly support the thesis that the emigration interest was significantly higher than the actual emigration.

<sup>44</sup> The terms refugee and expellee both describe persons who were forced to leave their homes and were unable to return. Refugees in this context are ethnic German displaced persons, while the term expellees refers to German nationals expelled by Soviet and Polish authorities from the territories Germany lost at the end of the Second World War.

neither obvious nor anticipated despite the financial aid from the European Recovery Program (ERP or Marshall Plan) and the currency reform of 1948. Unemployment was high and soared quickly after the monetary reform reaching an average of 1,580,000 or 10.3 percent in 1950. Over the winter months, the numbers were even higher, peaking at an all-time high of 12.2 percent in March 1950. One reason for the increasing unemployment was the Allies' gradual release of about eleven million men from POW camps in the late 1940s and early 1950s. In the fall of 1949, the industrial production of the country had only reached about 80 percent of the prewar numbers. At the same time, a recession threatened to deplete the already scarce monetary resources of the state, forcing the government to increase taxes. This inevitably reduced consumer spending and increased public debts, making Germany the greatest debtor within the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC). With the beginning of the Korean War in the summer of 1950, however, Germany's industrial production slowly revived, based on the readily available surplus of labour and increased demand in other western countries.<sup>45</sup>

Until the middle of the decade, the number of unemployed dropped slowly to just under one million, or 5.1 percent. This pace significantly quickened in the second half of the decade and levelled out at the beginning of the 1960s with a low of 161,000 unemployed (0.8 percent), a statistically insignificant number since 536,000 jobs were available. Industry and agriculture started to experience labour shortages, as did certain

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<sup>45</sup> Michael J. Hogan, *The Marshall Plan. America, Britain, and the reconstruction of Western Europe, 1947–1952*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 356–363; and Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 129. Also Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, vol. 4, 943 and table of West German industrial development, 1946–1950 on 972.

professions, while German industries had been recruiting labour in southern Europe since 1955.<sup>46</sup>

Economic and social factors do not satisfactorily explain the desire to emigrate. Some, especially West Germans, gave up secure jobs and, in some cases, even sold their houses to go abroad, sometimes simply to experience something else or to see a bit of the world. Such people were driven by a sense of adventure or what Germans aptly call “*Fernweh*,” the longing for a distant or exotic place.<sup>47</sup> Yet, apart from this rather abstract desire to break out of the familiar world, many had more concrete fears that led them to leave Europe. Many ethnic Germans, and among them especially Baltic and Black Sea Germans who had experienced the upheavals between 1917 and 1939, as well as other displaced persons, had a deep-seated fear of Communism and a lasting distrust of everything Russian.<sup>48</sup> The severity of their fears is clearly demonstrated by the behaviour of Soviet citizens when the Western Allies forced their repatriation from camps in the western occupation zones of Germany in 1945/46. For example, when American troops stormed the barracks of the former concentration camp in Dachau on January 19, 1946 to prepare the transport of its inmates to the East, many of the Soviet displaced persons there committed suicide or asked the soldiers to shoot them. Despite a suicide rate of ten percent, the transport left punctually the following day.<sup>49</sup> Not surprisingly, West Germany’s proximity to the East was a source of anxiety that could only be overcome by

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<sup>46</sup> See for example BA B106/20618, Dr. Sicha, Federal Ministry for Labour, Bonn, December 1953. Also Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 130–133.

<sup>47</sup> Interviews with Irmgard Siegmüller, Vernon, BC, October 11, 2005, Lucia Fallot, Rolf Ullrich, Victoria, BC, August 9, 2005, and others.

<sup>48</sup> A very detailed description of the ongoing terror, displacement, and war between 1917 and 1948 is an account by Anastasia Alexandrova von Bevern, in M. F. Kuester (Ed.), *The Baltic Germans: Reminiscences*. (Edmonton: Central and East European Studies Society of Alberta, 1985), 46–83.

<sup>49</sup> Wolfgang Jacobmeyer, “Ortlos am Ende des Grauens: ‚Displaced Persons‘ in der Nachkriegszeit,” in: Klaus J. Bade (Ed.), *Deutsche im Ausland – Fremde in Deutschland. Migration in Geschichte und Gegenwart*. (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1992), 370.

emigration, especially when the beginning of the Cold War increased international tensions.

For Caroline Leitner, who found out eleven years after her flight in 1945 that her mother and three brothers had been caught by Soviet troops and deported to labour camps in Siberia, the fear of further Russian advances in Europe was an important reason for her emigration. After her experiences and those of her family, Caroline remained so frightened that even after arriving in Canada, she would move a dresser in front of her bedroom door at night to dissuade intruders.<sup>50</sup> Other immigrants, like the parents of Christian Stieda, who were Baltic Germans, and Emil Wegwitz, from the Ukraine, left Europe because of fear of Stalin or expanding Soviet control over Western Europe. The terror of the Russian Revolution and Stalin's purges had left a deep psychological mark among those who had suffered through it. Rosa Stuver, whose parents were born in the Ukraine, tells a similar story. Though her parents escaped to the West, part of the family was caught in Austria and sent to Siberia. So entrenched was her mother's fear of Communism that it resurfaced when the family visited the Russian pavilion at the Expo '67 in Montreal. Rosa explains:

My mom was very afraid of everything that had to do with the Soviet Union. But my dad wanted to see it, so he did. So he was talking to this one Russian, while my mom was just so afraid – I could see the fear on her face. Afterwards, she gave my dad a piece of her mind and asked my dad why he had to speak Russian to him. But my dad said that he had told the man that they had come out in the 1920s and that the family just spoke Russian. He was just very interested in talking to someone from Russia. He did not hate the Russians, he was just very afraid of Communism.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Caroline Leitner Interview. Also interviews with Christian Stieda and Emil Wegwitz, Victoria, BC, August 10, 2005.

<sup>51</sup> Rosa Stuver Interview, Richmond, BC, May 26, 2006.

Though rationally, there was no danger of being extradited from Canada to the Soviet Union, especially since the family had received Canadian citizenship, the memories were enough to create these strong responses even more than two decades after the war. These findings are supported by Inge Weber-Newth and Johannes-Dieter Steinert's study of German postwar immigration to Great Britain. They found that "POWs born in the area of Germany under Soviet occupation, or whose relatives now lived there, told of the fear circulating at the time; fear of 'ending up with the Russians' or of being deported to Siberia. Several received letters from their parents or relatives that advised, 'between the lines' or even openly, not to come home if at all possible."<sup>52</sup> Undoubtedly, these fears could be motivation enough to consider emigration.

Other immigrants left Germany in 1954 and after to avoid being drafted into the *Bundeswehr*, West Germany's armed forces which were established officially in 1955 as part of NATO's defence strategy. Leaving the country, however, did not relieve the obligation to serve. Klay Schumann, for example, had just arrived in Vancouver in 1961 when the "*Feldjäger*" (German military police) knocked at his father's door to inquire where he was.<sup>53</sup> Similarly, Ute Szabo's 19-year old brother did not want to be drafted into the military in 1956, so, with the blessing of his father who had long dreamed of emigrating himself, he left for Canada, accompanied by 17 year-old Ute.<sup>54</sup>

Not all the immigrants came because they did not see a future in Germany. Some had direct job offers and planned to stay for a limited time for personal advancement while others were lured by the images of wilderness and adventure. Günther Beck, for example, had been an accountant in Hamburg. He arrived in Alberta as a sponsored

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<sup>52</sup> Weber-Newth and Steinert, *German Migrants in Post-war Britain*, 67.

<sup>53</sup> Klay Schumann Interview, Richmond, BC, September 1, 2005.

<sup>54</sup> Ute Szabo Interview conducted by Monika Schmid, Delta, BC, Summer 2004.

agricultural labourer in 1953. He had no plan to stay in Canada permanently – or to work on a farm for that matter – but just wanted to improve his English because to improve his job opportunities in Hamburg. He simply stated: “I figured that I could get a good job in Hamburg in the business world. I had no plans to stay in Canada.”<sup>55</sup> After meeting and marrying his Canadian wife, he decided to stay permanently.

Based on his study of three emigration information centres in Hamburg, Jan Philipp Sternberg discovered that motives for migration changed over time. He writes that in the early 1950s “the consideration of economic possibilities in the sense of a long-term labour migration to an overseas destination prevailed, while towards the end of the 1950s temporary migration for education, experiences abroad, or careers clearly dominated.”<sup>56</sup> As the example of Günther Beck shows, however, the latter motivations did exist early in the decade even though they were vastly outnumbered by the long-term labour and refugee migration at that time. Therefore, Sternberg’s argument about such a periodization seems too simplistic, especially since the records of the information centres also indicate that young single men and women were looking for better education, experience, and economic benefits in the beginning of the 1950s.<sup>57</sup>

Parallel to the economic migrations and short-term movements, fear of new wars in Europe influenced interest in emigration at certain times, such as the height of the Korean War in 1951 and the Hungarian revolution in 1956, when the number of people frequenting the information centres rose by twenty percent over the previous year. Discussions about the reintroduction of mandatory military service also inspired young men to visit the information centres, as in the case of Ute Szabo’s brother. Yet, these

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<sup>55</sup> Günther Beck Interview, Summerland, BC, October 9, 2005.

<sup>56</sup> Sternberg, “Staatliche und kirchliche Auswanderer-Beratungsstellen,” 362.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*,” 371.

private reasons are difficult to qualify and quantify and were certainly not always declared in the questionnaires retained by the information centres.<sup>58</sup> Nevertheless, Sternberg concludes convincingly that this last major emigration wave was characterized by a simultaneous process of modernization and restoration. Emigration for personal reasons existed in the early 1950s and came to the forefront towards the end of the decade, when refugee emigration declined and the poverty and destitution of the immediate postwar era had receded.<sup>59</sup>

Those departing for fear of Communism, to avoid military conscription, or simply for adventure were relatively few. Nevertheless, though a majority of the immigrants came to Canada primarily for economic reasons, the early postwar migration cannot be understood simply in terms of the classic push and pull factors focussing on hardship on the one side and opportunity on the other. Certainly, these played a significant part in most considerations to leave Germany in the late 1940s and early 1950s, but they do not conclusively explain all decisions, especially where the immigrants themselves knew very little about their prospective destinations before arrival. In light of the lack of information about the emigration countries, the question arises how the future immigrants actually found out about the possibilities for migration.

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<sup>58</sup> Sternberg, "Staatliche und kirchliche Auswanderer-Beratungsstellen," 363–365. However, Alexander Freund's data indicates a fairly steady decline of visits to the information centres between the peak in 1951 (478,863) and 1958 (125,088), see Freund, *Aufbrüche nach dem Zusammenbruch*, 251.

<sup>59</sup> Sternberg, "Staatliche und kirchliche Auswanderer-Beratungsstellen," 374–375.

### **4.3 Emigration fever and the transmission of information**

Historian J. D. Gould argues that a sort of emigration fever infected Germany (and other parts of Europe) after the end of World War II. She claims that “the metaphor of migration fever is an apt one, first because it communicates a certain psychological excitement, and second, and more important, because it is spread ‘by personal transmission.’”<sup>60</sup> Though it is clear that the receiving countries themselves, and in the early postwar years the German press, helped to stimulate this interest, the vast majority of people interviewed claimed that they heard about the possibility of immigrating to Canada by word of mouth from relatives in North America (25), from refugees (7), and friends (4). Only four out of fifty found advertisements or job offers from Canadian companies in German newspapers and one person heard about emigration after his uncle, who attended a public lecture on Canada, encouraged him to emigrate. The remaining people in the sample either contacted the Canadian embassy or visa offices directly to inquire about possibilities (7) or found out through church organizations (2).<sup>61</sup>

Thus, if there was an “emigration fever,” it seems to have spread largely through relatives in North America, including spouses who had emigrated first to get established before sponsoring the rest of their family. In some cases, this information pattern not only spanned the Atlantic in a geographical dimension, but also in some cases a generational gap, where contact was re-established with relatives who had emigrated in the interwar period. One such example is Leonhard Lange who told the following story:

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<sup>60</sup> J. D. Gould, “European Inter-Continental Emigration. The Road Home: Return Migration from the U.S.A.,” *Journal in European Economic History*, vol. 9 (1980), 304. Also Leslie Page Moch, *Moving Europeans. Migration in Western Europe since 1650*. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992), 151.

<sup>61</sup> Accumulated data from interviews with fifty postwar immigrants conducted in BC between July 2005 and May 2006.



When [his mother's cousin] Paul got to Canada, to Winnipeg, he put an ad in different newspapers. One ad was in the *Vancouver Sun* providing some contact information. My aunt Bertha, David's wife read the little ad in the paper and told him that his sister was looking for him. So, David wrote first to the cousin in Winnipeg and then to us in Germany. This is how she found her brother – through a little ad in a newspaper. She was really happy to hear from her brother and he consequently sponsored us to come to Canada. So, her cousin came through the church and in our case we were directly sponsored by uncle David.<sup>62</sup>

This case is significant in more than one way. First, it shows the interconnectedness of different migration waves and the establishment of patterns of chain migration. Secondly, the fact that Leonhard Lange's parents had originally planned to emigrate together with the mother's cousin Paul and his family shows a pattern that is fairly common among ethnic Germans, where the extended family would immigrate to the same location, either together, or more commonly in several groups sponsored by those who went before.

Because significantly higher numbers of German-speaking overseas migrants in the interwar years had come from Eastern Europe rather than from Germany proper, refugees from Eastern Europe were more likely to have contacts in North America in general, and Canada in particular.<sup>63</sup> Many of them also had friendship connections established in the former areas of settlement. Christian Stieda's parents, who had a Baltic German background, heard about Canadian immigration opportunities through other Baltic Germans. For them, Canada also became a preferred destination because of the connection with the later Lord Alexander of Tunis, the commander of a British expeditionary force that had cooperated closely with the German *Landwehr* in the Baltic States fighting the spread of the Russian Revolution after the First World War. From

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<sup>62</sup> Leonhard Lange Interview.

<sup>63</sup> As will be discussed in the following chapter, family sponsorship was the most common way to enter Canada before September 1950, and still played a significant role thereafter.

1946–52, Earl Alexander of Tunis was Governor General of Canada.<sup>64</sup> Apparently, he used his influence to allow immigration of Baltic Germans after the Second World War.<sup>65</sup> Similarly, Emil Wegwitz' parents and Sara Belter's family heard about the possibilities of emigration from other refugees they had known from their homes in the Ukraine and Volhynia respectively.<sup>66</sup>

Though their reception in Germany was often described as “cold,” the refugees also shared information on emigration with the local population. This was the case with Lucia Fallot and her husband, both of them originally from Hessen. They came into contact with expellees at their radio repair shop. She remembers: “They told us that they were planning to emigrate to Canada, so they wanted the radio repaired to be able to sell it. So they told us about emigration to Canada. This is what gave us the idea. We started thinking about it and wondered whether we should try it, too.”<sup>67</sup> As a result, Lucia Fallot and her husband arrived in Vancouver on August 1, 1953. What would have happened without this encounter with the refugees is unknown, but it is clear that the impetus for choosing Canada came from this episode. Beyond just introducing the idea, the refugees also told them that the Baptist World Organization provided loans for the passage and that they would go to Vancouver, British Columbia.

Despite the fact that the Fallots were Lutherans, the Baptist World Organization sponsored them and their three children.<sup>68</sup> The Fallots also followed the refugees to Vancouver because it was the only place in Canada where they already knew people.

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<sup>64</sup> Christian Stieda Interview. Landwehr was the German para-military fighting against the Red Army in the Baltic states. For some personal details about the lobbying of Baltic Germans in Canada and the connection to the Governor-General, see the interview with Dina Hahn, in: Kuester (Ed.), *The Baltic-Germans*, 128.

<sup>65</sup> Bernd W. Baumgartel, *Mit den Wölfen heulen. Deutsche Einwanderer in Kanada erzählen*. (Herdecke, Germany: Scheffler-Verlag, 1999), 30.

<sup>66</sup> Emil Wegwitz and Sara Belter Interviews.

<sup>67</sup> Lucia Fallot Interview.

<sup>68</sup> Sturhahn, *They came from East and West*, 312–313 (Passenger List) and Lucia Fallot Interview.

However, the motivation for emigration was a combination of hopelessness with respect to the economic conditions in Germany, frustration with the housing situation, a sense of adventure, and an urge to break out of the narrowness of small-town society, so the Fallots were certainly open to the idea of a new start abroad and would have likely found out about other possibilities through newspaper ads, public lectures, or otherwise.

However, only four out of fifty interviewees cited newspaper articles and advertisements as their source of information about Canada. Edith Mueller's mother was one of the few who noticed a newspaper ad in the late 1940s in which Canada was trying to attract workers. She applied and was subsequently sponsored by a shoe factory in Vancouver in 1949 that guaranteed her five years of work.<sup>69</sup> Helmut Reither also spotted an ad in a German newspaper in 1956/57 in which Canada was seeking trades people. In his case, however, he had an added motivation since his girlfriend (and later wife) was already in Winnipeg, where she stayed with her aunt and uncle who had immigrated to Canada before World War II.<sup>70</sup>

Alexander Freund shows convincingly that, especially in the late 1940s, German newspaper coverage of emigration possibilities often exaggerated or misrepresented the facts, thus causing floods of applications to the visa offices of the United States, Canada, and Australia.<sup>71</sup> For example, the Canadian military mission reported in February 1947 that it was still suffering from the "recurrence of misleadingly optimistic articles and broadcasts in the German press and radio."<sup>72</sup> Other articles in German newspapers also illustrate the extent of emigration interest. When the United States lifted the immigration

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<sup>69</sup> Edith Mueller Interview (pseudonym), Kelowna, BC, October 16, 2005.

<sup>70</sup> Helmut Reither Interview, Richmond, BC, May 26, 2006.

<sup>71</sup> Freund, *Aufbrüche nach dem Zusammenbruch*, 163–169.

<sup>72</sup> LAC RG 76, vol. 31, file 682, pt. 5, C4689, Canadian Military Mission, Berlin to Secretary of State for External Affairs, Feb. 28, 1947, cited in Freund, *Aufbrüche nach dem Zusammenbruch*, 164.

ban on German citizens on September 21, 1948, American consulates in Germany received between 30,000 and 40,000 applications per day, according to a visa officer. This daily number exceeded the entire annual quota.<sup>73</sup> Even earlier, in the fall of 1945, a public safety report from the British occupation forces in Oldenburg in north western Germany stated: “A rumour has come from Hamburg to the effect that emigration of Germans to Canada will be permitted next spring in view of the density of population here. This is being looked forward to with eagerness.”<sup>74</sup>

Since rumours and reports on migration in German newspapers were often exaggerated, or outright invented, getting correct and consistent information on the immigration policies of the United States, Australia, and Canada was difficult. Even state officials in Germany struggled to keep on top of limited but competing information flows from newspapers and foreign immigration missions. So difficult was the problem that in March 1949 the Secretary of the Interior for the State of North Rhine-Westphalia wrote to the Canadian immigration mission in Karlsruhe. Referring to several recent news reports suggesting that the possibilities for ethnic Germans and German nationals to immigrate to Canada would improve in the near future, he asked for an official Canadian position.<sup>75</sup> The immigration service responded: “There are no Canadian Immigration inspectional

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<sup>73</sup> Freund, *Aufbrüche nach dem Zusammenbruch*, 167–168. Also Nerger-Focke, *Die deutsche Amerikaauswanderung nach 1945*, 83. In contrast to Freund’s convincing portrayal, Nerger-Focke suggests that the emigration discussion in German newspapers was largely limited to an assessment by experts of the economic repercussions of mass emigration.

<sup>74</sup> British National Archives (BNA), WO 171/8085, 821 Military Government Detachment (Oldenburg), “Public Safety Fortnightly Report”, September 8, 1945. (Many thanks to Hugh Gordon for sharing this document from his research in London.)

<sup>75</sup> Landesarchiv Nordrhein-Westfalen, Hauptarchiv Düsseldorf (hereafter: HStA Düsseldorf), NW 58, vol. 206, p. 76, Draft letter, Secretary of the Interior to Canadian Immigration Mission, March 4, 1949.

facilities for German nationals at this time and, in view of the existing circumstances, I regret not being in a position to say when such facilities could be established.”<sup>76</sup>

The general lack of official information certainly facilitated the spread of sensational reports in a country where, according to polls conducted in the late 1940s, significant portions of the population were either willing to emigrate or at least to consider it. Such examples demonstrate a widespread desire to emigrate and that, at least in the early postwar years, migration was an important factor in the public discourse in Germany. Public opinion surveys confirm this. A Gallup survey in the British and American occupation zone in 1948 suggested that twenty-one percent of the population was interested in emigration.<sup>77</sup> A poll taken by the French military government a year earlier provides even more dramatic numbers, when forty-six percent of a sample of 1,596 persons declared that they would go abroad if they had the opportunity. This, however, might have been the result of the massive food shortages during the harsh winter of 1946/47, which were aggravated by the French occupation policy.<sup>78</sup>

Though the numbers in these polls are likely higher than the real emigration interest and possibly simply reflected people venting their frustrations with the postwar conditions in Germany, there still was significant real interest. A very detailed, if rather low, estimate on the volume of the emigration interest in Germany attests to that. A memorandum published by the Federal Ministry of the Interior in preparation for an international migration conference in Paris in July 1950 indicated that one million people were interested in emigration, but stressed that “this is a cautious estimate which

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<sup>76</sup> HStA Düsseldorf, NW 58, vol. 206, p. 77, Letter, Canadian Immigration Officer to Secretary of the Interior, May 13, 1949.

<sup>77</sup> Freund, *Aufbrüche nach dem Zusammenbruch*, 166.

<sup>78</sup> Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 36.

deliberately provided the lowest number” since many did not go to the information centres. Yet, the St. Raphaels-Verein, an emigration aid organization run by the Catholic Church, alone had registered 90,000 ethnic Germans in Hamburg who had come to find information on migration destinations.<sup>79</sup> As mentioned earlier, a visit to one of these information centres was not mandatory and none of the interviewees went there before emigration.

To spread information about migration possibilities and to attract potential new immigrants, Canada, and to a lesser extent other receiving countries, used public lectures to establish an image of a young and dynamic country as “the country of the future.”<sup>80</sup> Before the creation of the Federal Republic in the summer of 1949, advertising for immigrants was unrestricted, though many restrictions imposed by the Allied military governments in Germany and regulations in the receiving countries, including Canada, limited the groups allowed to leave the three western occupation zones. The Federal Republic had its own interests in migration matters and did not allow direct advertisement for emigration unless the advertising country was willing to sign a migration treaty and cooperate with the German employment offices in selecting immigrants.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> BA B146/360, BMI to BMA / BMV / BMM: „Unterlagen fuer die Internationale Konferenz ueber Auswanderungsfragen in Paris“, July 24, 1950; in Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 140. Out of the one million, the report states that 400,000 were part of the workforce (16% agriculturalists) while 60% of the total were between the ages of 20 and 40 years. In the ranking of destination countries, 26% were interested in going to Australia, 15% to the United States, and 11% to Canada. Argentina and Brazil followed with 5% and 4% respectively.

<sup>80</sup> Rolf Ullrich Interview. For the early 1960s, also Michael Hadley Interview, Victoria, BC, May 31, 2006. Michael Hadley had been an immigration officer and press attaché at the Canadian Immigration Mission in Cologne from the late 1950s to 1962 after serving in London and Vienna. In 1962, he gave a public lecture series on Canada in about sixty German cities.

<sup>81</sup> Given the disproportionately high losses of young males during the war, the Federal Republic was worried that large scale emigration from that group would severely interfere with postwar recovery of the economy, to name only one reason. A more detailed account of German government policy will follow in chapter 5.

Canada, however, wanted a high degree of flexibility to decide on its immigration policy without making any binding commitments in terms of quotas or other regulations. Therefore, public lectures became a form of “disguised” immigration advertisement, especially when the number of immigrants from Germany dropped significantly after 1957. Though official announcements, for example, of a public lecture tour through sixty German towns and cities in 1962 always claimed that the presentations on Canada were not soliciting immigrants,<sup>82</sup> the content was certainly designed to appeal to a young audience. Michael Hadley, Information Officer at the Canadian visa office in Cologne in the early 1960s, usually showed three films during his presentations: one on Indian legends, because of the German affinity for native Americans created by the writer Karl May; one on hockey as the Canadian national sport; and one on the building of the Trans-Canada Highway to show that it was a young and developing country. Hadley comments especially on the latter choice by stating: “So you have an idea of a world that is young, that is open. You did not have to advertise for immigration because so many people say: ‘I’d like to be a part of that; I’d like to try that.’ So, that is why this was emphasized.”<sup>83</sup> Since Germany did not impose restrictions on the emigration of individuals, but only on direct advertisement, anyone who contacted a Canadian visa office following this indirect promotion could apply for a visa without any interference from German authorities.

Such lectures produced few immigrants but there were exceptions. Rolf Ullrich found out about immigrating to Canada through such lectures but in his case it was second hand. After attending a lecture in one of the Ruhr cities, given by a Mr. von

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<sup>82</sup> For example: “Michael aus Kanada; Solingen hat interessanten Besucher – Kanadisches Bilderbuch,” in: *Rheinische Post*, March 20, 1962; “Informationen über Kanada aus erster Hand,” in: *Solinger Tagesblatt*, March 20, 1962

<sup>83</sup> Michael Hadley Interview.

Pandenburg, who had travelled extensively in Canada in the early 1950s, Rolf's uncle came out of the presentation with a feeling that "while Germany was still struggling in the rebuilding after the war, Canada was represented as *the* country of the future with all the natural resources like pulp, lumber, copper, nickel, coal, energy, etc." As a result, his uncle asked the 27-year old Rolf if he wanted to go, because Rolf was still undecided whether to stay in Germany and was already contemplating emigration to Australia. "He [Rolf's uncle] said that one from our family should really go to Canada and establish himself there. He also explained to me how dangerous the situation had become between the United States and the Soviet Union during the mid-1950s, when the Cold War became more intense.<sup>84</sup> Having Rolf established in Canada, the uncle reasoned, would provide the option of bringing the entire family over in case a new war broke out in Europe.

Rolf Ullrich arrived in Toronto in November 1955, with his uncle paying for the passage. In the same year, Liesel Schumacher's husband went to a public lecture in the Saar region of Germany, where he got the idea of emigrating to British Columbia because of his former work as a forester.<sup>85</sup> Public lectures certainly played a role in creating an emigration interest in the 1950s and into the 1960s and helped to spread information about possible destinations, but the limited number of examples suggests that they were significantly less important in making decisions to go abroad than direct connections to family members in Canada and even newspaper advertisements and reports.

Certainly, the already mentioned "*Auswandererberatungsstellen*," or Information Offices for Emigrants, were additional sources of information, but their great success in

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<sup>84</sup> Rolf Ullrich Interview.

<sup>85</sup> BC Archives, *The Story of the Victoria Edelweiss Club*, Liesel Schumacher Interview conducted by Elisabeth M. Mayer, 1983, p. 12. This is not part of the sample of fifty interviews conducted in 2005/2006.



discouraging emigration led to the mock name of “*Auswandererabratungsstellen*,” or Dissuasion Offices for Emigrants.<sup>86</sup> Given the reputation of these information centres, it is not surprising that none of the immigrants interviewed in British Columbia had gone there before departing from Europe, and in most cases they were not even aware of their existence. Since the German government attempted to influence emigration through these offices in the 1950s, this will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

Churches with a connection to the Canadian Christian Council for the Resettlement of Refugees (CCCRR), notably the Lutherans, Catholics, Baptists, and Mennonites, also provided members with information about Canada, arranged sponsorship, and gave loans for the voyage. The Canadian Lutheran World Relief, for example, filed the application for Gerhard Fennig, a war orphan from Berlin, and provided the money for the passage, while the Baptist Church sponsored Lucia Fallot and her family.<sup>87</sup>

#### **4.4 Choice of Destination – Why Canada?**

During the peak years of postwar migration between 1950 and 1957, Canada became the second biggest receiving country of German overseas emigrants after the U.S. and far ahead of Australia. About 200,000, or 37 percent of the roughly 540,000 people who left Germany during these seven peak years, settled in the Dominion.<sup>88</sup> For Canada,

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<sup>86</sup> See detailed treatment in Freund, *Aufbrüche nach dem Zusammenbruch*, 246–263; also Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 36–37.

<sup>87</sup> Gerhard Fennig, Vernon, BC, October 10, 2005, and Lucia Fallot Interviews.

<sup>88</sup> Ron Schmalz, “A Statistical Overview of the German Immigration Boom,” *German-Canadian Yearbook* 16 (2000), 4–5. The German Statistical Office lists 185,300 German nationals emigrating to Canada between 1950 and 1957 as part of a total overseas emigration of 552,400. Based on *German Statistical Yearbook* 1960, 75. See also Jan Philipp Sternberg, “Fernweh verwalten. Staatliche und kirchliche Auswanderer-Beratungsstellen nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg,” in: Jochen Oltmer (Ed.), *Migration steuern und verwalten. Deutschland vom späten 19. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart*. (Göttingen: V&R unipress,

this postwar influx was numerically by far the largest single wave of German immigration. Therefore, the question arises: how did those who emigrated decide on possible destinations and why did unprecedented numbers choose to move to Canada?

More than half of the fifty interviewees stated that Canada was either their first or only choice. In many cases, such as that of Lydia Ponto, family ties had an important influence since twenty people were sponsored directly by relatives already in Canada. Another eighteen immigrants received support either through the Canadian government's Assisted Passage Scheme, from religious aid organizations under the umbrella of the CCCRR, or directly from farmers or industry. On the other side, only twelve either paid for their own passage or received the necessary money from family in Germany. Given the strong dependency of more than two thirds of these immigrants on sponsorship from Canada, the choice of destination was generally limited, especially in the late 1940s and early 1950s when it was not possible to pay the passage in German currency and dollars were not easily available. Nevertheless, there were a few creative ways around these obstacles, Christian Stieda, for example, simply got a job on a ship from Europe to North America to save the cost of the ocean crossing and even earn some money along the way.<sup>89</sup> In another case, an immigrant illegally distilled schnapps that he sold to American occupation troops for US dollars to pay for the passages of himself, his wife, and three children.<sup>90</sup> In both cases, Canada was the first choice because of friendship connections.

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2003), 346. Out of 779,900 Germans who left for overseas destinations between 1946 and 1961, 384,700 went to the United States, 234,300 to Canada, 80,500 to Australia, and 80,200 to other countries. For the discrepancies between the numbers of the German Statistical Office and those from immigration offices in the United States, Canada, and Australia, see Freund, *Aufbrüche nach dem Zusammenbruch*, 390–393.

<sup>89</sup> Christian Stieda Interview.

<sup>90</sup> Emil Wegwitz Interview.

Thirteen interviewees, however, came to Canada only after other countries such as the United States, Australia, Argentina, or Brazil did not accept them, either because they preferred skilled over unskilled workers or had quotas. Richard Person, born in Poland of ethnic German descent, could not immigrate to the United States because he had been placed in the Polish quota, which was already full.<sup>91</sup> Others like Dieter Doberstein remember: “I think that my dad wanted to immigrate and I know that he had applications in for the United States, New Zealand, Australia, and for Canada and of course we had a relative here who sponsored us. So, we came here, because we had a toehold in Canada through our relative.”<sup>92</sup> Thus, the presence of a sponsoring relative decided where to go. In Henry Less’ case the decision was actually left to chance (or the most efficient office staff) to decide this question. He states: “the whole family put in applications for Canada, the United States, and Australia. Canada was the first to respond, sending us a form to fill out and go to the camp in Bremen to go through the whole routine, like the medical exam and interview.”<sup>93</sup>

The lack of an independent decision-making process in respect to the preferred destination of emigration is further supported by the fact that twenty-one interviewees said that they knew nothing about Canada before they came, another twelve knew a little about the country, mostly information related to them by relatives in letters and only five said that they had some knowledge about the country, mostly from reading at least one book on the topic. As a result, the most common ideas about Canada were limited to the general perceptions that it was a huge country; that it was cold; and that food was

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<sup>91</sup> Richard Person Interview, Kelowna, BC, October 16, 2005.

<sup>92</sup> Dieter Doberstein Interview, Black Creek, BC, April 21, 2006.

<sup>93</sup> Henry Less Interview, Black Creek, BC, April 21, 2006. Though Henry’s family was initially turned down, he was allowed to immigrate by himself and then sponsored his parents and siblings.

available, as was primarily proven by the Canadian CARE packages received in some German refugee camps. Their vague and limited knowledge about Canada and their dependence on sponsorship to pay for their passages indicates that the priority of these immigrants was simply to leave the destroyed, overcrowded and economically depressed postwar Germany.

Especially in the case of refugees, the vague hope for a better life elsewhere was enough to encourage emigration. Asked about what his parents knew about Canada before they emigrated, Emil Wegwitz remembers: “Everybody told us that there were great opportunities in Canada. This information was from letters from Germans who had immigrated before us. There is another large family that had immigrated before us to Victoria, the Meiers. My parents also knew them from Göppingen before.”<sup>94</sup> Since most of them knew little about Canada and the most important reasons for coming were family or friendship connections, availability of sponsorship, or not being accepted elsewhere, it seems safe to say that push factors were more important in the decision-making process than the pull factors drawing them to Canada while family sponsorship was the most decisive criterion for the choice of the destination. Though family sponsorship could be interpreted as a “pull” factor, the re-establishment of family contacts in most cases served as an opportunity to escape conditions in Europe, while family reunion remained at best a secondary consideration.

A perfect example of this pattern of family sponsorship is that of the Heise family in the Okanagan Valley in British Columbia. The first of the family to arrive in Rutland just north of Kelowna in 1951 was Alice with her husband. Two years later, they

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<sup>94</sup> Emil Wegwitz Interview. Also Rosa Stuiwer Interview. Rosa was part of the large Meier family that immigrated to Victoria before the Wegwitz family arrived.

sponsored two of her nieces, Lilli and Lydia to join them. These, in turn, sponsored their sister Alice in 1955, another sister, Erika, at the end of the 1950s, and one brother, Erwin, in 1960. Finally, when their handicapped father died in Germany in 1962, they brought the remaining family members to Canada, including the twins Herbert and Rosie, who were still going to school. At this point, the entire surviving family was reunited in the Okanagan.<sup>95</sup> Other refugees, like Richard Nikolaj, Adina Frank, and Pauline Leimert told similar stories of being sponsored by family members who had either arrived in the interwar period or as part of the early postwar immigration to Canada.<sup>96</sup>

Though family sponsorship was far more common among ethnic German refugees, Bernhard Dinter's example demonstrates that in some cases circumstances created similar situations for German nationals. To redeem himself after the estate he managed went bankrupt, Bernhard Dinter's father migrated to Canada in 1930, but his inability to bring his family over led to estrangement and divorce from his wife. At the end of the war, after Dinter's family had lost their property in Silesia, his mother re-established contact to his father, who had bought a small farm north of Edmonton. While Bernhard had married in the meantime and had a pregnant wife, the whole family decided to go to Alberta. His mother went in the beginning of 1951 and re-married her former husband. Bernhard Dinter followed in November. His wife arrived in 1952 after the child was born and Bernhard had found a job as a gardener on Vancouver Island.<sup>97</sup> So even in this case a major motivating factor for the migration to Canada was the loss of home and property in the East which the Dinters shared with the other refugees and expellees. In

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<sup>95</sup> Interviews with Lilli Grub, Alice Kropp, and Lydia Ponto

<sup>96</sup> Interviews with Richard Nikolaj, Kelowna, October 14, 2005, Adina Frank, Kelowna, BC, October 14, 2005, and Pauline Leimert, Kelowna, BC, October 17, 2005.

<sup>97</sup> Bernhard Dinter Interview, Duncan, BC, October 23, 2005.

general, having a relative overseas was by far the most common way for successful migrants to find out about the possibilities of immigrating to Canada.

Those who did not have family or friendship connections in Canada had to choose their destination usually based on vague impressions of the countries accepting immigrants. Because of the experiences during the Second World War and especially the massive aerial bombings, for some, like Irene Salamon, the United States had the image of being aggressive.<sup>98</sup> Some immigrants came to Canada instead of the United States to make sure that they would not be drafted into the military. For example, around the time of the outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950, an ethnic German immigrant to the United States reported that young immigrants were often drafted to the military after a short time, causing concern for immigrant families. He explained that, though foreigners could refuse to serve in the armed forces, they would encounter difficulties finding employment and be denied citizenship, with all its privileges.<sup>99</sup>

In general, after the Second World War, Canada had a positive reputation in Germany. People thought of it as prosperous and peaceful, and connected it to images of freedom and wilderness which contrasted favourably with the crowded and difficult conditions in Germany. These sentiments also reverberate in Henry Fehling's explanation of why he chose Canada over the United States: "I have three cousins who went to the United States ... But I didn't quite like what they were writing us. They ended up in Cleveland, an industrial and congested area. I wanted to go somewhere where there is

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<sup>98</sup> Irene Salamon Interview. Irene relates the story of how her native town of Oedenburg in Western Hungary was bombed by the Americans though, according to her, it had no industries or installations of military significance.

<sup>99</sup> Report from ethnic German refugees on their experiences in the United States between 1949 and 1951, cited in Nerger-Focke, *Die deutsche Amerikaauswanderung nach 1945*, 329.

more freedom and more space. This is why I chose Canada.”<sup>100</sup> Especially in comparison to the United States, several interviewees described Canada, as Henry did, as freer and more spacious. It should, however, be kept in mind that the United States remained the most popular destination for German migrants in the postwar period, though its position was far less dominant than it had been in the century before the Second World War.

#### **4.5 Discrepancy between interest in leaving and actual emigration**

As this chapter has demonstrated, emigration interest in Germany after the end of the war was significant and knowledge about migration was spread through letters from relatives abroad, word of mouth, newspapers, and public lectures. Given a combination of Canada’s manpower needs and its preference for settlers from northern European countries, as well as the enormity of the refugee problem in Western Germany and the wide-spread interest in emigration, it seems surprising that the size of the migration movement was not significantly larger.

A number of personal, economic, and political factors explain the discrepancy between migration interest and the actual emigration that took place. Though the conditions in Europe certainly made emigration appealing to ethnic Germans and German nationals in the postwar years, in the final count overseas migration remained a major step into an unknown future. Frank Oberle describes this situation well in his autobiography:

People often think that immigrants have left nothing of value, fleeing from poverty and repression to find prosperity and freedom elsewhere. No doubt that’s true in many cases [i.e. many ethnic Germans]. But for me and many others, leaving Germany meant leaving home. It meant leaving behind a network of friends and relatives, the universal social care offered by the

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<sup>100</sup> Henry Fehling Interview, Penticton, BC, October 9, 2005.

state and the community, and a career as a baker – all for a very uncertain and risky future.<sup>101</sup>

Frank Oberle and his friend Rolf had applied for immigration to South Africa and Canada. When the time came to finalize the arrangements for departure in the summer of 1951, his friend had changed his mind and remained in Germany.<sup>102</sup> Last minute doubts about the consequences of the decision to leave for an uncertain future in a far-away country played a role in reducing emigration, as did attachment to family and friends and discouragement by a partner or wife.

Although these personal factors affected individual decisions to emigrate, a combination of economic and political factors was more important in reducing emigration from Germany. The Allied military governments greatly restricted any prospects of legal emigration from Germany between the end of the war and the founding of the Federal Republic. Nevertheless, as discussed in the next chapter, an unknown number of people left illegally. Overall, however, the mass of those willing to emigrate from Germany was prevented from leaving the country until the Allied military governments slowly lifted travel restrictions between 1947 and 1949.

Finally, by September 1950, when the last restrictions were dropped and German nationals were able to join ethnic Germans in applying for immigration to Canada and also to the United States and Australia, conditions in Germany had started to stabilize slowly so that many who might have decided to leave earlier chose to stay. Therefore, the improving economic situation in the 1950s and the simultaneous integration of the refugees into West Germany significantly reduced emigration interest, especially after 1957. In other cases, potential migrants did not pass the immigration examinations of the

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<sup>101</sup> Oberle, *Finding Home*, 174.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 167.



receiving countries, either for medical reasons such as tuberculosis, for Nazi or Communist leanings, or because of criminal records. Though both sending and receiving countries tried to shape the migration flow based on their particular economic and political interests, the following two chapters will demonstrate that Canada retained almost unlimited control over immigration matters, while West Germany guaranteed individual freedom of movement and therefore had few means to reduce or direct the mass emigration of the 1950s.

## Chapter 5

**German Government Influence on Migration**

Until fairly recently, historians of migration emphasized the decision of emigrants to leave their homes because of diverse push and pull factors and generally examined the receiving country's immigration policy; alternatively, they studied the disposition of the resident population towards an immigrant group. The policies and regulations in the countries of origin that facilitated or limited emigration have become part of the discussion only recently. A study of postwar German emigration requires consideration of both the policies of receiving countries and the limits imposed first by the Allied occupation authorities and, after 1949, the Federal Republic of Germany. In view of its own economic and demographic interests, the government in Bonn limited the ability of other countries to advertise freely for immigrants and tried to influence the decision-making process of potential migrants.

Yet since Germany's constitution, the "*Grundgesetz*," or basic law, did not restrict freedom of movement, the means of shaping the composition and the direction of overseas emigration remained very limited unless the government negotiated bilateral agreements with receiving countries. In the case of Canada, Germany ultimately failed to secure a treaty that would have given it influence on migration beyond the Canadian "bulk orders"<sup>1</sup> of domestics and agricultural labourers processed in cooperation with the

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<sup>1</sup> The Canadian economy needed significant numbers of unskilled workers, especially for agriculture, logging, and domestic service. The immigration branch usually referred to these demands that were filled first from displaced persons camps and later, especially from Germany and Italy, as "group movements," or "bulk orders." This term suggested that the responsible department simply perceived these immigrants as a commodity to benefit Canada's economy. This is the only part of immigration from Germany to Canada in which both countries cooperated in recruiting through the German labour offices at least in the early 1950s. See Alexander Freund, *Aufbrüche nach dem Zusammenbruch. Die deutsche Nordamerika-Auswanderung*

German employment offices. Since German emigration policy after 1949 was largely based on ideas that had originated before the Second World War, this chapter briefly explores these policies in Imperial Germany and the Weimar Republic before turning to the largely restrictive approaches of the Allied powers. This will be followed by a more detailed discussion of the complex situation facing Bonn when it tried to relieve the massive refugee crisis by supporting the emigration of such people as ethnic German families and single women, while trying to discourage the emigration of groups deemed essential for the reconstruction efforts after the war and to a lesser extent, to uphold claims to the lost territories in the east.

### **5.1 Emigration Policy in Imperial Germany and the Weimar Republic**

The discussion of emigration policy in the Federal Republic of Germany in the late 1940s continued the paternalistic tradition of Imperial Germany and the Weimar Republic in dealing with migration. The emigration law, or “*Gesetz über das Auswanderungswesen*” of June 9, 1897, was the first attempt of the German state to protect emigrants on their overseas passages. It regulated their transport and accredited and controlled foreign immigration agents. Though it contained no emigration restrictions, its most important function was the possibility of controlling emigration.<sup>2</sup> Five years later, the German Colonial Society established a semi-official Central

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*nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg*. (Osnabrück: V&R unipress, 2004), 232–233. Also Johannes-Dieter Steinert, *Migration und Politik. Westdeutschland – Europa – Übersee 1945–1961*. (Osnabrück: Secolo Verlag, 1995), 162–163.

<sup>2</sup> Oltmer interprets this attempt as an expression of German imperialistic world politics, see Oltmer, “Einführung: Steuerung und Verwaltung von Migration in Deutschland seit dem späten 19. Jahrhundert,” 41–42. Jonathan Wagner agrees that this law gave the German government important powers to direct migration, but argues that it emphasized the protection of German emigrants. He furthermore writes: “After 1897 German emigrants possessed guarantees of non-interference and support for their planned departure unheard of in earlier times.” (Wagner, *History of Migration*, 149–151).

Information Office for Emigrants with the intention of channelling emigrants into German colonies, especially South-West Africa (Namibia), in order to create overseas dependencies along the lines of British settlement colonies and to prevent the assimilation of German citizens into other nations.<sup>3</sup> These plans remained largely unfulfilled; the “white” population of all German colonies combined totalled only 28,859 in 1913.<sup>4</sup>

Though the churches and other organizations opened the first *Auswandererberatungsstellen* (Information Centres for Emigrants) in the nineteenth century, the creation of the *Reichswanderungsstelle* or Reich Migration Office, on May 29, 1918, six months before the end of the First World War, had a far-reaching effect as it continued earlier efforts to influence German emigration.<sup>5</sup> Hartmut Bickelmann argues that the new migration office understood its responsibility not only to protect emigrants and prevent advertisements for emigration, but also to discourage migration by providing employment in Germany.<sup>6</sup> Although the Weimar constitution of 1919 firmly established the right of every German citizen to emigrate and article 112, paragraph 1 did not restrict

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<sup>3</sup> Klaus J. Bade, “Labour, Migration, and the State: Germany from the Late 19<sup>th</sup> Century to the Onset of the Great Depression,” Klaus J. Bade (Ed.), *Population, Labour and Migration in 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Germany*. (Leamington Spa, Hamburg, New York: Berg Publishers, 1987), 80–81.

<sup>4</sup> Manfred Görtemaker, *Deutschland im 19. Jahrhundert: Entwicklungslinien*. (5<sup>th</sup> Ed., Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1996), 354. The “whites” living in the colonies also included other nationalities. A significant number were members of the colonial administration, merchants, and their family members, so that the actual numbers of German settlers in the colonies was even lower. According to the German statistical office, only 0.2 percent of German emigrants (or 68 per year) went to Africa between 1901 and 1910, while 91 percent of the annual average of 27,965 went to the United States alone. See *German Statistical Yearbook, 1954*. (Wiesbaden: Statistisches Bundesamt, 1956), 66.

<sup>5</sup> Jochen Oltmer, “Einführung: Steuerung und Verwaltung von Migration in Deutschland seit dem späten 19. Jahrhundert,” Jochen Oltmer (Ed.), *Migration steuern und verwalten. Deutschland vom späten 19. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart*. (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2003), 43–44. The full name of the “*Reichswanderungsamt*” is: “*Reichsamt für deutsche Einwanderung, Rückwanderung und Auswanderung*” (Reich Office for German Immigration, Re-migration, and Emigration). See also Bade, “Labour, Migration, and the State,” 81.

<sup>6</sup> Hartmut Bickelmann, *Deutsche Überseeauswanderung in der Weimarer Zeit*. (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1980), 81–89.

their freedom of movement,<sup>7</sup> the *Reichswanderungsamt* clearly opposed emigration. While the official purpose of the migration office was simply to provide information for potential emigrants and to protect them from miscalculations, fraud, and disappointments, in reality, the government in Berlin had established the office to influence the volume and destinations of emigration. Until 1924, it was mandatory for potential emigrants to visit one of the many information centres whose unofficial purpose was to discourage skilled labour from leaving the country. In close cooperation with domestic employment offices, the information centres tried to retain such workers by offering them jobs. If suitable jobs were not available, the information centres would try to promote overseas establishment of German block settlements, especially in South America, where it was hoped such settlements would ensure the survival of German language and culture and provide markets for German exports.<sup>8</sup> This reflected a measure of indirect state intervention and control.<sup>9</sup> Since these attempts to direct migration often failed, the office was sometimes referred to as “*Amt der verlorenen Worte*” or “Office of lost Words.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Oltmer, “Einführung, Steuerung und Verwaltung von Migration in Deutschland seit dem späten 19. Jahrhundert,” 43–44; however, Klaus Bade cautions that the “Reichswanderungsstelle” of the Weimar Republic was not very successful in discouraging emigration because there were no strict emigration restrictions; see Klaus J. Bade, “Labour Migration and the State: Germany from the Late 19<sup>th</sup> Century to the Onset of the Great Depression,” Klaus J. Bade (Ed.), *Population, Labour and Migration in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> – Century Germany*. (Leamington Spa, Hamburg, and New York: Berg Publishers, 1987), 80–81; Jonathan Wagner comes to a similar conclusion: Wagner, *A History of Migration from Germany to Canada*, 190–191.

<sup>8</sup> Oltmer, “Einführung: Steuerung und Verwaltung von Migration in Deutschland,” 43–44.

<sup>9</sup> Karin Nerger-Focke, *Die deutsche Amerikaauswanderung nach 1945 Rahmenbedingungen und Verlaufsformen*. (Stuttgart: Verlag Hans-Dieter Heinz, 1995), 87. Weimar constitution, Article 112, Paragraph 1: “Jeder Deutsche ist berechtigt nach außerdeutschen Ländern auszuwandern.”

<sup>10</sup> Klaus J. Bade, *Europa in Bewegung. Migration vom späten 18. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart*. (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 2000), 262–263. Since Germany had lost its colonies in the First World War, these block settlements were supposed to create enclaves of German language and culture overseas. However, despite all official attempts to promote South American destinations, Brazil and Argentina could not compete with the strong appeal the United States continued to exert as the primary emigration destination for Germans, though their share of immigrants increased significantly. Between 1921 and 1930, an average of 56,729 Germans emigrated annually. Of these, 40,458 or 71 percent went to the United States, while Brazil received 5,626 (10%), Argentina 4,482 (8%), and Canada 2,329 (4%). *German Statistical Yearbook, 1954*. (Wiesbaden: Statistisches Bundesamt, 1956), 66.

In 1923, the *Reichswanderungsamt* became the *Reichsstelle für das Auswanderungswesen* (State Office for Emigration Affairs), though its mandate with respect to emigration remained unchanged. As Jonathan Wagner shows convincingly, the organization's head, Oskar Hintrager, discouraged emigration by stressing the hardships to be expected in the destination countries. In the case of Canada, his office published articles emphasizing such difficulties as the harsh climate on the agricultural frontier to counter the claim of Canadian immigration agents that Canada was a country of unlimited opportunities. Furthermore, Hintrager argued that working conditions were hard, especially in agriculture, and that farmers would have scant time to hunt or fish to supplement the diet as Canadian advertisements suggested.<sup>11</sup>

Despite its attempts to discourage emigration, the Weimar Republic never limited the constitutionally guaranteed freedom of movement and did not generally interfere with recruitment of immigrants by the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) and Canadian National Railway (CNR), though officials like Hintrager deemed these activities illegal. As a result, German immigration to Canada, though modest in comparison to the 1950s, reached an unprecedented level in the second half of the 1920s.<sup>12</sup> Hintrager's office largely failed to limit and direct emigration, given the constitutional, economic, and political situation in Germany in the 1920s. Yet, after 1949 the Federal Republic revived some of the earlier attempts of indirect state control over mass departures. Although there was a continuity of German emigration policy between the 1920s and the late

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<sup>11</sup> Jonathan Wagner, *A History of Migration from Germany to Canada, 1850–1939*. (Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 2006), 187–190.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 190–191. See Chapter 2 for details on the volume of migration from Germany to Canada in the 1920s. The total immigration of German citizens during the 1920s was about 25,000. In addition, a number of German speaking Mennonites from Russia and other German-speaking immigrants moved especially to the Canadian prairies.

1940s, immediately after the Second World War the Allied occupation authorities determined German emigration policy.

## **5.2 Emigration Restrictions under Allied Occupation, 1945–1949**

With the unconditional German surrender in Reims on May 7, 1945 and in Berlin-Karlshorst the following day, German state power ceased to exist; Allied military governments became sovereign in the four occupation zones.<sup>13</sup> As a result, the Allies controlled all legislative and executive power, including migration regulations. Therefore, despite the enormous interest in emigration in Germany discussed in the previous chapter, it was impossible for most Germans to leave the country legally.<sup>14</sup> Though it was not technically prohibited, the Allied Control Council Law No. 161 of March 7, 1945 and the Proclamation No. 2, which came into effect on September 20, 1945, required all potential emigrants to have an exit permit issued by the Allied powers.<sup>15</sup> The official purpose of these permits was to prevent Nazi war criminals from leaving, to make prosecution easier, and to forestall a dispersal of National Socialist ideology.

Nonetheless, many Nazi war criminals and party members with good personal connections did escape. Ernst Klee's study of Nazi war criminals shows how Roman Catholic priests provided travel documents to many, including Adolf Eichmann, the organizer of the "Final Solution," Josef Mengele, a notorious doctor in Auschwitz, and Franz Stangl, commander of the death camps of Sobibor and Treblinka. The process was usually fairly simple: priests would certify the false names in applications for Red Cross

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<sup>13</sup> Hans-Ullrich Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte, vol. 4: Vom Beginn des Ersten Weltkriegs bis zur Gründung der beiden deutschen Staaten, 1914–1949*. (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 2003), 978.

<sup>14</sup> For illegal border crossings in the early post-war years, see Freund, *Aufbrüche nach dem Zusammenbruch*, 169–170.

<sup>15</sup> Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 22.

passports and organize passages via Rome, especially to Argentina, which became a favoured destination. Similarly, with the help of Vatican connections, other groups like Ukrainian SS members, some of them former concentration camp guards, were able to emigrate as displaced persons to the United States or Canada instead of being repatriated to the Soviet Union, where they would have been either sentenced to death or sent to Siberia.<sup>16</sup>

Though the extent of illegal emigration is obviously impossible to determine, incidental evidence suggests that numbers were quite high. The newspaper *Hannoversche Allgemeine Zeitung* reported on September 20, 1951 that, in addition to some 50,000 other illegal emigrants, 100,000 men had been recruited into the French and Dutch Foreign Legions.<sup>17</sup> In 1948, the Dutch Ambassador in London complained that 1,100 Germans were arrested every month in the Netherlands for illegal border crossings; in 1949, a German newspaper reported that several thousand Germans were interned in Spain, Italy, Switzerland, and Sweden for illegal border crossings.<sup>18</sup> Not all of those arrested, however, were thwarted emigrants, since smuggling and family visits were among the motivations to cross borders without obtaining an exit visa. Apart from these illegal border crossings, the initial regulations were so restrictive that only those whose travels were in the interest of the occupying powers, such as German scientists who went

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<sup>16</sup> Ernst Klee, *Persilscheine und falsche Pässe. Wie die Kirchen den Nazis halfen*. (3<sup>rd</sup> extended edition, Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1992), 24–31. (On Ukrainians, p. 29)

<sup>17</sup> Lothar Kurth Wiedemann, “Täglich wandern 200 Deutsche aus,” in: *Hannoversche Allgemeine Zeitung*, September 20, 1951. Cited in Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 22. One of Frank Oberle’s early emigration plans included joining the French Foreign Legion; See Oberle, *Finding Home*, 150. Herman Brecht, who immigrated to Canada in the early 1950s, also reports that France was recruiting for its Foreign Legion. He signed a contract in the French occupation zone to work in France in 1946 or 1947. See interview with Hermann Brecht, conducted by Milly Charon, in Milly Charon, *Between Two Worlds. The Canadian Immigrant Experience*. (Montreal: Nu-Age Editions, 1988), 88–89. In addition to this recruitment, Hans-Ulrich Wehler claims that thousands of German prisoners of war held in camps in France were pressed into the French Foreign Legion after the end of the war; see Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, vol. 4, 943.

<sup>18</sup> Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 22.



to the United States as part of “Operation Paperclip” or to Canada’s much smaller “Matchbox” program, were issued exit permits.<sup>19</sup>

In addition to scientists, the Allied powers initially considered three other categories of people eligible for exit permits. These included opponents and victims of the Nazi regime who were persecuted for political, ethnic, or religious reasons; close family members of soldiers and other citizens of Allied countries such as spouses, parents and children under the age of 21; and the so-called “compassionate cases”: persons who needed medical treatment abroad, children and old people with relatives abroad, and displaced persons travelling outside of organized migrations. Between 1946 and 1949 the military authorities gradually relaxed the criteria regulating the issuing of travel documents. Germans could apply for exit permits under any of these categories but had to pass a background check from the Berlin Document Centre to determine possible involvement in the NSDAP and other associated Nazi organizations. In addition, the Allied Combined Travel Security Board, responsible for processing the requests, demanded that applicants have an entry visa for the country of destination and a person or organization outside Germany who would pay their passage.<sup>20</sup> Thus, war brides, people with close relatives abroad, and scientists and technicians had the best chances of getting exit permits. Germans persecuted by the Nazi regime, however, often had difficulty proving their opposition activities and so rarely qualified for exit permits.

Nevertheless, even applicants who fulfilled all the criteria found it difficult to obtain visas. Norman A. Robertson of the Canadian Department of External Affairs, who

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<sup>19</sup> Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 22–24. On “Operation Paperclip” and the “Matchbox” program, see: Howard Margolian, *Unauthorized Entry. The Truth about Nazi War Criminals in Canada, 1946–1956*. (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2000).

<sup>20</sup> Freund, *Aufbrüche nach dem Zusammenbruch*, 171. See also Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 24–25.

visited the Canadian Military Mission in Berlin, advised the Director of Immigration, A.L. Jolliffe, that an applicant who secured an immigration visa for entry to Canada could not “leave Germany unless he is given governmental assistance in obtaining the required exit permits and in getting transportation from Germany.” In short, Robertson explained, “under present conditions it is impossible for a person to leave Germany on his way to Canada merely on the strength of a Canadian visa.”<sup>21</sup> Since potential immigrants needed both external sponsorship and an immigration visa to obtain an exit permit, emigration was largely limited to displaced persons sponsored by the International Refugee Organization (IRO) which explicitly excluded all refugees of German ethnicity from its mandate until the early 1950s.<sup>22</sup>

The IRO, which took responsibility for the displaced persons problem created by the war, argued that those who were homeless within their own country could not be considered as refugees because they were still under the protection of their own country. As a result, its original mandate excluded all “persons of German ethnic origin, whether German nationals or members of German minorities who ... have been (or may be) transferred ... evacuated ... (or) ... have fled (from or) into Germany ...”<sup>23</sup> Though this position was understandable at the end of an excessively bloody war, there was no German state before 1949 that could have protected the refugees from the hardship they

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<sup>21</sup> LAC RG 76, vol. 31, file 682, pt. 5, C4689, Canadian Military Mission, Berlin to the State Secretary for External Affairs (SSEA), July 17, 1946, Telegram No. 80 Immigration from Germany; Under-SSEA, N.A. Robertson to Director of Immigration, A.L. Jolliffe, August 3, 1946, quoted in Freund, *Aufbrüche nach dem Zusammenbruch*, 171–172.

<sup>22</sup> Between 1947 and 1952, the IRO resettled about one million refugees (displaced persons) and repatriated another 73,000. The organization had its own camps and was responsible for food, clothing, and medical treatment of the refugees, as well as providing the trans-Atlantic shipping on 36 vessels, half of which were provided by the United States. The U.S. also financed 237 of the US\$398 million spent by the IRO and accepted forty percent of the refugees as immigrants. See Karin Nerger-Focke, *Die deutsche Amerikaauswanderung nach 1945 Rahmenbedingungen und Verlaufsformen*. (Stuttgart: Verlag Hans-Dieter Heinz, 1995), 50.

<sup>23</sup> Nerger-Focke, *Die deutsche Amerikaauswanderung nach 1945*, 49

experienced. Not until 1950 did the IRO include German refugees in its resettlement plans.<sup>24</sup>

In light of the postwar manpower need in many western countries, including the United States and Canada, and in response to the diminishing pool of displaced persons, the Allied governments started to relax travel restrictions. The United States took the lead on June 18, 1948, when its Foreign Secretary George C. Marshall declared that if security against the emigration of war criminals was maintained and there was no interference with the emigration of displaced persons, which Congress perceived as an important part in Europe's recovery, the emigration of German nationals and ethnic Germans could be supported.<sup>25</sup> In theory the restrictions for worldwide emigration of Germans ceased to exist; in reality, migration remained difficult, since many potential receiving countries, including Canada and Australia, did not lift German enemy alien status until late in 1950. As a result, in 1946 only 2,200 Germans left Germany for an overseas destination, followed by 4,200 in 1947. These numbers soon rose significantly. In 1948 and 1949 respectively 27,400 and 24,800 Germans left. This swelling volume of overseas emigration reached a peak of 90,400 in 1952 as receiving countries gradually relaxed and finally dropped restrictions. The annual number of emigrants remained consistently above 60,000 until 1957.<sup>26</sup>

Given German concerns about the emigration of men required for reconstruction and in recognition of the serious gender imbalance, in February 1949 the western military

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<sup>24</sup> Nerger-Focke, *Die deutsche Amerikaauswanderung nach 1945*, 44.

<sup>25</sup> BA OMGUS 7/43–1/8, George C. Marshall an OMGUS, undated, quoted in Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 38–39.

<sup>26</sup> *Statistical Yearbook 1959*. (Wiesbaden: Statistisches Bundesamt, 1960), "Overseas Emigration, table 33a." See also Freund, *Aufbrüche nach dem Zusammenbruch*, 391–397. The emigration of displaced persons from Germany which is not included in the above numbers reached a peak of 245,900 in 1949, dropping rapidly afterwards to a low of 3,300 in 1954.

governments dropped all restrictions for women who passed a security check. A man, however, had to obtain an official declaration that he was dispensable for the labour market. Two months later, however, the Manpower Advisors of the three western zones concluded that a further liberalization of the emigration regulations would have no negative repercussions for the German economy and allowed the emigration of men under the same conditions established for women. Therefore, in July 1949 the Allied military governments lifted the last remaining travel restrictions for western Germany. They retained the right to exclude specific professions but never exercised it.<sup>27</sup>

### **5.3 The Establishment of a West German Emigration Policy, 1949–1951**

Only with the foundation of the Federal Republic of Germany in the West on May 23, 1949 and the establishment of the German Democratic Republic in the East on October 7 of the same year did German governments recover at least some political power. Both governments, however, were firmly tied into their respective alliance systems and did not officially regain full sovereignty until the “Two-plus-four” Treaty came into effect on March 15, 1991, ending the occupation after Germany was unified on October 3, 1990.<sup>28</sup>

Though the Federal Republic was not in a position to conduct an autonomous foreign policy in the early years, the Petersberg Agreement of November 1949 allowed Bonn to establish consulates in other countries and to negotiate trade matters. With the

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<sup>27</sup> BA OMGUS 15/112–1/32, “Instruction No. 3,” undated; and BA OMGUS 7/43–1/8, “Relaxation of Emigration Procedures,” June 10, 1949, in Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 40–41.

<sup>28</sup> Gregor Schöllgen, *Die Außenpolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*. (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1999), 14–21. The “Two-Plus-Four Treaty” was the agreement between the two German states and the four occupation powers to officially grant the then unified German state full sovereignty.

outbreak of war in Korea in June 1950, the western Allies feared that as in Korea, where a communist north attacked a capitalist south, a communist East Germany might attack the west.<sup>29</sup> Thus, they began negotiations about West Germany's participation in multi-lateral defence organizations in December 1950. This advanced German autonomy in terms of foreign policy, culminating in the integration of the Federal Republic into western alliances, including NATO, with the signing of the Treaty of Paris on October 23, 1954.<sup>30</sup>

Chancellor Konrad Adenauer's strong commitment to western integration removed the last restrictions on migration for German nationals, categorized as enemy aliens until September 1950, and finally ended the official state of hostilities between Germany and Canada in July 1951. Ottawa had gradually broadened the categories of ethnic Germans admissible, even including ethnic Germans, without immediate family members in Canada, and those who had become German citizens after the beginning of the Second World War.<sup>31</sup> Since Canada's need for immigrants remained unbroken while the pool of displaced persons in Europe declined rapidly, Germany became the next logical recruiting ground, given its significant surplus population and the racial selection criteria in Canada that favoured white northern or western Europeans as immigrants.<sup>32</sup>

Adenauer's main political goal as chancellor of the newly established Federal Republic of Germany was complete integration with the West, a process made easier by Washington's view of West Germany's importance in the economic recovery of Western

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<sup>29</sup> Schöllgen, *Die Außenpolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, 25–26.

<sup>30</sup> Excerpts of Treaty of Paris, October 23, 1954, in Curt Gasteyger, *Europa von der Spaltung zur Einigung*. (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1997), 122–131.

<sup>31</sup> Angelika Sauer, "Christian Charity, Government Policy and German Immigration to Canada and Australia, 1947–1952," *Canadian Issues*, vol. 18 (1996), 163 and Ron Schmalz, "A Statistical Overview of the German Immigration Boom to Canada, 1951–1957," *Deutsch-Kanadisches Jahrbuch/German-Canadian Yearbook*, vol. 16 (2000), 11–12.

<sup>32</sup> See the following chapter for more details on Canada's immigration regulations.

Europe and as a future ally with a great reserve of military manpower for the defence of Western Europe.<sup>33</sup> The refugee crisis, however, was an economic burden for Bonn and a potential danger to its political stability if integration efforts failed and problems of high unemployment and lack of housing remained unresolved.<sup>34</sup> The Allies recognized the refugee problem, which the British Military Governor, General Brian Hubert Robertson, described as “undoubtedly one of the main tasks which will fall to the future German Government.”<sup>35</sup> Although the Allies eased their emigration restrictions, Bonn’s influence on emigration remained limited, since the Basic Law, the German constitution, by simply omitting the issue of emigration, did not limit the freedom of movement.

On September 29, 1948, during the deliberations for the new “*Grundgesetz*”, the constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany, the politicians of the “*Parlamentarischer Rat*” (Parliamentary Council) discussed future emigration policy. Given the Weimar Republic’s liberal emigration tradition and the recent experience of totalitarianism, it seemed a foregone conclusion that the right of emigration would be encoded in the new constitution. Yet, this was not the case. Scepticism and the fear that the emigration of young people would increase the burden for those who stayed behind in the war-ravaged country dominated the debate. Carlo Schmid, a member of the council,

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<sup>33</sup> Schöllgen, *Die Außenpolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, 26–27. Also Curt Gasteyger, *Europa von der Spaltung zur Einigung. Darstellung und Dokumentation, 1945–1997*. (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1997), 113–114.

<sup>34</sup> LAC MG28–V28, Canadian Society for German Relief funds, Monthly Bulletin, vol. 4, no. 3; March, 1951, p. 2; Also Angelika E. Sauer, “A Matter of Domestic Policy? Canadian Immigration Policy and the Admission of Germans, 1945–1950,” *Canadian Historical Review* 74, no. 2 (1993), 229; and Johannes-Dieter Steinert, “Drehscheibe Westdeutschland: Wanderungspolitik im Nachkriegsjahrzehnt,” Klaus J. Bade (Ed.) *Deutsche im Ausland – Fremde in Deutschland. Migration in Geschichte und Gegenwart*. (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1992), 389–390.

<sup>35</sup> General Brian Hubert Robertson to General Lucius D. Clay, March 2, 1949, OMGUS CAD 3/159.2/10, cited in Mathias Beer, “Symbolische Politik? Entstehung, Aufgaben und Funktion des Bundesministeriums für Vertriebene, Flüchtlinge und Kriegsgeschädigte,” Jochen Oltmer (Ed.), *Migration steuern und verwalten. Deutschland vom späten 19. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart*. (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2003), 295.

even evoked the idea of a “*Schicksalsgemeinschaft*,” a union of fate, when he argued that the shared burden of guilt and the efforts of reconstruction should be placed above individual freedom, including the right to emigrate.<sup>36</sup> However, restricting movement was not an option for the liberal, democratic, and western orientation of the new constitution. The politicians compromised by not mentioning the right of emigration in the Basic Law and merely giving the Federal Government the exclusive legislative authority for issuing passports, and matters of immigration and emigration.<sup>37</sup> Germany did not establish a Ministry of Migration, though until 1969 a Ministry of Expellees was responsible for settlement and integration of expellees and ethnic German refugees.

In 1947, before the establishment of the Federal Republic, the “*Ständiges Sekretariat für das Auswanderungswesen*” (Permanent Office for Emigration) was founded in Bremen.<sup>38</sup> Its director, Franz Wolff, had worked for the old “*Reichswanderungsamt*” (Imperial Migration Office) of the Weimar Republic. In an internal memorandum, written in 1948, he clearly reflected the traditional focus on demographics and the labour market. He declared that desirable emigrants would be women, old and sick people with relatives abroad, ethnic German refugees who were not settled, men who took their families with them, and educated people in fields where there was a surplus. However, the emigration of skilled workers, technicians, men between 20

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<sup>36</sup> Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 41–42.

<sup>37</sup> Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany, Article 73, point 3: “Ausschließliche Gesetzgebung des Bundes: die Freizügigkeit, das Paßwesen, die Ein- und Auswanderung und die Auslieferung.” See also Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 42.

<sup>38</sup> In 1952 this office was renamed into “Bundesamt für Auswanderung” (Federal Office for Emigration) and moved to Koblenz where it remained until 1959. Jan Philipp Sternberg, “Fernweh verwalten. Staatliche und kirchliche Auswanderer-Beratungsstellen nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg,” Jochen Oltmer (Ed.), *Migration steuern und verwalten. Deutschland vom späten 19. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart*. (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2003), 348.

and 40 years, and single men in general should be discouraged.<sup>39</sup> He continued to press for the emigration of those who could not be employed in West Germany, particularly refugees with an agricultural background. He believed that ethnic Germans would be quite willing to emigrate and would be “great settler material with their large families,” and because they were accustomed to living among foreign peoples, would quickly establish themselves in their new home.<sup>40</sup> These comments foreshadowed the need for a multi-faceted approach to dealing with the refugee problem.

Johannes-Dieter Steinert convincingly argues that internationally the German government played a “double game” with regard to emigration. At the Organization of European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) Conference in Paris from January 17–24, 1950, it tried to draw attention to the crisis to attract financial support for the integration of these groups into West German society, but was non-committal about the volume of emigration. Though German representatives at international conferences knew that Germany could not refuse requests from countries like Canada, the United States, and Australia for opportunities to seek immigrants, they argued that the migration should not be organized only to meet economic needs of the immigration countries and that they did not want young single males to leave. Rather, they emphasized the humanitarian elements of migration as they called on the immigration countries to accept such people as widows with children and large refugee families.<sup>41</sup> Three months later, at a migration conference

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<sup>39</sup> Sternberg, “Staatliche und kirchliche Auswanderer-Beratungsstellen,” 348–349. Also Freund, *Aufbrüche nach dem Zusammenbruch*, 203.

<sup>40</sup> “Sie stellen mit ihren kinderreichen Familien ein wertvolles Siedlermaterial dar, zumahl sie gewohnt sind, umgeben von fremdem Volkstum zu leben. Sie werden sich daher auch in einer neuen Heimat verhältnismäßig schnell einleben.“ BA B106/20580, Franz Wolff, Ständiges Sekretariat für das Auswanderungswesen (SSA) to Bundesministerium des Inneren (BMI), January 12, 1950, cited in: Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 135–136; Sternberg, “Staatliche und kirchliche Auswanderer-Beratungsstellen,” 372–373.

<sup>41</sup> Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 136–137.



in Geneva, the German delegation announced that Germany had 1.3 million people available for emigration including 450,000 workers of whom 100,000 were women; and an estimated 850,000 family members. By far the largest groups of men on the list were skilled and semi-skilled tradesmen (110,000) and farmers (70,000), while the largest categories of women were secretaries and office workers (30,000) and farmers (30,000).<sup>42</sup>

The Geneva Conference yielded few results for Germany. Hence, the Federal Ministry for Employment, under Anton Storch, started to take the lead in emigration matters from the Ministry of the Interior and began placing more emphasis on bilateral rather than multilateral agreements.<sup>43</sup> Storch also wanted to replace the voluntary visits of potential emigrants to the re-opened “*Auswandererberatungsstellen*” (Information Centres for Emigrants) with mandatory registration at employment offices (“*Arbeitsämter*”) in order to increase government influence on migration beyond the processing of direct recruitment and state-supported migrations such as bulk orders from Canada. The other ministers agreed that emigration could have a strong impact on employment policies, but rejected the proposal lest the registration of potential emigrants create an “emigration psychosis” by drawing attention to the issue.<sup>44</sup> As a result German emigration policy changed little until the mid-1950s. In the meantime, it discouraged the

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<sup>42</sup> BA B146/299, Bundesministerium für Arbeit (BMA): Protokolle über die Sitzungen “Inner- und außereuropäischer Wanderung von Arbeitskräften,” 4, April 13, 1950, cited in Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 138.

<sup>43</sup> Jochen Oltmer, “Einführung: Steuerung und Verwaltung von Migration in Deutschland seit dem späten 19. Jahrhundert,” Jochen Oltmer (Ed.), *Migration steuern und verwalten. Deutschland vom späten 19. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart*. (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2003), 18–19. Also Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 139–140. During the Nazi dictatorship from 1933 to 1945, the state had completely controlled migration as part of the labour market. Following this older tradition, the two most influential ministries with respect to migration in the Federal Republic of Germany were the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of the Interior.

<sup>44</sup> Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 140.

emigration especially of young single men and skilled tradesmen and tried to increase its control by negotiating bilateral treaties, such as the one signed with Australia in 1952, which gave employment offices the power to reject potential emigrants deemed essential for the German economy.<sup>45</sup>

In contrast to this restrictive policy, German delegations at international migration conferences emphasized the availability for emigration of ethnic German agriculturalists, from Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, who could not return to their former homelands. For example, the German delegation at the founding conference for the Provisional Intergovernmental Committee for the Movements of Migrants from Europe (PICMME) in Brussels in December 1951 achieved the inclusion of these refugees in the new organization's catalogue of tasks.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, Adenauer personally intervened to promote the mass-emigration of ethnic German farmers. When he met Canadian Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent in Ottawa on April 18, 1953, Adenauer asked Canada to accept 200,000 ethnic German refugees from Eastern Europe, all with a background in agriculture, for a limited time of four or five years before they would return to Germany.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 142–143.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 92–101 and 142–143. In October 1952, PICMME, which had been originally limited to a one-year term as the successor of the International Refugee Organization (IRO) became a permanent organization and was re-named Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM). Based on the agreement, both the immigration and emigration countries would pay US\$ 60.00 for each migrant moved by ICEM while the remaining costs of the ship passage was provided as a loan by the organization. The United States was in favour of PICMME/ICEM since it was an organization of western countries and did not include the Communist Eastern European states that had been part of the IRO. This relieved the continuous tensions in questions of resettlement of displaced persons versus the forced repatriation favoured by the Soviet Union. See *Documents on Canadian External Relations* (DCER), vol. 23–419, Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs J.W. Holmes to Canadian Ambassador in Bonn, Sept. 7, 1956. Also Nerger-Focke, *Die deutsche Amerikauswanderung*, p. 47–55.

<sup>47</sup> DCER, vol. 19–957, Visit of Chancellor to Ottawa, April 17–18, 1953, Notes on Canadian-German Conversations, April 18, 1953. The German government thought that these ethnic German refugees could be successfully integrated into the expanding German economy towards the end of the decade. In the meantime, the temporary move would have reduced German welfare expenditures.

At the same time, Bonn wanted to retain expellees from former German territories that had been incorporated into Poland and Russia to increase the moral and political pressure on the Allies to redress the territorial settlement of the Treaty of Potsdam, although Germany's eastern border could not be re-negotiated, especially while the Cold War continued.<sup>48</sup> Yet, all the political parties in the Bundestag agreed that unification meant re-establishing Germany in the borders of 1937. Given the millions of expellees from the eastern territories and the hundreds of thousands with family members in both the East and West German states, the Federal Parliament declared in September 1950 that recognizing the Oder-Neiße-Line as Poland's western border would be a "crime against Germany."<sup>49</sup> Despite preferences with respect to emigration, the Federal Republic, like the Weimar Republic, largely relied on indirect influences on individual migrations through church and state-run information centres for emigrants.

The reestablishment of emigration information centres after the Second World War continued the interwar approach of indirect state intervention and control of migration.<sup>50</sup> Similar tendencies are obvious in the orientation of representatives of the Federal Republic of Germany in the late 1940s and early 1950s, especially with respect to attempts to establish German block settlements in Brazil, Argentina, and Chile. However, the reluctance of the federal government to share the costs of emigration with Latin American governments largely explains the small volume of German migration to these countries. Even where these settlement schemes materialized, some were badly

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<sup>48</sup> Sternberg, "Staatliche und kirchliche Auswanderer-Beratungsstellen," 349.

<sup>49</sup> Schöllgen, *Außenpolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, 22. Though Schöllgen rightly argues that the political consensus was a result of the chronological proximity to the expulsions, it also seems unlikely that the parties would have risked contravening this position, given the millions of expellee and refugee voters in West Germany.

<sup>50</sup> Oltmer, "Einführung: Steuerung und Verwaltung von Migration in Deutschland seit dem späten 19. Jahrhundert," 43–44. Also Bade, "Labour Migration and the State," 80–81.

mismanaged. At the La Serena settlement in Chile, for example, conditions in 1952/53 were so desperate that about half the original immigrants left within a year.<sup>51</sup>

The role of the *Auswandererberatungsstellen*, or, as they were called by many people, *Auswandererabratungsstellen* (Emigration Discouraging Centres), was an important factor in state attempts to control and direct migration.<sup>52</sup> Even the Federal Ministry of the Interior admitted that these information centres usually presented a rather negative outlook on the economic development and personal opportunities in the country of destination while pointing to the good job prospects in Germany.<sup>53</sup> Between 1949 and 1961, about 2.4 million people visited one of the 82 offices located in 48 cities in 1954, but only an estimated ten percent of them actually left Germany, which certainly gives some credence to the mock name. Despite these successes in discouraging people, since visiting one of the official information centres was voluntary, only every third emigrant sought advice from these offices. Therefore, the potential for state intervention remained limited.

More emigrants might have visited the information centres if they had known of them but the German government deliberately did not advertise their existence in order not to draw public attention to emigration.<sup>54</sup> The majority of emigrants – like most of the persons in my interview sample – must have received information from relatives abroad

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<sup>51</sup> Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 181–190. Also Oltmer, “Einführung: Steuerung und Verwaltung von Migration in Deutschland,” 43–44; BA B106/20616, BMI “Vermerk über die [...] Besprechung betr. die Errichtung einer Deutsch-Chilenischen Siedlungsgesellschaft,” November 26, 1953; and PA Abt. 5 127, German Embassy to Foreign Office, December 24, 1953; cited in Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 188.

<sup>52</sup> Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 247.

<sup>53</sup> Political Archive of the Foreign Office, Bonn, Dept. 5 (Legal Department) 118, Draft. Report from the Federal Ministry of the Interior on the Emigration Policy to the Financial Committee [Haushaltsausschuß] of the Federal Parliament, 1954, quoted from Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 247.

<sup>54</sup> Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 248–249. Also Sternberg, “Staatliche und kirchliche Auswanderer-Beratungsstellen,” 354.

or other sources that are difficult to trace and quantify.<sup>55</sup> People migrating to Canada, for example, could contact the Canadian Immigration Mission in Karlsruhe (and later Cologne) directly to obtain details about the country and the migration process.

Though Alexander Freund generally agrees that the *Auswandererberatungsstellen* played a crucial role in limiting emigration, he also suggests that some people who were interested in emigration likely went there, simply to keep their options open.<sup>56</sup> In addition, host countries rejected some potential migrants because of poor health, including tuberculosis; political reasons, like Nazi past or membership in the SS; or otherwise failing to meet visa requirements. The fact that only ten percent emigrated is therefore not necessarily the sole result of discouragement at the information centres.

Based on his study of three information centres in the city of Hamburg, Jan Philipp Sternberg comes to a more moderate assessment. While agreeing that the information centres were intended to discourage emigration, particularly of skilled workers, and that they attempted to channel emigration in accordance with state interests that often followed the traditional assumption that large German agricultural settlement would be possible in South America, he concludes that these offices understood their role primarily as a social service of information and support for potential emigrants, not as agents of government policy.<sup>57</sup> Sternberg compares the government offices and two church sponsored agencies, the Lutheran Emigration Mission (*Evangelische Auswanderermission*) and the St. Raphael's Foundation for the Protection of Catholic German Emigrants (*St. Raphaels-Verein zum Schutze katholischer deutscher*

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<sup>55</sup> Sternberg, "Staatliche und kirchliche Auswanderer-Beratungsstellen," 353. Also Freund, *Aufbrüche nach dem Zusammenbruch*, 247–248.

<sup>56</sup> Freund, *Aufbrüche nach dem Zusammenbruch*, 201–202.

<sup>57</sup> Sternberg, "Staatliche und kirchliche Auswanderer-Beratungsstellen," 346–347.

*Auswanderer*). He found that the only significant difference was the clientele. Because the church organizations had access to charitable funding and migration loans from the Canadian Christian Council for the Resettlement of Refugees (CCCRR) and other organizations, refugee and expellee families frequented them more regularly, while single individuals with concrete career plans tended to patronize the public centres, though none of the agencies received many inquiries from single women. Likely, many women had direct contacts abroad, such as family members who had emigrated before the war or left as spouses of Allied soldiers.<sup>58</sup>

Though their clienteles may have varied, all of the information centres reflected traditional ideas of promoting block settlements to preserve German language and culture abroad. All three agencies discouraged those who they assumed were simply seeking adventure.<sup>59</sup> However, between 1948 and 1959 German immigration to Latin America never exceeded 2,700 persons annually for any single country or 7,000 for the entire continent, with Brazil and Argentina usually receiving the vast majority.<sup>60</sup> In short, the efforts of the information centres to direct migration to German agricultural block settlements in South America had a limited appeal.

Although discouraging potential emigrants at the information centres coincided with the interests of the German government, it must be emphasized that many persons seeking information either had very limited knowledge about their destinations or had highly unrealistic expectations about the migration process or life overseas.<sup>61</sup> Visitors to

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<sup>58</sup> Sternberg, "Staatliche und kirchliche Auswanderer-Beratungsstellen," 353 and 367.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 373.

<sup>60</sup> German Statistical Office, *Statistical Yearbook 1961*, section 2, table 6: "Auswanderer nach Übersee nach Staatsangehörigkeit und Zielländern."

<sup>61</sup> Eckehart J. Priebe, *Thank You, Canada. From Messerschmitt Pilot to Canadian Citizen*. (West Vancouver, BC: Condor Publishing, 1990), 207. Priebe writes about his fellow passengers on the trans-Atlantic voyage: "It was absolutely amazing to notice how little these immigrants knew about the country

information centres may have had their visions brought down to earth, while those who did not may have proceeded with their dreams in place. Certainly in retrospect, some interviewees attributed their decision to emigrate to “youthful naivety” and claimed that if they had had the funds, they would have returned to Europe when the first few years turned out to be more difficult than expected.<sup>62</sup>

Because of freedom of press, the government could not censor newspapers, but it occasionally reminded them of a still valid law introduced by the Nazis on June 26, 1935 forbidding the advertisement of jobs in foreign countries. That may explain why the press rarely mentioned emigration in the 1950s.<sup>63</sup> Already in August 1947, Ernst Friedländer wrote in the influential newspaper *Die Zeit* that emigration should not be supported and that emigrants should realize that even if their expertise was in demand abroad, they would simply remain foreign labourers.<sup>64</sup> Three years later, however, the *Handelsblatt* in December 1950 suggested that the mass emigration of some groups could be desirable since there were still 1.3 million unemployable persons in Germany, 400,000 of them were farmers and another 600,000 tradesmen, with an additional mix of office workers, self-employed, and housewives.<sup>65</sup>

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of their hopes. ... These people here on the ship knew virtually nothing about Canada. They were full of dreams, far from reality. They seemed to think that money was lying around on Canadian streets and was only waiting for them to come and pick it up.” Priebe himself had been a prisoner of war in Canada for several years, so he had some knowledge of his destination.

<sup>62</sup> For example, interviews with Lucia Fallot, Waldemar Belter, Erwin Kirsch, Gerhard Fennig, and Irmgard Siegmüller.

<sup>63</sup> Nerger-Focke, *Die deutsche Amerikaauswanderung*, 57. Also Freund, *Aufbrüche nach dem Zusammenbruch*, 166. Freund also suggests that the topic of emigration, though present in the press in the postwar years, did not have a high priority.

<sup>64</sup> Ernst Friedländer, “Bleibt im Lande!” *Die Zeit*, August 21, 1947, cited in Nerger-Focke, *Die deutsche Amerikaauswanderung*, 65–66.

<sup>65</sup> “Auswanderung in deutscher Sicht,” *Handelsblatt*, no. 144, December 11, 1950, cited in Nerger-Focke, *Die deutsche Amerikaauswanderung*, 66.

Other newspapers explicitly singled out ethnic German refugees and expellees as ideal emigrants. However, not all expellees were interested in going overseas, as some letters to the editor in *Die Welt* demonstrate. Under the title “Heimattreue hemmt Auswanderung” (Loyalty to homeland blocks emigration), journalists reported that most expellees wanted to return to their former homes and therefore insisted that emigration would weaken the pressure for that cause. In their opinion, the signatories of the Potsdam Agreement had to accept responsibility for the expulsions and acknowledge the right of the refugees to return to their homes. If emigration was the only possibility, they wanted block settlements to form their own communities.<sup>66</sup> In sum, the German press provided limited information on migration issues and destinations in the 1940s and 1950s and generally agreed with government representatives in singling out specific groups – notably ethnic Germans – as potential emigrants, while rejecting mass-emigration.

In 1952, the German government told the Organization of European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) that given the high proportion of women in the country and the large number of refugees with agricultural backgrounds who would have difficulties integrating into West Germany’s society and economy, it was interested in cooperating in any plans for agricultural settlements in Latin America and other overseas countries, and for work opportunities for women in Europe. Bonn, however, insisted that emigration should never be allowed to sever family ties. That issue appeared on the agendas of

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<sup>66</sup> Letters to the editor, “Heimattreue hemmt Auswanderung,” *Die Welt*, no. 117, May 22, 1950, cited in Nerger-Focke, *Die deutsche Amerikaauswanderung*, 67.



several discussions between German ministries and the Canadian Immigration Mission regarding Ottawa's assisted passage scheme.<sup>67</sup>

The death of 3.7 million men during the war left a large gender imbalance.<sup>68</sup> Even in 1950, after most men had returned from POW camps, on average there were only about 1,000 men to 1,400 women in the age group between 25 and 40.<sup>69</sup> In short, the German government was interested in using emigration to relieve demographic and social problems; but the emigration of young, single men would only exacerbate the already unbalanced gender ratio. For example, in 1953, the German Ministry for Labour, in supporting the Canadian plan to recruit 5,000 domestics, noted "a significant surplus of women for certain age groups."<sup>70</sup>

In sum, as Alexander Freund argues, the German government promoted the emigration of ethnic German farmers as good settlers because they were a burden on the welfare state, and of single women or widows because their limited chances for marriage meant that they had no proper place in 1950s West German society, which, as in other

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<sup>67</sup> For example BA B106/20618, Bundesministerium des Inneren (hereafter: BDI), Memorandum, Bonn, June 5, 1952. Also Steinert, "Drehscheibe Westdeutschland: Wanderungspolitik im Nachkriegsjahrzehnt," 388.

<sup>68</sup> *Statistisches Jahrbuch* 1960, published by the German Office for Statistics, 78. The total number of deaths in the German army is reported as 3,760,000 for Germany in the borders of 1937. In addition, 250,000 for Austria, and 430,000 for German areas of settlement outside of the pre-war borders.

<sup>69</sup> Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, vol. 4, 942–945. Even for the age groups from 15 to 65 years, there was still an average of 1,362 women for every 1,000 men. This meant that between 20 and 40 percent of all males born between 1910 and 1925 were killed during the war. In 1950, 4.1 million households were headed by a widow. Also Alexander Freund, "Identity in Immigration: Self-Conceptualization and Myth in the Narratives of German Immigrant Women in Vancouver, BC, 1950–1960." (M.A. Thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1994), 19.

<sup>70</sup> BA B106/24834, Auswanderung nach Kanada, 1953–1973, Bundesministerium für Arbeit (hereafter BMA), Memorandum from Federal Ministry of Labour on Canadian recruitment program for 1954, Bonn, Dec. 1953: "... doch stimmt das Arbeitsministerium der Anwerbung von 5.000 Frauen zu, da es für bestimmte Altersjahrgänge einen deutlichen Frauenüberschuß in Deutschland gibt."

western countries, tried to return women to the homes as mothers and housewives after the upheaval of depression and total war.<sup>71</sup>

While German officials saw women and ethnic German refugees as dispensable for the reconstruction and recovery of the country, expellees from territories that the Treaty of Potsdam had put under Polish and Russian control were a different matter because their presence was a strong reminder to the western Allies of Bonn's insistence on the return of the former German eastern territories.<sup>72</sup> Thus, Bonn generally discouraged expellees at the information offices and potentially rejected applicants at the employment offices in the case of so-called bulk orders from Canada and other countries.

#### **5.4 German-Canadian Negotiations on Migration**

Despite many inter-ministerial meetings in Germany on the topic, the German government had limited success in restricting emigration. This becomes clear since none of the immigrants interviewed remembers any interference from the German state (or any support for that matter). None was processed through the employment offices, even when they received funding through the Assisted Passage Scheme, nor went to the information centres.<sup>73</sup> Accordingly, Bonn addressed emigration directly to Ottawa in an attempt to influence the migration movement. These negotiations merit a closer examination since they clearly outline the various elements of German government policy and the limitations of state influence on the freedom of movement.

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<sup>71</sup> Freund, *Aufbrüche nach dem Zusammenbruch*, 206. For the Canadian context, see for example: Alison Prentice, et al., *Canadian Women. A History*. (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Toronto: Harcourt Brace, 1996), 350 and 383–384.

<sup>72</sup> Sternberg, "Staatliche und kirchliche Auswanderer-Beratungstellen," 372. Only the Federal Republic's treaties with Poland, the Soviet Union, and Czechoslovakia in the early 1970s legally terminated claims for the return of former German territories by officially accepting the status quo.

<sup>73</sup> Interviews with fifty immigrants in British Columbia.

After the foundation of the Federal Republic of Germany, several government offices and ministries undertook negotiations with the Canadian Embassy and Immigration Mission in Germany over the nature and organization of the migration movement. Germany's desire to export families with more than two children and widowed mothers did not coincide with Canada's preference of young single, "mobile and politically reliable," men and women, who would work as agricultural labourers and domestics, or in the construction trades and other areas of the economy that were suffering labour shortages as a result of the postwar economic boom.<sup>74</sup> It took several years to formulate a consistent government policy in Germany that corresponded to Canada's flexible approach to immigration that frequently adjusted manpower needs based on short-term economic prognoses. Immigration historian Freda Hawkins aptly described Canada's approach as a "tap on and off" system.<sup>75</sup>

German mass-emigration to Canada began in the fall of 1950. Its first two years were characterized by its unorganized nature on both sides of the Atlantic. Canada's director of the Immigration Branch, C.E.S. Smith, met representatives of the German government in October 1950 to discuss extending immigration policy to include German nationals in addition to ethnic German refugees. Since Germany was not prepared to provide financial support for potential emigrants or relax its strict policy on the conversion of Deutschmarks into Dollars or British Pounds, emigration remained largely

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<sup>74</sup> Ron Schmalz, "A Statistical Overview of the German Immigration Boom to Canada, 1951–1957," *Deutschkanadisches Jahrbuch/German-Canadian Yearbook* 16 (2000), 3. "Politically reliable" in this context meant foremost that immigrants should not have communist leanings or be affiliated with communist or socialist organizations. In the early years, a Nazi past would also disqualify immigrants, but this aspect became less significant during the Cold War. For a more detailed discussion of this topic see Chapter 6; Freund, *Aufbrüche nach dem Zusammenbruch*, 203.

<sup>75</sup> Freda Hawkins, *Canada and Immigration. Public Policy and Public Concern*. (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Kingston & Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988), 328. She refers to problems "of adjusting admission to current labour market requirements, without prejudicing the long-term advantages of immigration, the humanitarian considerations involved in it, and without adversely affecting the sources of supply."

limited to those with sponsors outside of Germany – either religious organizations like the CCCRR or relatives. Canada responded to the financial obstacles encountered in Europe generally by introducing the “Assisted Passage Loan Scheme” on February 1, 1951. Over the next ten years, almost half of all loans under the scheme were granted to emigrants from the Federal Republic of Germany.<sup>76</sup> As a result, Canadian recruitment in Germany continued to remain largely outside of German control.

As Steinert shows in great detail, the only area of cooperation in migration was Canadian bulk orders, large recruitment schemes for miners, forestry workers, agriculturalists, and domestics. This started in the winter of 1950/51 when the Canadian Department of Labour bypassed the Immigration Branch and sent its own representative, J.A. Sharrer, to Germany to negotiate an agreement to recruit 660 Germans for the Canadian Metal Mining Association through German employment offices. The number of miners was subsequently increased to 820, while 1,000 forestry workers and 500 domestics were added to the list of Germans admissible under the Assisted Passage Loan Scheme.<sup>77</sup> From Ottawa’s perspective, this limited cooperation for so-called “special movements” had the advantage of allowing specific job advertisements in newspapers and information posters in employment offices. This certainly drew attention to job opportunities in Canada and increased the number of persons contacting the Canadian Immigration Mission directly.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 161. The “Assisted Passage Loan Scheme” introduced by the Canadian government was a revolving fund loan system that provided the money for the trans-Atlantic voyage to help immigrants without sufficient means, or with no access to foreign currency to pay for the tickets (as was the case in Germany before 1954). The immigrants would pay the loans back after arriving in Canada.

<sup>77</sup> Landesarchiv Nordrhein-Westfalen, Hauptstaatsarchiv (hereafter: HStA) Düsseldorf, NW 58, vol. 234, Minutes of meeting at the Ministry of Labour regarding Canadian recruitment of workers for mining industry, March 5, 1951.

<sup>78</sup> Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 162–163.

The German Federal Ministry for Labour forwarded Canada's request to the responsible ministers in German states with significant refugee populations on February 23, 1951.<sup>79</sup> Despite the general agreement, negotiations among German ministries, the Canadian Immigration Mission and Embassy, and the IRO continued with respect to recruitment, medical examinations, and the distribution of the financial burdens among the parties involved.<sup>80</sup> Even when these issues were settled, the slow and inefficient processing of potential immigrants at the German employment offices in the first two years did not yield the desired numbers to fill Ottawa's bulk orders. Canada treated this cooperation as a small addition to its more important direct recruitment of immigrants in Germany. It was, as Steinert suggests, a sign of goodwill towards the government in Bonn.<sup>81</sup>

In order to reduce the likelihood of immigrants becoming dependent on welfare, Ottawa usually halted immigration during the fall and winter when unemployment tended to be high and obtaining housing was difficult. In the winter of 1950/51, however, Canada used all available shipping to bring over immigrants without a seasonal interruption to maximize the intake. As a result, 194,391 immigrants arrived in 1951 of whom about 32,400 came from Germany. This was the second highest immigration total in the decade and would have been even higher if the Assisted Passage Loan Scheme had not exhausted its budget by October 12, at which time the program was discontinued.<sup>82</sup> Given these numbers, the Canadian Immigration Minister, Walter E. Harris, declared that

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<sup>79</sup> HStA Düsseldorf, NW 58, vol. 234, Federal Minister for Labour to State Ministers in Munich, Kiel, Hannover, Hamburg, and Bremen, Feb. 23, 1951. Migration is a federal responsibility in Germany, but since the employment offices used for the recruitment of immigrants for "bulk orders" are run by the states.

<sup>80</sup> HStA Düsseldorf, NW 58, vol. 234, Minutes of meeting at the Ministry of Labour regarding Canadian recruitment of workers for mining industry, March 5, 1951.

<sup>81</sup> Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 163.

<sup>82</sup> Schmalz, "A Statistical Overview of the German Immigration Boom to Canada, 1951–1957," 17.

Germany and Austria had been among the most significant sending countries and would supply the Canadian labour market in all professions in the following year if the Assisted Passage Scheme were reinstated.<sup>83</sup> Despite the limited success in processing bulk orders through German employment offices in 1951, Canada planned to continue and even expand this cooperation the following year.

In the first half of 1952, consultations between the Canadian Immigration Mission in Karlsruhe and a number of ministries and governmental offices in the Federal Republic seemingly focussed primarily on practical improvements for processing applications. German delegates raised several issues concerning the simultaneous emigration of family members with the main applicants and asked for changed ratios between single workers to married ones with families. Canada generally had the upper hand in the negotiations but made some minor adjustments to ensure Bonn's continued cooperation.

In April 1952, the Canadian government informed the German Foreign Office that it would reinstate the Assisted Passage Loan Scheme in the following month and that it was interested in the immigration of 3,900 agricultural labourers and an undecided number of domestics. Dr. Heinrich von Trützschler, responsible for migration issues at the Foreign Office, generally welcomed the renewed Canadian interest in domestics and agricultural labourers. Nevertheless, he hoped to regulate migration in a general agreement or treaty that could be sufficiently flexible to be adjusted according to changing conditions in both countries.<sup>84</sup> That policy, however, was significant for German officials because it made it difficult to keep the employment offices informed about changes that were made without notice and therefore to influence emigration.

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<sup>83</sup> LAC RG26 132/3-35-2, Pt. 2, Minister of Department of Citizenship and Immigration: "Memorandum to the Cabinet: Immigration Policy," February 21, 1952. Cited in Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 109.

<sup>84</sup> BA B106/20618 Kanadisches Einwanderungsprogramm 1952, Bonn, April 4, 1952.

Heinrich von Trützschler criticised Canada's short-term planning, though he framed his disagreement in an expression of concern that insufficient shipping space might frustrate Ottawa's immigration targets.<sup>85</sup> Yet it is likely that the simultaneous negotiations for a migration treaty with Australia, which was finally signed on August 29, 1952, inspired these comments. In this treaty, for five years Germany and Australia would agree annually on the composition and numbers of the migration contingent with respect to age, occupation, and the ratio of single versus family migrants.<sup>86</sup> In the case of Australia, the German government could influence emigration based on the needs of its domestic labour market and thereby had a significant input that was generally absent from the much larger emigration stream that left for Canada and the United States.<sup>87</sup>

Former immigration officer Michael Hadley explained the difference between the Australian and Canadian approaches. He recalled that any government that signed an agreement with the West German government "could have free selection and openly advertise for immigration, [but] they had to send all persons they selected to the German labour office ["*Arbeitsamt*"] for approval." This gave the German government significant control over the migration movement. In the case of Australia, Germany also shared some of the costs for the long ocean passage and allowed Australia to advertise freely for immigrants. In contrast, Canada refused to sign a migration treaty and so could not advertise in Germany. However, Hadley concludes: "because we did not openly advertise

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<sup>85</sup> BA B106/20618 Kanadisches Einwanderungsprogramm 1952, Bonn, April 4, 1952.

<sup>86</sup> BA B106/20618 for example Note on German-Canadian Migration Treaty, Ministry of the Interior, May 1959. Also Steinert, "Drehscheibe Westdeutschland: Wanderungspolitik im Nachkriegsjahrzehnt," 390–391.

<sup>87</sup> Angelika E. Sauer, "Christian Charity, Government Policy and German Immigration to Canada and Australia, 1947 to 1952," *Canadian Issues* 18 (1996), 163–164. Also Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 147–160. Australia signed a migration treaty to diffuse costs for the long ship passages. Yet, Canada's continued success in recruiting immigrants in Germany without treaty restrictions caused the Australian government to reconsider the renewal of the treaty in 1957.

for immigration, [we could issue a visa to] anybody who voluntarily came to us ... and they could leave Germany to immigrate to Canada.”<sup>88</sup> Thus, Canada only sought the cooperation of the German employment offices in the context of bulk orders.

As an example of the high degree of flexibility in the Canadian adjustment of immigration targets based on economic needs, on April 17, 1952 the Canadian Immigration Mission finally announced the new projected numbers for large labour recruitment schemes (bulk orders) of immigrants from Germany and Austria for that year. Now, Ottawa wanted to recruit 8,500 agricultural labourers instead of the 3,900 suggested two weeks earlier. In addition, Canada was interested in 5,000 domestics, nurses, and nurses’ aides, 6,500 unskilled labourers, and 1,000 skilled labourers. About 17,000 of the total of 21,000 prospective immigrants would come from Germany; the remaining 4,000 were the quota set for Austria. In addition, Canada allowed space for 12,000 dependents. To help recruit this vastly expanded number, the Canadian Immigration Mission asked the German authorities to support the processing of applicants through the employment offices and to pay the applicants’ travel expenses to the port of departure.<sup>89</sup> The ratio of workers versus dependants shows that Canada envisioned the migration of mostly single people and small families.

On May 8, 1952, representatives of several German ministries and agencies met at the Ministry of the Interior to discuss the Canadian request. Those at the meeting again outlined Germany’s interests in emigration and discussed the points of disagreement with Canadian immigration practices in detail. Though Germany accepted the Canadian immigration program in terms of the occupational structure, it complained about

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<sup>88</sup> Michael Hadley Interview. Victoria, BC, May 31, 2006.

<sup>89</sup> BA B106/20618, Kanadisches Einwanderungsprogramm 1952, Bonn, April 17, 1952.



Ottawa's continued preference of young, single workers. Therefore, the representatives of the Federal Ministry for Labour refused to approve the emigration of agricultural labourers until there were further negotiations with Canada.<sup>90</sup> The others at the meeting agreed that the Canadian immigration program must give preference to married workers, not single ones. Since there was already a shortage of agricultural labourers in the Federal Republic,<sup>91</sup> they argued that they should demand a "healthy ratio between single and married workers that also takes German interests into account." Furthermore, the representatives thought it necessary to ensure that married emigrants could "bring their family members along, either immediately or within a reasonable period of time"<sup>92</sup> since the existing procedure delayed family reunions by requiring the husband to pay off his own fare before saving for the passages of his family. That, and generally low wages, delayed some reunions for several years, a condition that was neither in the interest of the emigrants, nor of the German government, which frequently had to support the families financially during the time of separation – not to mention increasing numbers of divorces and other strains on the families caused by the lengthy time apart. Though a migration of the whole family would have been in Germany's interest, Canada opposed it, primarily

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<sup>90</sup> BA B106/20618, Meeting in the Ministry of the Interior, May 8, 1952, Kanadisches Einwanderungsprogramm 1952, BMI, Written Report, Bonn, May 17, 1952, 1–2. Representatives of the Ministry of the Interior; Foreign Office; the Ministry for Nutrition, Agriculture, and Forests; the Ministry for Refugees; the Ministry for the Economy; the Ministry for Labour; and the Federal Agency for Emigration were present at the meeting.

<sup>91</sup> The shortage of agricultural labourers in the 1950s was the result of emigration combined with the quickly increasing labour demands (and higher incomes) in German industry. For example Sara Belter Interview, Vernon, BC, October 12, 2005: "I had stayed ... in Stuede, Kreis Giffon, which is close to Wolfsburg where the original plant for the Volkswagen was. We came [to Canada] in 1950, but two years later, they opened up the export and expanded. At that point, all the agricultural workers left to work in the plant."

<sup>92</sup> BA B106/20618, Meeting in the Ministry of the Interior, May 8, 1952, Kanadisches Einwanderungsprogramm 1952, BMI, Written Report, Bonn, May 17, 1952, 2.

because the loans were granted to fill manpower needs and not for humanitarian purposes.<sup>93</sup>

At a second meeting, when the discussion turned to the extension of the Assisted Passage Loan Scheme to the immediate family members of the applicants, a Mr. Andrew from the Canadian Embassy told the German officials that “the Revolving Fund was designated for the transport of 60,000 workers and ... was insufficient for the financing of passages for family members.” He specifically noted that “the Canadian government could only justify expenditures to parliament that contribute to the increase in productivity, but not expenditures that solely serve humanitarian purposes.”<sup>94</sup> Andrew’s assertion certainly underscores the assessment of Ron Schmalz that Canada’s immigration policy was narrowly defined by immediate economic interests.<sup>95</sup> The German representatives responded that it would be more economical to have the family accompany the applicant since he would only have to support one household.

In addition to these economic arguments, however, the interviews with immigrants and statements by Michael Hadley make clear that if the main breadwinner – at the time always the men since married women were generally considered dependents<sup>96</sup> – emigrated without family members, he could more easily move around and get established. That remained the advice of Canadian immigration officials.<sup>97</sup> Retrospectively, immigrants agree that this was sound advice since the breadwinner could

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<sup>93</sup> Michael Hadley suggests, however, that this policy changed in the late 1950s when the Canadian immigration office only suggested that the ‘breadwinner’ should immigrate first before bringing his family to Canada. Michael Hadley Interview.

<sup>94</sup> BA B106/20618, Minutes of meeting at the Foreign Office on May 20, 1952, Auswärtiges Amt (hereafter AA), Bonn, May 21, 1952, 5. The documents do not provide a first name for Mr. Andrews.

<sup>95</sup> Schmalz, “A Statistical Overview of the German Immigration Boom,” 1–2.

<sup>96</sup> Michael Hadley Interview. Also Irmgard Siegmüller Interview, Vernon, BC, October 11, 2005.

<sup>97</sup> Michael Hadley Interview.

usually earn enough within a year to send for the family, whereas families that came as a group found it more difficult to pay back loans and get established.<sup>98</sup>

The German government proposed an emigration ratio of 60 family members to 40 single workers, while J.R. Robillard, the head of the Canadian Immigration Mission, accepted the opposite ratio. Yet, Robillard claimed that many single applicants belonged to the same families, such as a widowed father and two adult sons, a statement met with scepticism by the German delegates since the maximum age for emigrants was 40 or 45 years. Though Robillard claimed that the age limit had been dropped, he ignored the question regarding the percentage of applicants over 40 years of age.<sup>99</sup> When the meetings remained largely without results, by early June the German officials agreed that it was essential to negotiate a framework agreement that would align Canada's recruitment activities with Germany's economic and labour market needs particularly its desire to promote the emigration of ethnic German farmers and single women. In the meantime, however, the ministries decided not to delay the process any further and to allow Canada to recruit immigrants in selected federal states with a high refugee population.<sup>100</sup>

Despite Germany's apparent reservations about Canada's immigration program, the refugee crisis and the maintenance of friendly cooperation between the two western countries during the Korean War made it imperative to work together in the efficient recruitment of emigrants. Though Bonn assumed a certain degree of independence in the

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<sup>98</sup> For example Lucia Fallot Interview, Sidney, BC August 9, 2005. She arrived together with her husband and three small children. Bernhard and Gertrud Dinter Interviews, Duncan, BC, October 23, 2005. Gertrud Dinter arrived about one year after Bernhard with their infant child.

<sup>99</sup> BA B106/20618, Minutes of meeting in the Foreign Office, May 20, 1952, AA, Bonn, May 21, 1952, p. 4–5. Also BA B106/20618, Minutes of meeting at the Ministry of the Interior, May 28, 1952, BDI, Bonn, June 5, 1952, p. 1.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1–2. Also Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 168–169.

short term, the fact that the German employment offices only recruited 1,000 agricultural labourers and 2,000 domestics, instead of the total of 17,000 immigrants desired by Canada, led to an intervention by the international migration organization PICMME that could have dampened relations with the United States, the most important backer of the organization.<sup>101</sup> To avoid similar delays in the future, Germany focussed on an attempt to increase the emigration of refugees from East Germany. Nevertheless, starting in the summer of 1952, the ministries concerned agreed that signing a migration treaty with Ottawa was essential to regain some government influence over the sizeable emigration movement to Canada.<sup>102</sup>

Even though the ministries agreed to support the Canadian immigration program, the delay caused by the negotiations and thereby of the processing of applicants through state and local employment offices likely contributed to the drop in the number of German immigrants to Canada.<sup>103</sup> Additional factors were a small downturn in the Canadian economy resulting in lower immigration targets and negative reports in the German press about the discontinuation of the Assisted Passage Scheme and of unemployment in Canada. Though the total emigration from Germany in 1952 was noticeably higher than in the years before and after, the number of immigrants going to Canada dropped in tandem with an overall drop in immigration to Canada from all countries. (See Table 5.1)<sup>104</sup> Therefore, the reduced immigration in 1952 was certainly

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<sup>101</sup> Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 169–170. For more detail on the establishment of PICMME, see footnote 42 of this chapter.

<sup>102</sup> BA B106/20618, Memorandum on the meeting at the Ministry of the Interior, May 28, 1952, BMI, Bonn, June 5, 1952.

<sup>103</sup> BA B106/20618, Minutes of meeting in the Ministry of the Interior, July 2, 1952, BDI, Bonn, July 17, 1952.

<sup>104</sup> Schmalz, “A Statistical Overview of the German Immigration Boom,” 4–5. Also Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 160. Despite the reduced immigration numbers, the unemployment rate in Canada increased slightly from 2.4% in 1951 to 2.9% in the following two years.

not just the result of delays in Germany, especially since the number of German immigrants processed by employment offices remained fairly small compared to independent migration.

Year	Total Emigration from Germany	Total German immigration to Canada (and percentage of all immigrants)	Canada's share of German emigrants in Percent	Total Immigration to Canada
1951	69,395	32,395 (16.7%)	46.7 %	194,391
1952	94,257	28,257 (17.2%)	30.0 %	164,498
1953	78,415	35,015 (20.7%)	44.7 %	168,868

**Table 5.1:** German Immigration to Canada, 1951–1953.<sup>105</sup>

In any case, both sides avoided these delays in 1953 and 1954 by agreeing early on the size and composition of the movement. By March 1953, for example, the German labour offices had received instructions from Bonn for recruiting workers for Canada while the few remaining technical questions were quickly resolved to streamline the processing of applicants.<sup>106</sup> Canada agreed to accept only single applicants over 25 years as agricultural labourers and a higher percentage of families for their Assisted Passage program and, without making concrete promises, indicated a willingness to support an early reunion of families after the emigration of the main applicant. Nevertheless, these changes or declarations of intent certainly corresponded to German interests.<sup>107</sup>

Germany, however, tried to direct Canada's recruitment efforts to the tens of thousands of refugees from Communist East Germany, especially about 120,000 illegal

<sup>105</sup> Numbers based on Schmalz, "A Statistical Overview of the German Immigration Boom," 4 and *Citizenship and Immigration Statistics 1996*. (Ottawa: Ministry of Public Works, 1999), 4.

<sup>106</sup> BA B106/20618, Bundesamt für Auswanderung (hereafter BAA), Memorandum from Federal Office for Emigration, Koblenz, March 11, 1953.

<sup>107</sup> BA B106/20618, AA, Minutes of meeting in the Foreign Office, December 18, 1953, p. 2–3.

immigrants in West Berlin, since, according to the German government, many of them had an agricultural background. The director of the Canadian Immigration Mission, J.R. Robillard, favoured this idea, but Canadian immigration officers rejected about ninety percent of these applicants because of fears of Communist infiltration in Canada. Negotiations over the processing of East German refugees continued well into the fall of 1953.<sup>108</sup> Nevertheless, overall cooperation worked well and increased recruitment through the employment offices contributed to the total of just over 35,000 German immigrants to Canada for that year.

Despite attempts to avoid the confrontations of the previous year, with the steady recovery of the German economy by 1953, the German Federal Ministry of Labour increased its demands to limit the recruitment efforts of the Canadian Immigration Mission with the old argument that placing workers in foreign countries was legally the monopoly of the federal employment offices based on the laws of 1897 and 1935.<sup>109</sup> Such foreign recruitment commissions as the Canadian Immigration Mission had continued to operate after the foundation of the Federal Republic and had been legitimized through agreements with the military governments of the Allied Powers, the Allied High Commission, or the Federal Government itself.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> BA B106/24834, AA, Memorandum on the emigration of refugees from the Soviet Zone to Canada, Oct. 30, 1953. Also Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 170–173.

<sup>109</sup> BA B106/20618, Bundesministerium für Vertriebene (hereafter BMV), Meeting in the Ministry of Refugees, Koblenz, March 11, 1953, p. 2, and Ministry of Labour, Bundesministerium für Arbeit (hereafter BMA), Bonn, December 1953, p. 6. The Federal Ministry of Labour already mentioned the law of June 28, 1935 in a letter to the Minister for Labour of North Rhine-Westphalia in 1951; see HStA Düsseldorf NW 58, vol. 234, Letter: “Anwerbung nach Kanada,” June 6, 1951.

<sup>110</sup> Steinert, “Drehscheibe Westdeutschland: Wanderungspolitik im Nachkriegsjahrzehnt,” 387.

### **5.5 Germany's attempts to influence emigration, 1954–1959**

In the mid to late 1950s, rapid economic recovery meant that full employment and labour shortages in several branches of industry replaced high unemployment and fears of overpopulation. This strengthened the desire of the German government to exert a stronger control over migration by such means as a stricter interpretation of restrictions on foreign recruitment campaigns and continued attempts to sign comprehensive migration treaties with immigration countries like Canada along the lines of the 1952 agreement with Australia.

Canada had a stronger position than Australia in this respect since it did not depend on support from Bonn to finance migration. In addition, Canada was an important NATO ally and a significant trading partner, so smooth bilateral relations were in the interest of the young Federal Republic. These considerations contributed to a largely conciliatory policy, especially in the early 1950s.<sup>111</sup> Nevertheless, though the good cooperation of 1953 officially continued, the recruitment programs for agricultural labourers and domestics fell far short of Canadian expectations. By June 30, 1954, the end date for agricultural labour recruitment, the German employment offices had only forwarded 860 candidates to the visa offices instead of 6,000. Similarly, the 900 domestics were far short of the 5,000 planned.<sup>112</sup> This discrepancy clearly shows the growing resistance of German ministries, led by the Ministry for Labour, to any emigration, especially when it remained largely outside of the control of the government as was the case with Canada. Heinrich von Trützschler confirmed this shift in the German position at the ICEM meeting on December 6, 1954 when he announced that the Federal

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<sup>111</sup> Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 160.

<sup>112</sup> BA B106/20618, Letter of Foreign Office (AA) to Ministry of the Interior (BMI) and Ministry for Labour (BMA), Bonn, July 30, 1954.

Republic would like to negotiate a migration treaty after it regained much of its sovereignty the following year.<sup>113</sup>

In addition, Dr. Sicha, who represented the Ministry of Labour at an inter-ministerial meeting in December 1953, urged the Foreign Office to ask the Canadian Immigration Mission to respect the 1935 law that gave federal employment offices a monopoly on the recruitment of workers to be employed in foreign countries.<sup>114</sup>

However, the Foreign Office was concerned that this would harm the otherwise good bilateral relations between Bonn and Ottawa. Nevertheless, with growing labour shortages in some fields of the German economy and the need to recruit workers in southern Europe, emigration became undesirable. Therefore, Germany cancelled all cooperation in the recruitment of immigrants for Canada through German employment offices in March 1955.<sup>115</sup> In terms of numbers, this was certainly not a major loss for the Canadian Immigration Mission but it also ended Canada's legal right to advertise for migrants in Germany. Canada circumvented this ban by extending loans to family members and holding public lectures on Canada without directly mentioning migration.<sup>116</sup>

In 1955 West Germany also signed a migration treaty with Italy to fill its own labour shortages and thereby became both a country of immigration and emigration. The initiative for negotiations came from Italy, which, like other emigration countries,

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<sup>113</sup> Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 173–174.

<sup>114</sup> BA B106/20618, Dr. Sicha, Federal Ministry for Labour, December 1953: "Ich wäre dem Auswärtigen Amt dankbar, wenn in den Verhandlungen auch diese Frage nochmals berührt werden könnte und die Einwanderungsmission darauf aufmerksam gemacht würde, daß die Arbeitsvermittlung nach dem Ausland in der Bundesrepublik durch die Verordnung vom 28. 6. 1935 (RGB1. I S. 903) in der Weise geregelt sei, daß diese allein den Arbeitsvermittlungsbehörden vorbehalten ist. Es würde deshalb begrüßt werden, wenn die Kanadische Einwanderungsmission, die kürzlich zwei neue Büros in der Bundesrepublik errichtet hat, auf diese Regelung Rücksicht nehmen könnte."

<sup>115</sup> Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 272–273.

<sup>116</sup> Michael Hadley Interview. Also Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 273–274.



including Germany, wanted to retain as much control over the movement of its citizens as possible. Rome anticipated an increased German demand for Italian labourers, especially after Germany joined NATO in 1955 and re-introduced the military draft to rebuild its military forces. In addition, Italy hoped to balance its significant trade deficit with the Federal Republic through workers' money transfers to their families. After two years of negotiations, the two governments signed the agreement in Rome on December 20, 1955. As an immigration country, Germany could conduct organized mass recruitment in Italy while Rome could control at least a part of the emigration through its employment offices.<sup>117</sup> The rapidly increasing demand of the German economy for foreign workers meant that in 1957, 21,500 Italians and 13,000 Austrians were among more than 100,000 foreign citizens who moved to western Germany. These numbers increased dramatically over the following years.<sup>118</sup> In the 1960s, Germany signed similar agreements with several other southern European and North African states including Spain, Portugal, Turkey, and Tunisia.

Since German emigration to Canada reached another peak -- almost 30,000 -- in 1957, German ministries continued to push for restrictions and a migration treaty. A migration agreement signed between Vienna and Ottawa in 1956 was an added impetus to regulate and limit German immigration to Canada. Vienna had arranged a migration agreement with ICEM and separately with Ottawa, allowing Austria to retain control over emigration that would be financially supported through programs like Canada's Assisted

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<sup>117</sup> Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 220–238. On the general topic of guest workers in Germany between 1955 and 1973, see Klaus J. Bade, "Einheimische Ausländer: 'Gastarbeiter' – Dauergäste – Einwanderer," Klaus J. Bade (Ed.), *Deutsche im Ausland – Fremde in Deutschland. Migration in Geschichte und Gegenwart*. (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1992), 393–401.

<sup>118</sup> *Statistical Yearbook of the Federal Republic of Germany*, 1959, p. 61; 1960, p. 75; 1961, p. 75. In 1960, Germany received more than 140,000 Italians, 31,000 Spaniards, 27,000 Greeks, 23,000 Austrians, and 12,000 Dutch, to name only the five largest groups of migrants. See: *Statistical Yearbook* 1962, p. 72.

Passage Loan Scheme. Though Austria, like Germany, guaranteed freedom of movement, in reality, Austrians could only secure financial support from ICEM or the Canadian visa offices if Austrian employment offices judged that their labour was dispensable.<sup>119</sup> The German Ministry of the Interior wanted to use this treaty as a blueprint for a similar agreement with Canada.<sup>120</sup>

Even though the number of emigrants declined significantly after 1957, discussions among the different ministries about the usefulness and potential political damage to the otherwise friendly relations between Bonn and Ottawa carried on for another two years. For example, when the German Embassy in Ottawa warned that Canada was not willing to sign an agreement and that any German pressure to that end would remain ineffective,<sup>121</sup> Dr. Franz Wolff at the Federal Office for Emigration, a branch of the Ministry of the Interior, noted in April 1958 that “the uncontrolled recruitment [of immigrants] by Canadian offices in the Federal Republic is unwanted, given the current employment situation and economic development.”<sup>122</sup> Despite a general consensus that Canada’s far-reaching recruitment attempts negatively affected Germany’s economic development, the ministries did not agree on a promising solution to the problem.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> BA B106/20618, Dr. Albert Hantschk, Austrian Ministry of the Interior to Dr. Wolff, German Ministry of the Interior, Vienna, June 18, 1957. The copy of the migration treaty was dated Oct. 8, 1956. Also Bettina S. Steinhauser, “Post-War Austrian Immigration to Canada,” in: Frederick C. Engelmann, Manfred Prokop and Franz A.J. Szabo (Eds.), *A History of the Austrian Migration to Canada*. (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1996), 109–110. However, Steinhauser does not mention a bilateral treaty but suggests that Vienna simply introduced these restrictions and Canada complied.

<sup>120</sup> BA B106/20618, BMI, Ministry of the Interior to Foreign Office, Bonn, February 14, 1957, Deutsch-Kanadisches Wanderungsabkommen, Bonn, February 14, 1957.

<sup>121</sup> BA B106/20618, German Embassy in Ottawa to Foreign Office in Bonn, December 2, 1957. As a result, the Foreign Office withdrew its instructions to the ambassador to approach the Canadian government in that matter.

<sup>122</sup> BA B106/20618, Dr. Wolff, Memorandum regarding Migration Treaty with Canada, April 23, 1958.

<sup>123</sup> BA B106/20618, AA, Minutes of the meeting at the Foreign Office, Bonn, April 17, 1958, Bonn, April 23, 1958. The notes under a draft for a diplomatic note show the disagreements between the different

The proposal for a migration treaty was finally put to rest in 1959, primarily because German emigration had dropped from close to 30,000 in 1957 to under 15,000 in 1958. Canada's ability to recruit immigrants from Germany was largely limited by the good economic prospects in the Federal Republic and the recession that hit Canada in 1957.<sup>124</sup> Immigration numbers continued to drop to an average of less than 6,500 for the 1960s.<sup>125</sup> Changing economic conditions in both countries finally ended the discussion about a migration treaty with Canada, while Bonn's emigration policies remained generally ineffective.

As a result of the overall small number of emigrants and the importance of good bilateral relations as NATO and trading partners, the Foreign Office did not even attempt to further regulate migration when German companies such as the porcelain manufacturer Villeroy & Boch in Lübeck complained in 1962 that the Canadian Consulate General had recruited about 30 Greek families that it had under contract there. Shortly thereafter, the Schlieker shipyard in Hamburg reported a similar incident involving its Italian and Spanish workers. The Foreign Office simply informed the Canadian Embassy about the complaints and closed the files, trusting that the consulates would receive instructions to stop this recruitment.<sup>126</sup>

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ministries: draft of verbal note 1957. See also critiques from Federal Ministry of Labour, Bonn, August 27, 1957; Federal Ministry for the Economy, Bonn, August 27, 1957; Federal Ministry of Finance, Bonn, September 6, 1957; the German embassy in Ottawa also agreed that it was not advisable to push for a migration agreement since it was opposed to Canadian economic interests: Ottawa, December 2, 1957.

<sup>124</sup> BA B106/20618, Ministry of the Interior to the Foreign Office concerning restriction of Canadian recruitment incentives in Germany, Bonn, November 2, 1959.

<sup>125</sup> *German Statistical Yearbook* 1961, p. 75, and Schmalz, "A Statistical Overview of the German Immigration Boom," 2 and 6.

<sup>126</sup> BA B119/4143, Landesarbeitsamt Schleswig-Holstein to Bundesanstalt für Arbeitsvermittlung und Arbeitslosenversicherung (BAA), Kiel, May 8, 1962; Bundesvereinigung der Deutschen Arbeitgeberverbände (BDA) to BAA, Cologne, July 11, 1962; Auswärtiges Amt (AA) to BMA, Bonn, July 13, 1962.

While Canada experienced a recession between 1957 and 1961, the economic situation in West Germany continued to improve rapidly. In relative terms, the index value of industrial workers' wages increased from a base of 100 in 1950 to 173.5 in 1960 while unemployment rates dropped from a high of around 12% in 1950 to 4.4% in 1956 and 0.8% in 1961.<sup>127</sup> Given these developments, the incentives to leave the security of full employment and a well-developed welfare state and start anew in a foreign country were limited, except for a few persons with close relatives in Canada and those seeking adventure or an escape from the still crowded living conditions in Europe. However, the general nature and destinations of migration also changed. In the early postwar years a majority of emigrants from Germany tried to escape from the desperate economic and housing conditions in Europe, including many ethnic Germans sponsored by family members and religious organizations to come to Canada.

Despite many attempts to influence the size, composition, and destination of the emigration movement, the German government did not manage to exert any significant control over migration to Canada. Because the liberal constitution of West Germany guaranteed freedom of movement, its influence was limited to indirect means of control, like the emigration information centres, employment offices, and legal restrictions on advertisements by receiving countries. In addition, since Ottawa refused to sign a migration treaty with Germany that would have given employment offices the right to approve emigrants, Canada could not be prevented from issuing visas to persons who visited its consulates and visa offices. Yet, since Canada was an important military ally and trading partner for West Germany, disagreements over migration did not become a

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<sup>127</sup> Sternberg, "Staatliche und kirchliche Auswanderer-Beratungsstellen," 361.

major strain on the relations, especially when German emigration to Canada rapidly dropped at the end of 1950s.

Though Canada retained its independence in choosing immigrants based on its own economic interest, the recovery of Germany and Western Europe limited Ottawa's ability to fill its manpower needs from the European continent. The reduced willingness to leave a secure life behind and changes in the character of migration meant that the reduced number of Germans went to other European destinations or to overseas countries other than the United States, Canada, and Australia. Nevertheless, during the peak years of German emigration from 1950 to 1957, Canada retained a far-reaching control over its selection of immigrants based on its economic interests, though the criteria were in many cases diametrically opposed to German preferences. Therefore, the following chapter will focus on the evolution of Canada's immigration policy from 1945 to 1961.

## Chapter 6

**Canada's immigration policy, 1945–1962**

The previous chapter argued that the policies of receiving countries were not solely responsible for shaping the nature of migration, since countries of origin also attempted to influence the composition and numbers of those leaving, based on their own economic and political interests. In the final assessment, however, Germany largely failed to regulate emigration to Canada in the 1950s, primarily because of Ottawa's unwillingness to limit its independence in selecting immigrants that could be absorbed into the Canadian labour market. Therefore, in contrast to Australia, Canada never signed a migration treaty with West Germany and insisted more vehemently than the United States on an autonomous immigration policy.

The lack of German control over emigration also meant that Ottawa had far-reaching autonomy to shape the size and composition of its intake of Germans. This generally unobstructed selection policy, however, only worked while the pool of potential migrants was large enough to fill the demand. The so-called "economic miracle" in West Germany and the fast recovery in other parts of Western Europe greatly limited Canada's ability to choose enough immigrants and ultimately contributed to Ottawa's decision in 1962 to open the country to migration from regions outside the preferred sources in Europe and North America.

While focussing on the political process that opened Canada's door first to displaced persons, then ethnic Germans and German nationals, this chapter will argue that the key factor in Canadian immigration policy in the interwar and early postwar

periods (and arguably to the present) was the need for manpower for the economic development of the country.<sup>1</sup> In all of these decisions economic considerations clearly remained more important than humanitarian efforts to relieve the refugee crisis in Europe. In addition, before 1962, Ottawa was determined to keep the ethnic composition of Canada unaltered. Britain, France, and the United States were the preferred source countries for immigrants, followed by Northern and Western European states, then Southern and Eastern Europe, and finally the remainder of the world. People especially from Africa and Asia were categorized as undesired and their entry was severely restricted.

The economic and racial bias in Canadian immigration policy had emerged by the beginning of the twentieth century. Between 1896 and 1914, Canada experienced an unprecedented immigration boom that brought hundreds of thousands of people to the country. In the Prairies, a significant percentage of them were Ukrainians, Russians, and Poles, including a number of ethnic Germans, who arrived, encouraged by the policies of Clifford Sifton, the Minister of the Interior between 1897 and 1905.<sup>2</sup> In the case of British Columbia, a considerable number came from Asia. In response, nativist agitation called for the introduction of immigration restrictions for non-British subjects, a policy that was supported by Frank Oliver, who succeeded Sifton in 1905. In competition with business interests, namely the demand for cheap labour, this led to a formulation of Canadian immigration policy which laid the foundations for regulations that would – altered, but not fundamentally changed – remain in place until the early 1960s.

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<sup>1</sup> This was belatedly acknowledged in the renaming of the immigration department into Department of Manpower and Immigration in 1966.

<sup>2</sup> Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies. A History*. (Toronto and London: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 242–246. In the census of 1931, about 50% of the population in the Prairie Provinces claimed British ethnic origin, followed by 20% from Eastern Europe and 20% from Western Europe.

Scholars of Canadian immigration policy observe that Canada exercised her sovereignty through an immigration policy that allowed the cabinet and the Immigration Branch to adjust the regulations to suit both economic needs and ethnic preferences. For example, Ninette Kelley and Michael Trebilcock rightly identified, “the principle that the absolute right of the state to admit and exclude new members was an essential feature of state sovereignty” as the central element of Ottawa’s new immigration laws.<sup>3</sup> The Immigration Act, in combination with further regulations, closely defined the categories of desired and undesired immigrants and determined those who would be subject to deportation. Despite the legislative framework, the Cabinet and the Immigration Branch retained far-reaching powers to adjust the regulations at any point to the perceived social and economic needs of Canada. Kelley and Trebilcock succinctly summarize that “the executive branch of government was free to determine – unencumbered by judicial or parliamentary scrutiny – those who would be permitted to enter the country, those who would be accorded citizenship, and those who would be excluded or expelled.”<sup>4</sup>

Consequently, Irving Abella and Harold Troper characterize the Canadian immigration regulations that emerged before the First World War and remained in place until 1962 as driven by both economic interests and racial selection:

Canadian immigration policy had always been as ethnically selective as it was economically self-serving. When economic necessity dictated the admission of non-British and non-American immigrants, it was always in descending order of ethnic preference. Following British and American immigrants, preference was given northern and then central Europeans. At the bottom were Jews, Orientals and blacks.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Ninette Kelley and Michael Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic. A History of Canadian Immigration Policy*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 113.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

<sup>5</sup> Irving Abella and Harold Troper, *None is too Many. Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1933–1948*. (3rd Ed., Toronto: Lester Publishing, 1991), 5.



The restrictive regulations applying to Asians, like the Chinese head tax and the Gentlemen's Agreement with Japan, are well known, but at the beginning of the twentieth century Canada also imposed barriers on all potential immigrants, including Europeans, if there were doubts about their ability to become productive members of society.<sup>6</sup> For example, in 1906, it excluded people of "unsound character" who were likely to become public charges or who posed a danger to public health. Women intending to come to Canada "for any immoral purpose" became an undesirable group in the new Immigration Act of 1910.<sup>7</sup> This immigration legislation largely remained in place while the cabinet simply used "orders-in-council" to adjust the categories of admissible persons to meet the economic, demographic, and political needs of Canada.<sup>8</sup>

After the First World War, Ottawa increasingly limited the admissible categories for immigrants. It completely barred the Chinese in 1923, after continued anti-Asian agitation in British Columbia and elsewhere in Canada. This move followed the example of similar but earlier legislation in the United States.<sup>9</sup> In general, many categories in the regulations were kept sufficiently vague to give immigration officers abroad a largely

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<sup>6</sup> For B.C. provincial politics and federal responses with respect to the limitation of Asian immigration around the turn of the twentieth century, see Patricia E. Roy, *A White Man's Province. British Columbia Politicians and Chinese and Japanese Immigrants, 1858–1914*. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1989), esp. Chapter 5: "The Politics of Restricting Immigration, 1896–1902," 91–119.

<sup>7</sup> Reg Whitaker, *Canadian Immigration Policy since Confederation*. Canada's Ethnic Groups, No. 15. (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1991), 11–12.

<sup>8</sup> Henriette von Holleuffer, *Zwischen Fremde und Fremde. Displaced Persons in Australien, den USA und Kanada 1946–1952*. (Osnabrück: Universitätsverlag Rasch, 2001), 137–138. The Immigration Act of 1910 was updated in 1927 (though not significantly altered) and remained in place until 1952. Yet, the new Immigration Act of 1952 still retained a hierarchy of preferred groups though it widened the categories of admissible persons. This legislation then remained largely unchanged until 1962. See Ravi Pendakur, *Immigrants and the Labour Force. Policy, Regulations, and Impact*. (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000), 20–28.

<sup>9</sup> For the agitation especially of BC provincial and federal politicians to exclude the Chinese from immigration, see Patricia E. Roy, *The Oriental Question. Consolidating a White Man's Province, 1914–41*. (Vancouver and Toronto: UBC Press, 2003), 73–77. In the United States, the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed in 1882, see Roger Daniels, "No Lamps Were Lit for Them: Angel Island and the Historiography of Asian American Immigration," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 17, no. 1 (1997), 4.

free hand to exclude anyone that they deemed unsuited either because of physical, mental, or occupational consideration, or because of skin colour, ethnic origin, or religion.

During and immediately after the First World War, Canada also excluded enemy aliens, including German and Austrian nationals. In 1923, however, the government lifted this status partly because it was unable to secure sufficient immigrants from the British Isles to meet its labour needs, especially in agriculture. The following year, the Canadian government signed an agreement with the Canadian National and the Canadian Pacific Railways giving the two companies the right to recruit bona fide farmers on the European continent.<sup>10</sup> Government authorities nevertheless remained responsible for medical examinations and the provision of visas. By the late 1920s, there was a turn towards more restrictions but despite these limits, almost 62,500 German-speaking immigrants entered between 1924 and the onset of the Great Depression.<sup>11</sup> In 1930, a total of 163,288 people arrived in Canada, in particular from many parts of Europe but the world economic crisis

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<sup>10</sup> Jonathan Wagner, *A History of Migration from Germany to Canada, 1850–1939*. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006), 165–169.

<sup>11</sup> Ron Schmalz, “A Statistical Overview of the German Immigration Boom to Canada, 1951–1957,” *Deutsch-Kanadisches Jahrbuch / German-Canadian Yearbook* 16 (2000), 2. About two-thirds of the Germans listed in Schmalz’ study were likely ethnic Germans from Eastern Europe, since the German statistical office lists only an average of 2,329 persons emigrating to Canada per year between 1921 and 1930. German Statistical Office, *Statistisches Jahrbuch 1955*. (Wiesbaden: Statistisches Bundesamt, 1956), table 30: “Aus und Einwanderung.” Though there is usually some discrepancy between the emigration and immigration statistics, this number would be quite close to Jonathan Wagner’s estimate of about 20,000 German nationals, or roughly one third of the total in the 1920s. It is hence safe to say that most German immigrants to Canada in the interwar period came from outside the borders of Weimar Germany. This nevertheless is an increase from earlier years. Art Grenke found that for the period before World War I “only a small percentage actually came from Germany,” see Art Grenke, “Settling the West: The German experience to 1914,” *Archivist* 12, no. 4 (1985), 10. For a more detailed discussion of German immigration in the interwar years, refer to Chapter 2, 21–28. T.D. Regehr, in *Mennonites in Canada, 1939-1970: A People Transformed* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 20 notes that 20,201 “Russlander” Mennonites arrived in Canada between 1923 and 1930.

almost completely halted immigration and led to the deportation of an increasing number of persons for various reasons, often relating to their unemployment.<sup>12</sup>

How tightly the Canadian government, as well as its counterparts in other countries, shut the door to unwanted immigrants in light of high unemployment and public debt was demonstrated by the plight of the slightly over 900 Jewish passengers from Germany and Austria aboard the ocean liner *St. Louis*. Though many of them had the financial means to support themselves, they were not allowed to disembark anywhere in the Americas in 1939 and had to return to Nazi-Germany where many later died in concentration camps.<sup>13</sup> Yet, that same year, as noted in chapter 2, Canada accepted 1053 Christian Sudeten German refugees in part to reduce the pressure, especially from London and Washington to share the burdens created by the refugee crisis in Europe while not challenging the anti-semitism in the immigration service and in public opinion, especially in Quebec.<sup>14</sup>

During the Second World War, the question of immigration moved into the background. The fighting in Europe (and Asia) reduced the numbers of new arrivals to a trickle, though a few immigrants mainly from Britain and the United States continued to

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<sup>12</sup> Barbara Roberts, *Whence they came. Deportation from Canada 1900–1935*. (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1988), 37–52. Also Whitaker, *Canadian Immigration Policy*, 13. About 28,000 people were officially deported between 1930 and 1935 with a peak of 7,025 in 1932 and 7,131 in 1933. At the same time, immigration numbers started to drop well below 20,000 per year.

<sup>13</sup> Donald H. Avery, *Reluctant Host: Canada's Response to Immigrant Workers, 1896–1994*. (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1995), 12–13. On the topic of anti-Semitic tendencies in Canadian immigration policy in the 1930s and 1940s, see Irving Abella and Harold Troper, *None is too many. Canada and the Jews of Europe 1933–1948*. (3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Toronto: Lester Publishing Ltd., 1991). Especially Frederick Blair, the director of the Immigration Branch and some of the other officials in the department were responsible for the strict exclusion of Jewish refugees fleeing increasing discrimination and persecution in Nazi Germany while Prime Minister Mackenzie King seemed content with the priorities of the Immigration Branch. The topic of the voyage of the *St. Louis* is covered on pages 63–64.

<sup>14</sup> For a more detailed account on the acceptance of Sudeten Germans over Jewish refugees, see Abella and Troper, *None is too many*, 47–50. On the sailing of the *St. Louis*, 63–64. For British and American perceptions of Canada's lack of action with respect to helping German-Jewish scientists, see David Zimmerman, "'Narrow-Minded People': Canadian Universities and the Academic Refugee Crisis, 1933–1941," *Canadian Historical Review* 88, no. 2 (June 2007), 291–315.

arrive. Even a small number of German-born persons entered by circuitous routes, as the example of Hedi Lattey, discussed in chapter 2, shows. She came to Canada from Germany via England and Brazil.<sup>15</sup> Though she had a Jewish grandmother and for that reason had lost her German citizenship, as the wife of a British citizen her entry into Canada was uncomplicated. In sharp contrast, the public and political discussion about the admission of mostly Jewish refugees from Portugal and Spain in 1943 and 1944 showed that their admission was generally unpopular in Canada. Despite a cabinet decision in September 1943 to allow 200 refugee families (up to 75% Jewish) into the country, the quota was never completely filled because of restrictive application of existing immigration legislation by the officer in charge in Lisbon, Odilon Cormier.<sup>16</sup>

The general rejection of Jewish refugees before and during the Second World War is only one part of the wide-spread racist perception that some groups were inassimilable and therefore a danger to the British (or French) character of the country. The removal of approximately 22,000 Japanese, including Canadian-born and naturalized citizens from the British Columbia coast after the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941 is a similar expression of nativist fears in Canada.<sup>17</sup> Other enemy aliens, such as German and Italian males who were not Canadian citizens, also had to leave the West Coast by April 1,

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<sup>15</sup> Hedi Lattey Interview. See Chapter 2, for more details on Hedi Lattey's life story, her partly Jewish background and the Nansen Pass for stateless persons. She entered Canada in 1944 as one of only 28 persons who gave German as their mother tongue, while only eight persons were listed under German nationality for that year. *The Canada Year Book 1947*. (Ottawa: Dominion Bureau of Statistics, 1947), 132–133.

<sup>16</sup> Abella and Troper, *None is too Many*, 156–168.

<sup>17</sup> Patricia E. Roy, *The Triumph of Citizenship. The Japanese and Chinese in Canada, 1941–67*. (Vancouver and Toronto: UBC Press, 2007), 16–66. She argues that public hysteria after the attacks on Pearl Harbor was the result of long-standing racial prejudices, alarmist newspaper articles of imminent Japanese attacks on the West Coast and fifth column activities, and economic interests especially of white and native fishermen who wanted to end Japanese competition. Therefore, despite official claims that the removal of the Japanese from the the West Coast was a military necessity, the federal government's decision was primarily based on fears of public retaliation and riots against members of the minority.

1942.<sup>18</sup> Yet, in North America in general, the comparatively benign treatment of these European groups, that were not subjected to mass internment along ethnic lines, shows a continuation of racial stereotyping that distinguished between preferred peoples deemed capable of assimilation and those undesired, allegedly “inassimilable races,” including Asians and Jews.<sup>19</sup>

Russell A. Kazal, writing about the different treatment of European and Asian enemy aliens in the United States after December 1941, captured this racial perception that applies in both North American countries: “Japanese Americans belonged to ‘an enemy race,’ ... The state and many ordinary European Americans refused to recognize Asians as potentially American. In contrast, they pressured Germans to accept precisely that American identity in place of a German one.”<sup>20</sup> Similar to measures taken in Canada, more than 100,000 Japanese-Americans were removed from the Pacific Coast and interned in the interior without regard to place of birth and naturalization. As in Canada, the only category applied was Japanese ethnic origin. In contrast, only German and Italian-Canadians who were not naturalized citizens of Canada had to report to the police every month and very few were arrested for proven or suspected Fascist or Nazi

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<sup>18</sup> Roy, *The Triumph of Citizenship*, 51–52. For example Arno and Ida Michael had to leave Vancouver for Stoney Plain in Alberta in 1942. In a letter to Paul and Grete Hertel from October 15, 1942, they explain: “This place is further than 300 miles from the Coast, but we didn’t have much choice. The police gave us twenty-four hours to get out of Vancouver or they’d arrest us... We weren’t welcome anywhere. In the Interior there were big signs, ‘Japanese and Germans Not Welcome here’.” See Rose Hertel Falkenhagen, *Wilderness Beginnings*. (Prince George, B.C.: Caitlin Press, 1997), 325–326.

<sup>19</sup> Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 305–310. For the internment of the Japanese in Canada, see Ken Adachi, *The Enemy that Never Was. A History of Japanese Canadians*. (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1991). For the treatment of Germans and Italians during the war, see Daniel Robinson, “Planning for the ‘Most Serious Contingency’: Alien Internment, Arbitrary Detention, and the Canadian State 1938–39,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 28, no. 2 (Summer 1993), 8–10. In the cases of European “enemy aliens,” the RCMP proposed only to intern those who really posed a threat to Canadian security. For anti-Japanese sentiments and fears of Japanese attacks in BC, as well as government responses between 1939 and 1941, see also Roy, *The Oriental Question*, 226–230.

<sup>20</sup> Russell A. Kazal, *Becoming Old Stock. The Paradox of German-American Identity*. (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), 273.

sympathies. Though the majority of the German community was not subjected to direct state control, widespread anti-German sentiment nevertheless hastened the process of assimilation.<sup>21</sup>

Though the number of Jews and other European displaced persons from Eastern Europe admitted greatly increased in the second half of the 1940s, the Mackenzie King government largely continued its restrictive and selective prewar policies immediately after the end of the conflict, while the practice of racial categorization, though certainly discredited by the example of “hyper-racism” in Hitler’s Germany, continued with only modest changes into the 1960s. Until late in 1946, the Canadian government made the return of its soldiers from Europe and concern for their peacetime employment a priority. Only when the economic boom continued uninterrupted after the end of demobilization and unemployment dropped to 90,000 in 1947, despite the return of 700,000 former servicemen to the labour force, did Canada begin to open its gates for immigration.<sup>22</sup> As in the first half of the twentieth century, the main motivation was economic, not humanitarian.

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<sup>21</sup> Howard Palmer, “Ethnic Relations in Wartime: Nationalism and European Minorities in Alberta during the Second World War,” Franca Iacovetta with Paula Draper and Robert Ventresca (Eds.), *A Nation of Immigrants: Women, Workers, and Communities in Canadian History, 1840s–1960s*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 456–460. On the requirement for Germans in Canada to report to the RCMP, see Falkenhagen, *Wilderness Beginnings*, 302–303.

<sup>22</sup> *Canada Year Book 1947*, XXXI–XXXIII and 608–610. Servicemen were quickly absorbed into the workforce because of a sharp increase in the demand for labour in the consumer industries, logging and mining, and especially in housing construction. At the same time, 300,000–400,000 workers, most of them women, left the workforce after the end of the war.

### **6.1 Canada's immigration policy in the early postwar years, 1945–1947**

The memories of labour unrest epitomized by the Winnipeg General Strike in 1919 and difficulties in re-integrating veterans into the economy after the First World War as well as memories of the Depression shaped the expectations of Canadian policy makers at the end of the Second World War. Freda Hawkins also argues that for years the government had not been very active in organizing migration and therefore only a “skeleton organization of the Immigration Branch existed in Canada and overseas.”<sup>23</sup> Moreover, officers from the prewar period who remained in charge at the Immigration Branch resisted demands for a relaxation of regulations. Therefore, until 1946, Canada's immigration policy remained very restrictive, only allowing the entry of British subjects (either by birth or naturalization), U.S. citizens, wives and unmarried children under eighteen years or fiancées of Canadian citizens (providing they were not Asian), and agriculturalists with sufficient funds to acquire a farm.<sup>24</sup>

In defence of this biased policy, the Canadian director of immigration, Arthur L. Jolliffe, prepared a memorandum for a cabinet meeting in September 1945:

The claim is sometimes made that Canada's immigration laws reflect class and race discriminations: they do, and necessarily so. Some form of discrimination cannot be avoided if immigration is to be effectively controlled. In order to prevent the creation in Canada of expanding non-assimilable racial groups, the prohibiting of entry to immigrants of non-assimilable races is necessary.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Freda Hawkins, *Canada and Immigration. Public Policy and Public Concern*. (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988), 90.

<sup>24</sup> Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 312–313 and 320. Also Hawkins, *Canada and Immigration*, 89–90. The only restrictions for these four classes of admissible immigrants were that “they be in good physical and mental health, of good character, and not likely to become a public charge.” The category of Asian immigration practically included the entire Eastern hemisphere outside of Europe and the British dominions, see Hawkins, *Canada and Immigration*, 94–95. Also Holleuffer, *Zwischen Fremde und Fremde*, 80–81.

<sup>25</sup> LAC RG26 100/3–18–1, Pt. 1, Arthur L. Jolliffe, Immigration Branch, Department of Mines and Resources: “Memorandum re Immigration,” September 5, 1945, cited in Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 103. Also Abella and Troper, *None is too Many*, 199.

In keeping with Jolliffe's perception of immigration, the government extended the eligible categories for family sponsorship in 1946. This legislation only applied to Europeans and explicitly excluded Asian immigrants, but it was a first concession to admit more displaced persons if they had family members in Canada who could sponsor them. German nationals, however, remained excluded as 'Enemy Aliens' until the end of 1950 while only ethnic Germans were admissible under these regulations.

Despite the widening of the categories for family sponsorship, immigration remained limited because shipping was in short supply in 1945 and 1946 as most of it was devoted to bringing soldiers and war brides to Canada. With the explanation that Canada was neither an occupying power, nor a member of the Allied Control Council in Germany, Mackenzie King had promised complete demobilization of troops in Europe by September or October 1946 despite British pleas to demobilize more slowly and continue to share the burden of occupation.<sup>26</sup> The Minister of Mines and Resources, whose department had responsibilities for immigration, clearly stated in the House of Commons that "it is the policy of the Canadian Government, ... to defer consideration of renewed immigration until conditions of employment amongst returned Canadian servicemen in the post-war period have been determined."<sup>27</sup> The lack of shipping space and the absence

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<sup>26</sup> British National Archives, Dominions Office (hereafter BNA-DO), WG 573/10, Telegram, Canadian Government to British Government, Feb. 13, 1946. (Thanks to Hugh Gordon for generously sharing these documents from his research at the British National Archives in London.) BNA-DO, WG 573/10, Telegram, British PM Clement Attlee to Mackenzie King, January 3, 1946. "It would seem hard that [Great Britain] should be expected to bear the whole burden of occupational duties in Europe. This would in effect be on behalf of all of us in the British Commonwealth who have fought together in the war and are seeking in the same spirit of partnership to play our part in restoring Europe and the world in general. If I may state frankly for your consideration the programme which seems to us to meet our needs, it would be that you keep a Canadian Division and elements of the Royal Canadian Air Force in Europe at least until after the spring of 1947."

<sup>27</sup> *Documents on Canadian External Affairs* (hereafter: *DCER*), vol. 12-211, R.G. Riddell, Memorandum, Ottawa, January 3, 1946.



of immigration processing facilities was a convenient “smoke screen” not to increase immigration in order to reduce the European refugee crisis.<sup>28</sup> Abella and Troper point to the combination of economic anxiety and wide-spread hostility towards Eastern European and Jewish immigration in particular as reasons for Canada’s inactivity in the early postwar years.<sup>29</sup> Though Canada’s lack of practical support can be at least partly explained by the experiences after the First World War and the more recent Depression, Allied governments steadily increased their pressure on Canada to accept more responsibility. Meanwhile, Canadians contributed generously to relief efforts in Europe through such organizations as the Canadian Society for German Relief and the Canadian Lutheran World Relief.<sup>30</sup> This might suggest that many Canadians, certainly including those who still had family members in Europe, were concerned about the situation after the end of the war, but were limited to donations of money, food, and clothing because of the restrictive Canadian immigration policy.

In addition to domestic and international pressure, sustained economic growth in the second half of the 1940s and emerging Cold War anxieties that Canada’s population was too small to play its self-proclaimed role as a middle power slowly changed the government’s attitude towards immigration. Hugh Keenleyside, the deputy minister of Mines and Resources, summarized the new objectives of Canadian immigration policy in 1948. He wrote that the increase in population was neither simply an economic consideration, nor purely for defensive reasons as the Australian “people-or-perish”

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<sup>28</sup> Abella and Troper, *None is too Many*, 197–199.

<sup>29</sup> Angelika Sauer, “A Matter of Domestic Policy? Canadian Immigration and the Admission of Germans, 1945–50,” *Canadian Historical Review* 74, no. 2 (1993), 233, n21. On April 2, 1947, the new Deputy Minister of Mines and Resources, Hugh Keenleyside “told a journalist that the officials of the Immigration Branch, including its director, just could not get used to a positive immigration policy because they had been trained in Blair’s bad school of ‘no immigration.’”

<sup>30</sup> LAC MG28–V28, Canadian Society for German Relief funds; and LAC MG28–V120, Canadian Lutheran World Relief funds.

campaign of the same period, but also “the defence of moral justification and intellectual and social independence ... against the loss of the Canadian identity in the larger American community.”<sup>31</sup> Based on these interests and the realization that a major recession would not follow the end of the Second World War, Canada slowly started to formulate an immigration policy that would remain in effect for about a decade and a half. At the same time, politicians did not want to change the ethnic composition of the country for fear of public resentment, so the British Isles and the United States remained the primary areas of recruitment.

The Department of External Affairs, which became more involved in immigration matters after the Second World War,<sup>32</sup> began to discuss the admission of displaced persons from Europe late in 1945. In a memorandum written in January 1946, under-secretary of External Affairs, R.G. Riddell, already acknowledged the political pressures exerted on Canada to accept displaced persons from Europe by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), Allied governments in London and Washington, and from different ethnic organizations especially of Poles, Ukrainians, Mennonites, and Sudeten Germans within Canada, but Ottawa moved very slowly to formulate concrete policies.<sup>33</sup> On March 21, 1946, the Cabinet Committee on

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<sup>31</sup> Hugh L. Keenleyside, “Canadian Immigration Policy,” *International Journal* 3, (1948), 233. Henriette von Holleuffer argues that Canada’s ethnically restrictive immigration policy was a reflex against US dominance, and thereby a rejection of “American forms of multicultural coexistence.” See Holleuffer, *Zwischen Fremde und Fremde*, 76–77. However, one could also argue that the ethnic preferences were simply a continuation of Canadian immigration policy before 1914 and between the two world wars. The American system of immigration quotas had explicitly been created to maintain the earlier composition of American society. The Immigration Branch remained part of the Ministry of Mines and Resources until it was organized as an independent ministry in 1952.

<sup>32</sup> Sauer, “A Matter of Domestic Policy?” 233. Sauer argues that the Department of External Affairs was more active in advocating a liberalization of Canada’s immigration law “combating the restrictionist mentality of the immigration officials” at Mines and Resources.

<sup>33</sup> *DCER*, vol. 12–211, Memorandum, Ottawa, January 3, 1946. “It is also probable that, when these circumstances prevail, members of the foreign language groups in Canada, who have so far concerned themselves largely with the problem of relief for displaced persons, will begin to ask permission to bring

Immigration appointed an inter-departmental Committee on Immigration Policy consisting of members from the Departments of Labour, Health, Mines and Resources – Immigration Branch, and External Affairs to make recommendations for Canada’s future immigration policy. The following month, this committee proposed that the government prepare transitional arrangements for the coming eighteen months while it worked on long term policy. It also recommended that Canada accept an undetermined number of displaced persons, namely the spouses, siblings, children, parents, and orphaned nieces and nephews “of any person legally admitted to and resident in Canada, who is in a position to receive and care for such relative.”<sup>34</sup>

The Cabinet approved the recommendations in May 1946, but did not immediately take any steps to implement them. Before participating in a program to relieve the displaced persons problem in Europe, Ottawa set down three conditions. First, the entire resettlement program should be led by the United Nations; secondly, the majority of displaced persons accepted by Canada should be sponsored by immediate family members in Canada and processed by the Department of Mines and Resources and, finally, that specific quotas of immigrants were against the principles of Canada’s immigration policy.<sup>35</sup> By insisting on sponsorship by immediate family members, Ottawa

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large numbers of their friends and relatives to Canada. Some representations have already been received to this effect.” The Canadian government also received a letter from Baltic-German refugees in Europe who wanted to settle 80–90,000 Baltic-Germans in Canada, if possible in a major block settlement with 5–6,000 farms. *DCER*, vol. 12–217, W. Schroeder, President, Initiative Group for the Emigration to Canada of Baltic-Germans from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, to Government of Canada, Königstein, January 5, 1946. This plan was rejected by A.L. Jolliffe, *DCER*, vol. 12–218, Director of Immigration A.L. Jolliffe to External Affairs, Ottawa, May 3, 1946. Also Wanka, *Opfer des Friedens*, 240–246.

<sup>34</sup> *DCER*, vol. 12–212, *Preliminary Report of Interdepartmental Committee on Immigration Policy to the Cabinet Committee on Immigration*, Ottawa April 4, 1946. Also Holleuffer, *Zwischen Fremde und Fremde*, 78–79. For pressure from Ukrainian, Polish, and Jewish groups for the admission of displaced persons from Europe, see Hawkins, *Canada and Immigration*, 83; and Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 320–321.

<sup>35</sup> *DCER*, vol. 12–219, Memorandum from Department of External Affairs (DEA) to Prime Minister, Ottawa, July 26, 1946; and vol. 12–223, H.H. Wrong (DEA) to Minister of Mines and Resources, James

guaranteed that Canada's general ethnic composition would remain unchanged and that its financial contribution to migration would be limited, while at the same time the incoming migrants would help to alleviate manpower shortages.

On May 28, 1946, through Order-in-Council P.C. 2071, the cabinet set out the regulations by which Canadian citizens, who were financially in a position to do so, could sponsor immediate family members as immigrants. They had to list their relatives' names individually, and since Canada's priority was that these people not become a public liability, pay for their passage, and vouch to support them. As enemy aliens were categorically excluded by this immigration policy, German citizens did not qualify. Ethnic Germans from Eastern Europe, however, were strictly speaking displaced persons and therefore admissible.<sup>36</sup> Initially, the exit permit regulations of the Allied powers in Germany and the failure of the International Refugee Organization (IRO) to recognize ethnic Germans as displaced persons effectively excluded them.<sup>37</sup>

In general, though Canada provided funding for relief efforts in Europe, its immigration policy remained very restrictive and it rarely participated in larger settlement schemes and individual immigration outside of family sponsorship before 1947.<sup>38</sup> The only significant movement of immigrants on the basis of labour contracts was the settlement of up to 4,000 Polish ex-soldiers publicly announced by Ottawa in Order in

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Allison Glen, Ottawa, August 19, 1946. Also Holleuffer, *Zwischen Fremde und Fremde*, 79; and Hawkins, *Canada and Immigration*, 90–91.

<sup>36</sup> Sauer, "A Matter of Domestic Policy?" 238–239.

<sup>37</sup> See Chapter 5 for more detail on Allied exit visas and the work of the IRO, the successor organization of UNRRA. Also Christiane Harzig, "MacNamara's DP Domestics: Immigration Policy Makers Negotiate Class, Race, and Gender in the Aftermath of World War II," *Social Politics* 10, no. 1 (Spring 2003), 27–29.

<sup>38</sup> *DCER*, vol. 12–216, Acting Director of Immigration to N.A. Robertson, Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, Ottawa, September 13, 1946.

Council P.C. 3112 of July 23.<sup>39</sup> This first postwar bulk-order destined for agricultural work and logging did not signal a change in Canadian immigration policy, but was a response to economic considerations. Canada accepted the Polish ex-soldiers explicitly in a man-for-man exchange for 4,000 German POWs returning to Europe who had been slated to work in the sugar beet fields in Alberta, Manitoba, and Ontario.<sup>40</sup> To prevent a public outcry of farmers over the loss of their cheap labour, the Immigration Branch recommended replacing them with Poles under the condition that all would come as single men with no families, that Canada would select and examine them individually, and that either the immigrants or the British government would pay for the screening process and the trans-Atlantic voyage.<sup>41</sup> In other words, this was certainly not a humanitarian act or Canada's contribution to solving the refugee crisis. Britain basically covered all the costs, while Canada received a free hand to select suitable immigrants based on its labour needs. London only refused when Canada also requested the right to return anybody to Europe who turned out to be "unsuitable" for agricultural work during

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<sup>39</sup> *DCER*, vol. 12–219, H. Wrong, Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs to Prime Minister Mackenzie King, Ottawa, July 26, 1946. Though Great Britain would have liked a more substantial contribution by Canada to settle the 228,000 Polish troops (not counting civilians) under British control, or with respect to the hundreds of thousands of displaced persons, including many Jewish refugees, J.A. Jolliffe of the Immigration Branch and J. Allison Glen, Minister of Mines and Resources agreed that "the recent widening of our Immigration Regulations and the agreement to take 4,000 Poles, should be considered as both a positive step and an indication of Canada's willingness to cooperate in finding a solution to the problem of displaced persons." *DCER*, vol. 12–220, Glen to Wrong, Ottawa, July 27, 1946. Also *DCER*, vol. 12–240, Acting Secretary of State for External Affairs to Acting High Commissioner in Great Britain, Ottawa, July 24, 1946.

<sup>40</sup> *DCER*, vol. 12–237, Telegram, Acting High Commissioner in Great Britain to H.H. Wrong, Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs, London, June 5, 1946. "United Kingdom recognize [*sic.*] that our present willingness to take Polish personnel is linked with our loss of prisoner of war labour, but urge that this relationship be not unduly stressed in any publicity given these arrangements because of adverse effect it would have upon Polish morale." For the return of the total of 35,000 German POWs in Canada between February 1946 and January 1947, see also Eckehart J. Priebe, *Thank You, Canada. From Messerschmitt Pilot to Canadian Citizen*. (West Vancouver, B.C.: Condor Publishing, 1990), 190–191.

<sup>41</sup> *DCER*, vol. 12–233, Memorandum, A.D.P. Heeney, Secretary to the Cabinet, to Cabinet, Ottawa, May 27, 1946. Also Abella and Troper, *None is too Many*, 217–218.

the first three years.<sup>42</sup> When it transpired that about 150 of the ex-servicemen selected by immigration officers in Italy had tuberculosis, Canada asked Britain to take them back, before changing the request that the two countries share the costs for their medical treatment, while the Poles would stay in Canada.<sup>43</sup> Franca Iacovetta concluded that the Poles were allowed to remain in Canada on compassionate grounds and because of their anti-Communism; in fact, sending them back would have seriously embarrassed the Canadian government, which had been given absolute control over the movement at minimum expenditures of its own.<sup>44</sup>

Even as it was making an exception for the Polish veterans, Canada was beginning to rethink its immigration policy to serve the labour needs of agriculture and industry.<sup>45</sup> Ottawa sent two immigration teams to Europe by March 1947 and the following month the first group of displaced persons left for Canada with the support of the IRO. Despite the failure of the IRO to recognize ethnic Germans as displaced persons

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<sup>42</sup> *DCER*, vol. 12–238, Telegram, Acting High Commissioner in Great Britain to Secretary of State for External Affairs, London, July 10, 1946. The Canadian High Commissioner reported to Ottawa that a representative of the British Home Office “argued that, by sending over a Commission of officials to select the Poles for immigration to Canada, we were skimming off the cream of the crop, and that it was unreasonable, after we had done that, to expect the United Kingdom to receive back any Poles who proved to be unsatisfactory.” Also *DCER*, vol. 12–243, Acting High Commissioner in Great Britain to Acting Secretary of State for External Affairs, London, Aug. 7, 1946. Canada basically threatened that it would not take any of the Polish ex-soldiers if Britain did not accept Ottawa’s conditions and suggested that other dominions might follow Canada’s lead.

<sup>43</sup> *DCER*, vol. 12–252, Secretary of State for External Affairs to High Commissioner in Great Britain, Ottawa, November 19, 1946, and *DCER*, vol. 12–258, Memorandum by Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, Ottawa, December 18, 1946

<sup>44</sup> Franca Iacovetta, *Gatekeepers. Reshaping Immigrant Lives in Cold War Canada*. (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2006), 30. “Some of the Poles, it turned out, had contracted TB, and thus could have been deported on medical grounds. But they were permitted to remain in Canada on compassionate and political grounds: they had fought the Nazis under British command and were considered to be vehement anti-Communists.” In contrast: *DCER*, vol. 12–256, High Commissioner in Great Britain to Secretary of State for External Affairs, London, Dec. 1, 1946: “For our own good name in the matter, I should much prefer to see us take the thick with the thin in the 3,000 we have already received and stop there—than have us make the reception of an additional thousand dependent on the United Kingdom’s willingness to take and treat the hundred unfortunates who were inadvertently included in the first party.”

<sup>45</sup> Donald Avery, “Canadian Immigration Policy Towards Europe, 1945–1952,” *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Canada-Studien*, no. 1 (1986), 43–44.

and Canada's exclusion of German nationals as enemy aliens, the fact that ethnic Germans were "subject to the provisions of the Immigration Act and regulations in the same manner as immigrants of other racial origins" allowed close relatives to sponsor a small number. In 1945, 244 Germans arrived in Canada; in 1946, 791, followed by 651 in 1947.<sup>46</sup> Included in this small group were family-sponsored ethnic Germans from Eastern Europe who arrived before the Canadian Christian Council for the Resettlement of Refugees (CCCRR) effectively started its work in 1947-48, German prisoners of war or civilian internees who stayed in Canada, German war brides, and possibly orphaned children of close relatives of Canadian citizens.<sup>47</sup>

Another small number of these early immigrants were German scientists who received exemptions from the general ban of enemy alien immigration. The major Allies, the Soviet Union, Britain and France, and especially the United States, had started a hunt for German scientists and know-how at the end of the Second World War. Until the official end of Operation Paperclip, the code name for the American program, 457 German scientists and technicians with 453 family members arrived in the United States. Secret recruiting activities continued and increased the numbers to 500 scientists and 644

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<sup>46</sup> Canada, *House of Commons, Debates*, March 28, 1949, 2056–2057. Andrea Koch-Kraft provides numbers of German citizens who immigrated during this period, but these are not consistent with the House of Commons Report: 1945: 196 / 1946: 844 / 1947: 139. Andrea Koch-Kraft, *Deutsche in Kanada – Einwanderung und Adaption*. (Bochum: Universitätsverlag Dr. N. Brockmeyer, 1990), 58. Koch-Kraft's numbers are identical with those provided in the *Canada Year Book*, 133.

<sup>47</sup> For the prisoners and internees, see Alexander Freund, *Aufbrüche nach dem Zusammenbruch. Die deutsche Nordamerika-Auswanderung nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg*. (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2004), 230–231. The number of German war brides coming to Canada is unclear and might have been negligible, but about 10,000 German war brides went to Britain, while about 100,000 women left Britain for the United States and Canada, see Johannes-Dieter Steinert and Inge Weber-Newth, *Labour and Love. Deutsche in Großbritannien nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg*. (Osnabrück: secolo Verlag, 2000), 116ff. About 14,000 German war brides arrived in the United States between 1946 and 1950, see Freund, *Aufbrüche nach dem Zusammenbruch*, 215–216.

family members by June 1948.<sup>48</sup> While her neighbour to the south took advantage of the available pool of highly qualified scientists, Canada responded very slowly to a British invitation to the Dominions to partake in the recruitment of scientists. The National Research Council in Canada argued that the political complications of bringing German scientists into the country would outweigh their potential contributions.

However, on September 10, 1946, Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, N.A. Robertson, informed Prime Minister Mackenzie-King that Canada was missing out on important research in specialized fields that could not be filled with Canadian experts.<sup>49</sup> Two months later, on November 12, the Canadian government announced it would support the temporary admission of an initial group of fifteen German scientists after some industries expressed interest in employing them.<sup>50</sup> In total, only 41 scientists and technicians came to Canada as part of the so-called “Matchbox Program,” a number that was significantly smaller than that of the United States and Britain.<sup>51</sup> It therefore had a limited impact on industrial, technological, or economic developments in Canada. Despite the small number, the entry of these scientists was controversial because of their alleged or real Nazi past. Nevertheless, as David Zimmerman shows, the number of postwar German scientists admitted to Canada was significantly higher than the six mostly Jewish academics accepted in the 1930s in response to the Nazi government’s

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<sup>48</sup> Tom Bower, *The Paperclip Conspiracy. The Battle for the Spoils and Secrets of Nazi Germany*. (London: Michael Joseph, 1987), 269 and 284.

<sup>49</sup> *DCER*, vol. 12–227, Memorandum, N.A. Robertson to Mackenzie-King, Ottawa, September 10, 1946.

<sup>50</sup> *DCER*, vol. 12–229, A.D.P. Heeney, Secretary to the Cabinet to J.A. Glen Minister of Mines and Resources, Ottawa, November 24, 1946.

<sup>51</sup> Howard Margolian, *Unauthorized Entry. The Truth about Nazi War Criminals in Canada, 1946–1956*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 118–125; also Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 73.



dismissal of Jewish and opposition scholars from German universities and the civil service.<sup>52</sup>

Therefore, apart from these limited exceptions, German immigration to Canada was basically non-existent even when Ottawa started to admit displaced persons. Some ethnic Germans tried to evade the regulations of the IRO mandate and restrictions on enemy alien migration by taking on Polish, Russian, and other displaced persons' identities, though clearly not all were successful. For example, Waldemar Belter, an ethnic German born in Volhynia, described the situation as follows:

To tell you the truth, I tried to come as a displaced person ... because the DPs came for free. They did not have to pay anything for their passage. So I thought I would come as a Pole, since I was born in Poland. I thought, I know what I am anyways. This would have saved me 250 dollars. So, I practiced my Polish, which I spoke very well. ... I applied through the IRO and had to go to Wipperfürth [?] for an interview. The lady there asked me for my name in Polish, but when I told her that it was Waldemar, she told me that this was not a Polish name. She put a "rejected" stamp on my file and that was it. I should have said Wladimir or something. Therefore, I could not come as a displaced person.<sup>53</sup>

Though it is impossible to tell how common these attempts were, Waldemar Belter was certainly not the only ethnic German who sought recognition as a displaced person, given the confusing mix of ethnic and national identities, frequently changing borders and the fact that most of the refugees were at least bilingual, if not multilingual.<sup>54</sup> At the same

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<sup>52</sup> Zimmerman, "'Narrow-Minded People': Canadian Universities and the Academic Refugee Crisis, 1933–1941," 291–315. Zimmerman convincingly suggests that the limited and belated response of Canadian universities was partly a result of financial difficulties during the Great Depression, but even more importantly an expression of wide-spread anti-Semitism in Canadian society and institutions like McGill University.

<sup>53</sup> Waldemar Belter Interview, Vernon, B.C., October 12, 2005. However, it appears that at least in the case of immigration to the U.S. about 1,000 displaced persons submitted false birth documents in 1948 claiming to be ethnic Germans in an attempt to immigrate as part of the German quota. Yet, the fraud was discovered, see Wolfgang Jacobmeyer, *Vom Zwangsarbeiter zum heimatlosen Ausländer. Die Displaced Persons in Westdeutschland 1945–1951*. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1985), 176. Since Canada did not have immigration quotas, it seems unlikely that similar cases would have occurred here.

<sup>54</sup> Also hints in William J.H. Sturhahn, *They came from East and West... A History of Immigration to Canada*. (Winnipeg: North American Baptist Immigration and Colonization Society, 1976), 73. "The IRO could not touch the movement of 'Volksdeutsche', although a good many of them did succeed in migrating

time, in many cases displaced persons did not have identification papers and birth certificates that would establish their places of origin. Therefore, changes of identity even across ethnic and linguistic lines were clearly possible.

Since Canada did not open its own immigration offices in Germany until the end of 1947, ethnic and religious groups, notably those sponsored by the Lutheran and Mennonite churches, who were closely linked with the European situation through their relief work, complained that ethnic Germans who were not German nationals could not be considered enemy aliens and should therefore not be excluded from immigration. However, without Canadian immigration approval they could not obtain exit permits to visit a Canadian office elsewhere in Europe which made it *de facto* impossible to apply.<sup>55</sup>

To address these problems, on February 7, 1947, Walter A. Tucker, the Liberal MP for Rosthern, Saskatchewan, arranged a meeting between Prime Minister King and a mixed delegation from Winnipeg including representatives of Ukrainian, Polish, and German groups.<sup>56</sup> Horace H. Erdman and Traugott Otto Francis Herzer, who later that year became instrumental in establishing the Canadian Christian Council for the Resettlement of Refugees (CCCR), were present as were members of the Canadian Lutheran World Relief, an aid organization that had been founded in 1946 to help people in Europe. At the meeting they discussed the immigration of ethnic Germans and other inadmissible relatives of Canadian residents.<sup>57</sup> Earlier lobbying by their organizations for the admission of German nationals also influenced this decision. Given the constant

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to Canada.” For German immigrants making false statements to get a visa to the United States, see Freund, *Aufbrüche nach dem Zusammenbruch*, 173–179.

<sup>55</sup> Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 76.

<sup>56</sup> Wanka, *Opfer des Friedens*, 245.

<sup>57</sup> LAC MG28–V120, Canadian Lutheran World Relief fonds, vol. 23, file 13, Horace H. Erdmann to Walter Tucker, February 15, 1947.

pressure from religious groups, the Canadian government started to seek a solution to satisfy their demands while avoiding the potential political damage from the suspicion of Canada subsidizing the immigration of Germans.<sup>58</sup>

The important breakthrough for the admission of ethnic Germans was Mackenzie King's announcement in parliament on May 1, 1947 of a major shift away from the restrictive immigration practices of the interwar years. The prime minister declared that Canada needed immigrants to increase the standard of living by expanding the domestic economy and utilizing its natural resources. At the same time, the beginning of the Cold War demanded the strengthening of Canada's military defences, which depended on an increased population. Yet Mackenzie King insisted that immigration was a matter of domestic policy, which meant that Canada had the right to control immigration so it should not exceed what he called the "absorptive capacity" of the country. The number of immigrants should be adjusted year by year according to economic demands.

In addition, he asserted that "Canada is perfectly within her rights in selecting the immigrants she wants" and that "the people of Canada do not wish to make a fundamental alteration in the character of their population through mass immigration."<sup>59</sup> Thus, for example, most restrictions on Asian immigration remained. Pointing out that "Canada's policy has to be related to the social, political and economic circumstances resulting from the war," King admitted the need to resettle those "persons who are displaced and homeless" and reported that his government had taken important steps to

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<sup>58</sup> Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 77.

<sup>59</sup> Prime Minister Mackenzie King's statement on Canadian immigration policy, Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, May 1, 1947, 2644–2647. See also Hawkins, *Canada and Immigration*, 92–93; and Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 312–313.

help solve the problem.<sup>60</sup> In this speech, Mackenzie King outlined the principles that would dominate Canadian immigration practices until the 1960s.

Though Canada did not completely drop its traditional interest in recruiting agricultural settlers, it started to focus more strongly on skilled workers in order to strengthen its industrial development. Despite the shift in the occupational structure of new immigrants, traditional and racist beliefs prevailed. Settlers from western and northern Europe were still preferred since they would be more easily assimilated. In this sense, Mackenzie King's speech was not so much a break with older traditions in immigration, but an affirmation of the correlation between economic need and migration without undoing the racial biases that had been part of the earlier regulations.<sup>61</sup> This speech might appear as a watershed marking the beginnings of a new mass immigration, rather, it reflects the government's realization that the postwar economic boom was not about to end with another depression.

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<sup>60</sup> House of Commons, *Debates*, May 1, 1947, 2644. Also Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 79.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 2645–2646. The key phrases in Mackenzie King's statement are the vague expression of an "absorptive capacity" or Canada's ability to integrate immigrants into the economy and society, and the commitment of the government not to change the ethnic composition of the country. "There will, I am sure, be general agreement with the view that the people of Canada do not wish, as a result of mass immigration, to make a fundamental alteration in the character of our population." Also Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 311–313. Hawkins, *Canada and Immigration*, 91–95. Freda Hawkins also observes that at the time, Canada was clearly not unique in its rejection of Asian immigration as similar perceptions and policies in the United States and Australia show.

## **6.2 - Opening the Door for German immigration, May 1947–September 1950**

Though Mackenzie King did not mention ethnic Germans in particular, four days later, James Allison Glen, the Minister of Mines and Resources, acceded to the demands of Walter Tucker that ethnic Germans be considered in the new immigration regulations unless they had formally applied for German citizenship during the Second World War.<sup>62</sup> Yet, the problem remained that no existing organization had the mandate, financial means, facilities, and transportation to organize the migration of ethnic Germans to Canada. The railway companies, the traditional organizers of agricultural settlement in the West, did not want to get involved beyond transporting ethnic Germans from the port of entry to their destinations. Furthermore, at least initially, the government did not provide any official support to organize the migration, partly because Mackenzie King did not want to be seen as openly subsidizing the entry of Germans to Canada so soon after the end of the war. Therefore, a private organization, the Canadian Christian Council for the Resettlement of Refugees (CCCRR), was founded on June 23, 1947.<sup>63</sup> It operated outside of the International Refugee Organization (IRO), which, as mentioned earlier, did not recognize ethnic Germans as refugees.

The CCCRR combined the interests of religious and social groups with those of the government and railway companies. Though it would not have been viable without financial support from the latter two, Mackenzie King could still claim that his government did not actively support German immigration, but simply acknowledged the

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<sup>62</sup> Wanka, *Opfer des Friedens*, 247. Sauer, “A Matter of Domestic Policy?” 240. The Ministry of Mines and Resources remained responsible for immigration until an independent Ministry of Immigration was established in 1950 under Walter Harris.

<sup>63</sup> LAC RG76, reel C10592, “Report of Meeting held in Ottawa,” June 23, 1947. Members of the CCCRR were: Catholic Immigration Aid Society, Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization, Committee for the Relief of Democratic Sudeten Refugees, German Baptist Colonization and Immigration Society, Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec, Canadian Lutheran World Relief, and the Latvian Relief Funds of Canada.

legality and humanitarian objectives of the CCCRR.<sup>64</sup> Only refugees who had been born outside of Germany and Austria and who had never taken up German citizenship were covered under the early mandate of the CCCRR. Former members of the SS were categorically excluded.<sup>65</sup> The Canadian Military Mission in Berlin and the Immigration Office which was first opened in Heidelberg on November 13, 1947 and later moved to Karlsruhe on March 20, 1948 were responsible for the formalities in processing the immigrants while the CCCRR provided loans for the passage.

When the success of initial attempts to bring ethnic Germans to Canada was limited by the difficulty of obtaining space on ships and higher than expected operational costs, the government chartered the *Beaverbrae* in March 1948 to transport immigrants under the CCCRR mandate and others outside IRO programs across the Atlantic. That solved the transportation difficulties. In addition, the government guaranteed financial support of \$100,000 for five thousand expected immigrants in 1948 alone. This money was used as a revolving fund for the continued support of the immigration movement.<sup>66</sup> A significant rise of German immigration to 2,880 in 1948 can be largely explained by the work of the CCCRR, though it fell far short of the expected 5,000.<sup>67</sup>

Given the stepped-up support of the government, the CCCRR greatly increased the number of German immigrants from a total of 886 until June 1948 to over 6,000 by March 1949. By April 1953, some 30,000 immigrants had arrived in Canada with the

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<sup>64</sup> LAC RG76 reel C10592, Immigration Branch (hereafter: IB): Memorandum for Deputy Minister, June 25, 1947, cited in Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 80.

<sup>65</sup> LAC RG76 reel C10592, IB to Under-Secretary Department of External Affairs, July 31, 1947, cited in Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 80.

<sup>66</sup> Freund, *Aufbrüche nach dem Zusammenbruch*, 230–231. Also Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 80–81.

<sup>67</sup> Canada, *House of Commons, Debates*, March 28, 1949.

help of the organization; most of them were German-speaking.<sup>68</sup> Based on Canadian immigration statistics, 17,729 of the 151,954 displaced persons arriving in Canada between April 1947 and the end of November 1951 were ethnic Germans. They were the third largest group admitted in this category after Poles (35,298) and Ukrainians (25,402). Almost two thirds of these displaced persons were sponsored by family members, while just over one third came as part of so-called bulk-orders selected for Canadian companies, farmers, and private households. The two largest groups among the latter were agricultural labourers (14,576) and domestics (10,958). This reflects some continuity to the recruitment in the interwar years.<sup>69</sup> The increased involvement of the Canadian government in the immigration of ethnic Germans reflected a general development that made German immigration more acceptable both in domestic and foreign policy. Another year passed, however, before Canada was ready to drop the restrictions for enemy aliens.

When the reservoir of eligible and employable displaced persons available in Europe and especially in camps in Germany started to dry up, Canada and other immigration countries sought a new source of immigrants to fill their manpower needs. Because the immigration countries selected mainly young and healthy male candidates, after 1949 only a “hard core” of the sick and old, and families with children remained in

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<sup>68</sup> LAC MG28-V120, vol. 30, Canadian Lutheran World Relief. Also LAC RG26, vol. 104/3-24-1 Pt. 1, Department of Mines and Resources: “Memorandum for Cabinet: Application from the Canadian Christian Council for the Resettlement of Refugees for financial assistance,” February 23, 1948; Secretary to the Cabinet to Minister of Department of Mines and Resources, March 5, 1948; and LAC RG76 C-10592, Statistic CCCRR, March 12, 1949, cited in Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 81. The 30,000<sup>th</sup> immigrant settled by the CCCRR was Alexander Holz who arrived in Lethbridge, Alberta with his family and another 750 German immigrants on May 13, 1953 to work on the sugar beet farm of John Horvath, the farmer who sponsored his family. *Lethbridge Herald*, Friday, May 15, 1953, p. 9.

<sup>69</sup> LAC RG26, vol. 140/3-40-4, Pt. 1, Statistics – Displaced Persons. See also Holleuffer, *Zwischen Fremde und Fremde*, 146 and 267; similar numbers in Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 313.

the displaced persons camps.<sup>70</sup> The emigration of foreigners residing in Germany to overseas destinations reached a peak of 245,900 in 1949 and declined very rapidly thereafter.<sup>71</sup> Since the manpower needs in Canada and other immigration countries remained high during the Korean War, the population surpluses of Germany and Italy increasingly caught the interest of immigration officials.

Groups such as the Canadian Society for German Relief (CSGR) had continued to lobby the Canadian government for the admission of German nationals. In 1948, H. Gummel, the Secretary of the Osoyoos Branch in British Columbia, wrote to O.L. Jones, his MP, to request the admission of German nationals under the same immigration regulations applied to other nationalities. To support his point, he referred to a petition signed to that effect.<sup>72</sup> Two years later, after returning from a ten-week trip to Germany to distribute food and clothing donations Theodore Schaffer, the vice-president of the society, wrote to Walter E. Harris, the first Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, strongly emphasising the degree of suffering caused by unemployment, the lack of housing, under-nourishment and the resulting spread of diseases. He reported an estimate “that every third person [in East Germany] has Tuberculosis as people have not enough fat and food.” Schaffer blamed the western Allies for the misery since they consented to the mass expulsions from the east. According to him, four million people were dead and missing as a result of the expulsions and an estimated “six million girls and women

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<sup>70</sup> Jacobmeyer, *Vom Zwangsarbeiter zum Heimatlosen Ausländer*, 169–173.

<sup>71</sup> Statistical Yearbook 1960, 75, table: “Auswanderung nach Übersee 1947–1958.” (Wiesbaden: Statistisches Bundesamt, 1960). In 1950, the number of foreigners emigrating from Germany was 136,500, followed by 94,600 in 1951 and 15,700 in 1952.

<sup>72</sup> LAC MG28–V28, Canadian Society for German Relief fonds, vol. 1 (Correspondence, Osoyoos Branch, 1948), H. Gummel to O.L. Jones, December 15, 1948; and O.L. Jones to H. Gummel, December 18, 1948. Also on the efforts of the Vancouver Alpen-Club and the Osoyoos Branch of the Canadian Society for German Relief after 1945, see Gottlieb Leibbrand, *25 Jahre caritative und kulturelle Arbeit des Hilfswerkes der Deutsch-Kanadier*. (Waterloo: Waterloo Printing Company, 1972), 26–27.



between the ages of twelve and seventy have been raped.” Finally, he suggested that Ottawa could contribute to improving the situation in Germany by admitting German nationals. Moreover, he noted, this would also benefit Canada because of the agricultural background of many expellees and their fierce anti-communism resulting from their experiences.<sup>73</sup>

In its monthly bulletins the CSGR also spread information, including the very detailed reports by Reverend Niemoeller, Frederick J. Libby of Washington D.C., and different aid societies like the *Hilfswerk*, about the extent of the refugee problem and human misery in Germany.<sup>74</sup> Their letters and bulletins established the extent of the humanitarian crisis in Germany; then invariably hinted at the involvement and therefore responsibility of the western Allies in the expulsion of Germans from the east. Finally, they suggested that emigration would diminish the refugee problem in Germany and benefit Canada at the same time.

Though they may have exaggerated some numbers such as those of expellees and casualties of the expulsions, all the details, including rape, death, starvation, disease, and poverty were also dominant themes in the life stories of many refugees interviewed in British Columbia.<sup>75</sup> Members of German-Canadian church communities also met with the Minister of Immigration, Walter Harris, in early 1950 to ask that ethnic Germans who had become German citizens during the Second World War be deemed eligible for

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<sup>73</sup> LAC MG28–V28, Canadian Society for German Relief fonds, vol. 1 (Vancouver Branch), Theodore Schaffer to Walter E. Harris, August 14, 1950; and Harris to Schaffer, September 1, 1950.

<sup>74</sup> LAC MG28–V28, Canadian Society for German Relief fonds, vol. 2 (Monthly Bulletins, 1948–1954), see especially bulletins of March 1948 (vol. 1, no. 6), September 1949 (vol. 2, no. 8), February 1951 (vol. 4, no. 2), and March 1951 (vol. 4, no. 3).

<sup>75</sup> Personal interviews with German immigrants residing in British Columbia, 2005–2006. Almost every refugee interviewed talked about the hardships of the trek, their fate if they were overtaken by the Red Army, or stayed in Poland or Hungary after the end of the war. They described starvation, disease, mistreatment, and some reported cases of rape. See Chapter 3 for more details.

immigration to Canada and lobbied for the admission of German nationals on an equal footing as citizens of other nations.<sup>76</sup>

Canada had originally planned to maintain the enemy alien status for German nationals until the signing of a peace treaty, but the deepening antagonism between the Soviet Union and the western Allies that had divided Germany made this increasingly unlikely. The founding of the Federal Republic of Germany in the summer of 1949 and more importantly Canada's manpower demands after the beginning of the Korean War in June 1950 led to the removal of the last restrictions for German immigration. That month, Canada announced that all Europeans who were deemed suitable for the requirements of the country would be admissible. On September 14, 1950 an "Order respecting the Entry to or Landing in Canada of Enemy Aliens" placed Germans on the same legal footing as other European immigrants.<sup>77</sup>

Not surprisingly, the number of German emigrants increased dramatically after the three most important receiving countries, the United States, Canada, and Australia revoked the enemy alien status for German nationals. Though there was no direct consultation between these three countries outside of international organizations like ICEM, Canada and Australia were competing for German immigrants and were very aware of their respective policies.<sup>78</sup> Based on data from the Federal Statistical Office, 779,700 Germans left for overseas destinations between 1945 and 1961 with Canada receiving about 234,300 of them. Seven of the fifty immigrants interviewed in British Columbia arrived in Canada between 1947 and September 1950; that proportion closely

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<sup>76</sup> LAC MG28-V120, Canadian Lutheran World Relief fonds, vol. 30, *The Courier*, 1950 (no specific date, but must have been in early in 1950 since the Canadian government dropped the enemy alien status for German nationals in September 1950).

<sup>77</sup> Hawkins, *Canada and Immigration*, 99. Also Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 105–107.

<sup>78</sup> Michael Hadley Interview, Victoria, B.C., May 31, 2006.

corresponds to the ratio of 32,000 to a total of 234,300 German immigrants landing in Canada until 1961.<sup>79</sup> All of those interviewed in British Columbia who came before September 1950 were ethnic Germans born in Poland (5), the Ukraine (1), and Rumania (1). Five of them, including Adina Frank (arrived October 1948), Richard Nikolaj (June 1949), Sara Belter (May 1950), Reinhold Ponto (July 1950), and Hilda Knopf (July 1950) were sponsored directly by relatives who had come to Canada in the interwar period while the remaining two, Waldemar Belter (August 1949) and Edith Mueller mother (late 1949), were sponsored by their employers.<sup>80</sup> These ethnic Germans who came as displaced persons before the Fall of 1950 clearly reflect both Canada's preference for family sponsorship, but also the availability of work sponsorship in agriculture and industry.

The data from the interviews equally support this continuation of earlier patterns. Especially in the early postwar years, Ottawa's policies were clearly biased towards healthy young refugees with family connections in Canada who could sponsor them by loaning them money for the passage.<sup>81</sup> Even after September 1950, three quarters of the immigrants were sponsored by relatives, the Canadian government, religious organizations, or farmers, while only one quarter paid their own way. Most of the latter,

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<sup>79</sup> Steinert, "Drehscheibe Westdeutschland," 386. Numbers based on *Wirtschaft und Statistik* 1954, 276–278 and 1963, 191. However, it needs to be noted that the statistical data provided by the German Statistical Office and Statistics Canada vary considerably with a margin of 4,000 and more in some years.

<sup>80</sup> Interviews with Adina Frank, Kelowna, B.C., October 14, 2005; Richard Nikolaj, Kelowna, B.C., October 14, 2005; Sara Belter, Vernon, B.C., October 12, 2005; Reinhold Ponto, Kelowna, B.C., October 16, 2005; Hilda Knopf, Kelowna, B.C., October 16, 2005; Waldemar Belter, Vernon, B.C., October 12, 2005; and Edith Mueller (pseudonym), Kelowna, B.C., October 17, 2005. Waldemar Belter was sponsored by a farmer in northern Alberta and Edith Mueller's mother by a shoe factory in Vancouver.

<sup>81</sup> For changes in Canadian immigration policy with respect to Germans, see Ron Schmalz, "German Immigration Boom to Canada, 1951–1957," 14–15.

however, arrived towards the end of the decade.<sup>82</sup> Given the nature of migration in the interwar period, almost all the immigrants sponsored by family members in Canada were ethnic Germans. People born as German citizens, in contrast, were over-represented in the group who paid their own passage or were supported by their family in Germany since only one of the German nationals interviewed had a family member in Canada who had immigrated before the Second World War.<sup>83</sup>

The single most important reason for Canada and Australia to remove restrictions on German immigration was the economic boom that followed the outbreak of the Korean War and an accompanying serious labour shortage in major industries. At the same time immigration from Britain declined sharply in 1949. In 1946 British immigration to Canada reached a peak of 51,408, followed by 38,747 and 46,057 in 1947 and 1948. In 1949, however, the total number dropped to 22,201 and further to 13,427 the next year before increasing sharply in 1951 after Ottawa introduced the Assisted Passage Loan Scheme. The decline is even more dramatic in comparison to overall immigration. In 1946, 71.6 percent of all new arrivals in Canada came from the British Isles while this percentage then dropped to a low 18.1 percent in 1950.<sup>84</sup> The sharp decline in British immigration at the end of the 1940s was primarily the result of British currency restrictions and the devaluation of the pound in 1949 which made passage across the Atlantic significantly more expensive and limited money transfers to £250 per year up to

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<sup>82</sup> Cumulative data from the 50 interviews: Before September 1950, passage paid by: Family in Canada (6), Farmer / Industry (2). After September 1950: Self-paid (10), Family in Germany (2), Family / friends in Canada (14), Aid Organizations (8) (Baptist (4), Lutheran (4)), Canadian Government (4), Farmer (4).

<sup>83</sup> Bernhard Dinter's father, Fritz Dinter, had arrived in Quebec City on August 31, 1930. RG76 - Immigration, Series C-1-a, 1930, vol. 18, 264.

<sup>84</sup> *DCER*, vol. 17-628, Deputy High Commissioner of United Kingdom to Assistant Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, Ottawa, June 9, 1951.

a total of £1,000.<sup>85</sup> At the same time, opinion polls in Canada showed declining opposition to German immigration by 1950, thus opening the door for Germany and Italy to become the two most important source countries for Canada's manpower.<sup>86</sup>

The new Immigration Act of 1952 generally continued Canada's previous policies. Though it avoided some of the blatant exclusion of ethnic groups, it gave explicit preference to British subjects from the United Kingdom and the former dominions, and to American and French citizens. The categories of preferred countries were more firmly established in Order-of-Council P.C. 1956-785, while the category of most desired countries with little official restrictions on immigration remained the same. A second category included all non-communist countries of Europe whose citizens could immigrate if they were employable or intended to open their own business. Categories three and four included the rest of the world. These allowed only direct family sponsorship, which largely excluded potential immigrants from these countries.<sup>87</sup> The

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<sup>85</sup> *DCER*, vol. 15-758, Telegram, Secretary of State for External Affairs to High Commissioner in United Kingdom, Ottawa, Oct. 29, 1949; and *DCER*, vol. 15-760, Telegram, High Commissioner in United Kingdom to Secretary of State for External Affairs, London, November 2, 1949. The High Commissioner pointed out that the main reasons for the numbers of British immigrants was the devaluation of the British pound and currency restrictions imposed by London in response to its negative payment balance with the North American countries. Nevertheless, he pointed to the Australian immigration program as a possible model for Canada: "The majority of [the British immigrants to Australia] would travel under the Government's free and assisted passages scheme, which also provided for the nomination of immigrants by relatives and friends guaranteeing accommodation. In making comparisons it should be borne in mind that in the case of migration to Australia, no dollar exchange problem arises, and that assisted passages are not available for emigrants to Canada." Also Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 313-314, 323. In the Netherlands, currency restrictions were even more severe than in Britain. All adult Dutch emigrants were allowed to take a maximum of \$100.00 with them. See Frans J. Schryer, *The Netherlandic Presence in Ontario. Pillars, Class, and Dutch Ethnicity*. (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 1998), 46.

<sup>86</sup> For opinion polls in Canada, see Ronald E. Schmalz, "Former Enemies come to Canada: Ottawa and the Postwar German Immigration Boom, 1951-57," (Ph.D. Dissertation: University of Ottawa, 2000), 46-47. On the press coverage of the two biggest non-British immigrant groups in the 1950s, the Italians and Germans, see Franca Iacovetta, *Gatekeepers. Reshaping Immigrant Lives in Cold War Canada*. (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2006), 26-27. She found that despite Germany's Nazi past Canadian "government and public hostility towards [German immigrants] was less marked than it was towards the Italians."

<sup>87</sup> Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 328-329. In the case of Asians, for example, family sponsorship was possible but the sponsor had to be a Canadian citizen and the spouse of the would-be immigrant. Only unmarried children under a certain age (it varied over time but usually was 18 or 21) were

Immigration Act of 1952 acknowledged that Canada had turned from a primarily agricultural country to a major industrial producer. As a result, bona fide farmers were no longer given priority. On the other hand, the Minister of Immigration received extensive new powers to exclude any person based on ethnic or geographic background, as well as education, occupation, and health. In addition, persons could be excluded because of their “probable inability to become readily assimilated or to assume the duties and responsibilities of Canadian citizenship within a reasonable time after admission” and because of “peculiar customs, habits, modes of life, or methods of holding property.”<sup>88</sup> In short, admission to Canada could theoretically be barred for any person that did not meet the ideal standards of a white, Christian, capitalist society.

While the economy remained important in determining immigration policy, the Cold War nevertheless heightened security concerns. In the screening processes, prospective immigrants were checked for former affiliation to Nazi organisations and for communist leanings. The latter became increasingly important in part at the expense of the former.<sup>89</sup> The fear of admitting communists led to situations where even families were separated. For example Heinz Benthin, a former resident of East Germany, immigrated to Canada in March 1955, leaving his wife and younger son in West Berlin. The older son, Karl-Heinz, aged 19 at the time, had been caught in a passport control when he tried to cross the border to West Berlin and was arrested. He remained in East Germany and was only reunited with his family in West Berlin in 1956. While the mother and younger brother received a visa to join Heinz in Saskatchewan in 1957, the older son

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eligible to be immigrants. This mainly affected the Chinese of whom relatively few in Canada were Canadian citizens.

<sup>88</sup> Hawkins, *Canada and Immigration*, 102.

<sup>89</sup> On Canada’s gradual relaxation of immigration restrictions for former members of Nazi organizations, see Iacovetta, *Gatekeepers*, 27.

was rejected because of alleged communist leanings. Only the interventions of the German embassy in Ottawa, record checks by the Allied authorities and the West German secret service, and a letter from the Senator of the Interior of West Berlin convinced the Canadian visa office that Karl-Heinz Benthin was not a communist. Finally, at the end of July 1959, Canada advised the German embassy that he would receive a visa.<sup>90</sup>

On the other side, former members of the Nazi party and of the SS successfully immigrated to Canada. In some cases they concealed their membership in the SS, for example by removing the tattooed number from their arm and explaining the resulting scars as war injuries.<sup>91</sup> In a different case, Richard Reiter, a member of an SS Panzer division, who was sentenced to three years hard labour by a denazification court in Germany after the war, escaped to Austria before he could be imprisoned. In 1950 he saw an advertisement for immigration to Canada in Salzburg and applied. During the application process, according to him, “no one asked about the Hitler Youth or SS.” Reiter even qualified for assisted passage by promising to repay the Canadian government for his fare on the *SS Italia*.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> LAC MG31–H39, Kurt von Cardinal fonds, Correspondence concerning the case of Karl-Heinz Benthin between December 6, 1957 and July 22, 1959.

<sup>91</sup> Emil Wegwitz Interview, Victoria, BC, August 10, 2005.

<sup>92</sup> Jack Knox and Dave Obee, “I was an ideal Nazi kid,” *Times Colonist*, August 7, 2005, Section D 6–7.

### **6.3 Canada's assisted passage scheme, 1947–1957**

The Canadian government introduced the Assisted Passage Loan Scheme in February 1951. It made \$950,000 available for operational costs to cover the passages of immigrants who did not have the necessary financial means. This amount was increased to \$1.3 million the following year. This loan was particularly helpful for German emigrants because of currency restrictions that remained in place until 1954 and it assisted British immigrants affected by unfavourable exchange rates. It covered the cost of trans-Atlantic passage and of a railway ticket to a Canadian destination and had to be repaid in monthly instalments after arrival, usually within a year of landing. To qualify, the immigrant had to contribute at least \$30.00 and agree to accept a one or two-year job contract usually as an agricultural labourer for men and domestic for women, though tradesmen and miners were eligible, too.<sup>93</sup> The fairly small amount of money required from the immigrant and the guaranteed support by the Immigration Department's Settlement Division to find a job upon arrival made this a very attractive option for people with limited resources and without family members who could sponsor them.

The Assisted Passage Scheme certainly attracted immigrants. In the fall of 1951, for example, 6,500 of the 10,000 persons in Germany and Austria who had visas to enter Canada also had a guarantee to receive an Assisted Passage loan. By October, however, Canada had exhausted its budget and many of those who had been guaranteed assistance were unable to migrate.<sup>94</sup> Despite this set-back, Germans were the largest group entering

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<sup>93</sup> LAC MG30–C132, Emil Kutscha fonds, vol. 4, German Immigration to Canada, Ministry for Citizenship and Immigration, *Unterstützung zur Überfahrt nach Kanada*. (Ottawa: CIC, 1951). This government pamphlet includes all the information regarding the application for the loans (in German). Also Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 323. See Chapter 5 for more detail on the Assisted Passage Loan Scheme.

<sup>94</sup> Schmalz, "A Statistical Overview of the German Immigration Boom to Canada, 1951–1957," 17–18.



Canada that year, partly because of the financial support, since they received fifty-two percent of the 17,095 government loans, which means that this program supported almost twenty-eight percent of all German immigrants arriving in Canada that year.<sup>95</sup>

Germans probably received more loans than British because the refugee crisis and the still difficult living conditions in Germany meant that the emigration interest was higher than in Britain. Secondly, Canada was unable to fill its manpower needs in the British Isles and in the United States, so Germany, as a Western European country with a large excess population, was the perfect place to fill its labour needs. Though 1951 remained the only year in which the number of German immigrants exceeded those from Britain, the assisted passage remained an important tool to attract German migrants and they continued to receive about half of all loans throughout the 1950s.

When the Canadian economy briefly slowed down in the mid-1950s, German immigration to Canada dropped off significantly from 29,845 in 1954 to 18,082 in 1955.<sup>96</sup> J.R. Robillard, the head of the Canadian Immigration Mission in Germany, attributed the drastic decrease to negative reports in German newspapers and in letters home from German immigrants already in Canada about high unemployment. In addition, the end of cooperation between the Immigration Mission and the German employment offices in 1954 meant that Canada could no longer advertise in their branches and local newspapers. The German government, however, tolerated an information campaign that Canada started in 1956 on condition that it did not appear to have Bonn's support. Canada also expanded the Assisted Passage Scheme to attract more

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<sup>95</sup> LAC RG 76, vol. 814, file 551-10-1952, pt. 1, Chief, Operations Division to Acting Director, October 22, 1951. (Freund, *Aufbrüche nach dem Zusammenbruch*, 233). British citizens comprised 24% of the recipients, followed by Austrians with 14%.

<sup>96</sup> LAC MG31-H39, Kurt von Cardinal fonds, vol. 5, German Immigration Statistics, "Einwanderungsstatistik deutscher Einwanderer nach Kanada nach dem zweiten Weltkrieg"

immigrants by including family members.<sup>97</sup> This, in combination with an improved economic situation in Canada, was reflected in the significantly higher numbers of German immigrants in 1956 and 1957 with 26,457 and 29,564, respectively.<sup>98</sup>

In 1958, another downturn in the Canadian economy resulted in a drop to less than fifty per cent in the number of the previous year's intake of German immigrants. The downward trend continued despite efforts to attract new immigrants with public presentations and continued loan programs. In 1961–62, when Michael Hadley toured West Germany to give public talks about Canada, only about 5–6,000 Germans were migrating to Canada annually. Overall, Canada's total intake of immigrants fell sharply from a high of 282,164 in 1957 to a low of 71,689 in 1961.<sup>99</sup> The latter year marked the end of the first major postwar immigration boom in Canada both in terms of the total numbers and for German immigration. The German government welcomed this development since it had increasingly, but largely unsuccessfully, pushed for limitations of emigration in light of its own developing labour shortages.<sup>100</sup>

#### **6.4 PICMME / ICEM and other financial support for German migration**

As the earlier discussion of the Assisted Passage Scheme demonstrated, financial sponsorship was very important for German immigration to Canada in the early postwar period. This is illustrated in the sample of the fifty persons interviewed. Only twenty-six percent of the people who arrived between 1944 and 1961 were able to pay the fare with

<sup>97</sup> Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 271–274.

<sup>98</sup> LAC MG31–H39, Kurt von Cardinal fonds, vol. 5, German Immigration Statistics, “Einwanderungsstatistik deutscher Einwanderer nach Kanada nach dem zweiten Weltkrieg” German immigration to Canada in 1958: 14,449.

<sup>99</sup> LAC MG31–H39, Kurt von Cardinal fonds, vol. 6, Die deutschstämmige Bevölkerungsgruppe Kanadas; And *Citizenship and Immigration Statistics*, 1996, “Immigration by Calendar Year, 1852–1996.” (Ottawa, Citizenship and Immigration, 1999), 4; Also Michael Hadley Interview.

<sup>100</sup> See Chapter 5 for a detailed discussion of German emigration policy.

their own funds or money from their families in Germany. Before the mid-1950s, few could raise the necessary means, either because of the poor economic situation or because of currency restrictions imposed by the German government to protect its economic recovery. In the latter half of the 1950s when the situation in Germany started to improve, some were able to sell their houses to raise enough funds. Nevertheless, for the entire period, almost three quarters of the interviewees relied on sponsorship from Canada. Among these, by far the largest group were those sponsored by family members with forty percent, followed by the religious groups organized in the CCCRR with sixteen percent, Canadian farmers or industry with ten percent and finally the Canadian government Assisted Passage Scheme with eight percent.<sup>101</sup> Though these numbers might not exactly correspond to the actual distribution among all German immigrants in that period, they nevertheless clearly show the importance of sponsorships and loans to migration. Given Freund's estimates that eighteen to nineteen percent of all German immigrants in the 1950s received Canadian government loans,<sup>102</sup> this group is clearly underrepresented in my sample, which might correspond with an under-representation of German nationals, the main beneficiaries of the loans scheme.

The sponsorship for ethnic German immigrants through the CCCRR and the Canadian Assisted Passage Loan Scheme were not the only programs supporting migration in the 1950s. When the old International Refugee Organization (IRO) threatened the autonomy of the three major receiving countries, the United States, Canada, and Australia, with regard to their ultimate freedom to decide on the numbers and qualifications of immigrants, the U.S. proposed a new organization. This Provisional

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<sup>101</sup> Cumulative Data from fifty personal interviews conducted in British Columbia between June 2005 and April 2006.

<sup>102</sup> Freund, *Aufbrüche nach dem Zusammenbruch*, 232.

Intergovernmental Committee for the Movement of Migrants from Europe (PICMME), founded at a Migration Conference in Brussels in December 1951, became a permanent organization the next year when the American Congress approved further financial support. The organization was then renamed the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM).<sup>103</sup>

A memorandum from the Chairman of the Interdepartmental Committee on Immigration to the Cabinet written on November 21, 1951 demonstrates Canada's interest in replacing the IRO with a new organization that would continue the transfer of populations from Western Europe. The recommendations based on present and future immigration needs proposed that the delegates at the Brussels conference insist that Canada "retain complete control in respect of selection standards and numbers of immigrants." In addition, the committee stressed the need to reduce Canada's share of the administrative budget by 50% or more.<sup>104</sup> In short, the IRO had been too expensive and had too much influence over the migration movement, issues that Canada wanted to redress in the establishment of a new migration organization.

PICMME/ICEM became one of the most important organizations for migration from Europe in the 1950s. From 1952 to 1957, it supported between 20,000 and 40,000 Germans each year, while Canada received numbers ranging from as low as 8,700 in 1952 to 46,600 five years later (see table below). Many of the latter were Hungarian refugees.

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<sup>103</sup> John F. Thomas, *Planned International Migration and Multilateral Co-operation. ICEM at Work*. (Geneva: Graduate Institute of International Studies, 1971), esp. 11–14. Also Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 98–100.

<sup>104</sup> *DCER*, vol. 17–344, Memorandum from Chairman, Interdepartmental Committee on Immigration, to Cabinet, Ottawa, November 21, 1951 (Cabinet Document No. 30651).

<b>Year</b>	<b>1952</b>	<b>1953</b>	<b>1954</b>	<b>1955</b>	<b>1956</b>	<b>1957</b>
German Emigrants moved by PICMME / ICEM  (as percentages of totals from all countries)	38,000 48.9%	40,300 46.1%	34,900 28.8%	21,900 18.2%	32,700 20.2%	20,400 10.5%
Immigrants received by Canada  (as percentage of totals from all countries)	8,700 11.2%	36,900 42.2%	21,300 17.6%	8,900 7.4%	11,300 7.0%	46,400 23.9%
Totals from all emigration countries moved by PICMME / ICEM	77,700	87,500	121,200	120,400	162,000	194,100

**Table 6.1:** PICMME / ICEM supported migrations.<sup>105</sup>

PICMME/ICEM reflected the interests of emigration and immigration countries alike since all operational activities had to be coordinated with the national governments. In this way, new possibilities of state intervention became available since no migration would be supported unless it was in the interest of the sending and receiving states.

Except in 1953 and 1957, Canada's share of the immigrants moved by ICEM was well below twenty percent or even as low as seven percent of the total in 1956. In September of that year, the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, J.W. Holmes, explained to Canada's Ambassador in Greece that "Canada had not made very much use of ICEM's services (such as vocational training, language classes, and shipping services), since we prefer to work either through our own immigration services, or through bilateral

<sup>105</sup> Numbers from Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 100.

arrangements.”<sup>106</sup> Yet, while Canada preferred to rely on its own devices and planned to withdraw from ICEM at the end of 1957, the organization was, at least in the beginning, very important for emigration from Germany. In 1952 and 1953, between forty-five and fifty percent of the migrants that it supported came from Germany but that proportion shrank to just over ten percent in 1957 (see Table 6.1).

Although ICEM played an important part in the postwar migration from the Federal Republic, supporting the equivalent of about one quarter of Germany’s overseas emigration between 1950 and 1957, the number of German emigrants moved by ICEM fell from a high of 40,300 in 1953 to 20,400 in 1957. This was a result of ICEM’s great expansion of support for migrants from other European countries, reduced interest in emigration in Germany, and the German government’s unwillingness to support the emigration of people who could be employed in the country’s expanding economy.

This exertion of state intervention becomes apparent in Canada’s insistence on having the final say in the choice and numbers of immigrants. Similarly, the Federal Republic protected its interests by signing a migration treaty with PICMME on July 12, 1952. In this treaty, Germany agreed to pay sixty dollars for every emigrant without any other means of transportation and whose departure its authorities had approved.<sup>107</sup> Therefore, the German government could block the emigration of persons whose departure was deemed undesirable from a political or economic point of view and who could not finance their own emigration. Germany also immediately reduced the financial

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<sup>106</sup> *DCER*, vol. 23–419, chapter 2, part 4, letter from Under-Secretary for External Affairs J.W. Holmes to Ambassador in Greece, Ottawa, September 7, 1956 (DEA/74-V-1-40 – Letter No. V-325). Similar letters were sent to the Canadian embassies in Rome (V-500); Bonn (V-503), The Hague (V-434), and Vienna (V-234).

<sup>107</sup> Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 100–101.

support for single males without family members to forty dollars.<sup>108</sup> This was one deterrent for young single males to leave the country, but not the only means of indirect influence on emigration introduced by the federal government in Bonn.<sup>109</sup>

Mod. C. I. N. 18  
Serie A/R

Al per il Passaggero  
for the Passenger

"SITMAR."  
SOCIETÀ ITALIANA TRASPORTI MARITTIMI S.p.A.

N° 17757  
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**Contratto per Passaggio in Classe**  
Passage Contract for Class

RILASCIATO ALLE CONDIZIONI INDICATE A TERGO  
ISSUED ON THE CONDITIONS PRINTED ON THE REVERSE SIDE AND/OR ON THE COVER

**ANDATA**  
OUTWARD

da Bremerhaven a Quebec/Canada  
con la nave "M.S. Fairsea" in partenza il 17.7.53  
Vessel sailing

cabina letto  
cubic berth  
comerone dormitory

**RITORNO**  
HOMEWARD

da \_\_\_\_\_ a \_\_\_\_\_  
con la nave \_\_\_\_\_ in partenza il \_\_\_\_\_  
Vessel sailing

cabina letto  
cubic berth  
comerone dormitory

NOMI DEI PASSEGGERI E INDIRIZZI PASSENGERS' NAMES AND ADDRESSES		Età Age	Valuta Currency	ANDATA OUTWARD		RITORNO HOMEWARD	
				Posti Seats	Prezzo Rate	Posti Seats	Prezzo Rate
Fallot	Walter	31					
"	Alma	29					
"	Bberhard	3					
Assion	Peter	11					
"	Edelgard	9					
TOTALE Posti e Prezzo Total Seats and Rate							

\* Indicare l'età dei ragazzi paganti meno del posto intero  
Indicate age for children paying less than full fare.  
Per ragazzi posto intero indicare "A".  
Insert "A" for whole fare.

Rilasciato in sostituzione del:  
Issued in exchange of:  
Buono Chiamata n° \_\_\_\_\_ Biglietto Ritorno n° \_\_\_\_\_  
Paid Order Return Ticket

Intermediario  
Booking Agency  
**Icem**

Emesso a  
Issued in  
**Bremen** Data \_\_\_\_\_

per la  
for  
SITMAR S.p.A.  
SOCIETÀ ITALIANA TRASPORTI MARITTIMI S.p.A.

(Firma e timbro)  
(Signature and stamp)

VALUTA  
Currency

Prezzo passaggio  
Passage rate

ANDATA  
OUTWARD

Diritti imbarco  
Embarkation dues

Diritti sbarco  
Landing dues

RITORNO  
HOMEWARD

Diritti imbarco  
Embarkation dues

Diritti sbarco  
Landing dues

TOTALE COMPLESSIVO  
SUM TOTAL

Meno Accanto come da ricevuto o Basso N.  
Less Deposit as per Receipt or Voucher

SALDO RICEVUTO  
BALANCE RECEIVED

As per agreement

Picture 6.1: Papers for passage on MS Fairsea (courtesy of Lucia Fallot)

As the papers of the Fallot family for passage on the MS Fairsea indicate, ICEM was the intermediary, facilitating the migration in 1953. This also meant that the German government approved the emigration and likely provided some funds for Lucia and

<sup>108</sup> Steinert, *Migration und Politik*, 101.

<sup>109</sup> See Chapter 5 for a more detailed account of German government policy with regards to emigration.

Walter, though they were not aware of it.<sup>110</sup> Yet, the Baptist World Alliance in Winnipeg remained the principal sponsor of the family and they repaid the loan to them in four instalments over the following two years.

TELEPHONE 93-6279

404B MCINTYRE BLOCK  
WINNIPEG, MAN.

Mr. Walter Fallot  
486-51st Ave. East  
Vancouver, B.C.

DATE October 21st, 1953

IN ACCOUNT WITH **BAPTIST WORLD ALLIANCE IMMIGRATION**  
WINNIPEG, MAN.

For services rendered in the immigration of Mr. Walter FALLLOT, wife Alma & child Eberhard  
& children Peter & Edelgard ASSION

Boat "FAIRSEA" # 5 Date July 26, 1953 at Quebec

Canteen (Kantine)			
Ocean Fare (Schiffskarte)		448	00
Assisted Passage (Regierung)			
Rail Fare (Eisenbahn)		184	70
Meals en route (Mahlzeiten)			
Pledge (Verpflichtung)		24	50
Cash Advance (Bargeld)		45	00
Overseas Charges (Ueberseekosten)			
Bremen Processing Service Charge (Dienstunkosten)		17	50
Telegrams (Telegramme)			
TOTAL AMOUNT DUE B.W.A.			\$ 719 70

*Diese Rechnung sollte so bald wie möglich abgezahlt werden. Höchste zinsfreie Frist ist ein Jahr.*

**Picture 6.2:** Total amount of loan for Fallot family (courtesy of Lucia Fallot) The German note below reads: "The bill should be paid as fast as possible. The maximum period for interest-free payment is one year."

The case of the Fallot family shows the difficulty in determining statistics about the sources of funding. The document above clearly shows that the Baptist World Alliance sponsored Walter, Alma (Lucia), and Eberhard Fallot, and two children from her first marriage, Peter and Edelgard Assion. The family is listed among the immigrants

<sup>110</sup> Lucia Fallot Interview. The Fallot family was officially sponsored by the Baptist World Alliance. They were not aware that ICEM provided some additional funding that, in contrast to the loan from the Baptist World Alliance, did not have to be repaid. See comment by Dr. Heinrich von Trützschler, BA B106/20618, AA, Bonn, May 20, 1952. Given the support by ICEM, German government authorities did not object to the emigration of the family.



supported by the Baptists in William Sturhahn's book.<sup>111</sup> Because the Fallot family would appear in the migration statistics of ICEM (see picture 1, bottom left), the CCCRR, and of the Baptist World Alliance, the number of supported migrations from these groups cannot simply be added to determine the actual number of people receiving assistance. Nevertheless, the three categories were also not necessarily identical since CCCRR support, in contrast to ICEM loans, did not depend on the approval of German authorities.

The year 1957 marked the end of ICEM operations between Germany and Canada. Economic recovery in the Federal Republic had significantly reduced emigration, while Ottawa ended its cooperation with the organization to regain its control of immigration, unrestricted by international obligations. Yet, during this last year of support for immigration to Canada, ICEM helped with the resettlement of about 200,000 Hungarian refugees (Canada accepted 37,000), who left their country after Soviet troops crushed the uprising of 1956.<sup>112</sup> The plight of these refugees and the high priority Canada gave to them explains why Canada accepted its highest number of ICEM migrants in the year it left the organization.

In addition to the priority given to Hungarian refugees, the beginning of a major recession in 1957 necessitated a downward adjustment of target numbers for immigration which nevertheless far exceeded the intake of any other year since 1913.<sup>113</sup> Despite these factors, almost 30,000 German immigrants arrived that year, mostly because Ottawa

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<sup>111</sup> William J.H. Sturhahn, *They came from East and West... A History of Immigration to Canada*. (Winnipeg: North American Baptist Immigration and Colonization Society, 1976), 312–313. They arrived in Quebec on the Fairsea #5 on July 26, 1953; Lucia Fallot Interview.

<sup>112</sup> Thomas, *Planned International Migration and Multilateral Co-operation*, 25.

<sup>113</sup> *Immigration and population statistics*. (Ottawa: Manpower and Immigration, 1974), 31. In 1957, Canada accepted 282,164 immigrants in comparison to 164,857 in 1956 and 124,851 in 1958.

continued what had been a very successful advertisement campaign started in 1956. In addition, Canada had widened the categories of admissible professions, and extended the Assisted Passage Program to include family members.<sup>114</sup> Given the economic downturn in Canada that lasted into the early 1960s and the fast recovery in the Federal Republic, 1957 also marked the end of German mass-emigration to Canada. The number of migrants dropped to 14,449 in 1958, just under 11,000 in 1959 and 1960, and 6,191 in 1961<sup>115</sup> when the building of the Berlin Wall ended the refugee crisis in Germany by sealing the last open border crossings from Communist Eastern Germany.

The economic recovery and the growing material prosperity of West Germany with its full employment were mirrored to a certain degree in other Western European countries. This reduced the attractiveness of emigration for economic reasons. As a result, the traditional sources for immigration would no longer fill Canada's manpower needs at the end of its recession in the early 1960s. This situation, combined with the fact that Ottawa's racially biased immigration policy increasingly became an embarrassment in its foreign relations, precipitated reforms of the immigration policy in 1962 and 1967 that completely altered migration patterns away from Europe and towards Asia.<sup>116</sup>

In sharp contrast to Canada's immigration policy, Australia took a longer-term approach in its "people or perish" campaign to increase its population based on security needs, rather than short-term economic factors, and "published long-term planning

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<sup>114</sup> Schmalz, "A Statistical Overview of the German Immigration Boom to Canada, 1951–1957," 27. Also Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 340–341. Canada had provided 32,788 Assisted Passage Loans to immigrants between 1951 and 1955. This number increased to 81,864 between 1956 and 1958 before dropping to 5,046 in 1959. See *Immigration and population statistics*. (Ottawa: Manpower and Immigration, 1974), 49.

<sup>115</sup> LAC MG31–H39, Kurt von Cardinal fonds, vol. 5, German Immigration Statistics, "Einwanderungsstatistik deutscher Einwanderer nach Kanada nach dem zweiten Weltkrieg."

<sup>116</sup> Hawkins, *Canada and Immigration*, 119–121

figures, which necessitated bilateral agreements with emigration countries.”<sup>117</sup> Ottawa, however, insisted on a maximum degree of independence to re-adjust numbers to employment needs several times per year. Angelika Sauer rightly concludes that Ottawa “refused to give an inch on the issue of domestic control of immigration, either by accepting international quotas or spelling out the long-term intake of certain nationalities.”<sup>118</sup>

Between 1945 and 1961, and arguably to the present, Canadian immigration policy has been guided by the country’s “absorptive capacity” to decide on the number of new immigrants that would be accepted. Michael Hadley comments that this concept of “the capacity of the country to absorb immigrants . . . was based on what to me then and to me even now is a pretty obscure principle as to how many people the country could actually absorb. But the overriding wisdom was that we needed a great many and a great variety of immigrants.”<sup>119</sup> The term “absorptive capacity” has never been defined satisfactorily; however, the labour market became the basic indicator for immigration targets that were frequently readjusted to avoid unemployment.<sup>120</sup> Yet, in the broader sense, given the categories of preferred sending countries, the term also described the possibility of assimilating these immigrants into Canadian society without, in Mackenzie King’s words, making “a fundamental alteration in the character of our population.”<sup>121</sup>

In sum, Canada’s immigration policy between 1945 and 1961 was largely self-interested. Even when Ottawa claimed to help solve the European refugee crisis in the

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<sup>117</sup> Angelika Sauer, “Christian Charity, Government Policy and German Immigration to Canada and Australia, 1947–1952,” *Canadian Issues* 18 (1996), 162.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

<sup>119</sup> Michael Hadley Interview.

<sup>120</sup> Holleuffer, *Zwischen Fremde und Fremde*, 83. Also Michael Hadley Interview.

<sup>121</sup> Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 312.

second half of the 1940s, Polish ex-servicemen and other displaced persons were not accepted for humanitarian reasons but to fill Canada's labour needs in agriculture, logging, and mining. In most cases immigration officers only accepted young and healthy refugees, leaving the old and ill in the refugee camps in Europe. Only through family sponsorship was it possible to bring older persons, including those with non-contagious health problems, to Canada if the family had the means to support their relatives, so that they would not become a burden to the state.

In the case of German immigration, Canada similarly took advantage of the vast surplus population in the Federal Republic as a result of the refugee crisis. Before 1950, the Canadian government did not want to be identified as supporting the immigration of ethnic Germans, but financially and logistically helped smooth the way for the CCCRR, while maintaining the Immigration Branch's rights to process the immigrants in its overseas offices. When the devaluation of the British pound and currency restrictions in West Germany hindered larger emigration from these major preferred source countries, Canada initiated a unilateral revolving fund program in the Assisted Passage Loan Scheme to attract more immigrants. Despite the existence of international organizations like ICEM, Ottawa preferred to maintain full control in its immigrant selection based on its economic needs and racial preferences.

## Chapter 7

**Immigration Application and Movement to Canada**

The previous chapters traced the developments, first of German emigration and then of Canadian immigration policy after the end of the Second World War. Though government decisions like the admission of ethnic Germans and, in September 1950, of German nationals ultimately had a strong impact on migration, very few of the immigrants applying for Canadian visas were aware of the larger economic and political considerations that opened these possibilities for their new lives overseas. Therefore, this chapter will focus on the way immigrants experienced and interpreted these migration policies, covering the period from the beginning of the application process to the trans-Atlantic voyage and arrival in North America.

While governmental eligibility criteria seem clear in their definition of admissible classes based on economic need and racial preferences defined in Canada's "absorptive capacity," the application of these policies was significantly more complex and certainly not uniform. Canadian immigration officers abroad had far-reaching powers to decide on a case-by-case basis. Nevertheless, despite the differences in the backgrounds of ethnic Germans and German nationals, the range of different immigration categories, and the gender biases in the application process, the personal interview and medical examination at the visa offices, as well as the trans-Atlantic voyage, first impressions of Canada, and finally the long train ride to their destinations were all part of a shared experience of immigrants to North America in the 1940s and 1950s.

As Canada gradually relaxed its immigration regulations for Germans, especially the ending of the enemy alien status of German nationals, the number of eligible immigrants rose dramatically. In response to the increased demand, the main Canadian Immigration Mission was moved from Heidelberg to Karlsruhe in 1948 where it remained until J.W. Pickersgill, the Immigration Minister at the time, personally attended the opening of a new office in Cologne on December 4, 1956. Cologne was close to the major population centres in the Ruhr and the German government in Bonn and was well-connected to the rest of West Germany by road and rail. Other Canadian visa offices operated in Hannover from 1951 to 1956 and in Bremen from 1953 to 1955, while offices opened in Hamburg and Munich in 1954, West Berlin in 1955, and finally Stuttgart in 1956.<sup>1</sup> These offices remained open during the period under consideration. All visa applications from Germany had to be sent to one of these locations where Canadian officers assessed the eligibility and suitability of the applicants.

In addition to a detailed application form asking for personal details, including all the places of residence, affiliations with political organizations, and occupations, potential immigrants had to submit birth certificates and a police background check. Persons under the age of 21, like Frank Oberle, also needed a signed parental consent.<sup>2</sup> In addition, during the interview, Canadian officials inquired into the applicants' Nazi past. As the Cold War developed, however, the focus increasingly shifted towards rejecting candidates suspected of leftist leanings, as in the case Heinz Benthin, while some former

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<sup>1</sup> Freda Hawkins, *Canada and Immigration. Public Policy and Public Concern*. (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988), 243.

<sup>2</sup> Frank Oberle, *Finding Home. A War Child's Journey to Peace*. (Surrey, BC: Heritage House, 2004), 161–167. Also Henry Less Interview, Black Creek, BC, April 21, 2006. He had just turned 18 when he immigrated to Canada.

members of Nazi organizations, including Richard Reiter, were allowed to immigrate to Canada.<sup>3</sup>

Before 1950, displaced persons and ethnic German immigrants to Canada could apply either under the close family scheme in which relatives legally residing in Canada sponsored them or as agricultural labourers.<sup>4</sup> These two categories were based on the regulations of the interwar period. After 1950, given Canada's changing economic focus, which was shifting from agriculture to resource extraction and a strengthening industrial base, Ottawa created a third general category under which it increasingly accepted applications of miners, industrial workers, and tradesmen.<sup>5</sup>

These three general categories, in principle, still exist in Canadian immigration policy today. First, family sponsorship allowed Canadian citizens and landed immigrants to bring close relatives to North America if they paid the travel expenses and guaranteed support for them. The second category included refugee movements and the humanitarian sponsorship of Germans by religious organizations under the umbrella of the CCCRR to fill labour shortages in agriculture. This was initially only open to ethnic Germans, but in September 1950, it was extended to German nationals. The third category consisted of independent immigrants admitted on the basis of their job skills. This last group also included those who entered as part of the bulk orders for domestic service, Canadian

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<sup>3</sup> The examples of Heinz Benthin and Richard Reiter are discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

<sup>4</sup> Landesarchiv Nordrhein-Westfalen, Hauptstaatsarchiv (hereafter HStA) Düsseldorf, NW58, vol. 206, Unterlagen für die Auswanderer-Beratung. Einwanderungsbestimmungen für Kanada, Bremen, December 8, 1948.

<sup>5</sup> Newspaper article "Ruhrarbeiter wandern aus," *Deutsches Zeitarchiv*, Hamburg, May 7, 1951, excerpt HStA Düsseldorf, NW58, vol. 234. Also Frans J. Schryer found a similar development among Dutch immigrants. While almost all new arrivals from the Netherlands were agriculturalists in the late 1940s, by 1955, this number had dropped to under 20%. Meanwhile, the percentage of industrial workers increased from 4.8 in 1948 to a high of 32.8 in 1954 before declining slightly in the following years. See Frans J. Schryer, *The Netherlandic Presence in Ontario. Pillars, Class, and Dutch Ethnicity*. (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 1998), 44–45.

industry, and agriculture.<sup>6</sup> Industry and the government usually supported these bulk orders with loans and employment guarantees.

### **7.1 Visa application procedure**

Given the substantial immigration of Germans from Eastern Europe in the interwar period, family sponsorship was the most common way for refugees to enter Canada in the late 1940s and into the 1950s, creating patterns of chain migration.<sup>7</sup> Initially, in 1947, only ethnic Germans who had not accepted German citizenship and had not served in the German military were eligible for sponsorship, though Ottawa later relaxed some of these categories. The family sponsorship application had to be initiated by a close relative in Canada who ordered the necessary forms from a local immigration office. Then, the relatives had to provide the exact birth dates and occupations as well as the whereabouts of the potential immigrant between 1939 and May 1945. If the Immigration Branch approved of the candidates, it would send a note to the Canadian Immigration Mission in Heidelberg which would enter the names into a so-called “Master List.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Citizenship and Immigration Canada, *Application for Permanent Residence*, Information booklet IMM EG7000 (12-2004), 3. Today, these classes are: “Family Class Applicants”, “Skilled Worker Class”, and “asylum seekers.”

<sup>7</sup> For cases of chain migration, see especially the Heise family from Poland (West Prussia). Lydia Heise, born in 1936 had been raised by her father’s sister. When her foster parents were sponsored to join a relative in Rutland, BC in 1950, Lydia could not come with them because she had a different family name. Therefore, the foster mother sponsored Lydia and her oldest sister Lily to join them in Rutland in 1953. In 1955, they sponsored their sisters Alice, and later Erika, followed by a brother in 1960. In 1962, their father died, so they brought over the rest of their family, including the mother, their brother Erwin who died in a work accident in 1964 and the twins Rosie and Herbert, born in West Germany in 1949. See interviews with Lydia Ponto, Lilli Grub, and Alice Kropp, Kelowna, BC, October 15 and 16, 2005.

<sup>8</sup> HStA Düsseldorf, NW58, vol. 206, Unterlagen für die Auswanderer-Beratung: Einwanderungsbestimmungen für Kanada, Ständiges Sekretariat für das Auswanderungswesen, Bremen December 8, 1948, 2–3. For Displaced Persons the process of family sponsorship was the same, though the information would be sent to the IRO instead of the CCCRR.



Once entered into the Master List, the papers of ethnic Germans were transferred to the CCCRR in Hannover, which in turn sent a questionnaire directly to the immigrants. If the potential immigrants passed that step, they would have an interview and a medical examination including a chest x-ray at the CCCRR camp in Mühlenberg, near Hannover in northern Germany.<sup>9</sup> The costs for the processing were DM 50.00 per person, in addition to the expenses for travel within Germany, the x-ray, and for the stay at the camps, which varied in time from one to five days.<sup>10</sup> While the applicants had to cover the costs of the processing in Germany, their relatives in Canada paid for the passage, arranged accommodation after arrival, and ensured that the immigrants would not become a liability of the Canadian state. In the context of family sponsorship, the age and occupation of the immigrants did not matter.

Alternatively, ethnic Germans without overseas relatives could directly contact the CCCRR camp in Mühlenberg to ask the organization to find Canadian farmers as sponsors, which would then initiate the process in Canada as described above.<sup>11</sup> Before 1950, the only other option, especially for women, to immigrate was marriage to a Canadian resident. In this case, the wedding had to take place within one month after

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<sup>9</sup> Willi Wanka, *Opfer des Friedens. Die Sudetensiedlungen in Kanada*. (Munich: Langen Müller, 1988), 252–257. Wanka provides a detailed account of the primitive conditions in the former forced-labour camp in Mühlenberg and the difficulties facing the CCCRR when they started processing immigrants in July 1947, ranging from a lack of forms, improvised filing systems, and a lack of fuel in winter. In addition, he mentions the time consuming process of finding persons' names on the "Master List" and receiving the appropriate forms via the Canadian Immigration Mission in London, the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees, and the IRO.

<sup>10</sup> DM 50.00 were about \$12.00 at the time (Can\$1.00 was DM4.20) while German currency restrictions were set at DM 40.00, which Canada asked to increase to DM128.00 in 1952 to provide the immigrants with \$30.00 as landing money. See Bundesarchiv Koblenz (hereafter BA), B106/20618, Kanada 1952–1964, Memorandum, Foreign Office to federal ministries, Bonn, April 28, 1952. The costs to stay in the camp for the examinations was DM 4.50 per day in 1951, see HStA Düsseldorf, NW58. vol. 234, Letter by the Federal Minister of the Interior, Bonn, March 5, 1951.

<sup>11</sup> HStA Düsseldorf, NW58, vol. 206, Unterlagen für die Auswanderer-Beratung: Einwanderungsbestimmungen für Kanada, Ständiges Sekretariat für das Auswanderungswesen, Bremen, October 29, 1948 and December 8, 1948. Also HStA Düsseldorf, NW58, vol. 206, Canadian Government Immigration Service, Canadian Immigration Mission, Karlsruhe, May 1, 1949.

arrival. For example, Richard Nikolaj came to Canada in June 1949 as an underage dependent when his mother agreed to marry her brother-in-law in Canada whose first wife (her sister) had died of cancer in 1942.<sup>12</sup>

On September 14, 1950, by Order in Council P.C. 4364, Canada lifted the enemy alien status of German nationals and made them eligible for immigration on the same basis as other European nationals (except for the British and French who had a preferred position) but all immigrants had to convince Canadian officers that:

- (a) They are suitable immigrants having regard to the climatic, social, educational, industrial, labour, or other conditions or other requirements of Canada; and
- (b) They are not undesirable owing to their peculiar customs, habits, modes of life, methods of holding property, or because of their probable inability to become readily adapted and integrated into the life of a Canadian community and to assume the duties of Canadian citizenship within a reasonable time after their entry.<sup>13</sup>

The regulations were so general that the immigration officers had significant freedom to determine the suitability of applicants.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, with the major manpower needs in all branches of the Canadian economy heightened by the outbreak of the Korean War in the summer of 1950, Ottawa opened the doors widely for immigration from Europe. Ethnic Germans and German nationals without family members in Canada were now able to apply directly to the Immigration Mission in Karlsruhe.<sup>15</sup> In addition Canada actively started to recruit German immigrants for all occupations that could not be filled in Great Britain, by encouraging direct applications to the Immigration Mission in Karlsruhe and

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<sup>12</sup> Richard Nikolaj Interview, Kelowna, BC, October 14, 2005. Richard Nikolaj was born as an ethnic German in Lublin, Poland in 1930. He remained there with his mother until 1947 before being expelled to West Germany.

<sup>13</sup> Order of Council P.C. 4364, September 14, 1950, in HStA Düsseldorf, NW58, vol. 206, Bundesstelle für das Auswanderungswesen, Rundschreiben Nr. 528, Bremen, November 1, 1950.

<sup>14</sup> Michael Hadley Interview, Victoria, BC, May 31, 2006.

<sup>15</sup> LAC MG30-C132, Emil Kutscha Fonds, "Kanadische Regierung-Einwanderungsmission."

by cooperating with German employment offices specifically to attract workers in agriculture, logging, mining, and female domestics for Canadian bulk orders.<sup>16</sup>

Individual applicants had to fulfill five general conditions: they had to provide evidence of their exact background and origins to ensure that they did not belong to a group that was deemed undesirable; they also had to obtain a valid passport, be in good physical and mental health, as well as possess a good character. In addition, independent immigrants had to be able to pay for the voyage to Canada and support themselves until they found employment.<sup>17</sup> However, since the fares for the trans-Atlantic passages could not be paid in German marks and currency restrictions in most European countries made it almost impossible to exchange sufficient amounts into dollars or pounds until the mid-1950s, only very few immigrants were able to pay their own fares.

The only way around these obstacles was to obtain foreign currencies on the vibrant black market, for example by selling illegally produced liquor to American occupation soldiers, or to find a way to cross the Atlantic by working on a ship.<sup>18</sup> Most German immigrants without sponsorship by relatives or from organizations like the CCCRR therefore had to rely on loans from the Canadian government as in the case of Irmgard Siegmüller and Albert Kropp who immigrated in October 1951 with the promise

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<sup>16</sup> See chapters 5 and 6 for more detail on German and Canadian government policy and cooperation.

<sup>17</sup> HStA Düsseldorf, NW58, vol.206, Federal Office for Emigration, "Summary of Immigration Regulations for Canada," Bremen, December 28, 1950, pt. 2, a)–e).

<sup>18</sup> Christian Stieda Interview, Victoria, BC, August 5, 2005. He got a job on a merchant vessel traveling from Rotterdam to Norfolk, Virginia in May 1952. Along the way, he also earned his first \$50.00. As in the example of Heinz M., who tried to get to the United States in the spring of 1951, some people also tried to travel to North America as "blind passengers," [stowaways] see Alexander Freund, *Aufbrüche nach dem Zusammenbruch. Die deutsche Nordamerika-Auswanderung nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg*. (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2004), 169–170. In contrast, the Wegwitz family was able to pay their own passages for five persons because the father had distilled schnapps and insisted to be paid in American dollars when selling it to the occupation forces in Germany. See Emil Wegwitz Interview, Victoria, BC, August 10, 2005.

to accept work immediately after arrival,<sup>19</sup> or future employers such as the Vancouver shoe factory that sponsored Edith Mueller's mother Lydia.<sup>20</sup>

The job contracts signed by these immigrants were usually limited to one year for agricultural labourers and domestic servants, while they could extend to eighteen months, as in the case of the special recruitment of 500–700 miners in 1951. In the latter case, Canadian mining companies covered travel expenses from the port of embarkation to the destination. The employer and immigrant signed a short contract whereby the company guaranteed employment and fair wages for the entire period, while the immigrant promised to pay back the passage loan in monthly instalments. Cancelling the agreement prematurely, required the consent of the Canadian State Secretary for Labour, which gave some security to the immigrants especially since they did not have immediate access to unemployment insurance.<sup>21</sup>

As well as providing the loan for the trans-Atlantic voyage, the Canadian government directly guaranteed the contracts signed by the employers and the agricultural labourers. The loan had to be repaid in full in monthly wage deductions, but the Ministry for Labour waived the train fare from the port of arrival to the destination when the immigrants fulfilled their contracts.<sup>22</sup> Such contracts gave the immigrants

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<sup>19</sup> Irmgard Siegmüller Interview, Vernon, BC, October 11, 2005; Albert Kropp Interview, Kelowna, BC, October 15, 2005. The immigrants had to sign a contract with the Canadian government promising to accept work immediately after their arrival and to have at least \$10.00 deducted from their incomes every month (which amounted to about 15–20% of the wages for unskilled labourers), see BA B106/20618, Kanada 1952–1964, Canadian Government office for Citizenship and Immigration, February 21, 1952, contract form in Appendix B (German version). Also Oberle, *Finding Home*, 175. He remarks here that Germany's currency restrictions allowed emigrants to take only DM 40.00 with them.

<sup>20</sup> Edith Mueller Interview (pseudonym), Kelowna, BC, October 16, 2005.

<sup>21</sup> HStA Düsseldorf, NW58, vol. 234, Note to the State Ministers for Labour of Bavaria, Schleswig-Holstein, Lower Saxony, Hamburg, and Bremen, Bonn, February 23, 1951. Immigrant workers had to pay into their unemployment insurance for at least one year to be eligible for payments, while no insurance schemes existed for agricultural labourers and domestic servants.

<sup>22</sup> BA B106/20618, Kanada 1952–1964, Canadian Government office for Citizenship and Immigration, February 21, 1952, loan contract for trans-Atlantic passage in Appendix B, the contract for the rail fare

guaranteed work, a set minimum wage, and a basic level of protection from exploitation. Nevertheless, as the next chapter will show, especially in the rural areas it was difficult for immigrants to enforce their rights, particularly if they did not have sufficient English skills.

The general contractual conditions were similar for domestic servants. Yet, set at a minimum of \$40.00 per month, their basic incomes were significantly lower than those of agricultural labourers, who earned between \$55.00 in the first month and at least \$70.00 in the fourth and thereafter. In both cases, accommodation and food were included.<sup>23</sup> However, while agricultural labourers could be married and have up to two children (though single status was preferred by most employers), female domestics had to be single, widowed, or divorced. In addition, in a contract signed with the National Employment Service, the employer of a domestic had to provide numerous details with regard to the size of the household, religion, availability of household appliances, and the work expected. Employers also had to agree that he or she would attempt to improve the servant's language skills, as well as knowledge of life in Canada.<sup>24</sup>

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with the Ministry of Labour in Appendix C (German version). To receive a government loan, the applicants had to provide three written references of good character. The referees could be priests, bankers, justices of the peace, or citizens with a good reputation and acceptable to the Canadian immigration officer.

<sup>23</sup> BA B106/20618, Kanada 1952–1964, Canadian Government office for Citizenship and Immigration, February 21, 1952, Appendix E (for agricultural labourers) and BA B106/20618, Kanada 1952–1964, Domestic Service in Canada (Hausarbeit in Kanada), forms, no date. Franca Iacovetta suggests that in addition to the gender bias, there was also a racial bias in recruiting and paying southern European women. For example, Italian domestics did not automatically receive Assisted Passage Loans and were paid a minimum wage of \$35.00, which was below the minimum remuneration for British and Northern European domestics. See Franca Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People. Italian Immigrants in Postwar Toronto*. (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), 34–37. Similar observations are in Christiane Harzig, "MacNamara's DP Domestics: Immigration Policy Makers Negotiate Class, Race, and Gender in the Aftermath of World War II," *Social Politics* 10, no. 1 (Spring 2003), 44.

<sup>24</sup> BA B106/20618, Kanada 1952–1964, Domestic Service in Canada (Hausarbeit in Kanada), forms, no date. The passage in the contract with respect to the English or French skills and general knowledge reads as follows: "Ich werde versuchen, die Kenntnisse meiner Hausangestellten als solche zu fördern und ihr Englisch oder Französisch zu verbessern."

Christiane Harzig argues convincingly that Canadian immigration officials “wanted to pick according to their liking, they also wanted to (re)create, from scratch, the perfect – white – domestic servant... And this perfectly recreated creature would blend in, would become a participant in the continuous building of the Canadian nation within the British frame of reference.”<sup>25</sup> Their minimum wages were sufficient while they were waiting to get married and take their “proper” position in 1950s society. The additional “education” promised by the employers would enable them later to instil Canadian values into their children.

## **7.2 Processing of Applications at Canadian Visa Offices**

No matter under which of the above categories the immigrants applied, the Canadian Immigration Mission made the final decision about their admissibility. If it accepted the initial application of the prospective immigrants and their accompanying family members, all were invited to come in person to the nearest visa office for interviews with an immigration officer and an examination by a Canadian doctor.<sup>26</sup> To deal with the applications of ethnic Germans and German nationals, the director of the Canadian Immigration Mission in Germany, J.R. Robillard, had a staff consisting of twenty visa officers, twenty medical doctors, fifteen security officers, and five labour representatives during his time in office in Karlsruhe from 1952 to 1957. In addition, a local labour force of about 140 worked as translators, secretaries, and the like.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Harzig, “MacNamara’s DP Domestic,” 43–44.

<sup>26</sup> In the general set-up of immigration examinations, Canada and the United States had very similar approaches. For the case of U.S. see Karin Neger-Focke, *Die deutsche Amerikaauswanderung nach 1945. Rahmenbedingungen und Verlaufsformen*. (Stuttgart: Verlag Hans-Dieter Heinz, 1995), 248–311.

<sup>27</sup> William J.H. Sturhahn, *They came from East and West... A History of Immigration to Canada*. (Winnipeg: North American Baptist Immigration and Colonization Society, 1976), 95–96. Hawkins,

Once the applicants arrived at the visa office, they had to go through a three-step process of a civil examination, a security check, and a medical exam. The civil examinations focussed on their backgrounds, including, where applicable, their military service, education, job skills, and work experience, to determine the likelihood of their employment in Canada and integration into Canadian society. Unless they were sponsored by family members, their skills were also important in determining where they might go. As Michael Hadley explained, the geographical placement of immigrants “was not just random. We had ideas of how to build up the economy and how we were trying to build up the workforce.”<sup>28</sup> As a result, industrial workers, for example, were often sent to cities in the industrial heartland of Canada, such as Hamilton, while persons with experience in forestry or mining would often go to British Columbia or Northern Ontario.<sup>29</sup> In addition, the civil examination included the presentation of a police certificate to make sure that the applicants had no criminal record beyond minor digressions such as traffic fines.<sup>30</sup>

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) was responsible for the political interviews. The police constables thoroughly examined the applicants’ party affiliations and Nazi past. By the 1950s, however, the chief concern, according to Michael Hadley, “was for anybody who had committed any offences under the Nazi regime.”<sup>31</sup> This was a change from the 1940s and early 1950s when former members of the Nazi Party or affiliated organizations like the SS were categorically excluded, while by the late 1950s,

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*Canada and Immigration*, 240. Freda Hawkins provides the number of 150 persons in Germany involved in the resettlement of Displaced Persons to Canada by 1952

<sup>28</sup> Michael Hadley Interview.

<sup>29</sup> For example LAC MG31–H39, Kurt von Cardinal fonds, vol. 1, Immigration Correspondence, Letter, Helmut Kadner to German Embassy in Ottawa, December 23, 1957. Also BC Archives, Liesel Schumacher Interview, in: *The Story of the Victoria Edelweiss Club*, 15.

<sup>30</sup> Michael Hadley Interview.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

immigration officers could admit former members who had not been involved in any (documented) offences and war crimes. As a background check, the Canadian visa office sought information from the Berlin Document Centre which held extensive files on Nazi party membership. Following the Gouzenko affair in 1946 which exposed Soviet spies in Canada and the establishment of Communist governments in Eastern Europe and China, Ottawa introduced a more rigorous security screening in overseas immigration offices leading to the rejection of 29,671 applicants in Europe between 1946 and 1958 because of security concerns.<sup>32</sup>

The third and final part of the examinations was a medical test. All potential immigrants aged eleven and older were required to have a chest x-ray taken before they arrived for the examination to ensure that they did not have active tuberculosis. Canadian officials rigorously pursued this policy after cases were detected among the Polish ex-servicemen who immigrated in 1947.<sup>33</sup> The applicants had to bring the negative to the examination together with a radiologist's written report. Canadian doctors then evaluated these results, performed a physical exam, and obtained a thorough medical history from the applicant.<sup>34</sup> "Spots on the lungs" was the most common reason for rejection for medical reasons.

Often, these "spots" were not an indication of active tuberculosis but rather of scar tissue from this disease and sometimes pneumonia. Given the situation during and

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<sup>32</sup> Ninette Kelley and Michael Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic. A History of Canadian Immigration Policy*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 342–343. Applicants' affiliation with leftist and Communist organizations became a growing concern during this period, though certainly not all of the rejections were based on leftist political convictions.

<sup>33</sup> Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 334–335. Also see Chapter 6 for details on the recruitment of Polish ex-servicemen in Italy in 1946 and 1947.

<sup>34</sup> For instructions applicants received with regard to the medical examination, see BA B106/20618, Kanada 1952–1964, Canadian Government – Immigration Mission. Instructions by Medical Officer H.R. Bulmer.



after the war, Europeans frequently had significant amounts of scar tissue. Yet, as Michael Hadley comments, “quite frequently Canadian standards for tuberculosis or for scar tissue on their lungs were quite different from Europeans.” Canadian medical personnel were more likely to interpret these remains as active tuberculosis than German physicians, but “the standard of the Canadian Department of Health had to overrule everybody else.”<sup>35</sup> Thus, many people, especially refugees and expellees, who were more likely to have contracted TB because of a combination of factors related to their flight, like insufficient food or the crowded conditions in camps, were often rejected for medical reasons.

Several interviewees related personal examples. The parents of Leonhard Lange, who was born in a mostly German village in the Ukraine, were rejected in 1949 because his mother had a spot on her lung and was diagnosed with TB. However, they “applied again in 1950 and were accepted that time, which was really amazing since she had tuberculosis, which could break out again at any time. In fact, she had an annual x-ray done right until she died at age 99.”<sup>36</sup> Henry Fehling and his wife were first rejected when they applied together through the United Church, because she also had a spot on her lungs, apparently as a result of childhood pneumonia. In this case, he applied again and came to Canada in 1951 as an agricultural labourer sponsored by the Canadian government. After six months, he was able to pay for his wife’s immigration.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Michael Hadley Interview. For the different assessment of active tuberculosis, see Gerald E. Dirks, *Canada’s Refugee Policy. Indifference or Opportunism?* (Montreal and London: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1977), 172–175. For Canadian doctors, tuberculosis was considered to have healed after two years without symptoms, while the equivalent period in Europe was accepted as one year.

<sup>36</sup> Leonhard Lange Interview, Comox, BC, April 21, 2006. Also Dieter Doberstein Interview, Black Creek, BC, April 21, 2006. In Doberstein’s case, his family was also first rejected in 1953 because his mother had a shadow on her lungs, but they immigrated to Canada three years later after it was confirmed that the shadow had not grown and therefore was not active tuberculosis.

<sup>37</sup> Henry Fehling Interview, Penticton, BC, October 9, 2005.

The main concern of the Canadian immigration officers was to deny entry to anyone who might become a burden to the Canadian government. This is illustrated by stories of individuals who had disabilities but were still employable. Bernd Baumgartel told of his friend Otto who passed the medical examination as completely healthy, even though he had lost his lower leg during the war. As a result, Baumgartel assumes that the doctor did not notice but also recalls hearing that bribes helped some people through the visa application process, which gave him a bad first impression of Canada.<sup>38</sup> However, it is more likely that the loss of Otto's limb did not pose a threat to his ability to become a successful immigrant. Michael Hadley provides the example of a man who "had been hurt in the war so that he had difficulties walking. But if he was, let's say a watchmaker, I would have no difficulty [to accept him], if he was with his family and could get around. The issue was that he would be employable and that he therefore would not become a burden to the Canadian state to provide health services and so on. So, it makes sense for this man to come."<sup>39</sup>

Yet, for occupations involving hard physical labour the health requirements were certainly more rigorous. For miners, for example, the Canadian Immigration Mission provided detailed guidelines which gave preference to young healthy males under 30, but definitely no older than 35 years. They were supposed to be "physically well-developed" with a weight of at least 135 pounds (125 pounds were acceptable if the applicants were short, but strong), with good eyesight and good hearing, little damage to teeth and no

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<sup>38</sup> Bernd W. Baumgartel, *Mit den Wölfen heulen. Deutsche Einwanderer in Kanada erzählen*. (Herdecke, Germany: Scheffler-Verlag, 1999), 262. With regard to bribing immigration officers, J.R. Robillard, the Chief of Immigration for Central Europe with headquarters in Karlsruhe, Germany, stated in the 1970s: "I recalled only one incident where a Canadian visa officer issued visa in exchange for money. The person was dismissed immediately." See Sturhahn, *They came from East and West*, 96.

<sup>39</sup> Michael Hadley Interview.

gum infections, no previously broken bones, no major amputations, etc.<sup>40</sup> Despite this example of miners, in general it was largely left to the judgement of the immigration officers to provide visas to people who, even if they were handicapped or had a chronic disease, would be able to work successfully in their trade or profession and thereby support themselves and their dependents.

Another telling example is the case of Henry Less. His family applied for immigration in 1953, but was turned down because of his father's asthma. The visa officer worried that he could not support his wife, three daughters, and his son. But since Henry had a certificate from an agricultural college, the officer offered him a government loan for his passage and a job on a farm, which later enabled him to bring his parents, two sisters and one brother-in-law to Canada.<sup>41</sup> Since Henry sponsored his parents, his father's asthma ceased to be a reason for rejection. This case also demonstrates that assumed gender roles played an important part in the considerations for admission to Canada. Though in most cases all members of a family beyond school age would work after their arrival to contribute to the overall income, for immigration purposes, a married man was generally assumed to be the breadwinner, while his wife and children were considered dependents.

This gender bias is even more pronounced in the case of Irmgard Siegmüller. Her husband and a few male friends decided to emigrate to Canada without consulting their spouses. In the summer of 1951, the Canadian government loaned him passage money. Irmgard, who "didn't want to stay behind," was told she could not go until her husband

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<sup>40</sup> HStA Düsseldorf, NW58, vol. 234, 17–20. Canadian Immigration Mission to German Federal Ministry of Labour, Bonn, February 14, 1951, 17–20. This letter includes four pages of instructions regarding the medical examination of prospective miners.

<sup>41</sup> Henry Less Interview.

was in a position to sponsor her. She states: “If I had been single, I could go, but not as a married woman. So, I spent two hours at the immigration office in Hannover and finally they allowed me to go within a week or two.” She convinced the officer to bend the rules slightly and provide her with a visa for a single woman and a government loan for her passage. When questioned upon arrival in Quebec as to why her passport stated that she was married while the visa declared she was single, she simply pretended that she did not know how that had happened.<sup>42</sup> The Assisted Passage Loans in the early 1950s did not cover family members. This policy changed in 1956, but even after this date, the immigration service continued to recommend that the breadwinner went first – but it was no longer a regulation.<sup>43</sup>

In his autobiography, Frank Oberle provides a detailed description of his visa application process. Oberle applied to the Canadian Immigration Mission in Karlsruhe and to the South African Consulate in Munich. Shortly afterwards he had an interview with the Canadian Mission in which he was questioned, among other topics, about his language skills and ability to pay the passage. The officer also asked about his parents’ background and their involvement with the Nazi party, while, to his surprise, they did not inquire about his membership in the party’s youth organisations. Satisfied with the results of the interview, the officer told Frank to obtain a police certificate and his parents’ written consent, before sending a final application, because he was still under 21 years old. Once this was done, he had to present himself for a medical examination. He passed, and in mid-1951 at age 19 the immigration office invited him to discuss the final travel

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<sup>42</sup> Irmgard Siegmüller Interview, Vernon, BC, October 11, 2005.

<sup>43</sup> Michael Hadley Interview.

plans to Canada. He received his visa on September 18, 1951, two weeks before he left Europe on the Italian ship *Vulcania*, sailing from Genoa to Halifax.<sup>44</sup>

In sum, Frank Oberle's application procedure included all three elements described by Michael Hadley: the civil examination, background check, and medical exam, though it seems that they were spread out over a longer period than for most other immigrants. The processing usually took about six months, though some people with good job skills and no medical or political concerns received their visas within a matter of weeks, or, according to Albert Kropp, in a matter of four hours while he was on the ship to Canada six days later.<sup>45</sup> The final step for the receipt of the immigrant visa included a consultation about travel arrangements and the destination in Canada.

Since most people did not know much about Canada, as Chapter 5 established, the decision with respect to the destination in Canada was usually dictated by the location of the sponsor or family members, as in the cases of Caroline Leitner, Leo Keller, Willi Godlinski, and many others.<sup>46</sup> However, if the immigrants did not have a direct sponsor or any family members in Canada, the decisions often seemed rather random. For example, Christian Stieda decided to go to Winnipeg just because it was right in the middle of the country. He reasoned that if he did not like it there, he could go east or west to find a better place.<sup>47</sup> Yet it is likely that the immigration officer in charge agreed, because Winnipeg was a good destination in terms of employment opportunities for an immigrant with Christian Stieda's qualifications.

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<sup>44</sup> Oberle, *Finding Home*, 161–167. Oberle's memoirs do not mention when he started the application process but from the chronology of events it must have been either at the end of 1950 or early in 1951.

<sup>45</sup> Michael Hadley Interview. Also Albert Kropp Interview.

<sup>46</sup> Caroline Leitner Interview (pseudonym), Sidney, BC, August 25, 2005; Leo Keller Interview, Kelowna, BC, October 15, 2005, and Willi Godlinski Interview, Vancouver, BC, May 27, 2006. In total, thirty four out of fifty interviewees were sponsored from within Canada, so for most of them the destination was determined by the location of the sponsor / employer.

<sup>47</sup> Christian Stieda Interview.

In the late 1950s, when Ottawa increased its recruitment efforts in Europe to counter declining migration interest, immigration officers like Michael Hadley went on a long tour of Canada to gain first hand impressions of the different regions, its towns and cities, and local industries so they could make better recommendations and explain to the potential immigrants what to expect. In addition, Ottawa sent detailed reports listing open jobs in different cities and districts to the visa officers. Based on these job listings and the applicant's occupational qualifications, the visa officers would make a recommendation in consultation with the immigrant and then enter the destination on the visa.<sup>48</sup> However, some people changed their destinations at the port of entry. Lucia Fallot, for example, was supposed to go to Edmonton but convinced the immigration office in Quebec to change the ticket to Vancouver because her sponsors (and only acquaintances in Canada) had just moved there.<sup>49</sup> Many others later migrated to new destinations within the country.

Despite the careful screening process with personal interviews and detailed background checks, German immigrants frequently applied as agricultural labourers or domestic servants to receive a visa to Canada, with no intention to fulfill the contract terms. When the *Fairsea* arrived in Montreal on June 1, 1953 carrying over 1,000 German immigrants, a majority of whom were agricultural labourers, the German ambassador in Ottawa, Werner Dankwort, wrote to the Ministry for the Interior in Bonn suggesting that the German employment offices should be more careful with their

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<sup>48</sup> Michael Hadley Interview.

<sup>49</sup> Lucia Fallot Interview, Sidney, BC, August 9, 2005. The immigration officer in Quebec initially did not want to change the ticket because the job prospects for her husband Walter would have been better in Edmonton than Vancouver. Walter had serious difficulties to secure employment on the West Coast. In total, only sixteen out of fifty persons interviewed in British Columbia came directly to this province while the remainder settled in BC between a few months after their arrival in Canada to decades later.

selections and impress on the applicants that they had to fulfill their contract obligations. In this context, he also remarked that given the hardship faced by ethnic German refugees with a farming background, “it would be better to recruit agricultural labourers and domestics from this group, rather than accepting tradesmen and steno typists” who apply in this category to get a visa and then return to the professions, for which they were trained, before the end of their labour contracts.<sup>50</sup> That this was a valid concern is demonstrated, for example, by Günther Beck, an accountant from Hamburg, who never intended to work in agriculture, but wanted to improve his English skills.<sup>51</sup>

In the case of domestics from Germany (and very likely from other countries), the misuse of the Assisted Passage Program became so frequent in the mid-1950s that Canadian immigration officials sought ways to weed out those who made false claims. Christiane Herzog reports that “it had become widely known that a number of women used the Assisted Passage Program to get to Canada, only to sneak across the border to join their U.S. soldier boyfriends.” To counter this problem, overseas immigration officers were instructed to “pay close attention to these potential defectors by listening to specific lingo used around the military base, and the medical examiner was asked to check whether women wore underwear that could only be bought in army PX stores.”<sup>52</sup> In addition, domestics also had to take a pregnancy test, not only to ensure that they would not become public charges after immigrating to Canada, but also that they had “good moral standards.” The working conditions of domestics, however, with long

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<sup>50</sup> BA B106/20618, Kanada, 1952–1964, German Ambassador in Ottawa, Werner Dankwort, to Federal Ministry of the Interior, Ottawa, June 2, 1953.

<sup>51</sup> Günther Beck interview, Summerland, BC, October 9, 2005. The farmers who sponsored Günther were friends of his sister and did not expect him to work for them. The immigration scheme was simply a way to bring him to Canada. He found work first in construction and then in the oil industry in Alberta and paid back his loans.

<sup>52</sup> Harzig, “MacNamara’s DP Domestics,” 40. Apparently, the margin of the memo with these instructions bore a hand-written note: “What more can we do!”

workdays and low pay, were often so dissatisfying that many domestics left before finishing their contracts.<sup>53</sup>

### **7.3 The Trans-Atlantic Voyage**

In preparation for departure from Germany, all immigrants had to sell or give away most of their household items and possessions, arrange their finances, and in some cases in the later 1950s also sell their house in the short time between the receipt of the immigrant visa and the departure of the ship. In some cases, this period was only between five days and two weeks.<sup>54</sup> Then they would travel to their port of embarkation, which, in most cases was done by train since very few people in Europe had access to cars.<sup>55</sup>

Though some German emigrants departed from such ports as Genoa, Le Havre, Rotterdam, and Hamburg, the vast majority left from Bremen and Bremerhaven. Of the persons interviewed, more than three quarters left from these ports on the German North Sea coast, while no more than two left from any of the other port cities.

Many of the immigrants leaving from Bremen and Bremerhaven stayed in the *Bremer Überseeheim* (departure facilities) for up to a week before embarkation, for a last medical examination and possible vaccinations. If they travelled as part of the CCCRR scheme, “they were housed in good comfortable camp facilities, the baggage was

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<sup>53</sup> Alexander Freund and Laura Quilici. “Exploring Myths in Women’s Narratives.” *BC Studies*, nos. 105 & 106 (Spring / Summer 1995), 171–172. However, Freund cautions that “the decision to quit domestic service was therefore not always rooted in the real working conditions (e.g. low wages, long hours) but rather in the women’s individual, subjective ideas about the function domestic service had in their immigration experience.” For a more detailed discussion of German domestics in Vancouver see especially Alexander Freund, “Identity in Immigration: Self-Conceptualization and Myth in the Narratives of German Immigrant Women in Vancouver, B.C., 1950–1960.” (M.A. Thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1994). Domestics from other countries also frequently quit their jobs prematurely or fought for better working conditions. See Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People*, 42–43.

<sup>54</sup> Johann Giannelia Diary, Tyrol, July 1956. The family had about six days to get everything ready to travel to Bremerhaven from where they left on the *Arosa Star* on July 18, 1956.

<sup>55</sup> Sturhahn, *They came from East and West*, 93. Similar information from many of the immigrants interviewed.



dispatched by trucks to Bremen, and on the day of departure, buses took the immigrants to port side in Bremen” while trains transported passengers to Bremerhaven.<sup>56</sup> From there, the immigrants would embark on the voyage across the Atlantic.



**Picture 7.1:** Fallot Family taking a meal at the *Bremer Überseeheim* before embarkation, July 1953. The caption reads: “We’re come and we’re going, There really is no other way. Whether we will meet again, It’s only God that will say. There’s something we have found, They call it Love, you see. It’s this that keeps us always bound, Despite the distance, land, and sea.”<sup>57</sup> (Courtesy of Lucia Fallot)

Depending on the ports of embarkation, the routes to Canada obviously varied.

Those who started in Genoa usually stopped at two or three other harbours, for example

<sup>56</sup> Sturhahn, *They came from East and West*, 93. Also Lucia Fallot Interview (and see photo below). The Fallots were sponsored by the Baptist World Alliance. And Johann Giannelia Diary, Bremen, July 17, 1956. The Giannelias were sponsored by the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC).

<sup>57</sup> The same poem was printed on other pictures taken at the departure facilities in Bremen. See picture of “Young men and women departing, November 1951 in Sturhahn, *They came from East and West*, 73. Also Freund, *Aufbrüche nach dem Zusammenbruch*, 332. For a picture of the *Arosa Star* which carried the Giannelia family to Canada, see Kianga Giannelia, *The Giannelias. My Story*. (transcribed family history, 2004), 37. The poem has been translated by Inke Giannelia.

Naples or Lisbon, before crossing the Atlantic, either to New York or Halifax. The two interviewees who departed from Italy both described how they had to deal with the risk of fraud by local hotel businesses, inflated prices, and thefts.<sup>58</sup> None of this was part of the stories told by those departing from any of the Northern and Western European ports. For the vast majority departing from the North Sea ports between Hamburg and Rotterdam, the vessels went through the English Channel, with possible stops in Southampton, Portsmouth, and Le Havre. From there the voyage would go to Halifax or Quebec City, or in rare cases to Montreal or St. John, New Brunswick.<sup>59</sup>

The character of the trans-Atlantic voyage to Canada had certainly changed from the era of sailing ships that prevailed well into the twentieth century.<sup>60</sup> The ocean crossing took approximately a week to ten days, during which generally the worst hardship was sea-sickness. In contrast to the potentially high fatality rates a century before, those travelling in the late 1940s and 1950s were very unlikely to die on the Atlantic. Not only were they mostly young and healthy but also the ships were safer, the accommodation more comfortable, the food better, and finally, the voyage was shorter. On the *Beaverbrae*, for example, only one out of more than 33,000 passengers died

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<sup>58</sup> Oberle, *Finding Home*, 175. Frank Oberle experienced a hotel scam in which a baggage handler that claimed to be from the ship *Vulcania* delivered the baggage to a hotel where the immigrants were supposed to stay and pay for the night, though the ship was ready for boarding later the same day. He was able to get his baggage and passport back by bribing a policeman... Also Bernhard Dinter to Gertrud Dinter, Naples October 26, 1951 (Bernhard Dinter provided a collection of translated letters to his wife written in 1951). He writes: “after overcoming some indescribable difficulties, which unfortunately left me convinced for the rest of my life, that Italians have more than their fair share of crooks, corruption, and inefficiency, I finally made it on board of the ship...” These are the only two accounts of persons leaving from Genoa, available for this study. Since both left within a month of each other in 1951, it is difficult to determine if conditions for immigrants were typical or if they improved in later years.

<sup>59</sup> Accumulated interview results.

<sup>60</sup> For a description of a change in trans-Atlantic voyages from Germany to Canada between 1850 and 1939, see Jonathan Wagner, *A History of Migration from Germany to Canada, 1850–1939*. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006), 59–68 (for the 1850s) and 210–212 (Interwar period).

during the ship's many voyages, and that was not a result of the conditions aboard, but of excessive bravado of a young man who broke his neck.<sup>61</sup>



**Picture 7.2:** Fallot family ready to embark on *MS Fairsea* in Bremerhaven, July 17, 1953. (Courtesy of Lucia Fallot)

Almost all the immigrants who arrived in North America by ship came on the *Beaverbrae* or another passenger ship. There were some exceptions; Christian Stieda, managed to get a job on a cargo ship owned by a friend's uncle. He remembers: "since I didn't have any money, I worked my way over. I even got paid, earning my first \$50 working on this boat. The boat happened to go to Norfolk, Virginia. It went from Rotterdam to Norfolk to pick up cargo. The journey took about two weeks, it was quite

<sup>61</sup> Sturhahn, *They came from East and West*, 81.

long. From there I took the train to come to Canada.”<sup>62</sup> The vast majority of immigrants arrived on direct passages from Europe to Canada and only three persons in the sample flew to Canada as the plane did not become the primary mode of transportation until the 1960s.<sup>63</sup>

German immigrants arrived on a wide variety of vessels. Some were regular passenger ships, like those of the Arosa Line,<sup>64</sup> while others were converted navy vessels, like the *Beaverbrae*, which had been a submarine tender of the German Navy, given to Canada as part of reparations. William Sturhahn of the Baptist World Alliance reported that “Very few *Beaverbrae* passengers were actually in love with the ship. She was small, therefore passengers were more prone to sea-sickness; with a full passenger complement she was crowded. The men’s and ladies’ dormitory beds were stacked two high. The food was adequate and plenty, but not luxurious. She had no recreational facilities. But she was sturdy and seaworthy, ploughing through wind and waves regardless of weather.”<sup>65</sup> When the *Beaverbrae* finished its 52<sup>nd</sup> trans-Atlantic voyage, the last one for the CCCRR, on August 6, 1954, it had brought 33,259 immigrants to Canada and between sixteen and seventeen percent of all German immigrants who arrived between 1945 and

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<sup>62</sup> Christian Stieda Interview. He is one of the few European immigrants at the time who actually came to Canada via the U.S. Also Hans von Hardenberg likely arrived in British Columbia on a freight ship in the early 1950s to work on a farm, see Bernd W. Baumgartel, *Mit den Wölfen heulen. Deutsche Einwanderer in Kanada erzählen*. (Herdecke, Germany: Scheffler-Verlag, 1999), 102–103.

<sup>63</sup> By plane: Brigitte Ullrich (arrived 1956), Irene Salamon (1960), Klay Schumann (1961), personal interviews.

<sup>64</sup> The Arosa Line had at least four ships on the route from Germany to Canada (*Arosa Kulm* (carried 3 persons in sample), *Arosa Star* (3), *Arosa Sun* (2), *Arosa Sky* (1)). Other frequently used vessels were the *MS Fairsea* (4), and *MS Seven Seas* (4). In comparison: *MS Beaverbrae* brought 10 passengers in the sample to Canada while the remaining persons came on a variety of other ships. Accumulated data from personal interviews.

<sup>65</sup> Sturhahn, *They came from East and West*, 81.

1961.<sup>66</sup> The percentage in my own sample is only slightly higher with twenty percent, or ten out of fifty.

William Sturhahn's assessment that passengers on the relatively small *Beaverbrae* were prone to sea-sickness is certainly well documented. Almost every interviewee recalled being sea-sick, regardless of the ship they took. In minor cases, sea-sickness was limited to days with stormy weather, while in more severe cases it lasted for the entire trans-Atlantic journey.<sup>67</sup> Frank Oberle remembers from his passage on the *Vulcania*, which was more than twice the size of the *Beaverbrae* in terms of tonnage: "As we discovered, the month of October was definitely not the best time to be crossing the Atlantic. I, most of the passengers, and even some members of the crew were deathly ill with sea-sickness for the remainder of the trip."<sup>68</sup> Some people, he noted, even slept on deck to escape the ship's motions in the confined space of the cabins.

Given the wide range of ships bringing immigrants to North America, the general accommodation also varied widely. On the *Beaverbrae*, passengers slept in large dormitories for either men or women. No accommodation was available to family groups. Similarly, Bernhard Dinter wrote to his wife about the *Saturnia* of the Italian Line, which he boarded in Genoa: "Instead of the promised five person cabin it turned out to be a vast room in the bottom of the ship holding 42 beds!"<sup>69</sup> On the other hand, some commercial ocean liners like those of the Arosa Line accommodated passengers in cabins. Though the

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<sup>66</sup> Sturhahn, *They came from East and West*, 81 and 318.

<sup>67</sup> Some immigrants were hardly able to eat at all during the voyage. For example Irmgard Siegmüller was so sea-sick on the Atlantic that she refused to get on a boat on Okanagan Lake that would have carried her to her official destination in Oliver, BC. Also Johann Giannelia Diary, July 20–28, 1956. Kianga and Maria Giannelia were plagued by sea-sickness almost for the entire journey from the British Channel to the St. Lawrence while the rest of the family was affected at least for some time.

<sup>68</sup> Oberle, *Finding Home*, 177.

<sup>69</sup> Bernhard Dinter to Gertrud Dinter, Naples, October 26, 1951. In a letter written on October 27, 1951, he tells his wife that the *Saturnia* had 1,550 passengers and 500 crew on this trip. Bernhard Dinter to Gertrud Dinter, In the Mediterranean between Sardinia and Gibraltar, October 27, 1951.



Giannelia family from Austria had only four beds in the cabin for the parents and four children, they at least had a certain degree of privacy on their voyage from Bremerhaven to Quebec.<sup>70</sup> On all the vessels, the food was usually good and plentiful, especially for those who were not overcome by sea-sickness and could therefore enjoy it.



**Picture 7.3:** Pipke family posing in their Sunday best on deck of the *MV Beaverbrae*, July 1950. (Courtesy of Hilda Knopf – front left)

On most of the ships, with the exception of the *Beaverbrae*, the immigrants also had some access to entertainment. For example, on the *Saturnia*, Bernhard Dinter reported that “the daily schedule on board includes Breakfast at 7 am, then Holy Mass and a Concert, Lunch at 11 am, Tea at 4 pm, Supper at 6 pm, and at 8.30 pm a Movie,

<sup>70</sup> Johann Giannelia Diary, Bremerhaven, July 18, 1956. Similarly, Frank Oberle describes his cabin as follows: “The cabin to which I was assigned was small and had to be shared with three or four other passengers. The two bunk beds occupied most of the space, and there was no porthole to the outside.” Oberle, *Finding Home*, 175–176.

Dancing, and Bingo.”<sup>71</sup> Ships like those of the Arosa Line also had dances and music in the evenings. More important than the social events, however, was that English lessons were offered on some ships.<sup>72</sup> Yet very few immigrants took advantage of them, while the length of the trip would have been too short to learn more than the very basics. Most of the immigrants interviewed actually arrived in Canada with little or no English (or French) skills, as will be discussed in the following chapter.

In addition, the ships also offered important opportunities to meet other immigrants and learn more about different regions. Frank Oberle, for example, who had no fixed destination in Canada beyond Halifax, was very eager for information. He remembers that “most of my fellow passengers could be found in groups discussing and sharing whatever information had been imparted to them by contacts in Canada or other reliable sources. Unlike any of the people I met, I did not have a fixed destination, so I was hungry for every morsel of information that might help in selecting a final goal.”<sup>73</sup> In this way, he found out that most of the Italian passengers seemed to be going to Toronto, while many of the Germans were headed to Kitchener, Ontario. Another German couple heading to Vancouver told him that the real opportunities were on the West Coast or prairies, but Frank did not have the money to go there immediately.

Unfortunately for some passengers, the trans-Atlantic voyage was not a break with the past and an escape from national stereotypes. One interviewee reported discrimination by other passengers. She recalls that on the Dutch vessel *Groote Baer* “there were not many refugees... Most of the passengers were Dutch, but they were not

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<sup>71</sup> Bernhard Dinter to Gertrud Dinter, In the Mediterranean between Sardinia and Gibraltar, October 27, 1951.

<sup>72</sup> Johann Giannelia Diary, Southampton, U.K., July 20, 1956 and mid-Atlantic, July 24, 1956.

<sup>73</sup> Oberle, *Finding Home*, 177.

very friendly to us. We sat at the same table with them and they did not even speak to us.”<sup>74</sup> More unpleasant was the treatment of ethnic German CCCRR immigrants on an

IRO transport. A Mr. Ehrenfried wrote of a trip of the *General Stewart*:

The escorting officer, Mr. Gilbert G. Dicks, had a satanic pleasure in making our life on the ship a veritable torture. Although he knew that we were paying passengers, he insisted that our passage was free as in the case of I.R.O. people, and we were, therefore, obliged to work. We had to knock paint, brush and work in the machine rooms from early morning until late at night. Whoever refused was incarcerated. The women had to clean all the time – worse than in a penal institution. Then always the Germans had to do the heavy work while Poles and Hungarians supervised.<sup>75</sup>

After the intervention of the CCCRR representatives in Germany, George M. Berkefeld, at the IRO improved the situation on later voyages. In general these complaints seemed to be isolated issues. Moreover, racial stereotyping was a two-way street. For example, because of his experiences in Genoa, Bernhard Dinter wrote to his wife: “Under no circumstances would I like to have you travel on an Italian ship, because of the language problem and because one has to be constantly on guard for thieves. For me, who has to deal with the realities and risks of the world anyhow, a start like this provides perhaps already a better conditioning than a trip on a well organised and protected North European shipping line.”<sup>76</sup> In addition to the racial stereotyping, he displays a clearly defined traditional family understanding that seems to reflect a “separate spheres” idea in which the man has to deal with the dangerous real world outside, while the wife should remain well protected.

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<sup>74</sup> Erika Riemer Interview, Kelowna, BC, October 17, 2005.

<sup>75</sup> Complaint letter by Mr. Ehrenfried to the CCCRR, April 1951, quoted in Sturhahn, *They came from East and West*, 80.

<sup>76</sup> Bernhard Dinter to Gertrud Dinter, In the Mediterranean between Sardinia and Gibraltar, October 27, 1951. At the beginning of the letter, he also writes: “In Naples a lot more passengers joined us, among them some wild looking gangster types from Southern Italy.”



Though certainly the vast majority of German immigrants came directly to North America, a small minority first immigrated to other countries, before relocating to Canada. As Anthony H. Richmond points out in his study of immigration and ethnic conflict in Canada and Australia, it would be “anachronistic to assume that migrants will settle permanently in a particular country or locality” because of cheap and accessible transportation and an increased global awareness of opportunities elsewhere.<sup>77</sup> Though Richmond’s argument seems strongly based on economic motivations for migration, which is only partly applicable to the sample of immigrants interviewed in this case, his assessment that people did not usually remain in one locality within Canada is certainly confirmed by the high mobility rates among the German immigrants interviewed. Some also moved to third countries, for example leaving Canada for the United States or Australia.<sup>78</sup>

Others first went to other countries and then moved to Canada, including Hans and Mechthild von Hardenberg who had lost their family property in Pomerania at the end of the Second World War. From Germany, they first migrated to Colombia, where Hans worked as a horse trainer, before settling in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia in 1957.<sup>79</sup> Similarly, Helmut Godau went to Great Britain in 1948 to work as a dental technician. There he met his English wife Una. They married in 1950 and decided together to leave Britain, arriving in Canada in February 1952.<sup>80</sup> The latter route from the European continent via Britain to Canada seems not unusual, as a study by J.A. Tannahill

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<sup>77</sup> Anthony H. Richmond, *Immigration and Ethnic Conflict*. (London: Macmillan Press, 1988), 1.

<sup>78</sup> For example Emil Wegwitz has a brother who arrived with the rest of the family in Canada in the 1950s, later went to Montreal, then to Germany, Algeria, and finally settled in Australia; Emil Wegwitz Interview, Victoria, BC, August 10, 2005. Also Heinrich Wessels Interview (pseudonym), Kelowna, BC, October 15, 2005. Heinrich Wessels’ brother decided to move to the United States after immigrating to Toronto first.

<sup>79</sup> Baumgartel, *Mit den Wölfen heulen*, 102–103.

<sup>80</sup> Helmut Godau Interview, Nanaimo, BC, October 21, 2006.

suggests. By 1958 about 25 percent of the European Volunteer Workers who had arrived in Great Britain after the end of the Second World War had migrated to a third country. A majority went to Canada, while one third headed for the United States.<sup>81</sup>

#### **7.4 Arrival and First Impressions of Canada**

While for most persons arriving at the time, the experiences of the trans-Atlantic voyage contained many comparable components, the same is true for the landing at the Canadian port of entry, where all the immigrants had to go through customs and then travel by rail to their final destinations. The following discussion of original destinations in Canada is, of course, strongly biased by the BC focus of this study. This discrepancy is most evident in the case of Ontario, which received and continues to receive a considerable percentage of the total number of immigrants. In this sample, however, only five people originally went to any of the Eastern Canadian provinces.

As mentioned before, in the case of the sponsored immigrants, the destination was determined by the location of the sponsor. Since many of the immigrants originally came as agricultural labourers, almost two thirds (24) initially arrived in the Prairie Provinces and just under one third in BC. By the 1950s, however, more than half of the interviewees had established themselves in British Columbia and by the 1960s three quarters lived here. The remainder arrived in the 1970s to 1990s, usually after their retirement, to enjoy the milder climate of the West Coast and Okanagan Valley.

Nevertheless, the first impressions of the new country, except for the coastline they had seen from the ships that had carried them across the Atlantic, were the

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<sup>81</sup> J.A. Tannahill, *European Volunteer Workers in Britain*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1958), 97–98, cited in: Inge Weber-Newth and Johannes-Dieter Steinert, *German Migrants in Post-war Britain. An enemy embrace*. (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 132.

immigration facilities in Quebec, Montreal, and Pier 21 in Halifax. Those first impressions were not always favourable. For example Frank Oberle describes his arrival at Pier 21 with the following words: “Like cattle we were herded into pens, from which we were selected one by one to be interrogated by an official who offered little in terms of a welcome or helpful information. . . . The uniformed personnel conducting the interviews appeared rude, doing little or nothing to bridge the language barrier separating them from their clients.” He continues that “it became increasingly difficult to crowd out the feelings of disappointment and even fear. The few words of English I had mastered failed me when it finally became my turn to be humiliated by the official representative of the country in which I had invested so many of my hopes and dreams.”<sup>82</sup> In sharp contrast, Bernhard Dinter, who arrived in Halifax in November 1951, found the immigration officials quite pleasant, but then adds that that might have been because he spoke English.<sup>83</sup> The differences in the perceptions certainly reflect the discrepancy between the expectations of the new country and the reality. This was certainly heightened by most immigrants’ inability to communicate effectively in either of the official languages.<sup>84</sup>

Given the limited knowledge about Canada at the time of arrival, the first impressions reflect a combination of personal expectations, but also hopes and anxieties about the future home as well as simple observations. For example about twenty five percent commented on the size of the country, usually mentioning that it took them between three and five days on the train to get to their destinations. Fifteen percent

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<sup>82</sup> Oberle, *Finding Home*, 179.

<sup>83</sup> Bernhard Dinter Interview.

<sup>84</sup> For a detailed discussion of the influence of expectations on immigration and integration, see Hans Werner, *Imagined Homes. Soviet German Immigrants in Two Cities*. (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2007).

commented on the cold, especially when arriving in the winter or spring. But then, the impressions vary widely. About ten percent thought that Canada was a prosperous country, while a similar percentage thought that it was primitive. The most common issue was the surprise, especially mentioned by several male interviewees, that in many places big new American cars were parked outside run-down wooden shacks. Frank Oberle for example writes about his first impressions after landing in Halifax in 1951: “People seemed friendly and well-dressed. They drove large ‘American’ automobiles, leaving me to speculate that, given the flimsy wooden houses in front of which they were parked, Canadians had different values and priorities than the ones to which I was accustomed.”<sup>85</sup> The combination of primitive wooden shacks and shining new American cars is a theme that appeared in almost identical wording in about one third of the interviews with male immigrants, though it was not mentioned by women.<sup>86</sup>

Some people thought that Canada was a place of opportunity and prosperity indicated by the big cars that had largely remained unaffordable in Europe. Others, mostly women, found the country scary and lonely. It was described as beautiful by some or barren by others (each about ten percent). Ten percent thought that Canadians were friendly and generally helpful while five percent thought that people, especially at customs were unfriendly. Bernhard Dinter probably provides the best explanation for the wide range of first impressions when he simply stated, “I was predisposed to like everything in Canada, so I did.” In contrast to Bernhard Dinter, however, a majority of

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<sup>85</sup> Oberle, *Finding Home*, 180.

<sup>86</sup> For example Henry Fehling Interview, Penticton, BC, October 9, 2005. He states “What really amazed me travelling with the train was all these old shacks, old houses, but a brand-new car in front of them.” Richard Nikolaj Interview, “And then you would see a little shack and a great big car.” Waldemar Belter Interview, “...the big cars and the little sheds beside.” Several other male interviewees were also fascinated by the big American cars they saw after their arrival in Canada.

the German immigrants did not speak any English (27) or at most a little bit (11). So, out of a total of fifty, only twelve had English skills that were good enough to communicate effectively, including only two who described themselves as fluent. A good grasp of the language certainly made the adjustment to the new environment significantly easier.

After the arrival in Canada, almost all the immigrants interviewed in British Columbia went west by train and experienced first hand the size of the country that was unimaginable for Europeans. Common stories are the long journeys of three to five days on the old immigrant trains, the vast, flat, and unchanging landscape of the Prairies, and the sparse population along the way.<sup>87</sup> Edith Mueller, for example, relates her mother's feelings on the trip from Winnipeg to Edmonton: "The train was just going on and on and she was scared. It seemed that she would never get to Edmonton. She had no idea how big Canada was and this was the first time she was really scared, though she had already crossed the ocean."<sup>88</sup> Whether it was scary or exciting, the days and nights on the train, more than any map or description of the size of Canada, gave the immigrants a clear impression of the vastness of the country that was to become their new home.

In the early years after the Second World War, Canadian immigration policy made clear distinctions in its regulations governing the admission of ethnic Germans and German nationals. Even when Ottawa revoked the enemy alien status for German nationals, placing them on the same footing as other northern and western Europeans, people could apply for visas under several different categories. Nevertheless, despite the different backgrounds and adjustments to life in Canada, most immigrants share very

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<sup>87</sup> Lucia Fallot Interview and Waldemar Belter Interview. Both report that the trains were so old that the windows did not seal properly so that the soot from the steam engine came into their compartments.

<sup>88</sup> Edith Mueller Interview.

similar experiences of the final interview and medical examination process, the trans-Atlantic voyage, and the first impressions of their new homeland. In fact the wide-spread memories of sea-sickness and the long train ride westward among immigrants essentially make these common experiences an essential element in the postwar immigration identity shared by ethnic Germans and German nationals (as well as most other 1940s and 1950s immigrants to Canada), and stand in contrast to those who arrived in the 1960s and after when planes completely replaced the old immigrant ships. Nevertheless, despite the similarities in the experiences described in this chapter, the map below shows a strong correlation between urban destinations for German nationals and rural / agricultural settlements in the Prairies and Okanagan for ethnic Germans.



**Map 7.1:** First Destinations of German-speaking immigrants in interview sample.<sup>89</sup>

<sup>89</sup> Map created by author based on fifty interviews with German-speaking immigrants in British Columbia. Note that all the immigrants to Manitoba actually went to Winnipeg.

## Chapter 8

**Ethnic support networks in British Columbia**

In a September 1951 memorandum, the German ambassador in Ottawa, Dr. Werner Dankwort, described his impressions of a recent trip to the four western Canadian provinces, where he met with representatives of the German community. He found a noticeable difference between prewar immigrants, who stressed their Canadian identity and avoided associating with German organizations because of the pressures they experienced during the war, and “recent immigrants,” who were mainly part of “German minorities from Russia, the smaller states along its margins and the successor states of the Austrian Empire.” Because they usually knew little, if any, English and hardly anything about the Canadian way of life, they sought to associate with other Germans. Where they were concentrated, as in southern Ontario, the Prairie Provinces and later in British Columbia, they took the lead in cultivating “German traditions” and in running German associations.<sup>1</sup> The ambassador believed their concern for preserving their German heritage resulted from having fought for their identity for generations while living in an alien environment, an impression that may have reflected Nazi ideology’s focus on the eternal struggle between racial groups.

Despite his the questionable reasoning, it should not have surprised the ambassador that ethnic Germans rather than German nationals or pre-World War II immigrants had become the most active members of these associations. After all, before Canada lifted its ban on the immigration of former enemy aliens in September 1950, the

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Werner Dankwort memorandum, Ottawa, September 26, 1951, Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC) MG31–H39, Kurt von Cardinal fonds, vol. 1, Correspondence Immigration II, translation from German original.

vast majority of the Germans who were allowed into the country were Eastern European refugees.<sup>2</sup> Only after that did German nationals begin to arrive in significant numbers.<sup>3</sup> Thus, when Dankwort travelled through western Canada, most of the few German nationals were recent immigrants who were not well-enough established to finance and support their own ethnic clubs and churches even if they had wished to do so. Therefore, the ambassador's observations are at least partly rooted in the nature of the early postwar German immigration to Canada, which was, like the migrations before 1914 and between the world wars, dominated by ethnic Germans.<sup>4</sup>

To some extent, this connection between the different immigration waves is reflected in Alexander Freund's assessment that the postwar movement was "economically, politically, socially, and culturally connected to earlier, simultaneous, and later migration streams."<sup>5</sup> Though patterns of chain migration through family sponsorship support Freund's statement, it needs to be treated with caution when taking Dankwort's observation into account. Certainly, there was a continuation between the two

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<sup>2</sup> For a detailed description of Canada's immigration policy, see Johannes-Dieter Steinert. *Migration und Politik. Westdeutschland – Europe – Übersee 1945–1961*. (Osnabrück: Secolo Verlag, 1995), 79–81 and 105–109. Also Ron Schmalz. "A Statistical Overview of the German Immigration Boom to Canada, 1951–1957," *Deutschkanadisches Jahrbuch / German-Canadian Yearbook* 16 (2000), 8–9.

<sup>3</sup> For changes in Canadian immigration policy, see Angelika E. Sauer, "A Matter of Domestic Policy? Canadian Immigration Policy and the Admission of Germans, 1945–50," *Canadian Historical Review* 74, no. 2 (1993), esp. 255–263; also Donald Avery, "Canadian Immigration Policy Towards Europe 1945–1952. Altruism and Economic Self Interest," *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Kanada-Studien*, no. 1 (1986), 51–53.

<sup>4</sup> For Canada's immigration policy towards German nationals in the interwar period, see Jonathan Wagner, *A History of Migration from Germany to Canada, 1850–1939*. (Vancouver, Toronto: UBC Press, 2006), 164–168; discussion of extent and composition of German immigration between 1919 and 1937: Heinz Lehmann, *The German Canadians, 1750–1937. Immigration, Settlement & Culture*. Translated, edited, and introduced by Gerhard P. Bassler. (St. John's, Newfoundland: Jespersen Press, 1986), 157–160.

<sup>5</sup> Alexander Freund. *Aufbrüche nach dem Zusammenbruch. Die deutsche Nordamerika-Auswanderung nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg*. (Osnabrück: V&R unipress, 2004), 509–510. The Assisted Passage Loan Scheme and the placements of German immigrants on farms in Canada through the CCCRR allowed persons with no prior connections to North America to leave Europe, a change that might challenge Freund's assessment regarding the connectedness of successive migration waves. Nevertheless, some of these new arrivals in turn sponsored family members and friends, or encouraged others by spreading the word about immigration possibilities. Thereby they became part of a broader sponsorship, information, and support network spanning the Atlantic.



movements, but the divergent war experiences also created a major break between the pre- and postwar migrants on the one side and between ethnic Germans and German nationals on the other.

Because of the wartime pressures on enemy alien ethnic groups in Canada, German-speakers who arrived in the interwar years had often distanced themselves from German organizations, adopted English as their home language, and generally integrated into the British-Canadian mainstream. By the time the postwar immigrants arrived, they were already well adjusted and rarely participated in German clubs. German nationals on the other hand were quite aware of their connection to the Hitler dictatorship and the Holocaust, and so were often quite willing to downplay their German identity.<sup>6</sup> Ethnic Germans did not feel the same guilt, but emphasized their expulsion and loss of homeland, while often taking pride in their German identity.

Dankwort's remarks about the absence of earlier immigrants in German organizations must be understood in the context of the experiences of the Second World War and the advanced stage of earlier migrants' integration into Canadian society. Though the anti-German backlash during the Second World War was much less severe than during the First World War and could in no way be compared to the treatment of the Japanese in Canada and in the United States, being German was not something to be proud of or to be made public.<sup>7</sup> The lack of enthusiasm for German organizations among the interwar immigrants should not be surprising.

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<sup>6</sup> For a detailed discussion of the memories of German postwar immigrants and their response to the Canadian mainstream, see Alexander Freund, "Troubling Memories in Nation-building: World War II Memories and Germans' Inter-ethnic Encounters in Canada after 1945," *Histoire Sociale / Social History* 39, no. 77 (May 2006), 129–155.

<sup>7</sup> Daniel Robinson, "Planning for the 'Most Serious Contingency': Alien Internment, Arbitrary Detention, and the Canadian State 1938–39," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 28, no. 2 (Summer 1993), 8–10; Howard Palmer, "Ethnic Relations in Wartime: Nationalism and European Minorities in Alberta during the Second

Many of the new immigrants joined ethnic clubs and churches to ease the transition to the new life in a foreign country, especially in cases where no English skills were present. This was clearly not a motivator for the older immigrants. The virtual suspension of immigration during the depression and the Second World War created two distinct generations of German-speaking immigrants – one that had already integrated into Canadian society, and the new arrivals trying to find their place in their adopted home country. As this chapter will show, formal and informal support networks, including family connections, friendships, ethnic clubs and churches provided crucial initial support for new immigrants, especially for the majority who spoke little or no English when they arrived.

Ethnic Germans were more likely than German nationals to participate in informal and formal support networks because fewer knew any English when immigrating, significantly more had family connections in Canada, and their German identity was formed more through the victimization of the expulsions than the excesses of the Hitler dictatorship. While finding a place to live and a job, most recent immigrants took advantage of available networks, but when their language skills improved, German nationals tended to dissociate themselves from the German diaspora in Canada.

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World War,” Franca Iacovetta with Paula Draper and Robert Ventresca (Eds.), *A Nation of Immigrants: Women, Workers, and Communities in Canadian History, 1840s–1960s*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 455–461.

## **8.1 Accommodation**

After arriving in Canada, the first two tasks for the immigrants were to find accommodation for themselves and their families and then look for work to support their new life in North America. Many also had to pay off the costs of the passage and to sponsor their family members still in Europe. Though experiences vary widely, many men initially found employment and accommodation on farms in the Prairies, in logging and construction camps, and with the Canadian Pacific Railway, while many women worked as domestics, cleaning houses, or in kitchens.<sup>8</sup> Not all married women worked outside the home, because they had to care for small children, and their husbands assumed the role of breadwinner.<sup>9</sup> Yet the number of couples where both spouses contributed to the family income in the 1950s and 1960s was likely higher among the immigrants than the average in either Canada or Germany at the time.

Independent immigrants who were neither sponsored by farmers nor family sometimes faced the difficult situation of finding housing and employment immediately on arrival. This group also included those who were sponsored by religious groups or by the Canadian government but did not have pre-arranged work. Here, the situation was fairly easy for single men who could stay at immigration halls until they secured employment and accommodation, as in the case of Frank Oberle in Halifax and Gerhard Fennig in Winnipeg. Although both describe the accommodation as a “lockup” or a “jail” respectively, at least they had a place to sleep for free and were provided with meals,

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<sup>8</sup> Accumulated results from personal interviews conducted with fifty German immigrants in British Columbia in 2005 and 2006.

<sup>9</sup> Lucia Fallot Interview, Sidney, BC, August 9, 2005. Lucia Fallot’s husband Walter was one of the few men who preferred to be the sole breadwinner of the family, despite the fact that they were struggling in the early years. Even Lucia described his attitude as old-fashioned. However, later she ran a small knitting business out of her home.

“courtesy of the government.”<sup>10</sup> Otherwise, single men often stayed in boarding houses that provided meals and usually took care of their laundry. If they were employed in logging or agriculture, employers provided a bed and meals.<sup>11</sup> Accommodation was usually spartan at best, but food was plentiful, especially in comparison to Germany.

Married couples like Rolf and Brigitte Ullrich would rent a suite or apartment and try to buy a cheap house as soon as they had a steady income.<sup>12</sup> The situation was most difficult for immigrants with large families or with small children, who found it hard to find suitable apartments to rent and usually did not have the means to rent a bigger house by themselves. Those who did not speak any English were in danger of being exploited by exaggerated rents, sub-standard housing arrangements, or both. For example, Lucia Fallot and her husband agreed to lease a fairly big house in Vancouver for themselves and their four small children, with a separate suite to rent out. Yet soon after they moved in, their tenants left because of a rat. This created a major financial burden for the family, especially since Walter’s income was too small to cover the lease and the repayment of the loan for the passage. They finally had to move again, because they could not afford the house without renting a suite to tenants.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Frank Oberle, *Finding Home. A war child’s journey to peace*. (Surrey, BC: Heritage House Publishing, 2004), 179–181. And Gerhard Fennig Interview, Vernon, BC, October 10, 2005.

<sup>11</sup> For the case of living arrangements of an agricultural labourer, see Bernhard Dinter, letters to his wife Gertrud, East Kelowna, BC January 6 and 10, 1952. A detailed description of life in a logging camp on the Queen Charlotte Islands in 1952 is available in Oberle, *Finding Home*, 201–219.

<sup>12</sup> Rolf and Brigitte Ullrich Interview, Victoria, BC, August 9, 2005. After about a year, they bought a cheap house in Vancouver for \$2,500. They did a lot of work around the place themselves and said that after the war years in Germany, they did not mind the lack of comfort in the beginning. “The difference was that because we had experienced the destruction in Germany, having no light, no water, and no firewood, we could do something with a small house like that, because we were used to this in Germany.”

<sup>13</sup> Lucia Fallot Interview. She remembers: “Then another German told us that he was going to the East, but had a spacious house for rent with a suite. We agreed to take it, but when we moved in there, the tenants told us that there were rats in the house and that they were moving out. This was really the low point for my husband and me and we were really homesick.”

Even for English immigrants like Joy Moulds who arrived in Vancouver with her husband and two small children in 1956, three years after the Fallots, finding accommodation and work was not easy. No one was willing to rent an apartment to a family with small children, so the receptionist at the hotel on Granville Street where they were staying suggested that they should try to find a house and rent out rooms for boarders. Following the advice, they rented a three-storey home and turned it into a boarding house, equipped with furniture from the Salvation Army and blankets from the Army and Navy store. Joy Moulds then called the local immigration office and told them that she was in business. She claimed she never had to advertise her rooms since the government's boarding houses did not have enough space.<sup>14</sup> Most recent immigrants moved on within a few weeks or months when they found their own accommodation or moved away for work. In many cases, the immigrants who stayed at the boarding house found work through the immigration and employment offices, and advice from Moulds.

For some immigrants, like Rosa Stuver who arrived in Victoria with her parents as the youngest of five children in March 1952, the housing situation was primitive. For the first year, the children were split up among her father's siblings who had also immigrated to Victoria but had smaller families. Her mother worked in a nursing home in the city and the father was employed by a farmer in Black Creek, north of Courtenay. After a year, the father bought some land in Black Creek and the family moved there. While the parents lived in a tiny two-room cabin, the father turned the chicken shack into the children's bedroom with bunk beds, a potbelly stove, and a table for homework.

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<sup>14</sup> Joy Moulds Interview, Kamloops, BC, October 8, 2005. (She contacted me for an interview to talk about the significant number of Germans who had stayed in her Vancouver boarding house.) Italian women in Laura Quilici's study used a similar approach of running boarding houses to supplement the family income. See Alexander Freund and Laura Quilici. "Exploring Myths in Women's Narratives." *BC Studies* nos. 105 & 106 (Spring / Summer 1995), 172–181.

There was only an outhouse and no running water.<sup>15</sup> Despite an extensive network of relatives on Vancouver Island who helped each other in such ways as getting together to build their houses, because of Rosa's many siblings, the early years were a time of hardship, though she remembers them as a happy childhood.

The situation was easier for new immigrants with relatives in Canada who could provide accommodation. For example Reinhold Ponto from Rumania arrived in Oliver, BC in the summer of 1950 with his parents and two brothers. His father's brother, who had immigrated in 1913, gave them with a little cabin when they arrived.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, Irene Salamon from western Hungary remembers that when she arrived in Winnipeg, her cousin with whom she was staying bought a whole bedroom suite for her, though she had told him that she only needed a mattress to sleep on. "It was nice for me, because I had somebody who took care of me. Most other people had to work really hard when they came to Canada, but it seemed that most things just fell into my lap."<sup>17</sup> Irene Salamon found her first job in Canada when she consulted a doctor. He turned out to be from Salzburg and immediately offered her a position as a receptionist. For most immigrants, finding accommodation and a job were far more challenging than this.

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<sup>15</sup> Rosa Stuver Interview, Richmond, BC, May 26, 2006. Rosa Stuver was born in Treffensbuch near Ulm in Western Germany in 1947 as the youngest child of the Meier family. They were ethnic Germans from the Ukraine who had become refugees in 1943. Rosa's two oldest brothers were born in the Ukraine, the sister in Poland, her youngest brother in Linz, Austria. Rosa was four years old when the family arrived in Canada and started school in Black Creek.

<sup>16</sup> Reinhold Ponto Interview, Kelowna, BC, October 16, 2005.

<sup>17</sup> Irene Salamon Interview, Kelowna, BC, October 14, 2005. Irene's cousin Ferdinand had immigrated to Winnipeg in 1958, sponsored first his wife in 1959, and Irene in 1960.

## **8.2 Employment arrangements**

As in the case of housing, those who arrived with a job offer, or with relatives and friends in Canada, had an easier time than those who did not have such advantages. Yet, given the major labour needs and the support of government agencies such as the settlement division of the immigration department and employment offices (though some immigrants were apparently not aware that they could go there), securing employment was rarely a problem, except for periods of economic downturns as in the late 1950s.<sup>18</sup> Christian Stieda remembers: “When I arrived in Winnipeg [in May 1952], I talked to a number of German immigrants I met there. One of these guys told me that since I had already studied in Germany, I should try to get a job as a draftsman somewhere. I didn’t have this idea myself.”<sup>19</sup> Stieda followed this advice and since he spoke some English, he secured a position as a draftsman within a week. Then he found employment for his father, an engineer, who arrived shortly afterwards. Together they sponsored his mother and three siblings within six months of Christian’s arrival, while the two remaining sisters immigrated independently.

When language was not a major barrier, securing employment was not difficult in the early 1950s. According to Joy Moulds this was also true for those without language skills. She remembers that employers were already waiting on the railway platforms in Vancouver when the immigrant train pulled in. They had brought tools that represented the trades they were looking for, so the challenges of verbal communication would not prevent them from securing the skilled labour they needed.<sup>20</sup> Though Joy Moulds was the

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<sup>18</sup> Information from the fifty interviews conducted in British Columbia in 2005–2006.

<sup>19</sup> Christian Stieda Interview, Victoria, BC, August 5, 2005. A year later, the family was well-enough established so that he could go to university and improve his job prospects after receiving his degree.

<sup>20</sup> Joy Moulds Interview.

only interviewee to provide these details, most immigrants did not experience major problems finding work if they were willing to accept any jobs offered. Yet, in most cases the work was unskilled, under-paid, and often exploitative and dangerous while the risk of sudden unemployment remained a constant threat.<sup>21</sup> While employable wives and children were a decided asset for the family's financial security, more than one small child posed a significant financial burden for recent immigrants because of the mother's inability to work full time outside the home, the need for larger accommodation, and the lack of mobility to find new and better employment.

The example of Rosa Stuiver's large family clearly illustrates the latter case. Similarly, Lucia Fallot comments that "most immigrant families were able to make a down-payment for a house after a year or two, since nice houses in Vancouver were around \$8,000 at the time. It was even easier when there were teenage kids who could earn some money, too. For us, it was more difficult because we had three small children and only my husband's very small income."<sup>22</sup> Meanwhile, Walter Fallot's first job was to cut peat in Richmond but he later found work in an iron foundry. After being dismissed from that job because of a nerve infection, he worked as a labourer in a Vancouver sawmill. For the most part, the fact that they had three and, by 1954, four small children meant that the family had difficulties surviving on the husband's income, especially since he was not working steadily and his jobs were not well paid.

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<sup>21</sup> Writing about postwar German immigrants in Winnipeg, Hans Werner rightly identifies these as major components in the stories of recent immigrants. See Hans Werner, *Imagined Homes. Soviet German Immigrants in Two Cities*. (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2007), 80–81. The following themes "... dominated the working world of immigrants and the pattern of the typical narrative: perceptions of having to start at the bottom, memories of difficult and sometimes dangerous work, stories of sudden unemployment when firms failed, but also memories of the success that often came after a period of struggle."

<sup>22</sup> Lucia Fallot Interview.



The situation was quite different for Reinhold Ponto who arrived with his parents and two brothers in Oliver in 1950. Since all three sons and the father had trades and got jobs right away, they pooled their incomes to build their first house. He recalls: “my brothers and I gave all our wages to my father for two years and he gave us \$2 per week as spending money for smoking and some beer. After two years, we had paid off our passage, built a new house and furnished it, and bought a 1938 car.”<sup>23</sup> Even though the parents and each of the sons could have likely immigrated to Canada on the merits of their own applications, pooling their resources for the first few years allowed them to acquire property and provided a safety network that many other immigrants lacked.

Given the low incomes of most recent immigrants, women’s work and additional income was an essential part of many family strategies, helping with the establishment in the new home country. The story of Hans von Hardenberg, an expellee from Pomerania who came to Canada in 1957 with his wife is more typical. He first worked as an unskilled labourer building the Deas Island tunnel under the Fraser River and after that as an agricultural labourer. In 1959, he and his wife saved all the money they could to buy their first farm of ten acres at Pitt Meadows, fifty kilometres from Vancouver. Then he worked as a car salesperson to make additional money, while the farm provided some milk and cheese for sale. They paid off the farm within 1½ years.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, Dieter Doberstein and Henry Less both bought farms in Black Creek, BC, but continued to work

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<sup>23</sup> Reinhold Ponto Interview. Reinhold, born in 1931 had finished an apprenticeship as a blacksmith in Germany in 1949, about a year before immigrating to Canada.

<sup>24</sup> Bernd W. Baumgartel, *Mit den Wölfen heulen. Deutsche Einwanderer in Kanada erzählen*. (Herdecke, Germany: Scheffler-Verlag, 1999), 103.

as a part-time electrician and a mill worker respectively, while their wives did much of the farm work.<sup>25</sup>

Studying Italians in Vancouver, Laura Quilici found similar patterns of family strategies, suggesting that the experiences of Germans were not unusual for recent arrivals to Canada. In most cases, therefore, work of both spouses was important to overcome the financial difficulties of the early years.<sup>26</sup> Many immigrants who came as singles or as a young couple without children were able to save enough money even in low-paying positions to buy their own houses (or farms) within a few years of arriving, or, depending on priorities, to buy their first cars, which was often more important to young single men.

Single men were the most flexible among the immigrant groups. While single women were usually limited to domestic service, house cleaning, kitchen work, and nursing, even unskilled men could find work in a whole range of occupations and locations, from agriculture to logging, mining to industrial jobs, and construction. Gerhard Fennig's example is typical for a single man. Following an Allied air raid in 1941, his family was deemed dead, so he grew up in an orphanage in Berlin. In 1954, he immigrated to Winnipeg as an unskilled labourer. After almost a month in the immigration hall, he got a job on a hog farm in Manitoba, where he had a room in the farmhouse which was quite primitive, with outhouses and no running water. Gerhard stayed there over the winter, but in May he and another German immigrant from a

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<sup>25</sup> Dieter Doberstein and Henry Less Interviews, Black Creek, BC, April 21, 2006.

<sup>26</sup> Alexander Freund and Laura Quilici, "Exploring Myths in Women's Narratives. Italian and German Immigrant Women in Vancouver, 1947-1961," *BC Studies*, nos. 105 & 106 (Spring / Summer 1995), 172-173. "Most Italian families who immigrated to Canada in the postwar years needed the income of both spouses to achieve their financial goals of security and eventual home ownership." For the importance of women's labour as a contribution to the family economy, see also Franca Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People. Italian Immigrants in Postwar Toronto*. (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), 92.

neighbouring farm decided to hitch-hike to Red Lake in Ontario to work in a mine, because wages were higher. They earned good money, so the following year, Gerhard bought himself a brand-new 1955 Chevy for \$3,600.00, paid in cash – presumably after paying back his passage loan.<sup>27</sup> At this point he felt that he achieved something that he could not have done in Germany. Fennig, of course, enjoyed more flexibility and freedom in matters of job changes than those immigrants who had signed a year-long work contract as agricultural labourers or as domestics to pay back their loans for the passage.

At least in an organizational sense, the housing and work situations were easiest for immigrants who had either been sponsored by a farmer or, in the case of women, were destined for work as domestics. Though the accommodation was usually austere at best, and the work generally unappealing and strenuous, it at least provided a welcome at the railway station by their future employers, room and board, and an immediate small income. Evidence suggests, however, that most people did not finish their one year contract for various reasons – chiefly the lack of work on most farms over the winter, which meant that if the farmers paid them at all, it was at reduced rates. While this was a clear breach of the agreements signed with the government that guaranteed minimum incomes,<sup>28</sup> farmers had little to fear since the immigrants were rarely in a position to complain because of language difficulties and the distance to the nearest immigration office. Besides, the immigrants themselves were often quite happy to leave the positions to find higher paying jobs elsewhere.

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<sup>27</sup> Gerhard Fennig Interview, Vernon, October 10, 2005. Though he worked on a farm first, Gerhard Fennig was not an agricultural labourer with a fixed contract.

<sup>28</sup> Federal Archives in Koblenz (hereafter BA) B106/20618, Kanada 1952–1964, Canadian Government office for Citizenship and Immigration, February 21, 1952, Appendix E. The minimum wage for agricultural labourers around 1950 was \$55.00 for the first month and then went up to \$70.00 in the fourth month and after.

Waldemar Belter's experiences illustrate the problems faced by migrants sponsored by farmers. He arrived in Lacombe, 80 miles east of Edmonton in August 1949. He could have earned \$0.85 per hour working in town, but on the farm he was paid a dollar per day. Since his uncle, who had immigrated to Canada in 1929, had just sponsored his own wife and five surviving children (the depression and war had prevented the family reunion for 17 years), the uncle found another German-speaking farmer, Otto W., to provide the loan. Waldemar Belter had a contract as an agricultural labourer for a year to repay his passage to Canada. In December, the farmer declared that he could not pay Waldemar Belter the agreed \$30.00 per month, and would only provide room and board. Therefore, Waldemar Belter went to his uncle's farm for the winter. He continues his story:

In the spring, the farmer who had sponsored me wrote a letter, telling me to come back to finish my year. ... I stayed with him, trying to finish the year, but it did not quite work out that way. Some time in early July, we had a disagreement and I told him that I considered my year to be over. He told me that he would write a letter that I did not finish my time with him and threatened that I would be sent back to Germany. I told him that that was fine with me. 'If this is how Canada is, I do not want to see any more of it.'<sup>29</sup>

Though the presentation of the conflict might be a sign of a retrospective empowerment in a thoroughly unfavourable position for a recent immigrant, it nevertheless seems that they found a mutually acceptable solution. Waldemar Belter paid back the loan of \$255 he had received for the passage while the farmer agreed to regard the contract as fulfilled.

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<sup>29</sup> Waldemar Belter Interview, Vernon, BC, October 12, 2005. Similarly, Henry Fehling Interview, Penticton, BC, October 9, 2005, an ethnic German born in Bessarabia and locksmith by trade, was placed with a German-speaking farmer in Young, Saskatchewan by the Canadian government. This farmer only employed him until the end of the harvest and then for four months over the winter he worked for a second farmer who had livestock. At the end of this period, Henry quit the job and found work in the local beer parlour for another four months where he picked up his command of English before moving to Saskatoon for employment that was more closely related to his trade.

Yet, after settling the accounts, he had only five dollars left when he went to the bus depot of Lacombe to find work in Edmonton. A German man who was working at the bus station told him that Kurt Schmitt, the German owner of the local beer parlour needed somebody to wash the glasses. He worked there briefly before his employer found out that he was under 21 years old and therefore not legally allowed to even be in the beer parlour. Waldemar Belter then moved to Edmonton where he had a cousin.<sup>30</sup>

Similarly, Henry Less left the farm before his contract was finished. He arrived in Calgary around Stampede time in July 1953. Since the immigration office was unable to contact the farmer who had originally sponsored him, they arranged for another employer. This farmer, however, reduced Henry Less' wages from \$80 to \$60 over the winter months, though it was against the contract. He "found out later that this was an incident that should not have happened. I talked it over with the immigration people later and they told me that if I would have contacted them, they would have straightened that out. But since it was 45 miles away from Calgary and I did not have a car, there was no way for me to go to the Immigration Office."<sup>31</sup> This statement illustrates the vulnerable position of new immigrants.

Though the government guaranteed set minimum wages for agricultural labourers by signing contracts with the farmers, immigrants were not likely to complain if the obligations were not kept.<sup>32</sup> The lack of English skills made it difficult to file a complaint

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<sup>30</sup> Waldemar Belter Interview. For sponsored immigrants not meeting their contract obligations, see also the comments by the German Ambassador in Ottawa, BA B106/20618, Kanada, 1952–1964, Letter by Werner Dankwort, to Federal Ministry of the Interior, Ottawa, June 2, 1953. Also Werner, *Imagined Homes*, 84–85.

<sup>31</sup> Henry Less Interview.

<sup>32</sup> The issue of guaranteed work contracts in agriculture also came up in discussions between the Canadian Immigration Mission and several federal ministries in West Germany in the early 1950s in which the Canadian representatives stated that Ottawa guaranteed set incomes for labourers for the first year. See BA B106/20618, Kanada, 1952–1964, Canadian Office for Citizenship and Immigration, Immigration Office in

and as Henry Less explains, he was neither aware of the possibility to challenge the farmer's decision, nor in a position to get to the office to make his case. Yet, like Waldemar Belter, he left the farm to find work in the city after ten months, using the acquaintance of some other Germans he had met in Calgary while waiting to be picked up by the farmer. In either case, the farmers could hardly complain to the immigration office over an unfulfilled contractual year after reducing the wages of their employees.

Many female immigrants similarly found their employment conditions difficult to bear. Ute Szabo, who had come to Vancouver as a domestic servant through a loan from the Canadian government, left her employer prematurely for reasons largely unrelated to the pay. She had expected to be practically part of the family, as she had been while working as a domestic for an American family affiliated to the occupation forces in Germany, but when she was treated as a lower class servant and was neither allowed to sit at the table with the family, nor to eat the same food that she was serving, she became dissatisfied. She also did not get along with the children. The impetus to leave her job as a domestic after only three months came from other German women she met at the YWCA English classes for new Canadians. Though the classes were taught by volunteers and were not, in her view, overly effective, they offered an opportunity to socialize and to network with other young recent immigrants, mostly from Europe. She followed the advice of her new acquaintances and found a job at the Bank of Montreal.<sup>33</sup>

In contrast to Alexander Freund's findings that German domestics created positive myths of working in a position that could be a "necessary stepping stone" in the

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Karlsruhe to German Ministry of Labour in Bonn, February 21, 1952, see points 4 and 5 for guarantees of minimum wages and one year employment.

<sup>33</sup> Ute Szabo Interview conducted by Monika Schmid, Delta, BC, Summer 2004.

process of successful immigration,”<sup>34</sup> Ute Szabo acknowledged being unhappy as a domestic servant and found another job which, as she says herself, was also badly paid. But she certainly did not feel “incarcerated.” Though Freund’s interpretation of myth-building leaves little agency for the women to change their positions, he later states that “German women (like Italians and Lithuanians) usually quit their jobs and live-in domestic service after a short time.”<sup>35</sup> Ute Szabo is no exception. Her story and those of Waldemar Belter and Henry Less show that if recent immigrants felt exploited or denigrated, even if they had signed a contract, they had the option of leaving prematurely to find other employment.

Evidence from the interviews conducted in British Columbia shows that of ten ethnic Germans who came as agricultural labourers on one-year contracts, seven left before the end of the year, while both German nationals with these obligations left early.<sup>36</sup> Yet, these numbers should not be over-emphasized as a general failure to keep sponsored immigrants at their contractual workplaces. In some cases, sponsoring farmers would recommend that the immigrants leave, as in the case of Mina Schmidt’s husband Walter. After only three months, the farmer told Walter that he should go to either

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<sup>34</sup> Freund and Quilici, “Exploring Myths in Women’s Narratives,” 168. Freund writes on the same page: “The myth was a ‘fantasy’ that allowed the women to withdraw from and not criticize their ‘real’ situation, that of being the exploited, ‘incarcerated’ maid from which they had become alienated.”

<sup>35</sup> Freund and Quilici, “Exploring Myths in Women’s Narratives,” 171–172. For a discussion of Lithuanian domestics’ rebellions against exploitation by employers, see Milda Danys, *DP. Lithuanian Immigration to Canada After the Second World War*. (Toronto: Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1986), 156–160.

<sup>36</sup> Based on 30 interviews with ethnic German immigrants and 20 with German nationals. In total, 25 of the 30 ethnic Germans were sponsored, most (18) by family members already in Canada, religious groups (3), the Canadian government (2), a farmer and a factory (one each). Out of 21 German nationals, 13 were sponsored, almost half by religious groups (6) and the remainder by farmers (3), Canadian government (2), family (1).

Edmonton or Calgary to learn a trade in construction since there was no more work on the farm in the fall and winter.<sup>37</sup>

In other cases, sponsorship as agricultural labourers was set up simply to fulfill Canadian immigration criteria and the sponsors did not expect the immigrant to work on their farm, while the immigrants sometimes had no farming experience.<sup>38</sup> Alternatively, immigrants were officially sponsored by family members in Canada, while other members of the community provided funding. For example Erwin Kirsch was sponsored by his brother-in-law who had immigrated a year before, but the money came from a Japanese gardener who guaranteed work and accommodation for a year by signing an agreement with the Canadian government.<sup>39</sup>

The housing and work situation was generally similar for those sponsored by family members, since the relatives usually organized accommodation and in most cases also assisted with finding a job. Yet, for those sponsored by family to work in agriculture, living conditions were in some cases hardly better than for those sponsored by other farmers. Caroline Leitner, her husband, and small child were sponsored by her uncle, who found work for them on a farm in Pincher Creek, Alberta. There, they were provided with a little unheated hut with an outhouse. Work started at 5:00 am with the milking of cows. The labour on the farm was hard and physically demanding and neither of them

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<sup>37</sup> Mina Schmidt Interview, Kelowna, BC, October 15, 2005.

<sup>38</sup> Bernhard Dinter and Günther Beck Interviews. Bernhard Dinter was a gardener and planned to find a job in his field while he was sponsored by a prosperous farmer in Flatbush, Alberta. His father, who had immigrated to Canada in 1930, had just sponsored his wife and did not have the means to pay for Bernhard's passage. Günther Beck was an accountant from Hamburg who just wanted to come to Canada for a year to improve his language skills. Since the category of agricultural labourer was the only way for him to come to Canada, his sister, who was already in Alberta, arranged a sponsorship through a friend farming in Stoney Plain, Alberta.

<sup>39</sup> Erwin Kirsch Interview (pseudonym), Vernon, BC, October 11, 2005. Similarly, Sara Belter Interview, Vernon, BC, October 12, 2005. Her whole family of seven (her parents and four siblings) were officially sponsored by her uncle in Wetaskiwin near Edmonton in May 1950, but another farmer in the community had paid the passages and set up a contract for repayment with Sara's father after their arrival.



was used to it. In the beginning both were very homesick. Caroline had to work mostly in the house, taking care of five or six children while her husband worked on the farm. Despite their agreement (and the family connection), they stayed for less than a year. Caroline found employment cleaning motel rooms, while her husband worked in a logging camp for a while.<sup>40</sup> Though many of the immigrants interviewed went to the Prairie Provinces first, mostly because of family connections, better job opportunities and a milder climate soon attracted them to British Columbia.

In the early 1950s, there were good job opportunities on the West Coast for men who wanted to establish themselves in agriculture or were willing to work in construction, logging, and sawmills. For women, jobs as domestics, waitresses, house cleaners, and kitchen helpers were available. In addition, Vancouver Island was a paradise for gardeners.<sup>41</sup> Few of these jobs required English skills and for many immigrants one or two years in a low-paying position seemed unavoidable in order to learn the language and the customs that were valuable assets for later careers. In contrast to Alexander Freund's findings, most immigrants in this sample knew that they were exploited and fought for higher wages or sought better employment opportunities once they improved their command of the language and familiarized themselves with practices in Canada.<sup>42</sup> When Walter Fallot was asked to fill in for a higher-paid co-worker at a sawmill in Vancouver, he told his superior that he would only do so if he was also paid the same as the person he was replacing. Though he lost his job as a result, he clearly

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<sup>40</sup> Caroline Leitner Interview (pseudonym), Sidney, BC, August 25, 2005.

<sup>41</sup> Bernhard Dinter Interview. For the experiences of domestics in Vancouver, see Alexander Freund, "Identity in Immigration: Self-Conceptualization and Myth in the Narratives of German Immigrant Women in Vancouver, B.C., 1950–1960." (M.A. Thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1994). Also Oberle, *Finding Home*; and Erna Rudolph, *The Landscape of my Life*. (Garibaldi Highlands, BC: Harmony House, 2004).

<sup>42</sup> Freund and Quilici. "Exploring Myths in Women's Narratives," 167.

stood up for his interests and was not willing to accept exploitation. Henry Less was less radical in his approach. Even though his farm wages were reduced over the winter, he stayed on the farm until the spring, knowing that it would be difficult to find employment before then. When the spring work was about to start, he told his employer that he was leaving and could not even be convinced to stay when the farmer offered to increase his wages from \$80 to \$120.<sup>43</sup> For Henry, this offer reinforced the feeling that he had been exploited by his employer and therefore did not entice him to stay. Both Henry Less and Walter Fallot easily found better-paying employment.

Though Canada was a place of opportunity for immigrants, especially those who were young, healthy, and independent, labour market practices (in particular the lack of job security) and the absence of unemployment or accident insurance posed an added challenge. In July 1952, two years after arriving in Canada, Sara Belter cut off her finger in a walk-in refrigerator of the hospital kitchen where she worked. Not only did she have to pay her own doctor's bill which amounted to two weeks of wages, but she also lost her job because she was unable to work. Three years later she found out that she could have sued the employer for compensation, but at that point she was seven months pregnant, so she and her husband did not pursue it.<sup>44</sup>

The lack of a social security network becomes blatantly clear in the case of the Buth family, Jehovah's Witnesses who lost their four children in a fire in Ottawa (after losing two previously from natural causes, and one was killed by the Russians in 1945).

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<sup>43</sup> Lucia Fallot and Henry Less Interviews. Henry Less told the farmer that if he stayed over the summer, he could not trust that the farmer would pay him properly over the next winter. Similar examples for Lithuanian domestics who left despite belated offers by the employers to reduce the workload and significantly increase the pay in Danys, *DP. Lithuanian Immigration to Canada*, 157.

<sup>44</sup> Sara and Waldemar Belter Interviews. Also Brunhilde Wiehler Interview, Kelowna, BC, October 17, 2005. Horst Wiehler was diagnosed with a brain tumor three years after arrival – he was treated and recovered. Brunhilde Wiehler introduced this information with the words: “my brother-in-law told Horst that Canada can be very good to you, unless you get sick. Of course, three years later, he got sick.”

Though the person who set fire to the house was convicted, no provision was made for the couple who had lost everything in the conflagration. Both suffered heart problems afterwards which made them generally unemployable.<sup>45</sup> They received support from donations received by the German aid society (*Deutscher Hilfsverein*) in Ottawa before they moved to Toronto in 1959. In 1961, the German Embassy advised the couple to get free legal aid in Canada, and to apply for welfare with the city of Toronto to help them out of their desperate financial situation, before closing the file.<sup>46</sup> This, of course, is an extreme example.

Meanwhile, in the context of an accident that her older brother Alfred had around 1958, Rosa Stuver cautioned not to overemphasize the misfortunes that befell some people. She said:

I think sometimes when you have problems and [*sic.*] you emigrate, you cannot just think that the problems have arisen just because you are new and you don't speak the language, or because of this or that. There are certain things that arise – like illness, unhappiness, discontent, sadness – that might look like they are magnified because you are in a foreign country. But in fact, you would have those in any country. You would have those same things happening to you even if you had not immigrated.<sup>47</sup>

Rosa's comment is certainly true, but some of the hardships created by the immigration experience were the result of isolation from support of family and friendship networks available in the homeland, and the institutional safety of the well-developed welfare state in Germany which, after 1949, had far-reaching coverage.

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<sup>45</sup> LAC MG31–H39, Kurt von Cardinal fonds, vol. 1, Immigration Correspondence II, August Buth to German Embassy in Ottawa, Toronto, June 3, 1961 and Kurt von Cardinal to German Consulate in Toronto, June 21, 1961. The Buth family were expellees from Eastern Pomerania who arrived in Canada with the support of the IRO on August 16, 1953. At the time of the fire, August Buth was in Elliot Lake, Ontario, working for a mining company to support his family. His wife Anneliese worked as a waitress in a nearby restaurant and was not home, either. The last information in the file states that August Buth found part-time employment after three years and they had another child.

<sup>46</sup> LAC MG31–H39, Kurt von Cardinal fonds, vol. 1, Immigration Correspondence II, Kurt von Cardinal, German Embassy to August Buth, Ottawa, June 1961.

<sup>47</sup> Rosa Stuver Interview.

### **8.3 Informal support networks**

As many of the examples above have shown, most immigrants were able to draw on family, friends, or even brief acquaintances with other German-speaking immigrants or simply people they met in the street to establish support and information networks for housing and employment. In most cases these were important in easing the difficulties of the early immigration experience, especially in places where no formal support networks existed. It is essential to explore the workings of these various informal connections more closely before turning to the ethnic clubs, choirs, and churches that are part of the formal and organized ethnic networks.<sup>48</sup>

In the context of this study, informal support networks include anything from the very basic information networks shared by immigrants and non-immigrants alike, to family relations and friendships that even offered material support to overcome hardships. Nevertheless, the distinctions between informal and formal networks are blurry, as in the example of the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Victoria, discussed below, where the pastor of the formal institution also provided support that fits into the category of an informal network. The distinction is nevertheless important since German nationals were less likely to participate in the formal ethnic clubs and churches than ethnic Germans, while almost all immigrants, at least initially, made use of informal networks.

The most obvious informal networks are the family and friendship connections that helped to defuse some of the initial difficulties of immigration. Apart from sponsorship, these relations also commonly helped with finding the first accommodation

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<sup>48</sup> For a comparable application of informal and formal help in the context of volunteer work in the United States, see John Wilson and Marc Musick, "Who Cares? Toward an Integrated Theory of Volunteer Work," *American Sociological Review* 62, no. 5 (October 1997), 694–695.

and employment. For Heinrich Wessels and Reinhold Ponto, whose stories are discussed above, the pooling of family incomes and sharing accommodation made it much easier to get established in the new country within a short time.<sup>49</sup>

The interviews suggest that family and friendship connections were more important to many recent immigrants than job security in a place where they did not know anybody.<sup>50</sup> The destination was determined first of all by personal connections, then by sponsors and job offers, and only sometimes by recommendations of immigration officials. Knowledge about Canada generally had no influence on the decision-making process. This sets these early postwar German immigrants apart from those arriving in the 1960s and later, who increasingly had previous knowledge of their migration destination, either from reading about it, or from personal travels.<sup>51</sup>

Apart from the family and friendship connections that operate in any human environment, a number of networks catered especially to the needs of recent arrivals who lacked the language skills to tap into the existing networks in their host societies. Two examples show that the informal support networks transcended ethnic and linguistic boundaries. Remembering her arrival in British Columbia in 1958, Liesel Schumacher recalled:

Luckily, my husband had already made a few German friends before my arrival. They were residents of the area where he worked. It was these people who helped me with practical advice concerning living in Canada. In addition, my Canadian neighbors helped me with my English, correcting my mistakes, and they allowed me to observe their Canadian ways. Now, looking back, I would not want to have missed either of them,

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<sup>49</sup> Heinrich Wessels Interview, Kelowna, BC, October 15, 2005. Also Reinhold Ponto and Rosa Stuver Interviews.

<sup>50</sup> For example Lucia Fallot Interview.

<sup>51</sup> Klay Schumann Interview, Richmond, BC, September 1, 2005. Klay Schumann's brother had already traveled to Vancouver and told him about it. The stories about describing the mountains and ocean had a significant influence on the final choice of destination.

neither the Canadians, nor the Germans. Life has become very rich this way.<sup>52</sup>

Just as German friends and Canadian neighbours helped Liesel Schumacher adjust to Canada, boarding houses like that of Joy Moulds did not simply provide room, board, and laundry service. At times, employment offices would call her to ask if any of her tenants had certain trades. In at least one other case, Joy called an acquaintance to arrange for a job as a gardener for one of her German tenants. She also provided emotional support when her boarders were frustrated with their sometimes exploitative work situations and gave advice how to find work.<sup>53</sup> Ethnic stores such as delicatessens were also important information exchanges, spreading the word about events from movie nights and picnics to the establishment of formal clubs like the Harmonie Choir in Victoria.<sup>54</sup>

Finding work was certainly made easier by such institutions as employment offices, but job interviews remained challenging to immigrants who spoke little or no English. Frank Oberle had his first interview at the Green Lantern Restaurant in Halifax in 1951: “As far as interviews go, this one was notable in that it was mainly a mimed affair. Fortunately, the manager of the place was familiar with enough of the rudimentary skills I demonstrated with my hands to know that I had worked in a bakery before.” Despite the lack of English, he got the job, while the manager “pointed out via the clock on the wall, it would start the following morning at 7 a.m.”<sup>55</sup> Sara Belter was more

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<sup>52</sup> BC Archives, *The Story of the Victoria Edelweiss Club*; Interview with Mrs Liesel Schumacher conducted by Elizabeth M. Mayer, 15 (transcript).

<sup>53</sup> Joy Moulds Interview. Since her first husband had been stationed in Austria with the British Army, Joy Moulds spoke a little German which may be why many of her boarders were German-speaking, though she housed immigrants from all over Northern and Western Europe.

<sup>54</sup> BC Archives, *The Story of the Victoria Edelweiss Club*. Erwin and Leona Koslowski Interview, transcript, 1.

<sup>55</sup> Oberle, *Finding Home*, 181.

fortunate than Frank Oberle in this respect since she could rely on the help of other Germans in securing her first job. She remembers:

After two weeks, I met a girl at the German-speaking Church of God in Wetaskiwin, who had come back from Edmonton. She said that there is a hospital in Edmonton which is looking for female employees. So, I went to Edmonton with her. She arranged another German girl to go with me to the office of St. Joseph Hospital on White Ave. in Edmonton. That was my first job, starting right the next day. I had room and board, sharing with two other girls. I was very happy to have a job.<sup>56</sup>

While Frank Oberle's support was limited to the help from the employment office, Sara Belter used an informal network relying on German-speaking acquaintances who were sufficiently familiar with conditions in Canada to have information on jobs and know enough English to act as translators at job interviews.

Irmgard Siegmüller received even more help from Hedi Lattey when she got off the train in Vernon in October 1951. She recalls her arrival as follows: "The gentleman from the train took me across the street. At that time this was the unemployment office. Of course, I didn't speak any English and they didn't know what to do with me. So, one gentleman called Mrs. Lattey to translate. So I explained to her what had happened and that I was looking for my husband who was somewhere in the area."<sup>57</sup> Hedi Lattey not only put Irmgard up in her own house but also arranged for a local newspaper to publish the story. Within a day, her husband had heard that his wife had arrived prematurely and the *Vancouver Sun* was arranging (and covering) the reunion of the couple. In addition, Hedi Lattey's husband "rescued" Irmgard and her husband from an exploitative work setting on a mink farm near Salmon Arm, while Hedi continued to find employment for

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<sup>56</sup> Sara Belter Interview.

<sup>57</sup> Irmgard Siegmüller Interview. Also Hedi Lattey Interview, Vernon, BC, October 12, 2005. Hedi Lattey, born in Berlin in 1913 had arrived in Canada in 1944, via Britain, Brazil, Barbados, and Bermuda. She had been a resident of Vernon since 1948. Hedi Lattey and Irmgard Siegmüller remained friends thereafter.

Irmgard as a house cleaner and later as a waitress. This informal connection that soon developed into a lasting friendship was very important for Irmgard's introduction to Canada. In her own words: "What would I have done, standing at the train station without speaking a word of English and didn't know where to go? So the Latteys really helped me out and I am forever grateful."<sup>58</sup>

That these ad hoc ethnic networks were very important, especially because of the wide-spread lack of English skills, becomes clear when assessing the self-declared language abilities of the recent immigrants. Out of fifty interviewees, twenty-seven said that they did not speak a single word of English, while an additional eleven only knew a few words, but not enough for any effective communication. Ten of the immigrants had learned enough English to get around successfully and only two claimed to be fluent when they arrived.<sup>59</sup> In the context of language skills, however, it should not be forgotten that most of the ethnic German immigrants were at least bilingual, speaking the language of their former country of residence in addition to their German mother tongue. Thus, lack of English skills did not necessarily reflect their level of education. Rosa Stuver's mother, for example, had gone to a German-speaking university in the Ukraine, but nevertheless felt treated as an uneducated immigrant in Canada, which she resented.<sup>60</sup>

Language was also an important factor in drawing German immigrants to German employers. Several sponsored immigrants such as Waldemar Belter worked for German-speaking farmers in the beginning, while many others found employment because of the ethnic connection. For example, Frank Oberle was hired by a logger of ethnic German

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<sup>58</sup> Irmgard Siegmüller Interview.

<sup>59</sup> Cumulative data from interviews conducted in British Columbia. I asked the interviewees to rate their own language skills at the time of arrival.

<sup>60</sup> Rosa Stuver Interview.



descent when he arrived in Vancouver (the employer's parents were from the Ukraine and he spoke a dialect very similar to that of Oberle's).<sup>61</sup> Walter Fallot was employed first by the German-speaking owner of a sawmill in Vancouver; later his boss at West Coast Wool Mill, producing Scottish tartans, was also German-speaking.<sup>62</sup>

Though most German immigrants had at least some other German-speaking friends and acquaintances, rarely were they as immersed in German culture as Willy Godlinski. He spent six years in Kitimat making electrical installations at the Alcan aluminium smelter, while boarding with a German family. He remembers that "they put all the Germans, Austrians, and Swiss into one group and placed us under a French-Canadian foreman who did not care about anything as long as we did our work. My friends were also Germans; so for the first two years, I spoke almost always German at work and at home. Though, this was possibly not a good idea."<sup>63</sup> According to Jack Fossum, who was a security officer in Kitimat in 1953, the largest, and one of the first immigrant groups in the company town were Germans, many of them "skilled tradesmen and technicians." Later major groups of Italians, Greeks, and Portuguese arrived to work in the new Alcan smelters.<sup>64</sup>

For all recent immigrants, no matter whether they were ethnic Germans or German nationals, help from other German-speakers who had been in the country for

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<sup>61</sup> Oberle, *Finding Home*, 198–199. On the similarities between the some Ukrainian German groups and those in South West Germany, Hans Werner notes: "Black Sea Germans traced their ancestors to the regions of Württemberg and Alsace, and their everyday language was a thick Swabian High German dialect." Werner, *Imagined Homes*, 179.

<sup>62</sup> Irene Salamon and Lucia Fallot Interviews.

<sup>63</sup> Willy Godlinski Interview, Vancouver, BC, May 27, 2006. Willy Godlinski is an expellee from East Prussia who arrived in Canada at the end of October 1955.

<sup>64</sup> Jack Fossum, *Mancatcher. An Immigrant's Story of Logging, Policing, and Pioneering in the Canadian West*. (Comox, BC: Lindsay Press, 1990), 138. Jack Fossum himself was a Norwegian immigrant who arrived in Canada in 1925. He writes: "The Germans were by far the most numerous. Most of them were skilled tradesmen and technicians who would accept any type of work, pending openings in their own line."

longer was important in the process of establishment. This help was not just limited to finding work and accommodation, it was also important for guidance and introduction to the norms and conventions of the host society in places where no formal ethnic clubs existed. In the early 1950s, that included most of British Columbia, outside of Vancouver and the southern Okanagan.

Where German clubs and churches already existed, as in Winnipeg and Vancouver, they often served as job exchanges. Arnold Hirschhorn, an ethnic German immigrant from Bessarabia who arrived in Winnipeg in 1955, had a very positive experience with the local German Club:

People who had been here for many years helped the newcomers along. You would not always get what you wanted, but you would find a job. When I was laid off at the CPR in the wintertime, I contacted them. ... So, I got a job in Wellington Crescent where all the millionaires lived. It was hard work shovelling all the driveways in the winter for \$2. It was good money. ... There is also a big German Club in Vancouver and I spoke to people there who told me that this club did the same for newcomers. Newcomers were invited to the club and someone knew somebody else who was looking for a labourer, or something. This was how they found jobs.<sup>65</sup>

Yet not every immigrant had the same positive experience with German clubs. Gerhard Fennig, for example, reported that the older immigrants at the German Club in Winnipeg were not very helpful. He recalls that an immigration officer suggested that the city's German Club would be a good place to make connections. "Two of us went down to Logan Avenue, but nobody would talk to us. The only thing they asked was how long we had been here. When they found out that we had been here for only two weeks they

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<sup>65</sup> Arnold Hirschhorn Interview, Courtenay, BC, April 22, 2006.

ignored us. So I figured that if this is the way German people are, then I don't want anything to do with them."<sup>66</sup>

Even worse than being ignored, some other immigrants felt that members of these clubs and churches exploited the new immigrants by offering them underpaid jobs.

Heinrich Wessels recounts that he "finally got a job with a German contractor, but just because he had arrived a little earlier, he took advantage of all immigrants. There is a saying among the Germans: '*Gott schütze uns vor Sturm und Wind und Deutschen, die im Ausland sind.*' That is pretty accurate and with other immigrants this still continues."<sup>67</sup>

Lucia Fallot used the same saying to summarize her experiences with some members of a German Church in Vancouver to which she and her husband belonged for a while and concludes that it was a mistake to attach themselves to the German community in the city.<sup>68</sup>

The Christian churches actively dealt with the influx of German immigrants by establishing new congregations in British Columbia. Catholics, Baptists, and Lutherans founded German language congregations, while the initiative in some cases came from the immigrants themselves. For example, Kitimat attracted many immigrant families from western and northern Europe, including a significant number of Lutherans. Since there were no Lutheran church services at the time, Alcan employee Wilfried Langen contacted the Western Canada Synod in Winnipeg to ask for a church and provided a list of fifty people who would support the establishment of a Lutheran congregation. He estimated that there were about 200 Lutheran workers in Kitimat and an unknown

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<sup>66</sup> Gerhard Fennig Interview.

<sup>67</sup> Heinrich Wessels Interview (pseudonym), Kelowna, BC, October 15, 2005. The saying translates to: "God protect us from storm and wind and Germans abroad."

<sup>68</sup> Lucia Fallot Interview.

number of family members. The vast majority of those listed were German immigrants, but there were also five Norwegians and one Danish couple. In 1955, the Lutheran Church provided \$80,000 to develop a bilingual or multilingual church in Kitimat.<sup>69</sup> Around the same time, the Western Canada Synod investigated the possibility of establishing a German mission in Victoria.

After retiring from the presidency of the Synod, Rev. Julius Ernst Bergbusch accepted the task of building a new bilingual German-English church in Victoria in 1955. Born in Germany in 1897, he arrived in Halifax, Nova Scotia on April 3, 1926, at the age of 29, accepting a call from the Lutheran Western Canada Synod in Winnipeg.<sup>70</sup> There, he stayed with Reverend Martin Ruccius, who introduced him to his future tasks as a Lutheran minister in the prairies (and to his wife).<sup>71</sup> The young couple soon moved to the farming community of New Surrepta, Alberta where they lived until 1949.<sup>72</sup>

As a mission, the Lutheran Church in Victoria initially received financial support directly from the Synod since the recent immigrants did not have the means to pay for their own church. Moreover, because the German government deducts church taxes directly from a person's income, German nationals were not used to donating a percentage of their wages at collections. By 1960, however, the congregation was able to purchase its own building, the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church at the intersection of Cedar Hill Road and Hillside. The church soon provided an early morning service in English (9:00 am), followed by the main service in German (10:30 am).<sup>73</sup> Over time, an

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<sup>69</sup> Correspondence between Wilfried Langen, and Pastors Julius E. Bergbusch and W.A. Mehlenbacher, October 15, 1954 to April 15, 1955, LAC MG30–D213, Julius Ernst Bergbusch fonds, vol. 2.

<sup>70</sup> RG 76 – Immigration Series c-1-b; Volume: 1926, vol. 4, page 60; Microfilm Reel: T-14804.

<sup>71</sup> BC Archives, *Germans in British Columbia Collection*; Mary Magdalene Bergbusch Interview, 6 of transcript.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 9 of transcript.

<sup>73</sup> *Der Synodalbote*, January 1961, 4–5, LAC MG30–D213, Julius Ernst Bergbusch fonds, vol. 4.

increasing number of Sunday school classes were taught in English, until finally only the kindergarten class was in German.

In the 1950s, the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church not only catered to the spiritual needs of recent arrivals in their own language, but the Bergbuschs also provided an informal support network to help them adjust to a new environment, language, and culture. He taught new immigrants English, gave them driving lessons, and accompanied some of them – not necessarily all Lutherans – as a translator to job interviews or on house hunting expeditions. In at least a couple of cases, he supported the immigration of fiancées of members of his congregation through the Lutheran World Relief Organization, and assured worried parents that their daughters would stay well-protected in his parsonage until the wedding day.<sup>74</sup> His wife, Mary Magdalene Bergbusch, remembered in a 1981 interview that when German immigrants arrived in Victoria, the immigration department would inform Rev. Bergbusch so that he could help them find accommodation and employment. One young immigrant family, for example, came to the Bergbuschs only equipped with a tent and \$5 in cash. They had hoped to pitch their tent within walking distance of the harbour as a temporary shelter. They stayed at the parsonage until they found work and could pay for their own place, while neighbours provided them and other immigrants in need with blankets, beds, chairs, and other household items.<sup>75</sup>

Not everyone who took advantage of the social network provided by the Bergbuschs was interested in the church. Mary Bergbusch seemed resentful that “many

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<sup>74</sup> Correspondence between Julius Ernst Bergbusch and Ellen Meyer, February 2, 1958, Karin Nessel, February 26, 1958, and Erwin Nessel, April 1, 1958, LAC MG30–D213, Julius Ernst Bergbusch fonds, vol. 2.

<sup>75</sup> BC Archives, *Germans in British Columbia Collection*; Mary Magdalene Bergbusch Interview, 11.

showed little or no interest or even enmity for the church. But,” she said, “they were very pleased when my husband let them use his car for driving lessons and taught them to speak English so they could find jobs.”<sup>76</sup> The Bergbuschs continued to work with the Good Shepherd congregation for over ten years until 1967, when Rev. Bergbusch retired at the age of 70. With the end of the early immigration wave, the increasing establishment of the members of the community in Canada, and finally the retirement of Julius Bergbusch, the fabric of the church and parsonage largely ceased to be part of the informal network helping new immigrants adjust to the new environment and primarily became a formal ethnic organization providing a meeting place for the established members of the community. But even during the 1960s, the Good Shepherd Church did not remain the only German organization in Victoria as “some of the German immigrants decided to support a German language school and other organizations independent of the church so that people of various persuasions could participate.”<sup>77</sup>

#### **8.4 Formal support networks**

In the Prairies, a network of German clubs existed by the time the postwar German immigrants arrived. In British Columbia, this was largely confined to the Vancouver Alpen Club and the German club in Osoyoos. Most other locations, including Vernon and Kelowna in the Okanagan, and Victoria, had no German clubs or churches. Therefore, many of the early social networks were necessarily limited to family connections and friendships described earlier as part of the informal support networks. Lilli Grub, who had been sponsored by her aunt and uncle, with whom she stayed after

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<sup>76</sup> BC Archives, *Germans in British Columbia Collection*; Mary Magdalene Bergbusch Interview, transcript, 12.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, transcript, 11.

her arrival in the Okanagan, remembers how the younger German people met every Sunday at the Müller farm in Rutland just outside of Kelowna and then drove to the park to play games. Lilli and her sister Lydia Ponto met their future husbands, both ethnic Germans, at a privately organized German New Year's dance in Vernon in 1953.<sup>78</sup>

By the early 1960s, however, German immigrants were sufficiently well established to start their own ethnic organizations. The Grubs, for example, were founding members of the German Harmonie Club in Kelowna in 1964 and members of the choir and German Lutheran Church, while Henry Fehling, born in Bessarabia and a member of a German club in Saskatoon, was a founding member of the Heidelberg Club in Penticton in 1972 and became its treasurer. According to him, there were about 4,000 Germans in Penticton at the time.<sup>79</sup> Sara and Waldemar Belter, born in Volhynia are members of the German-speaking Church of God ("*Gemeinde Gottes*") in Kelowna, while Richard Nikolaj, born in Poland, is a member of a German-Lutheran church and the Edelweiss Club in Kelowna.<sup>80</sup> Apart from these clubs and churches, several other ethnic clubs and choirs, as well as at least one German Baptist church, existed in the Okanagan Valley. As in other places, ethnic German immigrants in the Okanagan Valley were clearly overrepresented in these formal organizations, while several German nationals like Christian Stieda and Günther Beck made a conscious decision not to get involved with German clubs, because they were committed to integration into their host society.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Lydia Ponto and Lilli Grub Interviews.

<sup>79</sup> Henry Fehling Interview. Canada, *Census of Canada, 1961* (Ottawa: Dominion Bureau of Statistics, 1963), table 51 lists a total of 1,586 Germans in the census district that covered the Okanagan. The number likely increased noticeably over the following decade, but a number of 4,000 likely refers to the entire district rather than Penticton itself.

<sup>80</sup> Richard Nikolaj, Sara and Waldemar Belter Interviews.

<sup>81</sup> Christian Stieda and Günther Beck Interviews.

As in the Okanagan, no formal clubs existed in Victoria or smaller Vancouver Island towns in the early 1950s. However, Victoria is a good place to explore the development of the formal ethnic networks because some of its German immigrants started a few ethnic clubs in the late 1950s and thereafter, in addition to the Good Shepherd Church. In the early 1950s, Rolando Sartorius, a German from Mexico who owned Karen's delicatessen in Victoria, organized German movie nights at the Oak Bay Theatre for the recent immigrants.<sup>82</sup> His delicatessen and others in downtown Victoria also served as informal information exchanges that helped, for example, to spread the idea of establishing the Harmonie Choir in 1961 and the Edelweiss Club in 1970.

Despite its relatively small German population, Victoria had had German clubs from its earliest days. In 1861, the "Germania Sing Verein" was founded, followed by the "Liederkranz" in 1883, and later by the "Deutscher Verein," which was reorganized through the initiative of newcomers like Vancouver-based Alvo von Alvensleben, a wealthy promoter who invested funds from Germany in a variety of British Columbia enterprises before the First World War. The club's elaborate parties even attracted guests from outside the German community, including the Premier, Sir Richard McBride. The beginning of war in 1914 ended these activities and von Alvensleben spent the rest of his life in Seattle.<sup>83</sup>

The declaration of war in August 1914 thoroughly destroyed the development of a German ethnic culture in Victoria as elsewhere in the country. The lack of significant

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<sup>82</sup> BC Archives, *The Story of the Victoria Edelweiss Club*. Erwin and Leona Koslowski Interview, transcript, 1.

<sup>83</sup> BC Archives, *The Story of the Victoria Edelweiss Club*; Foreword by Elizabeth M. Mayer, Victoria 1983, ii–iii. On early German clubs in Canada and the "Germania Sing Verein" in Victoria, see also Hartmut Fröschle, *Die Deutschen in Kanada. Eine Volksgruppe im Wandel*. (Vienna: Österreichische Landsmannschaft, 1987), 48.



new immigration in the interwar period and the outbreak of the Second World War forestalled the recovery of a German ethnic identity. Elizabeth Mayer claimed that in Victoria “by 1941, hardly anybody dared anymore to confess to their background: 70 are stated as born in Germany and eight as born in Austria, with 493 as of ‘German racial origin’ in a population of 44,086. By 1951 there would be, however, a grand total of 1,186 Germans and Austrians combined!”<sup>84</sup> Though it seems surprising to see this increase in the census of 1951, at least part of it was possibly due to an early influx of ethnic Germans like the Meiers and later the Wegwitz family, but more likely it seems that after the end of the war, people started to admit to their German identity again.<sup>85</sup> The additional rise in the numbers likely came from Germans who had immigrated in the interwar period and then relocated to the West Coast from the Prairies.

Only in the 1950s, did the influx of recent German immigrants become sufficient to build new ethnic organizations in Victoria. Initially the two delicatessen stores, Karen’s and Conti’s, and the showing of German-language films, served as an informal network for the reviving German community. According to Leona Koslowski – whose husband, Erwin Koslowski, was the long-time president of the later Edelweiss Club – Sartorius was the founder and later treasurer of the “Rheingold” choir in 1954. Dr. Steltzer, an Austrian, was their conductor. Leona Koslowski suggests that “Sartorius’ Delicatessen and the concerts and dances of Rheingold brought the incoming Germans together to a certain extent.”<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> BC Archives, *The Story of the Victoria Edelweiss Club*, iii. Despite the exclamation mark at the end of the quote, Elizabeth Mayer does not attempt to explain the increase.

<sup>85</sup> Rosa Stuver and Emil Wegwitz Interviews. Though not quite as pronounced as during the First World War, many persons of German ethnicity changed their “racial origins” to Dutch or others in 1921 and 1941. See Chapter 2 for more detail.

<sup>86</sup> BC Archives, *The Story of the Victoria Edelweiss Club*; Interview with Leona and Erwin Koslowski, 3.

When Dr. Steltzer left Victoria for California, the choir's activities ended, but the arrival of new immigrants led to the formation of the "Harmonie Choir" in 1961. It was again Rolando Sartorius who gave the impetus. He wanted to donate a small amount of money from the previous group to a new choir, along with a set of German songbooks and some other music. He kept mentioning this to German customers in his delicatessen. Finally, Gretel Adam, who arrived from Edmonton, was confident that she could conduct such an enterprise. Already in her fifties, she had been trained as a singer in Germany and was used to entertaining large crowds. Sartorius allowed her to sing a few German songs with several other ladies in the intermissions of the German films he showed at the Oak Bay Theatre in the 1950s. This appealed to enough people to form a mixed choir in 1961, which started with about forty members. The Harmonie Choir also had help from the Vancouver Alpen Club Choir and immediately joined the North Pacific Singing Federation (Nordpazifischer Sängerbund) that had been established in Bellingham in 1901 and consisted mainly of German choirs in the U.S. The Harmonie Choir was officially incorporated in March 1961 with the stated purpose of cultivating "German songs, especially in mixed choirs for the general good and friendship."<sup>87</sup>

However, Leona Koslowski made a telling comment about German immigrants. After describing them as "isolated individuals in an ocean of English speaking people," she observed that "many of them still hesitate to be involved in an organization with a German name."<sup>88</sup> When the "Harmonie Choir" was founded, only about 40 of the 2,000 ethnically German residents of Victoria joined. It fits the general pattern evident from my own interviews that German nationals were often reluctant to identify with the German

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<sup>87</sup> BC Archives, *The Story of the Victoria Edelweiss Club*; Interview with Leona and Erwin Koslowski, 2.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

community in Canada. The legacy of the war, whether based on self-perception or imposed stereotyping, left a mark in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>89</sup> Nevertheless, the choir was quite successful throughout the 1960s. Soon, the Norwegian Hall, which had been rented for the first Christmas party, became too small, so the very popular dances were held at the Club Tango on View Street until the newly founded Edelweiss Club bought a hall on Niagara Street and offered Harmonie a space in 1971.

The growth and thereby the survival of the choirs was threatened by the fact that they sang in German in a time of significantly reduced immigration from Germany. Erwin Koslowski stated that “language is even a problem with Kinderchöre [children’s choirs], which should train new recruits. [Gretel] Adam had the patience to teach the kids first the language, then the songs. Most professional men conductors refuse to do this. What they want are children with perfect enunciation as well as good voices. And these are few and far between.” However, though he agreed that the future of the choir was at least doubtful, with its aging members, he pointed out that the folk dance group and the carnival group of the Edelweiss Club attracted many young people, though most of them spoke English.<sup>90</sup>

In 1969, Edmund Raeder, a member of Harmonie choir, noticed that the hall of an old roller-skating rink on Niagara Street was for sale and put down \$ 1,000 to hold the building. Then he searched for people interested in a German club to join the project. The Edelweiss Club was founded, “for the maintenance of cultural traditions of the German-speaking population of Victoria and for the advancement of integration into the Canadian

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<sup>89</sup> Cumulative data from interviews I conducted in British Columbia, 2005–2006.

<sup>90</sup> BC Archives, *The Story of the Victoria Edelweiss Club*; Interview with Leona and Erwin Koslowski, 8. This assessment is from the early 1980s, but today most German language choirs have problems recruiting enough new members.

way of life.”<sup>91</sup> It consisted of members of the choir and the wider German immigrant community. The Edelweiss Club and Harmonie Choir merged in 1971.<sup>92</sup> Liesel Schumacher, the President of its Ladies Group, remembers the founding of the club as follows: “one day there were signs at Karen’s about a proposed meeting for a German club. The first meeting took place on Johnson Street, the second one at the Polish Hall. ... There were about 120–150 people present” at the second meeting.<sup>93</sup>

But what had changed over the previous decade that would explain the enthusiasm for the founding of a German ethnic club? Leona Koslowski had said in the context of Harmonie Choir that many people did not want to join an organization with a German name, but 120 to 150 people showed interest at the initial meetings. In addition to a further increase of the German population in Victoria, Schumacher suggests that it was not so much the new ideas of multiculturalism that gave the impetus, but the fact that the Italians had just formed a club and other nationalities such as the Poles had already had one for quite a while. Moreover, the immigrants of the 1950s had gained a foothold in Canada and were not poor any more. Most of all: “People from the prairies came in, and in those areas there were many flourishing German clubs. The new arrivals wanted the same here. The best supporters were and still are Germans from the eastern part of Europe with a long tradition of religious as well as social organizations.”<sup>94</sup> In Liesel

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<sup>91</sup> [http://www.victoriaedelweissclub.bc.ca/index\\_de.php](http://www.victoriaedelweissclub.bc.ca/index_de.php) (February 26, 2004) German version: “zur Erhaltung kultureller Bräuche der deutschsprechenden Bevölkerung Victorias, und zur Förderung der Integration in die kanadische Lebensweise.”

<sup>92</sup> BC Archives, *The Story of the Victoria Edelweiss Club*; Interview with Leona and Erwin Koslowski, 7.

<sup>93</sup> Rolf and Brigitte Ullrich, both born in Germany, were among the founding members of the Edelweiss Club in 1970. Though they have been paying members ever since, they stated in the 2005 interview that they hardly ever go to the club and simply consider the continuation of the club as a good deed for the oldtimers who still need it as a second home. Rolf and Brigitte Ullrich Interview. Also BC Archives, *The Story of the Victoria Edelweiss Club*; Interview by Elizabeth M. Mayer with Liesel Schumacher, President of the Ladies Group of the Edelweiss Club, Victoria 1983, 11.

<sup>94</sup> BC Archives, *The Story of the Victoria Edelweiss Club*; Interview with Liesel Schumacher, 11.

Schumacher's assessment, which coincides with evidence from my interviews, ethnic Germans were important supporters of the Edelweiss Club and other German organizations in British Columbia.<sup>95</sup> In addition, the interviews support her description of the mobility of Germans within Canada, since only one third arrived in British Columbia immediately, while the remaining two thirds moved to the West Coast over time.

Horst Kopplin, the former President of the Edelweiss Club, gives a similar explanation:

Harmonie, in spite of its success as a choir, never wanted to go beyond being an organization for people merely interested in music. But now there was a good influx of Germans from all over Canada who had gained a foothold and were attracted by the pleasant climate of Victoria. Many of them had been members of clubs with a wider range of interests on the mainland. ... These newcomers from the mainland were also less afraid of admitting to their German background than those who had come earlier to our very English city. One personal example: When arriving from Ontario, we thought nothing of going shopping in 'dirndl' and Lederhosen downtown, but Victorians were aghast.<sup>96</sup>

Horst Kopplin and his wife had arrived in Ontario in 1951 and moved to Victoria in 1969. "Having lost my home in the eastern part of Germany after the war,"

Horst Kopplin said, "I was very glad to be able to come to Canada. In northern Ontario the extremes of the climate made people friendly and talkative. We lived in Thunder Bay, and there were also many other newly arrived Germans."<sup>97</sup> There the new immigrants had started playing soccer and soon had a club of their own.

Music had also brought them together.

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<sup>95</sup> Results of personal interviews conducted in British Columbia, 2005–2006. The very fact that thirty of the fifty interviewees were ethnic Germans while only eleven came from within the borders of postwar West Germany (the remaining nine were expellees and refugees from East Germany), suggests very strongly a difference in the self-identification. German nationals, though more numerous than ethnic Germans for the postwar period, were less likely to respond to a call for German-speaking interviewees.

<sup>96</sup> BC Archives, *The Story of the Victoria Edelweiss Club*; Interview by Elizabeth M. Mayer with Horst Kopplin, President of the Victoria Edelweiss Club, Victoria 1983, 19. "Mainland" in this example refers to the rest of Canada, not the Lower Mainland of British Columbia.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

Canadian-born Mary Bergbusch perceived immigrants' adjustment to a new environment merely as finding housing, a job, and learning the language.<sup>98</sup> First generation immigrants themselves, however, focus more on the cultural differences, the loneliness, and the need to find people confronted with similar situations sharing the same cultural background. This need to overcome issues of alienation and isolation, then, was likely the strongest impetus for starting German-language choirs in a time when music was seemingly the only acceptable part of German culture and later, in the 1960s and 1970s, to found other ethnic organizations.

For Liesel Schumacher, it was precisely this aspect of finding people confronted with similar problems created by the adjustment to the new environment that drew her to the Edelweiss Club. It had been very helpful, not so much to recreate the old home abroad, but to deal with the everyday issues. "As a group we have been facing similar problems and therefore have always been able to help each other in finding solutions. It also has helped our children to better understand their German heritage."<sup>99</sup> Her explanation of the club's benefits focussed on the ways in which it eased the integration into Canadian society, rather than cherishing the preservation of language and traditions that seemed to be more important to Horst Kopplin.

In the context of the future of the Edelweiss Club, Kopplin suggested in the early 1980s that it is necessary "to try to instill our traditions and values into the second generation. If we succeed, they will have become Canadian traditions."<sup>100</sup> However, if we understand these clubs only as part of a support network to help immigrants in the

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<sup>98</sup> BC Archives, *Germans in British Columbia Collection*; Mary Magdalene Bergbusch Interview, 11

<sup>99</sup> BC Archives, *The Story of the Victoria Edelweiss Club*; Interview with Liesel Schumacher, 16.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, Interview with Horst Kopplin, 22.

integration or at least with the adjustment to the new country, does it matter if they survive? What values and traditions did Kopplin mean when he suggested that they would become Canadian traditions? The fact that the club house on Niagara Street was remodelled to resemble a Bavarian-style house and that he thought nothing of walking through downtown Victoria with his wife in dirndl and himself in lederhosen, which are not part of the traditional dress of Silesia, but of Bavaria, suggests that a re-shaping of German identity was well under way in North America.<sup>101</sup> So as the German-speaking people of various origins from throughout Europe and the Americas became identified as being part of a perceived cohesive German ethnic group, so their distinct regional identities became overwritten by the common stereotypes originating in Bavaria.

The interviews with Kopplin and Schumacher suggest that the club greatly helped in the integration into Canadian society. Though they emphasized different aspects of the Edelweiss Club's purpose, neither of them saw its existence as a conflict between their German past and their Canadian present. As several interviewees said in one way or another, the combination of the traditions of both countries has enriched their lives and helped them break out of the narrowness of their ancestral homes,<sup>102</sup> or it gave them a feeling of a new home abroad, as Rolf Ullrich would describe the function of an ethnic club. Others, in particular German nationals, made a conscious decision to keep their distance from German organizations, favouring a fast integration into the English-Canadian mainstream.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> On the equation of Germany with Bavaria, see Matthias Zimmer, "Deconstructing German-Canadian Identity," in: Angelika E. Sauer and Matthias Zimmer (Eds.), *A Chorus of Different Voices. German-Canadian Identities*. (New York: Peter Lang, 1998), 31.

<sup>102</sup> For example Lucia Fallot Interview. Also, Helmut Godau Interview, Nanaimo, BC, October 21, 2006.

<sup>103</sup> Christian Stieda, Günther Beck, and Gerhard Fennig Interviews. See Chapter 10 for a more detailed discussion of the self-identifications and integration patterns of ethnic Germans and German nationals.

Dankwort's assessment quoted at the beginning of this chapter that German organizations were often in the hands of ethnic Germans because they had a tradition of preserving their German identity in Eastern Europe was certainly correct for British Columbia. He could have added two other possible explanations. First, since many of the ethnic Germans came to Canada with their extended families, many continued to speak German at home and celebrate traditional holidays. Second, German nationals had a more immediate connection with the Hitler dictatorship and the Holocaust and likely felt at least some guilt or shame like – Lucia Fallot, who “felt bad for being German because of what happened under Hitler.”<sup>104</sup> As a result, they were generally less likely to lead these organizations, if they joined them at all. Ethnic Germans, in contrast, could point to the loss of their homes and the horrors of the trek westward to justify their role as victims of the war, not perpetrators.<sup>105</sup> This is invariably a prominent theme in their life stories retold in the interviews. Because they saw little reason to feel ashamed or guilty of their German identity, they did not readily give up their language and customs. Though distinctions in the self-identifications of ethnic Germans and German nationals are not completely clear-cut, there is a noticeable tendency for German nationals to keep their distance from German organizations, in an attempt to integrate into the Canadian mainstream. As a result, not all German-speaking immigrants made similar use of the developing formal ethnic support networks in Victoria and British Columbia in general.

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<sup>104</sup> Lucia Fallot Interview.

<sup>105</sup> However, Hans Werner claims for the case of German postwar immigrants to Winnipeg that German nationals took the lead in the establishment of clubs while ethnic Germans were rarely interested in these efforts. If that is accurate, then the situation in Winnipeg seems to be distinct from a general trend in other parts of Canada, but it seems that his results are partly influenced by his strong focus on sectarian religious groups like Mennonites and Baptists since he suggests himself that Lutheran ethnic Germans were “instrumental in rejuvenating the [German Club] after the war.” See Werner, *Imagined Homes*, 211–216; quote on 211.



Since ethnic Germans had lost everything in Europe, they were more likely to attempt to re-create aspects of their lost home in North America through churches and clubs. German nationals who could maintain ties to family still in Germany did not have the same emotional need to bring their old traditions with them. Moreover, people born in West Germany usually had the option to return home if they did not succeed in Canada. Rolf and Brigitte Ullrich, for example, even had a return ticket as insurance against failure.<sup>106</sup> Therefore, this combination of differences in migration patterns and self-identification between ethnic Germans and German nationals (with expellees who shared characteristics of both groups somewhere in between) explains the different degrees of involvement in formal ethnic organizations. The level of support through informal networks, especially in the early years after immigrating, was largely determined by the widespread lack of language skills that tied both German nationals and ethnic Germans to other members of the diaspora community in Canada.

Even today, decades after the establishment of the Good Shepherd Church, the Harmonie Choir, and the Edelweiss Club, these pillars of the support network for German immigrants that arrived in Canada in the 1950s still exist. Good Shepherd Church still offers services in German, though the main service is now in English, and Harmonie Choir presently has fifty members.<sup>107</sup> The Edelweiss Club has expanded its clubhouse over the years to offer space for all cultural groups and holds dances, carnival, and film nights. These organizations had been part of a network that helped the immigrants of the 1950s integrate into Canadian society.

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<sup>106</sup> Rolf and Brigitte Ullrich Interview.

<sup>107</sup> <http://www.victoriaedelweissclub.bc.ca/harmonychoir.html> (accessed February 24, 2004)

But with the significant drop in German immigration to Canada after 1957, most ethnic clubs and churches like the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Victoria now cater to an aging group of first generation immigrants. In the 1950s and 1960s, the informal and formal ethnic support networks helped new immigrants with often limited English skills to establish themselves in their adopted homeland. After the first one or two years, which were usually the most difficult for immigrants, the process of adaptation to the host society generally progressed smoothly. Under these circumstances the specific ethnic networks became less important; taking on rather nostalgic meanings in cases where being German had at least a neutral, or a positive connotation.

In general, the integration of those German-speaking immigrants who came to Canada between the end of the Second World War and 1961 was tied to expanding language skills, upward mobility in the workplace, new friendships and club involvements outside of the German community. In addition, their children grew up in a largely Canadian environment and rarely had any experiences of their parents' home countries. The following chapter will focus on the process of integration into Canadian society in the years after the initial establishment in a new country.

## Chapter 9

**Life in Canada – adjustment and integration**

In the early postwar period, for many immigrants, not only Germans, the first one or two years were the most difficult, unless they came to a well-established family in Canada. Living conditions were generally very basic and first jobs often strenuous, underpaid and exploitative, as the last chapter demonstrated. This situation was aggravated by communication difficulties and a general lack of knowledge about the social norms of Canadian society. Yet many German immigrants, in particular the refugees, claimed that they felt at home in Canada within a year, partly because they had more spacious accommodation than in Germany and they finally had enough to eat.<sup>1</sup> Finding a home and employment as well as getting established with the help of informal and formal support network was certainly a first step in building a new life in Canada, but integration included the ongoing process of improving the linguistic and cultural “fluency” that allows upward mobility at the workplace and in society.<sup>2</sup>

However, not everybody remained in Canada. Some immigrants returned to Europe, either because they had never intended to stay permanently or they found it more difficult than expected to get established, others moved on to third countries, but those who stayed made a strong commitment to integrate into Canadian society. The negotiations of their German heritage in a Canadian environment again produced

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<sup>1</sup> Based on fifty personal interviews with German immigrants residing in British Columbia conducted in 2005–2006.

<sup>2</sup> For the concept that successful immigrants not only needed to learn the majority language and therefore become at least bi-lingual, but similarly had to learn the conventions of the majority culture, see Oda Lindner, “Is Bi-Culturalism a Viable Concept? Evidence from German-Canadians,” in: Angelika E. Sauer and Matthias Zimmer (Eds.), *A Chorus of Different Voices. German-Canadian Identities*. (New York: Peter Lang, 1998), 41–47.

different patterns of responses among ethnic Germans and German nationals. Not all immigrants settled permanently in Canada. Some moved on, most often to the United States, in search of better opportunities such as higher-paying jobs. An example is Dr. Steltzner, the Austrian-born conductor of the Rheingold choir in Victoria who left for California in the late 1950s.<sup>3</sup> A few others returned to Germany. While it would be easy to categorize the re-migration to Germany as a sign of failed immigration this is only partly true. Some immigrants only planned to stay long enough to make some money or experience some adventure and freedom for a year, before settling into a regular life in Germany.

### **9.1 Failure and Re-Migration**

Little has been published about the reasons for re-migration in the German context, apart from Marita Krauss' book, *Heimkehr in ein fremdes Land*, which only deals with the return of a few German intellectuals who had gone into exile during the Hitler years and were invited back by the Federal Government in Bonn after the Second World War.<sup>4</sup> The most important reason for the lack of research is the difficulty to find these re-migrants partly since major immigration countries like Canada and the United States do not keep emigration statistics. Thus it is necessary to rely on incidental and anecdotal evidence from personal interviews, research at the National Archives in

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<sup>3</sup> BC Archives, *The Story of the Victoria Edelweiss Club*; Interview by Elizabeth M. Mayer with Mrs Leona Koslowski, Victoria 1983, 1.

<sup>4</sup> Marita Krauss, *Heimkehr in ein fremdes Land. Geschichte der Remigration nach 1945*. (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 2001). The title translates to: "Return (or more literally: homecoming) to a foreign country. A history of re-migration after 1945." Hedi Lattey's parents became part of this postwar re-migration when they returned to Germany from Brazil. Hedi Lattey Interview, Vernon, BC, October 12, 2005.

Ottawa, and data from the Federal Statistical Office in Germany to explore the wide range of different motivations for return migration.

Given the general hardship that many immigrants experienced before they learned the language and got established in Canada, some, especially German nationals, played with the idea of returning to Germany, where most of them still had family and friends. For single immigrants or couples who had left most of their family in Europe, the first Christmas was especially hard and many felt lonely and homesick.<sup>5</sup> Despite such feelings of loneliness during holidays and even more so when confronted with such hardships as unemployment, accidents, or substandard housing, most did not have the means to pay for a return-ticket to Europe.<sup>6</sup> By the time they had saved enough money for the voyage back, they had generally started to adjust to their new home in Canada.

A few immigrants like Kurt Rudt, Helmut Kadner, Erich Roemer, and Wilhelm Zeitler encountered problems, such as unemployment, that they felt were serious enough to ask the German Embassy in Ottawa for financial support to return home.<sup>7</sup> Wilhelm Zeitler had worked in Ottawa as an electrician for a year but had been unable to secure guaranteed employment. Because of this situation, his wife had refused to join him in North America and since the German economy was doing better by 1958, he returned to

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<sup>5</sup> Mina Schmidt Interview, Kelowna, BC, October 15, 2005. Also Frank Oberle, *Finding Home. A war child's journey to peace*. (Surrey, BC: Heritage House Publishing, 2004), 188–189.

<sup>6</sup> For example, Lucia Fallot Interview, Sidney, BC, August 9, 2005. This was certainly not only the case for German immigrants as the example of the British couple Rex and Joy Moulds shows. They reached the low point of their immigration experience when Rex lost his job just before their first Christmas in Canada. Joy Moulds Interview, Kamloops, BC, October 8, 2005.

<sup>7</sup> Note in file of German embassy in Ottawa on Wilhelm Zeitler, May 16, 1958, and correspondence of Helmut Kadner, Montreal, December 23, 1957, Erich Roemer, Winnipeg, May 8, 1958, and Kurt H. Rudt, various letters, Tarzwell, Ont., January – February 1961 to German Embassy in Ottawa. LAC MG31–H39, Kurt von Cardinal fonds, vol. 2. In the same file, is the request for help from August Buth who lost his four children in a fire in Ottawa. See Chapter 8 for details on this case.

Munich for better job opportunities and reunion with his wife.<sup>8</sup> When Helmut Kadner contacted the embassy for help, it only advised him that he was eligible to apply for a Canadian emergency fund for recent immigrants who had not obtained employment in their first year in the country because of the economic crisis that had started in 1957. The embassy also informed the settlement division of the Canadian Immigration Department about his case.<sup>9</sup> His file does not state whether he stayed in Canada or not.

Erich Roemer, who came to Canada with his wife and four children, was faced in 1957 with a double burden of unemployment and having to pay rent for a large home. He had planned to sub-let part of the house to cover some of the costs, but the building was in such bad repair that the Winnipeg health authority declared it uninhabitable. When winter arrived the family had to move into city-owned accommodation and accept payments from the emergency fund for unemployed recent immigrants. As the chief of the settlement division, L.M. Hunter, expected, Roemer found work in the following spring. In May 1958, J.G. Keil, a representative of the Lutheran World Relief, which had sponsored the Roemers, advised the German Embassy in Ottawa that the family had resolved its problems and was no longer thinking about returning to Europe.<sup>10</sup>

However, not all economic problems arose in the first year of settlement nor were they always a result of uncontrollable factors like an economic downturn. Kurt Rudt, an expellee from Danzig, had lived in England with his wife and daughter from 1952 to

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<sup>8</sup> Note in file of German embassy in Ottawa on Wilhelm Zeitler, May 16, 1958. LAC MG31-H39, Kurt von Cardinal fonds, vol. 2.

<sup>9</sup> Letter by Helmut Kadner, Montreal, December 23, 1957 and response by Kurt von Cardinal (undated). LAC MG31-H39, Kurt von Cardinal fonds, vol. 2.

<sup>10</sup> Letter by L.M. Hunter, Chief of Settlement Division to M. Roellinghoff, Second Secretary of the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Ottawa, Ottawa, April 29, 1958; and: Letter by J.G. Keil from the Lutheran World Relief to German Ambassador in Ottawa, K.C. von Widdern, Winnipeg, May 8, 1958. LAC MG31-H39, Kurt von Cardinal fonds, vol. 2. Also Lucia Fallot Interview. The Fallots had similar difficulties with a rat-infested house in Vancouver. See Chapter 8 for more details.

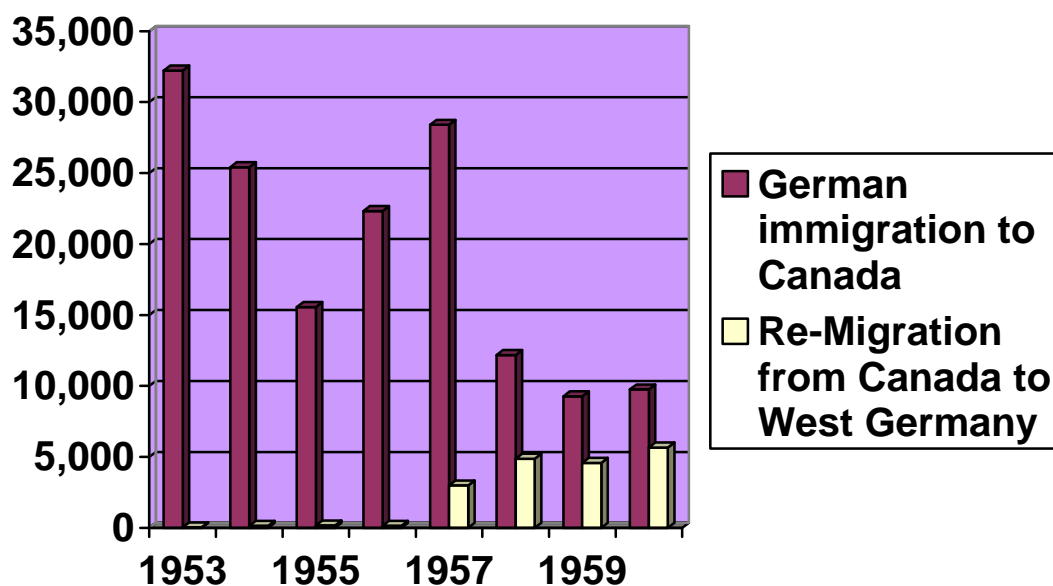
1959, where he had a secure job. In 1959, representatives of the Canadian Pacific Railway encouraged him to come to Canada for better opportunities. He had a successful start as a gardener near Toronto and paid off the loans for the passage within six months. However, shortly afterwards, he made the ill-advised decision to start his own nursery in the small town of Tarzwell in Northern Ontario, where he had to deal with very cold winters and the lack of markets for his products. While the German Embassy reminded him that he must bear a significant share of the responsibility for his situation, it did contact the Canadian settlement division which gave the Rudt family sufficient help that they, too, decided not to return to Germany.<sup>11</sup> Though only one of the four persons who contacted the German embassy in Ottawa for financial support to return to Germany actually left Canada, the problems of finding work and building up a new existence clearly illustrate some of the economically based motivations for the desire to return to Europe. Not all of the returnees did so voluntarily, as one case of deportation for criminal misconduct suggests, though this is the only example that surfaced during the research. Frank Oberle recounts how his countryman, Fritz, stole a significant amount of ore from the Pioneer gold mine near Bralorne, BC, in 1956 or 1957. When he was caught and convicted, he was deported to Germany with his wife and children.<sup>12</sup>

Throughout the first half of the 1950s, the numbers of re-migrants from Canada remained miniscule in comparison with the total number of German arrivals, especially until 1956. In 1953, for example, when 32,232 German immigrants arrived in Canada, only 34 returned to Europe and in 1954 the comparable figures were 25,413 and 144.

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<sup>11</sup> Kurt H. Rudt, various letters, Tarzwell, Ont., January 15 and 17, and February 6, 1961 to German Embassy in Ottawa; Letter by Kurt von Cardinal to Kurt H. Rudt, Ottawa, January 31, 1961. LAC MG31-H39, Kurt von Cardinal fonds, vol. 2.

<sup>12</sup> Oberle, *Finding Home*, 266–267.



**Figure 9.1:** Total Immigration from Germany to Canada and Re-Migration.<sup>13</sup>

By 1957, however, this situation changed dramatically. While Germany was approaching full employment as part of the so-called economic miracle, Canada's economy slipped into a noticeable depression. Not only did the number of German immigrants fall from 27,000 in 1957 to just under 10,000 in each of 1959 and 1960, declining further thereafter, but the number of re-migrants rose from 2,982 in 1957 to 5,660 in 1960.<sup>14</sup> The numbers of migrants may be inflated because the German statistical office includes as an emigrant every person that left Germany for at least one year (though clearly not everybody informed the German bureaucracy of their departure). The data does not take into account whether a person had intended to leave Germany permanently or only for a limited period of time.

<sup>13</sup> German Statistical Office, *Statistische Jahrbücher, 1953–1960*. (Wiesbaden: Statistisches Bundesamt, 1954–1962). Earlier data is not available, but re-migration between 1947 and 1952 was likely negligible. The persons counted in the statistics are German nationals who returned from Canada after officially leaving Germany for at least a year.

<sup>14</sup> Data for the graph and numbers in text from: German Statistical Office, *Statistische Jahrbücher*. (Wiesbaden, Statistisches Bundesamt, 1954–1962). Migration figures are not available for the years before 1953, though the re-migration was likely similarly low as those for the period from 1953–1956.



Of course, some who planned to stay in Canada only temporarily remained for personal reasons, such as meeting and marrying a Canadian resident. Lilli Grub had simply planned to come to Canada for a year to accompany her under-age sister Lydia who wanted to join her aunt and foster mother who had been unable to bring Lydia to Canada when she immigrated because she had never formally adopted her. During this first year in Rutland in the Okanagan, Lilli met her husband, got married and stayed permanently in North America.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, Günther Beck had intended to stay in Canada for a year to improve his English and then go back to Hamburg, where he had formerly worked as an accountant, to find a good job in business. Then he met his Canadian wife and decided to stay in Canada.<sup>16</sup> These were potential cases of return migration that, in contrast to the original plans, led to a permanent immigration.

Others, however, did work in Canada for a limited time, made some money and returned to Germany. Gerhard Fennig travelled with a friend from Manitoba to a gold mine in northern Ontario. The friend went back to Germany. Gerhard simply states: “he worked in the mine for about a year and a half, made enough money and then went back.”<sup>17</sup> Similarly, Emil Wegwitz was aware of one person who went back since he still had relatives in Germany. The man, Emil recounts, had been “working in the winery with my father. [He] wanted to start his own taxi business in Hamburg, so he saved enough money in Canada until he could buy two Mercedes Benz and went back.”<sup>18</sup> Because of higher income levels in Canada, especially in the first half of the 1950s, and good

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<sup>15</sup> Lilli Grub Interview, Kelowna, BC, October 15, 2005 and Lydia Ponto Interview, Kelowna, BC, October 16, 2005.

<sup>16</sup> Günther Beck Interview, Summerland, BC, October 9, 2005. More detail on his arrival in Canada in Chapter 5.

<sup>17</sup> Gerhard Fennig Interview, Vernon, BC, October 10, 2005.

<sup>18</sup> Emil Wegwitz Interview, Victoria, BC, August 10, 2005. In Germany, most taxis are Mercedes Benz.

currency exchange rates, saving enough money to start an enterprise back in Germany was a viable possibility. In these cases, migrants came to Canada for economic advancement, not for immigration. Though this was the only case among the Germans he knew in Victoria, Emil Wegwitz remembers that several of his English friends went back to Britain after a while, since they started to idealize what they had left behind.<sup>19</sup> However, most later returned back to Canada after experiencing the rift between memory and reality.

For some people, the decision to immigrate was connected to a spirit of adventure, to experience other parts of the world before returning to Germany. Rolf Ullrich explains: “at the time I made the decision from a sense of adventure. Today, people would go to Australia for three or six months and then they go back. We used our immigration in a similar way. I thought that I would just immigrate and if I did not like it, I would go back.”<sup>20</sup> But even though some immigrants at least considered or even decided to return to Germany, they found out, like the English immigrants mentioned by Emil Wegwitz, that it was not what they remembered. Both their country of origin and the immigrants themselves had changed in the meantime, creating a reverse culture-shock that made them feel like strangers in a country and society that they used to know. Rolf Ullrich continues with regard to these changes with the words: “As a matter of fact, we thought about going back after five years. But when we went to Germany again at that time, we found out that we and Germany had changed. We were already different from

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<sup>19</sup> Emil Wegwitz Interview. Jenny Clayton’s grandmother, Doris Clayton, a war bride from Britain, called this phenomenon the “Thousand Dollar Cure.”

<sup>20</sup> Rolf and Brigitte Ullrich Interview, Victoria, BC, August 9, 2005.

other Germans.”<sup>21</sup> In addition, the value of the Deutschmark had increased in comparison to the Dollar, as a result of Germany’s fast economic recovery. Unfavourable exchange rates reduced the value of the Ullrichs’ small savings. For these reasons, they finally decided to stay in Canada and become Canadian citizens.

Arnold Hirschhorn’s experiences were similar. After he lost his job in Winnipeg in 1960, he and his wife decided to sell their little house and return to Germany with their child. When the downswing in the economy made it difficult to find a buyer for the house, his wife and son went back to Europe while he stayed behind for the transaction, which took a long time. The marriage did not survive the separation, so in the end Arnold went back to Germany for his divorce. But he describes his return as follows: “It was very hectic in Germany and it was not only my divorce, but the whole lifestyle in Germany was different. By that time I was used to the easy-going style in Canada, so when I returned to Canada, I felt at peace here and I knew that this was the place where I wanted to be.”<sup>22</sup> Therefore, after a short period in Germany, he returned to Canada and concludes: “I felt at peace when I came back from Germany. Also, over the years, you make friends here in Canada and get more estranged to the old friends in Germany.”<sup>23</sup> Arnold Hirschhorn had already started to adapt to the way of life in Canada before he returned to Germany, but did not realize it until he was confronted with the reality in Europe.

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<sup>21</sup> Rolf and Brigitte Ullrich Interview. The story of Heinz and Erika Prager is similar. They immigrated to Canada with their eleven-month-old son in April 1958 but when their homesickness did not disappear, they decided in 1962 to return to Germany only to find that they did not fit in any longer. They came back to Canada in 1963 to stay permanently. See Trudy Duivenvoorden Mitic and J.P. LeBlanc, *Pier 21. The Gateway that Changed Canada*. (Hantsport, N.S.: Lancelot Press, 1988), 140–143.

<sup>22</sup> Arnold Hirschhorn Interview, Courtenay, BC, April 22, 2006.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. Arnold Hirschhorn was born in Bessarabia in 1930. His family was resettled to Poland in 1940 and arrived in West Germany in 1945 where he stayed until his emigration to Canada in 1955. Because he spent only ten years in Germany, he never really felt at home there.

## **9.2 Adapting to the way of life**

Those immigrants who stayed or at least finally decided to make Canada their home, like Arnold Hirschhorn, found ways to adapt and integrate into life in their adopted country, improving their language skills, building new friendships across ethnic boundaries, and participating in Canadian organizations. All of these steps were important to grow roots in this new country, but without knowledge of English, neither advancement at the workplace, nor participation in Canadian society in general was effectively possible.

The most important element for a successful integration, therefore, was (and is) a command of the dominant language. More than three quarters of the interviewees did not know enough English to establish themselves successfully without outside help. Two examples illustrate the range of experiences based on language and education. Christian Stieda had what he describes as “school English.” It was not perfect, but he could communicate. He had also studied three semesters at the University of Hannover before coming to Canada. Within a week of his arrival in 1951, he secured a job as a draftsman in Winnipeg. Within two years he sponsored his parents and siblings, and began studying engineering at the University of Manitoba. After graduating, he got a job with the Canadian government, which later subsidized his doctoral studies at London University. He managed a government research facility in Vancouver, before switching to private forest products companies.<sup>24</sup>

Though Horst Godlinski did not go to university in Canada, his story certainly has some parallels to that of Christian Stieda. Horst had learned English in Germany, where he was trained as a translator, and was fluent when he and his wife Christel arrived in

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<sup>24</sup> Christian Stieda Interview, Victoria, BC, August 5, 2005.

Winnipeg in 1954. They stayed there for a year while he worked for a maintenance company. Horst states that he only got the job because of his English skills. After a year, they moved to northern British Columbia because they had heard about the big Alcan aluminium smelter in Kitimat. Horst worked there only for three days before finding a job in a sawmill in Terrace, where he worked his way up over the next two years while saving enough money to buy a John Deere Cat and arranged a lucrative pole contract with Crown Zellerbach. He thrived as an independent contractor cutting trees for phone and hydro poles in areas that were slated to be logged. In the meantime, Christel worked as a teller at the local Royal Bank. Later, they went into real estate and continued to do very well for themselves.<sup>25</sup> As in the case of Christian Stieda, a good command of English was the key to better-paid jobs in the beginning, while a second income and the fact that they did not have children at the time made it significantly easier to save enough money to start their own enterprise.

In contrast, Lucia Fallot's husband Walter, whose story is related in chapter 8, had been a radio technician in Germany with his own little store, but after they arrived in Vancouver in 1953, he worked as a labourer for many years. Eventually, he started his own business as an electrician in the 1970s, which significantly improved the economic situation of the family.<sup>26</sup>

Lucia and Walter Fallot's story was quite common for all the new immigrants without English skills and transferable certificates. All of them started in low-paying labouring positions, but over time most either started their own businesses, or gained

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<sup>25</sup> Horst and Christel Godlinski Interview, Comox, BC, April 22, 2006. When areas are slated for logging, pole contractors go into the forest first to extract the straight trees of a certain diameter that could be used for hydro poles.

<sup>26</sup> Lucia Fallot Interview.

additional qualifications and work experience that allowed for upward mobility.

However, the employment opportunities had a gendered quality in that the chances for upward mobility were generally far more limited for women.

For many women Canada was not a country of opportunity, but a few female immigrants interviewed were nevertheless able to embark on their own careers after they improved their language skills. One example is Irmgard Siegmüller, who had been an office clerk in Hameln, Germany, before she came to Canada in 1951, shortly after her husband had arrived. Not speaking any English, she first worked on a mink farm near Salmon Arm, pressing out the animals' glands to produce an ingredient for perfume. The work and living conditions were so bad that she left after about three weeks. She moved to Vernon and started cleaning houses for fifty cents per hour before she found work as a waitress. Because she did not speak the language, initially the customers had to point at the items on the menu when ordering, so she could write it out for the kitchen. This waitressing job became a stepping stone, since she later started her own café in Enderby, north of Vernon, after she had learned enough English. After the café was successfully established, she sold it and used the money to launch a catering business.<sup>27</sup>

Another example is Gisela Hoffmann who arrived in Canada in 1951 after her husband had immigrated the previous year. She had been a school teacher in Germany and became re-certified in Alberta in 1952, where she first taught grades one to nine at a small one-room school outside of Stony Plain, west of Edmonton. According to her brother, she spoke Oxford English with a strong German accent in the beginning. Since most of the children there had grown up with Ukrainian, French, or German as home languages, few spoke English when they started school. Later she went to the University

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<sup>27</sup> Irmgard Siegmüller Interview, Vernon, BC, October 11, 2005.

of Alberta and received a Ph.D. in German literature and became a professor there.<sup>28</sup>

Nevertheless, the examples of Irmgard Siegmüller and especially of Gisela Hoffmann are quite unusual for female immigrants in the 1950s, though they show that in some cases, gender and marital status did not prevent occupational upward mobility, but women were generally less likely to advance at the workplace than men.

The immigration experience was significantly more difficult for Edith Mueller's mother Lydia, who came from an ethnic German community in the Ukraine. In 1949, the widowed mother and daughter immigrated to Canada. To raise her daughter, she juggled up to three or four low-paying jobs, like cleaning offices, until she started to work in the kitchen of one of the residence halls at the University of Alberta, which her daughter described as "the beginning of a steady career."<sup>29</sup> She worked there for the next thirty-five years until her retirement. Despite the initial hardships, she nevertheless managed to raise her daughter by herself and later buy her own house. But as Franca Iacovetta suggests in the context of Italian female workers in postwar Toronto: "Even where wages and conditions are poor, paid employment could be an empowering experience for immigrant women who might otherwise have been isolated in their homes."<sup>30</sup>

In short, for most men without sufficient language skills, the first jobs were likely those of unskilled labourers, often in agriculture if they were sponsored immigrants. Later

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<sup>28</sup> Günther Beck Interview. Also an informal phone conversation with Dr. Gisela Hoffmann who lived in Vancouver at the time (August 2005). Gisela Hoffmann was Günther Beck's older sister who immigrated to Canada two years before him and found a sponsor for her brother. At least in light of Franca Iacovetta's argument, it seems rather surprising that a teaching position in an immigrant community would be given to another recent immigrant since schools were an important institution for the formation of new Canadians. See Franca Iacovetta, *Gatekeepers. Reshaping Immigrant Lives in Cold War Canada*. (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2006). Yet, it seems that the employment of recent immigrants relieved a shortage of teachers, especially in rural areas.

<sup>29</sup> Edith Mueller Interview (pseudonym), Kelowna, BC, October 16, 2005.

<sup>30</sup> Franca Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People. Italian Immigrants in Postwar Toronto*. (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), 102.

many worked in construction or industry. After their English had improved sufficiently, they often found opportunities to specialize and start their own businesses as contractors, electricians, or plumbers. Even if they were not self-employed, qualifications would allow upward mobility at the workplace, combined with better pay over time. Very few of the immigrants interviewed in British Columbia returned to their original professions, mostly because many of those with an agricultural background either did not want to buy their own farms or could not afford to do so until later, when they were already well-established in another profession like construction.<sup>31</sup> Those who had learned a trade often found that their certificates and credentials were not recognized in Canada and usually neither had the time nor the money to afford to go back to school for re-certification.

For women, the situation was quite different. Though, as with Irmgard Siegmüller, many initially accepted work as domestics, cleaning houses and working in kitchens, her story is fairly uncommon in that women were far less likely than men to either become self-employed or to move from unskilled to skilled work positions, as Alexander Freund points out in his study of German domestics in Vancouver. A significant number of immigrant women continued to work after they married, at least for a while, but their labour usually just added to the family income while the husband was the main breadwinner. Given that at least some of the domestics interviewed by Alexander Freund had immigrated to Canada with dreams of adventure, freedom, and an opportunity to embark on a career, most of them soon found themselves in the prescribed

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<sup>31</sup> Mina Schmidt Interview, Kelowna, BC, October 15, 2005. Also Alexander Freund, *Aufbrüche nach dem Zusammenbruch. Die deutsche Nordamerika-Auswanderung nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg*. (Osnabrück: V&R unipress, 2004), 489.



postwar roles of mothers and wives.<sup>32</sup> For both genders, however, upward mobility in the workplace remained tied to the acquisition of a command of the dominant language.

There were many different ways for new immigrants to acquire or improve their English skills in Canada. Although taking language courses seems the most logical and easiest way to learn, relatively few immigrants had the opportunity to attend those classes for an extended period of time, since they usually had to seek full-time employment as soon as they arrived in Canada.<sup>33</sup> Rolf and Brigitte Ullrich tried to combine both, but were rather unsuccessful: “as for the language, we were advised to go to evening school. We did that, but we had worked so hard during the days that we fell asleep in the classes. So, finally the teacher told us that we should ask for a refund since we did not learn anything.”<sup>34</sup> Others were initially working on farms and simply did not have the chance to take formal English classes, but would sometimes go back to school in later years. Nevertheless, based on the information from the interviews, evening schools and work were the two single most important places for the immigrants to learn and improve their language skills.

Evening schools were especially important for those immigrants who had arrived with no or very limited language skills, since learning the basics of grammar and vocabulary made it easier to later expand their skills on their own. Nevertheless, though about one quarter of the interviewees said that they had gone to evening school at some point, for most the schooling was rather short. Willy Godlinski, for example, went only

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<sup>32</sup> Alexander Freund and Laura Quilici, “Exploring Myth in Women’s Narratives. Italian and German Immigrant Women in Vancouver, 1947–1961,” *BC Studies*, nos. 105 & 106 (Spring/Summer 1995), 163–166.

<sup>33</sup> In many places, language classes were offered for free to new immigrants. See Hans Werner, *Imagined Homes. Soviet German Immigrants in Two Cities*. (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2007), 184.

<sup>34</sup> Rolf and Brigitte Ullrich Interview.

during the first winter when he was in Terrace, BC.<sup>35</sup> Erika Riemer who arrived in Kelowna in the Okanagan in 1952 went to night classes from September to the next spring, but did not find them very helpful since the classes were so big in the beginning that there was hardly a chance to practice speaking. Moreover, the classes were only once a week.<sup>36</sup> Erika simply picked up her English along the way. Brunhilde Wiehler was more fortunate in that respect. She remembers: “My daughter’s first school teacher in Fort McLeod stayed an extra hour after school to teach my daughter and she invited me to come to these English lessons, too. That was very nice of her.”<sup>37</sup> In comparison to the evening classes described above, Brunhilde would have had more opportunities to actually practice her English in the process.

In general, immigrants learned the language at their workplaces. Henry Fehling learned English while working at the beer parlour in Young, Saskatchewan. Since it was a small town and people were interested in Henry’s past, he had many opportunities to practice and he told the patrons to correct him when he made mistakes.<sup>38</sup> Within a few months, he had a good command of English. Sara Belter’s experience was similar when she got her first job in a hospital for the elderly, run by Catholic nuns. Sara recalls: “A nun came to me, showing me a spoon and told me what it was in English and I had to repeat it.”<sup>39</sup> The transition was eased by the fact that the hospital’s cook was German, so he could explain things to her, which helped to overcome some of the initial difficulties.

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<sup>35</sup> Willy Godlinski Interview, Vancouver, BC, May 27, 2006.

<sup>36</sup> Erika Riemer Interview, Kelowna, BC, October 17, 2005. Erika Riemer was born in Bessarabia in 1926

<sup>37</sup> Brunhilde Wiehler Interview, Kelowna, BC, October 17, 2005.

<sup>38</sup> Henry Fehling Interview, Penticton, BC, October 9, 2005. Also Waldemar Belter Interview, Vernon, BC, October 12, 2005. Waldemar Belter also learned English at a beer parlour, which made his experiences quite similar to those of Henry Fehling.

<sup>39</sup> Sara Belter Interview, Vernon, BC, October 12, 2005.

A few immigrants, however, remained sheltered in a German-speaking environment. Henry Grub, for example, arrived in Canada in 1951, but worked first for a German farmer in Saskatchewan and later moved to live with his relatives in Oliver, BC. Only after he settled in Kelowna three years later was he forced to speak English at the Rutland sawmill where he worked. In 1954, his French-Canadian co-worker taught him English while they worked together at the saw.<sup>40</sup> Similarly, Helmut Reither worked for a German-speaking upholsterer in Winnipeg for the first twelve years he was in Canada. This, he says, is the reason why his “English is quite bad.” He continues: “The first twelve years in Canada, I hardly needed English since there were a lot of Germans around. For example we would go to the ‘*Deutsches Haus*,’ the German-language church, etc. So, if you wanted to avoid speaking English, it was possible to do so.”<sup>41</sup> Despite these examples, in most cases the men were more likely to be exposed to an English-speaking environment than women, especially where the latter stayed at home.

After her arrival in Canada in 1948, Adina Frank only briefly worked in the hospital kitchen in Westlock, north of Edmonton, before she married an interwar German-speaking immigrant. They lived on his isolated farm for ten years but when he became seriously ill they moved to Kelowna in 1959 because of the milder climate. Since her husband could no longer work, she had to accept employment at a local packing plant. She remembers: “When I went to work, I had to learn English. Most of the workers were German, but since there were some English-speakers, we had to be able to

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<sup>40</sup> Henry Grub Interview, Kelowna, BC, October 15, 2005.

<sup>41</sup> Helmut Reither Interview, Richmond, BC, May 26, 2006. Also Willy Godlinski Interview. Willy Godlinski hardly spoke any English in the first years of his stay in Canada, even though he went to evening school over the first winter. Like Helmut Reither, he believes in retrospect that this was a mistake and is the reason why his English is not quite as good as it could be.

communicate in English.”<sup>42</sup> She also learned a lot by watching television. Since she was increasingly exposed to the language, she got a feeling for it over time without ever having taken any formal English instruction. Even when women stayed at home, they were not necessarily isolated from their English-speaking environment since neighbours and friends would help them to improve their language skills. Caroline Leitner, for example, remembers that her neighbour invited her regularly for coffees and taught her English little by little.<sup>43</sup> By exposing her to English, the neighbour made Caroline’s immigration experience less isolating.

Children were also a major factor in the language acquisition of immigrants. Once their children went to school they could help with the English skills of their parents, particularly their stay-at-home mothers. Caroline Scholz, for example, had first worked in a glove factory in Winnipeg and then later cleaned offices, but all her co-workers in both jobs were Ukrainians, so she learned Ukrainian, not English. When her children started school she picked it up from them, though they generally continued to speak German at home.<sup>44</sup> Hilda Knopf was a child when she came to Canada with her family. With her sister, she attended the one-room school in the little town of Herbert, Saskatchewan, where they learned English in the classroom and by playing with the other children. Her parents, however, found it much more difficult to learn the language. There was no evening school in a small town, so her mother used Hilda’s school books to teach herself

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<sup>42</sup> Adina Frank Interview, Kelowna, BC, October 14, 2005. Adina Frank’s husband was 20 years older than she was and they were married for 19 years until he died in 1968. After her husband’s death, Adina Frank quit her job at the packing plant and focussed on selling flowers from her garden, which, she said, increased her income in comparison to what she had earned in her unskilled work position.

<sup>43</sup> Caroline Leitner Interview (pseudonym), Sidney, BC, August 25, 2005. Also BC Archives, *The Story of the Victoria Edelweiss Club*; Interview with Mrs Liesel Schumacher conducted by Elizabeth M. Mayer, 15 (transcript). See Chapter 8, for more details.

<sup>44</sup> Caroline Scholz Interview, Kelowna, BC, October 16, 2005. Caroline Scholz’ husband went to evening school after coming to Canada, but she never did.

reading and writing, while her father never acquired much more than an oral command of the language.<sup>45</sup>

The majority of German immigrants eventually learned English through interactions with native speakers, especially at the workplace and through their own children. Additional strategies to improve communication skills varied widely. Some immigrants, such as Adina Frank, learned by listening to the radio or watching television, while Frank Oberle, for example, studied an old Eaton's catalogue which he found at the immigration hall in Halifax to expand his vocabulary since the item descriptions usually came with pictures and covered everything from clothing to tools, hardware and furniture.<sup>46</sup> Canadian immigration officials "used Eaton's or Simpsons catalogues as well as films to teach the Europeans English and orient them to a modern and affluent Canada" in the displaced persons camps in Europe in the late 1940s.<sup>47</sup> It is therefore certainly possible that Oberle's discovery of a catalogue at the immigration compound in Halifax was not an accident. The catalogues, together with radio and television programs, were not only helpful for learning English, but also connected the immigrants to the mainstream (consumer) culture of 1950s Canada.

In addition to the personal interactions in evening schools, at the workplace, or with neighbours and friends, audio-visual and print media were among the many ways in which a significant number of immigrants improved their vocabulary and general grasp of the language. Beyond language acquisition, the process also included elements of

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<sup>45</sup> Hilda Knopf Interview, Kelowna, BC, October 16, 2005. Also Leonhard Lange Interview, Comox, BC, April 21, 2006. The situation was very similar for Leonhard Lange's mother, when the family lived outside of Courtenay in the Comox Valley on Vancouver Island. He remembers: "when I was going to school, I would bring home my spelling lessons. She would improve her pronunciations by helping me with these. I did not know it at the time, but when I was learning English, she was learning it, too."

<sup>46</sup> Oberle, *Finding Home*, 184–185.

<sup>47</sup> Iacovetta, *Gatekeepers*, 4.

nation building and integration along the lines described in Gerald Friesen's study "Citizens and Nation."<sup>48</sup> The media that taught many immigrants English also familiarized them with Canadian products, customs, and opinions.

### **9.3 Improving employment and upward mobility**

When they arrived in Canada, German nationals were more likely than ethnic Germans to have some knowledge of English, because more, though certainly not all, had been exposed to it in the German school system, while it had not been part of the curriculum in Eastern Europe. This often allowed German nationals to develop their language skills more quickly and thereby improve their employment prospects and integration. Based on the interviews conducted in British Columbia, only three out of the thirty ethnic German immigrants could converse in English when they arrived in Canada, while nine out of twenty German nationals could do so.<sup>49</sup> The already mentioned examples of Christian Stieda and Horst Godlinski certainly demonstrated that language skills and education were helpful in securing better-paying positions and thereby made it easier to establish a foothold in the host country. Günther Beck's story is another example. Since he spoke English when he came, he was able to get a job in the oil industry in Alberta and later started his own business in petroleum exploration.<sup>50</sup>

However, the initial lack of language skills was not necessarily an insurmountable obstacle for upward mobility. Frank Oberle is an outstanding example of a success story. He arrived in Canada in 1951 with five dollars in his pocket and minimal knowledge of

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<sup>48</sup> Gerald Friesen, *Citizens and Nation. An Essay on History, Communication, and Canada*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000).

<sup>49</sup> Based on information from fifty immigrants residing in British Columbia.

<sup>50</sup> Günther Beck Interview.

the language, but with hard work and some luck, he moved from logging and mining to establishing himself in business and construction in Northern British Columbia from where he entered federal politics. In 1985, he became Minister of State for Science and Technology and later Minister of Forests under Prime Minister Brian Mulroney.<sup>51</sup>

Oberle's rise in federal politics was an unusual achievement for a first generation immigrant – especially for German-Canadians who generally kept a low profile – his success in business was not. For example, Norman Kelly, an expellee from Breslau in Silesia (now Wroclaw, Poland) came to Canada in 1951. Kelly worked his way up from a cleaning position in a paper-products factory to eventually start three of his own companies. He sold the first two in the late 1990s at a profit while he was still partially involved with the third, an electrical installations company.<sup>52</sup> The story of Hugo and Helmut Eppich was quite similar. The twin brothers were ethnic Germans born in Slovenia who came to Canada in 1953 and 1954 respectively. Helmut was a tool-and-die maker while Hugo had apprenticed as an electrician. They first worked for an uncle in Toronto as galvanizers and toolmakers. In September 1955 they came to British Columbia and started their own tool factory, EBCO Industries, in Vancouver the following year, which became a very successful enterprise and is now located in Richmond.<sup>53</sup> Other immigrants, such as Klay Schumann and Richard Person, also had successful careers, the former first in the hotel business and later in real estate in

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<sup>51</sup> Frank Oberle published his autobiography in two volumes: Frank Oberle, *Finding Home. A war child's journey to peace*. (Surrey, BC: Heritage House, 2004) and *A Chosen Path. From Moccasin Flats to Parliament Hill*. (Surrey, BC: Heritage House, 2005).

<sup>52</sup> Bernd W. Baumgartel, *Mit den Wölfen heulen. Deutsche Einwanderer in Kanada erzählen*. (Herdecke, Germany: Scheffler-Verlag, 1999), 74–90. Norman Kelley's real name was Reinhard Klaffke, but he decided to anglicise it as an outward sign of his integration and to remove the negative stigma of his German name.

<sup>53</sup> Baumgartel, *Mit den Wölfen heulen*, 94–101. Also, a short article on the company's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary at <http://www.thecanadianimmigrant.com/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=498> (entered: August 9, 2007).

Vancouver, and the latter started a clothing store and a paint store in Kelowna and did some construction on the side, from which he still owns an apartment building.<sup>54</sup>

Especially for greater Vancouver, the Edelweiss Credit Union was instrumental in providing German immigrants with access to loans for the establishment of businesses and investments.<sup>55</sup>

Upward mobility and better job opportunities, however, were not the only reasons for people to migrate from other parts of Canada to British Columbia. In terms of a career, success ultimately remains a relative term strongly, depending on the personal expectations rather than on the size of the income. Therefore, a common reason for moving to British Columbia was not related to material improvement, but to escape the long and cold Prairie winters. Apart from the more familiar climate, the landscapes of the Okanagan Valley evoked memories of home for several residents. Irene Salamon and Erwin Kirsch found the region strikingly similar to their former homes in Western Hungary, while Mina Schmidt and her husband moved to Kelowna because the countryside “with all the fruit trees” was reminiscent of the scenery along the Rhine.<sup>56</sup> For others, it was the fulfillment of a dream to live in view of the Coast Mountains in Vancouver, or on an island, as in the case of Caroline Leitner’s husband, who gave up a position as a manager of a feed mill in Alberta to work in the engine room of a BC ferry because this allowed him to live on Saltspring Island.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Klay Schumann Interview, Richmond, BC, September 1, 2005; and Richard Person Interview, Kelowna, BC, October 16, 2005.

<sup>55</sup> G.F. Otto (Ed.), *Special Report Commemorating the 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Edelweiss Credit Union*. (Vancouver: BC Central Credit Union, 1979), 28–31.

<sup>56</sup> Erwin Kirsch Interview (pseudonym), Vernon, BC, October 11, 2005; Irene Salamon Interview, Kelowna, BC, October 14, 2005; and Mina Schmidt Interview.

<sup>57</sup> Caroline Leitner Interview.



Others, like the Rabien family immigrated to Canada in 1952 explicitly to escape the trappings of modern capitalism and waged employment. They settled on a homestead in Longworth on the upper Fraser River, between McBride and Prince George, trying to establish a self-sufficient farm; but they struggled from the beginning, not least, as Ruth Rabien admitted, because of “excessive procreation.” They had six children between the ages of four months and eleven years.<sup>58</sup> Though she considered their homesteading enterprise a failure, they had at least tried to escape the dependence on employment in a capitalist market economy. Therefore, the definition of what exactly success means in the context of immigration to Canada depended largely on the expectation of the persons who arrived in the 1950s. Though it is safe to say that after the experiences of the Second World War, all were looking for stability and security, acquiring wealth was only a goal for some, while others cherished the freedom, space, and recreational possibilities BC offered, or liked the climate and pace of life.

The interviews clearly show a pattern of rising economic standards of living and a generally positive attitude towards the decision to immigrate to Canada. However, the concepts of integration and assimilation into Canadian society are more difficult to grasp. In his study of race, religion, and nationality in the United States, Elliot Barkan defines “integration” as attaining “a considerable degree of inclusion or incorporation in the general society..., although residual cultural, identificational, symbolic, and behavioral characteristics remain and, quite likely, particular language expressions, traditional foods,

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<sup>58</sup> LAC MG31–H71, Albert H. Taylor fonds, Ruth Rabien to Albert Taylor, Longworth, BC, April 17, 1956. Taylor wanted to create a self-sufficient community either on Read Island, or on the neighbouring Cortez and Quadra Islands. Therefore, he was looking for people who wanted to live away from the constraints of modern, capitalist civilization. For the Rabien family (as for the Dutch immigrant John Lodenstijn who arrived in Kitchener, Ont. in 1953), this seemed to be the last option to escape the need to accept waged employment, but the plan never worked out since Taylor did not own the land he proposed for the settlement, but merely squatted on it.

and some festival observations or celebrations that are episodic or infrequent.” In contrast, “assimilation” describes a final stage in which persons “largely blended or melded into the larger society culturally, socially, institutionally, and identificationally. Although persons may retain a knowledge of their ancestry, they no longer see themselves as ethnic group members.”<sup>59</sup>

Based on Barkan’s definitions, in the context of this study, the term “assimilation” will be used to describe a process in which an immigrant fully embraces the mainstream language and culture inside and outside the home. This will be discussed in more detail in the last chapter under the heading “Becoming Canadian?” In contrast, “integration” is taken to mean that an immigrant is participating and successfully interacting with other members of the host society. It thereby includes the ability to speak the language well enough to communicate effectively with native speakers, and knowledge of the codes of conduct at the workplace and in social situations that is similar to that of the host society. A person that has integrated successfully will likely be bi-lingual and bi-cultural, have friends and acquaintances outside of the German diaspora community and will understand and respect local customs, though they might maintain their own in the private sphere.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> For a detailed discussion of integration and assimilation, see Elliot R. Barkan, “Race, Religion, and Nationality in American Society: A Model of Ethnicity – From Contact to Assimilation,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 14, no. 2 (1995), 57. Barkan developed a six step model from contact to assimilation, in which integration and assimilation are the two final stages. Similar approach applied in the case of Canada and Germany in Hans Werner, *Imagined Homes. Soviet German Immigrants in Two Cities*. (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2007), 9–10.

<sup>60</sup> See Barkan, “Race, Religion, and Nationality in American Society,” 48.

#### **9.4 Patterns of Integration**

Language as the key to integration has already been discussed, but a command of English is not equivalent to a full integration, which also includes an understanding of social norms in the host society – or in a very general phrase, “the ways of doing things.” Co-workers, friends, and neighbours certainly played a part in this process, as in a case remembered by Rosa Stuver. When her mother boiled the clothing and hung it outside to dry, her neighbour told her: “Frau Meier, now you are in Canada and you have to tell Mr. Meier that in Canada, the women do not boil the laundry. He must buy you a washing machine.”<sup>61</sup> In this case, the appropriate Canadian way of doing the laundry was perpetuated through personal contact with neighbours. This image was also shored up by advertisements portraying what household appliances the modern female consumer needed.<sup>62</sup>

Franca Iacovetta makes a similar argument in the context of ethnic food and shopping practices, through which immigrant women were introduced to the modern Canadian ways, when she writes that “the postwar health and food campaigns would become the site of conflicts and accommodations between, on the one side, the experts who promoted good health and modern cooking and family lifestyles and, on the other, the newcomer mothers from war-torn or impoverished regions of Europe.” She continues that “these mothers, having had little access to convenience foods or the latest kitchen

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<sup>61</sup> Rosa Stuver Interview, Richmond, BC, May 26, 2006. However, in the beginning, the family was too poor to afford appliances and since they did not have running water a washing machine was not possible.

<sup>62</sup> Joy Parr, *Domestic Goods. The Material, the Moral, and the Economic in the Postwar Years*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999). For a discussion of washing machines, see esp. 218–242.

technology, were now told to abandon their folkways for ‘modern’ shopping and homemaking techniques.”<sup>63</sup>

In another example, Bernhard Dinter agreed to baby-sit the children of his employer one evening, a few months after his arrival in Canada. He wrote to his wife: “Tonight I am babysitting for the Pollocks. It is a North American custom never to leave one’s children alone at home. When the parents go out at night, they hire someone, who gets paid about one dollar an hour. The babysitter usually stretches out on the couch, listens to the radio, smokes a cigarette, and enjoys life.”<sup>64</sup> Though he seemed rather surprised about the custom, from then on, he was at least aware that it would be unusual in Canada to leave children unsupervised.

However, despite these community influences and those of advertisement and government programs, the interviews suggest that, similar to language acquisition, the most effective inside agents of integration were the immigrants’ own school-aged children.<sup>65</sup> The children’s exposure to the Canadian way of life was significantly more intense than that of their parents, not only in the classroom, but also directly through their classmates. Most of the immigrants who arrived as children have negative memories of their school experiences, when other students ostracized them because of their German background. The attempts to “fit in” created identity crises that reverberated into the homes of the immigrant families, often increasing integrative pressures, but also creating inter-generational strains surrounding home language and old traditions.

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<sup>63</sup> Iacovetta, *Gatekeepers*, 138. Generally on the topic of government attempts to change or appropriate immigrants’ cooking and homemaking practices in the context of postwar nation-building, see her chapter six, “Culinary Containment? Cooking for the Family, Democracy, and Nation,” 137–169.

<sup>64</sup> Bernhard Dinter to Gertrud Dinter, Kelowna, January 10, 1952. (Unpublished Manuscript)

<sup>65</sup> For a study of attempts to re-make new immigrants into reliable Canadians during the Cold War, see Franca Iacovetta, *Gatekeepers*. For the influence of children on immigrant integration: Personal interviews conducted with fifty immigrants in British Columbia.

Based on sociologist Karl Mannheim, who claims that age is an important category in every historical theory, Cynthia Comacchio writes: “Moments of intense social change and resultant anxieties tend to polarize age groups into oppositional ‘generational units.’”<sup>66</sup> The immigration experience is one of those moments. Though the interview sample is too small to confirm or refute this theory, it applies to those immigrants who came to Canada as adults and their children who were either born in Canada or arrived at a young age. A generational conflict, however, was not apparent in the case of adults who arrived with children who were in their late teens. The shared memories of the war and the postwar hardships might have superseded the generation conflict, while younger children did not share those experiences and found a different reception in North America. Generational conflict was especially evident when parents tried to instil German language and traditions into their children, which was at odds with the negative perception of all things German that the children encountered in the school system in the 1950s and 1960s.

The children were often confronted with racist attitudes in schools, where their classmates equated their German background with Nazism. Edith Mueller remembers that “back in the 1950s in Canada, being German was not something you would make public. In the school system there was no distinction. If you were German you were a Nazi and as a child I knew that that was not something I wanted to be.”<sup>67</sup> As some of the interviews show, this stigmatizing either led to conflict or a rejection of their German background. Like Edith Mueller, Leo Keller recalled being called Nazi. “It did two things

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<sup>66</sup> Karl Mannheim, “The Problem of Generations” (1927), in *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), 320. Cited in (and expanded on): Cynthia R. Comacchio, *The Dominion of Youth. Adolescence and the Making of a Modern Canada, 1920 – 1950*. (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 2006), 7.

<sup>67</sup> Edith Mueller Interview.

for me, really. It made me want to learn how to speak English very quickly, to avoid being identified as German, and it gave me the ability to run very fast. I was beaten up because I was a Kraut.”<sup>68</sup> Arnold Hirsch Korn remembers his daughter’s desire to dissociate from her German identity because of the difficulties she encountered in school:

She spoke German until it was time for her to go to school. But being with English-speaking children and of course being exposed to the bad reputation of Germans changed that. The kids were teased for being German. Kids sometimes are cruel and can hurt others because they don’t know what they are saying. So she did not want to speak German. That hurt a little bit, but that is the way it is – kids will do that.<sup>69</sup>

Almost all the interviewees who came to Canada as children reported similar experiences of verbal and sometimes also physical abuse because of their German background. As a result, they tried to hide their ethnic background to the extent that many refused to speak German at home with their parents. This could create significant tensions within families, especially if the parents wanted their children to learn German to preserve the language.

According to a 1982 survey in Vancouver, fifty-eight percent of German immigrant parents stated that they spoke German with their children before they started school. “However, less than 20% continued to do so later on, blaming it on the children’s rejection of the ethnic tongue due to peer influence.”<sup>70</sup> A study of German postwar immigration to Great Britain by Inge Weber-Newth and Johannes-Dieter Steinert shows

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<sup>68</sup> Leo Keller Interview, Kelowna, BC, October 14, 2005. Also Christian Stieda Interview, Victoria, BC, August 5, 2005. His Canadian-born son had fist-fights at school when other students insulted him because of his parents’ German background. Other informal conversations with German immigrants or their children strongly suggest that these are not isolated cases, but part of a fairly wide-spread pattern.

<sup>69</sup> Arnold Hirsch Korn Interview. Also Kurt H. Rudt to German Embassy in Ottawa, Tarzwell, Ont., January 15, LAC MG31–H39, Kurt von Cardinal fonds, vol. 2. Kurt Rudt reports that his daughter had been mistreated by other children at school because of her German background. Such experiences were confirmed by several German immigrants who came to Canada as children (or were even born in Canada to immigrant parents) in personal conversations.

<sup>70</sup> Beatrice Stadler, “Language and Assimilation. The Case of Selected German-speaking immigrants in Vancouver,” Peter Liddell (Ed.), *German Canadian Studies. Critical Approaches*. (Vancouver: Canadian University Teachers of German Association. CAUTG Publication No. 8, 1983), 32. Also Ruth Gump, “Language Loss and Language Retention among German Postwar Immigrants in Vancouver, 1945–1971,” *Deutschkanadisches Jahrbuch / German-Canadian Yearbook* 14 (1995), 82.

very similar but even more intense and frequent patterns of racist incidents which had more long-term effects on the children's psyche.<sup>71</sup> The interviews conducted in British Columbia, however, suggest that the pressures of the school experiences hastened the process of integration if not assimilation into Canadian society, driven by a desire not to be identifiable as being of German background.

Given the children's experiences, it seems surprising that few adults remember encountering racist attitudes. This might be partially explained by their original lack of English skills but may also have resulted from the fact that in their initial low-paying labouring jobs, they did not compete with established Canadian workers. When they applied for managerial positions, however, a few adults encountered racism among anxious Canadians who feared their competition. Klay Schumann recalled physical and mental abuse for being German, especially at a job interview with a TV station in Vancouver. At a different company the boss told him outright that he would not hire Germans at a managerial level.<sup>72</sup> Similarly, Caroline Leitner remembered that her husband experienced racist attitudes at a feed mill in Alberta when he became the manager there.<sup>73</sup>

Nevertheless, though racial stereotyping was certainly not a uniquely German experience in Canada, for the interviewees who immigrated as adults, these experiences were generally quite rare. Some immigrants like Gerhard Fennig remember being called "DP", while Frank Oberle mentions a co-worker at the Pioneer gold mine complaining about "DPs and Huns" pushing "honest, hard-working Canadians" out of their jobs,

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<sup>71</sup> Inge Weber-Newth and Johannes-Dieter Steinert, *German Migrants in Post-war Britain. An enemy embrace*. (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 154–155.

<sup>72</sup> Klay Schumann Interview, Richmond, BC, September 1, 2005.

<sup>73</sup> Caroline Leitner Interview. Though the desire to live on an island was the main motivating factor for moving to Saltspring Island, anti-German sentiments also contributed to the decision.

though he apparently did not resent Oberle personally.<sup>74</sup> Overall, it seems that German immigrants in Canada faced significantly less overt and subtle forms of racism than their counterparts in Britain, where experiences ranged from simple social exclusion to the painting of swastikas on houses owned by Germans.<sup>75</sup> Franca Iacovetta also observed that in Canada both “government and public hostility towards [Germans] was less marked than it was towards the Italians.”<sup>76</sup>

Indeed, many German immigrants actually report a generally positive reception by Canadians as being among their first impressions of the country. The first time Lucia Fallot left the immigrant train with her children, they went to a restaurant close to the railway station in Winnipeg. Since she did not speak any English, she just pointed to the next table to order what they had. She remembers:

When the meals came, they also served dessert, so I was getting worried that I did not have enough money to pay for it all. But when I went to pay for it, a man stood at the cash register and told me that he would pay for us, because he really liked Germans. He told me this in broken German. I am still thankful to this man since it was the first time I got out of the train in a foreign country and he would just pay for us. It was a wonderful experience.<sup>77</sup>

Despite this and other positive experiences, Lucia remained uncomfortable about her German background for a long time. Many German nationals who immigrated as adults integrated into Canadian society as a means of distancing themselves from their German identity as well as from the guilt associated with excesses of the Hitler dictatorship. Many ethnic Germans, in contrast, did not identify to the same degree with the terror of the Third Reich and were proud of their German language and culture.

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<sup>74</sup> Gerhard Fennig Interview and Oberle, *Finding Home*, 236–237.

<sup>75</sup> Weber-Newth and Steinert, *German Migrants in Post-war Britain*, 152–154.

<sup>76</sup> Iacovetta, *Gatekeepers*, 26–27.

<sup>77</sup> Lucia Fallot Interview.



As immigrants settled into Canadian life they built new friendship networks that often included at least some Canadians. German nationals were not only more likely than ethnic Germans to make a conscious effort to stay away from the German community in Canada, but also to switch to English as their home language. In a few cases immigrants would even convert from Lutheranism or Catholicism to Anglicanism. For example, “unlike many other German immigrants” Christian Stieda and his wife never attended a German-Lutheran church. “Very early on, we got involved with the Anglican Church of Canada, which has become a home to us. We were quite determined to integrate and did not want to be a separate entity in a foreign environment.”<sup>78</sup> Nevertheless, despite the conscious effort to integrate into Canadian society, they continued to speak German with each other at home, while switching to English with their children after the third child started school in Canada. At this point it was too time-consuming and complicated to keep up a bi-lingual household, so only the two oldest of five children learned some German.

Children not only brought the language, but also Canadian culture and traditions into the homes, while parental involvement in school and sports introduced the immigrants to teachers and other parents. Brigitte Ullrich clearly makes this point when describing the corresponding integration process: “I think that the integration works very fast since it is quite common in Canada to volunteer for many things, like in schools or sports. This helps with the integration.”<sup>79</sup> Parents also became active in organizations like Brownies, though many German immigrants had developed a strong dislike of any form of uniform during the war. As a result, Emil Wegwitz’ father would never let him “join

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<sup>78</sup> Christian Stieda Interview. Similarly Gertrud Dinter Interview. She waited 16 years until she decided to become a Canadian citizen, but was very proud when she did. She, too, joined an Anglican congregation.

<sup>79</sup> Rolf and Brigitte Ullrich Interview.

Boy Scouts after the war nor the cadets or army and navy because these were military-like organizations. He was always glad that his two boys never had to go to war.”<sup>80</sup>

Based on the younger generation’s interaction with their Canadian peers, they had an outlook on life that on occasion clashed with their parents’ values derived from their wartime experiences and general upbringing. Adult immigrants were able to make do with very little, whether it was low wages or primitive accommodation; because they had survived the war, they did not consider this a major hardship. For many, austerity was rather a sign of thriftiness than poverty. The outlook on life of the younger generation, however, was likely closer to many of their Canadian peers, who were participating in the consumption-oriented affluence of postwar Canada. Yet, more than material values and the perceptions of uniforms, the home language and language retention of the children was a contested field between the generations.

One way or another, most German immigrants to Canada had learned enough English within a few years to communicate effectively at work and in their daily lives, but many continued to use German as their home language. Nevertheless, in her study “Language Loss and Language Retention among German Postwar Immigrants in Vancouver, 1945–1971,” Ruth Gumpff concludes that Germans quickly switched to English as their home language.<sup>81</sup> Through census analysis she found that by 1971, ninety-five percent of Germans in Vancouver were able to communicate in English. Her assessment of home languages, however, does not coincide with the data from my interviews. Gumpff writes that by 1971, among those immigrants who had arrived between 1946 and 1960, about 56 percent had switched to English as their home

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<sup>80</sup> Emil Wegwitz Interview.

<sup>81</sup> Gumpff, “Language Loss and Language Retention,” 80–83.

language.<sup>82</sup> Yet, these numbers do not take into account that parents might speak English with their children, but retain German as the main language of communication between themselves and with other family or friends. In addition, the census makes no distinction with regard to different patterns of language retention among German nationals and ethnic Germans.

Given the general trend of linguistic assimilation in 1971, it would seem likely that the numbers of immigrants who switched to English as their home language should increase among the group interviewed in British Columbia in 2005 / 2006. Out of forty-seven responses to the question of home language, however, seventeen said that they only used German at home with their partner and the children, while English was the home language for twelve interviewees. The majority, however, had a more practical approach of either speaking a mix of English and German at home, or of speaking German to the partner and English to the children. Yet, there is a striking difference between ethnic Germans and German nationals with respect to the home language. Out of the seventeen who only used German at home, thirteen were ethnic Germans, while only four were German nationals; out of twelve who used English as their home language, eight were German nationals while only four were ethnic Germans.

In ten of the twelve cases where families speak English, this was the result of a mixed marriage, most often with a Canadian partner, while the remaining two cases were German nationals who found it easier to converse in English after more than fifty years in the country. In all cases of mixed marriages, English was the home language and none of the children learned German at home or in Saturday School. In total, out of thirty-five cases where we discussed children's education, twenty percent actually went to Saturday

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<sup>82</sup> Gump, "Language Loss and Language Retention," 77-78.

School at least for a time, with a slightly higher number among ethnic Germans. Twenty out of the thirty-five cases or fifty-seven percent state that all the children learned German at home, while in another six cases at least the older children learned the language (see table below).<sup>83</sup>

<b><u>Language retention:</u></b>	total	Ethnic German	German National	Mixed Marriages
German as home language	(17)	(13)	(4)	(--)
German only with partner	(6)	(2)	(4)	(--)
Mix of German and English	(12)	(8)	(4)	(--)
English only with children	(4)	(3)	(1)	(--)
English as home language	(12)	(4)	(8)	(10)
All children speak German	(20)	(12)	(8)	(--)
Only older children	(6)	(3)	(3)	(--)
All children speak only English	(9)	(6)	(3)	(4)
Went to Saturday school	(7)	(4)	(3)	(--)

**Table 9.2:** Language retention of fifty German-speaking immigrants interviewed in British Columbia.

A majority of the interviewees who married a German speaker still use German or at least a mix of German and English as their home languages, and many of the second generation still have a working knowledge of German. Nevertheless, the numbers above indicate a noticeable difference between ethnic Germans and German nationals in the emphasis on the use of German at home and the insistence that the children learn the language. Though this was also important to German nationals like Rolf and Brigitte

<sup>83</sup> The data is based on the results of interviews conducted with German-speaking immigrants in British Columbia in 2005–2006. See also Gump, “Language Loss and Language Retention,” 82. The 57% of cases where the children learned German are surprisingly close to the 58% of parents who spoke German to their children before they started school.

Ullrich and Christian Stieda, they usually accepted the unwillingness of their children to learn German and did not insist that the children attend Saturday School, even when German remained the primarily language of communication between the parents.

Christian Stieda, for example, recalls: “The two oldest ones went to a German Saturday School, but it turned out that it was not very good. They didn’t want to go and didn’t like the atmosphere, which was very German – very authoritarian. So we told them that they didn’t have to go.”<sup>84</sup> He then provided a very detailed explanation of the dilemma between keeping German as a home language and the conflicts arising with the children as a result:

So, with our children we fairly quickly slipped into this English-speaking mode. We also observed that other Germans who insisted on speaking German with their children experienced great difficulties with their children later on. There were great communication problems between parents and children that we wanted to avoid. I think that it happens quite often that if the parents insist on speaking German at home, the children clam up and don’t say anything. The next thing you know is that there is a break between parents and children. We were aware of this from observing it and wanted to avoid it, so we continued speaking English to them.<sup>85</sup>

Rolf and Brigitte Ullrich’s experiences were quite similar. They, too, tried to maintain German as their home language, but once both children went to school, they started speaking English to each other, while using German only with their parents. But even this arrangement did not last. Brigitte remembers: “At home we continued to speak German, but as soon as the first child brought home an English-speaking boyfriend and later got married, English became more and more a part of our home language.”<sup>86</sup> Having grown up in Germany with German citizenship, and given their wartime experiences, German nationals may have been willing to distance themselves from the German language as it

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<sup>84</sup> Christian Stieda Interview.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Rolf and Brigitte Ullrich Interview.

was neither a symbol of their identity, nor a factor of pride. However as the mother tongue, it was usually quite important to the parents and sometimes helped to overcome the conversational limitations of the second language.<sup>87</sup> They accepted that for the second generation, its significance was limited to communicating with family members in Germany and that it was simply useful to have a second language.

For ethnic Germans, however, who had maintained their language and traditions over generations in Eastern Europe these factors were an integral part of the identity transplanted to Canada. In many ethnic German families the parents insisted on German as the home language and when that became impossible – usually when two children were in school and started to speak English with each other – they often demanded that only German be spoken around the dinner table. Ethnic German parents were also slightly more likely to insist that their children go to German Saturday School as a means of preserving their heritage, and are proud when the second or possibly third generations still speak the language. Sara and Waldemar Belter are a good example for this general pattern of language retention. They still speak German at home and only switch to English in bigger groups where non-German speakers are present. Sara Belter adds: “All of our five children speak German, only the younger grandchildren don’t. Our children went to German school in Edmonton and had to learn the language on their day off. They hated it, but...” her husband finishes: “But later they realized how well they were off [*sic.*].”<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Lucia Fallot Interview. In the context of her initial association with the German Baptist Church in Vancouver, she stated: “You sometimes simply need people to talk to about personal issues without first searching for words.” This very practical consideration makes it very likely that a majority of immigrant couples where both partners spoke German as their mother tongue would continue to speak German or a mix of both languages with each other.

<sup>88</sup> Sara and Waldemar Belter Interviews.

In cases where it was not possible to maintain German as home language, ethnic Germans were more likely to stress that they regretted the language loss. Richard Nikolaj, who married a Canadian woman in the late 1950s, clearly states: “I made a great mistake since my children do not speak German at all. We only spoke English at home and of course I was out of the house during the day. I blame myself because I should have insisted that they learn it, because it is always nice to know more than one language.”<sup>89</sup>

Reinhold and Lydia Ponto were both ethnic Germans who met in Canada and married in the German-Lutheran church in Kelowna in 1956. Though their children can read and understand German, they do not speak it. Reinhold Ponto clearly links language and the preservation of traditions in a foreign country when he states: “I would have liked to see my children speak German. The reason why I am saying this is that my ancestors were in Rumania for 100 years, but all of them still spoke German, even though we had to go to Rumanian schools. German was only spoken at home, in our village and in church.”<sup>90</sup> Though the distinction between ethnic Germans and German nationals is not clear-cut, the latter are generally less concerned about the retention of their mother language in the second generation.

Hence, since some immigrants wanted to preserve their mother tongue in the second generation, they founded German Saturday or Sunday Schools in the 1950s. In the beginning they were often attached to German churches, like the Good Shepherd Church in Victoria, or Baptist Church in Vancouver, but later people like Ruth Berndt established larger independent schools.<sup>91</sup> Similar to other immigrant families, the Berndts spoke

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<sup>89</sup> Richard Nikolaj Interview.

<sup>90</sup> Reinhold and Lydia Ponto Interviews.

<sup>91</sup> BC Archives, *Germans in British Columbia Collection* (tape 3880:1), Interview with Mrs. Mary Magdalene Bergbusch, conducted by Elizabeth M. Mayer, August 7, 1981, transcript. 10–11. Also Lucia

German at home while their children communicated in English with friends and at school. When Ruth realized that she could not preserve the home language by herself in 1971, she founded the school in a church basement and advertised it in Vancouver delicatessens. A demand for such a school was evident as Berndt immediately attracted forty-two students. Over time the school grew to serve Vancouver and parts of the Lower Mainland up to a 100 kilometres away. At its peak, it had about 400 students and 28 teachers in five separate locations.<sup>92</sup>

The birth and education of children in Canada were major factors in a family's integration, not only bringing the English language into the homes, but also involving families in school activities, sports, and other organizations outside of the ethnic networks. This brought them in contact with other families and their children's friends and introduced them to life and traditions in Canada more fully than they would have otherwise experienced. Thereby, the children played an important part in growing the roots that made Canada a new home – though the parents would always be torn between their own experiences in Europe and the new life in North America, while the Canadian reality was the only one that the children's generation knew.

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Fallot Interview. Mrs Bergbusch states that the Good Shepherd Church in Victoria first had German Sunday school classes in the 1960s before members of the community started an independent language school, while Lucia Fallot remarks that a German-language school was attached to the Baptist Church in Vancouver.

<sup>92</sup> Baumgartel, *Mit den Wölfen heulen*, 14–15.



### **9.5 Marriage patterns**

Marriage patterns among the fifty interviewees who answered the question conclusively show a noticeable divide between German nationals and ethnic Germans, too. Only six of the twenty-nine ethnic Germans were already married when they arrived in Canada; the majority of the interviewees were either single or came as children in a larger family migration.<sup>93</sup> In contrast, twelve of the twenty German nationals, of whom two had non-German partners (both British), were married when they arrived.<sup>94</sup> An additional four brought fiancés from Germany to Canada within three years of their own arrival.<sup>95</sup> Similarly striking is the discrepancy between the sixteen ethnic Germans who married within the German community in Canada, as opposed to one single case among nationals.<sup>96</sup> Finally, most of the marriages with non-German speaking partners in Canada involved those immigrants who either arrived as children and teenagers, or married only after they had integrated well into the host society.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Sara and Waldemar Belter Interviews. Sara came to Canada with her parents and siblings, but went to Edmonton on her own after a short time in Canada while her husband Waldemar came as a single immigrant.

<sup>94</sup> Lucia Fallot, Irmgard Siegmüller, Brunhilde Wiehler Interviews. Also Horst and Christel Godlinski Interview; Bernhard and Gertrud Dinter. All of these German nationals were already married when they decided to immigrate to Canada. Hedi Lattey and Helmut Godau Interviews. These were the two who had married British partners before moving to Canada.

<sup>95</sup> Rolf and Brigitte Ullrich Interview. Also Oberle, *Finding Home*, 243–248. Frank Oberle brought his partner Johanna (Joan) and their baby to Canada where they got married.

<sup>96</sup> For example Lydia and Reinhold Ponto, Alice and Albert Kropp Interviews in the case of ethnic Germans and Willy Godlinski Interview for German nationals.

<sup>97</sup> Leonhard Lange, Emil Wegwitz, and Rosa Stuiver interviews. All three were between 5 and 11 years old when they came to Canada and are all married to non-German speakers. Also Klay Schumann, Henry Less, and Günther Beck Interviews. Klay Schumann was 21 years old when he arrived in Vancouver, but did not get married to his Canadian wife for another 12 years. Henry Less got married after the same period of time. The only exception to this pattern is Günther Beck who married his French-Canadian wife about a year after he had arrived in Alberta.

<b><u>Marriage Patterns:</u></b>	Ethnic German	German National
Married to German partner when immigrating	(6)	(10)
Married to non-German partner when immigrating	(--)	(2)
Brought German partner to Canada	(--)	(4)
Married to German-speaker in Canada	(16)	(1)
Married to non-German speaker in Canada	(7)	(3)
Never married	(--)	(--)

**Table 9.3:** Marriage patterns among fifty German-speaking interviewees.

This suggests that the choice of marriage partners at least partly depended on the degree of integration into Canadian society. Though certainly not a representative sample, the patterns of second marriages shows a tendency away from choosing a partner within the German-speaking community. Out of five second marriages in the sample, three of the partners were Canadians and only two were German-speaking immigrants. One of the cases where the first and second partner was from the same linguistic community is Heinrich Wessels. He came to Canada in 1958 and became a member of the Martin Luther Church in Toronto, one of five German-language churches in the city where he met his first wife at a church-sponsored social group for young adult immigrants. After Heinrich's retirement, they moved to Kelowna, but his wife died in 2002. Later, he met Christa, a Swiss-German, at the local church and married her in June 2005.<sup>98</sup> The degree of attachment to the German community clearly influenced the likelihood of continued intermarriage within the diaspora.

<sup>98</sup> Heinrich Wessels Interview (pseudonym), Kelowna, BC, October 15, 2005. In two cases of second marriages, both partners were not from the German community. Both of Gerhard Fennig's wives were Canadian, while Siegmund Geist first married a Polish immigrant woman and later a Canadian.

Anecdotal evidence of marriage patterns among second-generation German-speaking immigrants shows that their behaviours strongly reflect general Canadian patterns. The son of Hilda Knopf, who married a girl whose parents live in Hamburg, Germany, is exceptional.<sup>99</sup> In all other cases, marriages are outside of the German diaspora, or in the case of Christian Stieda's five children even quite international. Two of his children married Canadians, one married a Dutch person and has lived in the Netherlands for some years, while one son married a Japanese woman living in Ottawa and the youngest daughter married a Hungarian and is living in Hungary.<sup>100</sup> There is little doubt that at least the second generation has thoroughly integrated and became assimilated into Canadian society.

The postwar German immigrants to British Columbia were clearly not a monolithic group. Their immigration experiences were shaped by the opportunities that were open to them based on their language skills and qualifications, but also by their self-perceptions. Immigrants born in Germany were more likely to distance themselves from the ethnic German community in Canada based on the assumed negative image conveyed to Canadians by the Second World War and the Holocaust. For ethnic Germans, this connection with Nazi Germany was usually not strong enough to influence the victimization they felt, created by the loss of their homes and their refugee experiences.

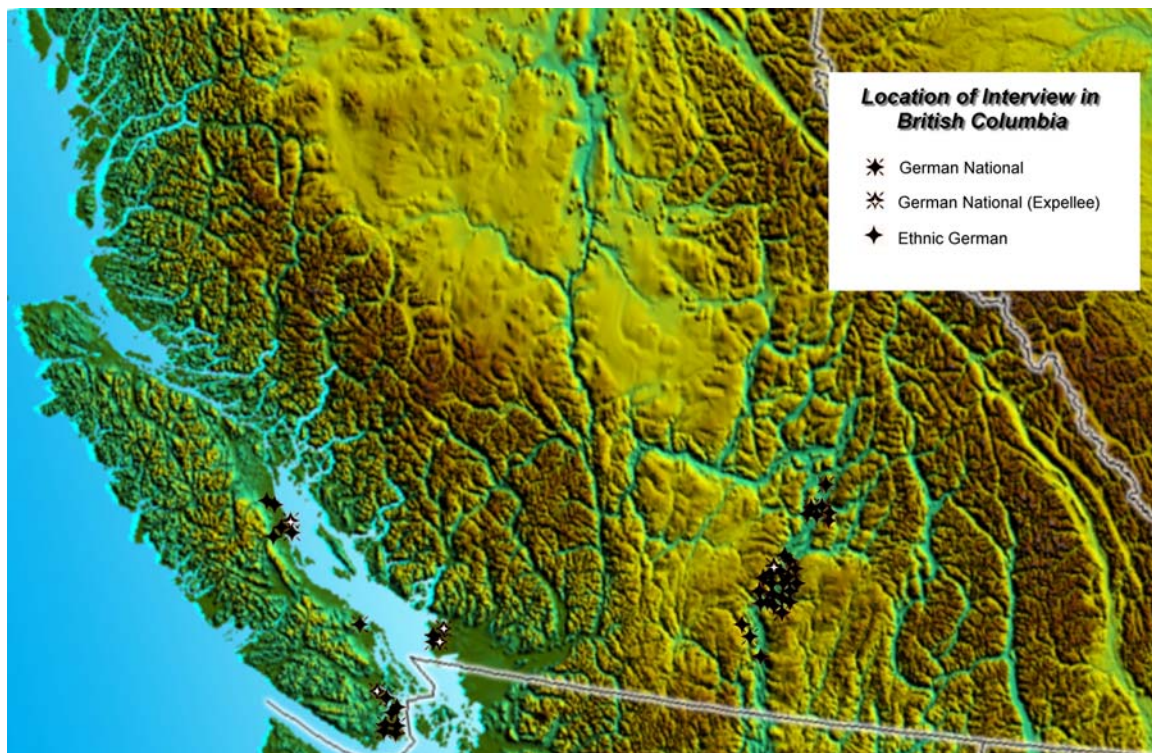
Therefore, ethnic Germans are over-represented in German organizations and also in their response to my study. Children of immigrants who went through the Canadian school system in the 1950s usually experienced negative stereotyping as Nazis from their classmates, with no regard to distinctions between ethnic and national Germans. First

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<sup>99</sup> Hilda Knopf Interview.

<sup>100</sup> Christian Stieda Interview.

generation ethnic German immigrants were able to integrate positively by combining pride in their German and Canadian identity, while German nationals and especially second generation immigrants tended to downplay their German identity in the public domain, integrating more fully into the Canadian mainstream. The German-speaking clubs and churches that emerged in British Columbia after the war (see Chapter 8), therefore, remained organizations of the first generation immigrants, with little appeal to their children and even to the small number of later German arrivals. These ethnic networks remained specific to the 1950s immigration wave, because later German immigrants were not only significantly fewer in number, but also usually had reasonable language skills and transferable work experience. For these reasons, and because the early postwar German diaspora community in Canada has tried to hold on to its cultural values, their clubs and churches were no longer relevant to the second generation and later immigrants. The changes in marriage patterns clearly attest to the degree of assimilation into Canadian of the second generation, but to what degree could the first generation immigrants become truly Canadian?



**Map 9.1:** Location of Interviews with German-speaking immigrants in British Columbia, 2005–2006.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Map created by author based on location of interviews with German-speaking immigrants in British Columbia.

## Chapter 10

**Becoming Canadian?**

As shown in the last two chapters, English language acquisition was the key to economic and social success in British Columbia, but the question remains: What was required for German immigrants to 'feel Canadian'? In the interviews, two questions helped shed light on this process of assimilation, of fully embracing the values and identity of the mainstream Canadian society. These questions were: first, when, if ever, did they apply for Canadian citizenship; and second, how did they identify in terms of ethnicity? On the surface, the answers were paradoxical. On the one hand, ethnic Germans generally applied for Canadian citizenship sooner than German nationals yet were more likely to still identify as German. German nationals on the other hand took a longer time to apply for citizenship, if they did at all, but were more likely to identify as Canadian. Upon closer examination, a pattern started to emerge. As with family migrations and home language, citizenship applications and self-identification within Canadian society strongly depended on the immigrants' background and experiences in Europe during and after the Second World War. While ethnic Germans had lost their homes in Eastern Europe and therefore did not have a place to which to return, accepting Canadian citizenship was a matter of taking advantage of the privileges that came with it, while German citizenship was basically a psychological safety net for German nationals who had the option of returning to Europe if their immigration failed. The reverse is true for self-identification. For ethnic Germans, as for other displaced persons and refugee groups, the preservation of language and traditions were the foundations of their identity,

whereas German nationals often made a conscious decision to become Canadian, not least because of the negative self-image imposed by the recent Nazi past.

At first glance, the fact that the overwhelming majority of interviewees had acquired Canadian citizenship supports the argument of historians such as Gerhard Bassler and Udo Sautter that Germans are among the best integrated ethnic groups in Canada.<sup>1</sup> Out of fifty interviewees, forty-seven, or 94%, had become Canadian citizens while only three remained German citizens. This high number is even more striking because Germany does not allow dual citizenship; therefore those applying to become Canadians clearly expressed their interest in staying in Canada permanently. Not surprisingly, all thirty ethnic Germans, who had lost their homes in Eastern Europe, became Canadian citizens. For the German nationals, the decision to give up their German passports was complicated by the fact that most of them still had family and friends in Europe. As a result of different considerations, three out of twenty German nationals did not become Canadians.

Canadian Citizen:	total (50)	Ethnic Germans (30)	German Nationals (20)
Yes	47	30	17
No	3	---	3

**Table 10.1:** Acquisition of Canadian citizenship among Ethnic Germans and German Nationals.<sup>2</sup>

The numbers for German nationals are closely matched by results from interviews Monika Schmid conducted with twenty-one German nationals in Vancouver who arrived

<sup>1</sup> For example Gerhard P. Bassler, *The German Canadian Mosaic: Today and Yesterday*. (Ottawa: German-Canadian Congress, 1991), 10; and Udo Sautter, "Deutsche in Kanada," in: Klaus J. Bade (Ed.), *Deutsche im Ausland – Fremde in Deutschland. Migration in Geschichte und Gegenwart*. (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1992), 196–197.

<sup>2</sup> Table based on fifty personal interviews conducted in British Columbia in 2005 and 2006.

in Canada between 1945 and 1961. Here, too, three persons remained German citizens while the other eighteen acquired Canadian passports.<sup>3</sup>

Overall, citizenship acquisition was very high among both groups of German-speaking immigrants. Yet the conflict for German nationals between old and new loyalties becomes even more apparent when the time that elapsed between immigration and application for Canadian citizenship is considered. Nineteen of the interviewees (38%) applied for Canadian citizenship as soon as they could. During the 1950s and 1960s, the waiting period was five years, though a couple of immigrants said that they were able to apply after three years.<sup>4</sup> An additional seventeen (34%) applied in the following five-year period, so that almost three quarters had become Canadian citizens within their first ten years in Canada. Most of the remaining fourteen (28%) applied more than sixteen years after their arrival.

Years:	total (50)	Ethnic (30)	National (20)
1 - 5	(19) 38%	(11) 36.6%	(8) 40%
6 - 10	(17) 34%	(14) 46.6%	(3) 15%
11 - 15	(2) 4%	(1) 3.3%	(1) 5%
16+	(9) 18%	(4) 13.3%	(5) 25%
Never	(3) 6%	(--)	(3) 15%

**Table 10.2:** Time elapsing between arrival in Canada and application for citizenship.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Based on twenty-one interviews with German nationals in Vancouver conducted by Monika Schmid in the summer of 2004.

<sup>4</sup> HStA Düsseldorf, NW58, vol. 206, Federal Office for Emigration, "Summary of Immigration Regulations for Canada," Bremen, December 28, 1950, pt. 7. Immigrants were allowed to become Canadian citizens if they had lived in Canada for five years. Immigrants could apply after one year, but would only be granted citizenship after the required five year period, so possibly this is the reason for the confusion.

<sup>5</sup> Fifty personal interviews conducted in British Columbia, 2005–2006.



However, when splitting the numbers between ethnic Germans and German nationals, slightly different patterns appear. Both groups are very close for those who applied immediately with 36.6% among ethnic Germans and 40% for German nationals, a difference that is statistically insignificant given the size of the sample. After that, however, the numbers diverge noticeably. Ten years after immigration, the accumulated percentage for ethnic Germans with Canadian citizenship is already 83.2%, while only 55% of German nationals had become Canadians at this point. Also, while only 13.3% of ethnic Germans waited more than fifteen years for naturalization, this is true for one quarter of German nationals, with another 15% permanently retaining their German citizenship. It seems that the low number of German nationals applying for citizenship between six and ten years after arrival reflects the division between negative self-perception which might have led them to become Canadian as early as possible (i.e. after five years) and the desire to hold on to the German passport as an insurance against failure in the early years of the integration process. Most ethnic Germans did not have a place to return to in Europe and therefore applied for naturalization as soon as they could, or as early as they thought of doing so, or when they needed a Canadian passport, for example, for travelling.

Though the statistical data shows a clear difference between the two groups, it cannot explain the motivations to acquire Canadian citizenship. Based on the interviews, in many cases the reasons were very practical, rather than stressing loyalties to the new country or a desire to be able to vote. Heinrich Wessels, a German national born near Berlin, applied for Canadian citizenship after five years, because he wanted to visit his brother in the United States without the hassle of being “checked thoroughly” as a

“foreigner” at the American border. He explains: “Well, we had nowhere else to go, so why not join the club and be Canadian?”<sup>6</sup> Waldemar Belter’s reasoning was similar. In 1957, he and his wife Sara, both born in Volhynia, drove to British Columbia on their first vacation from their new home in Alberta. Road conditions were very poor along the “Big Bend” between Golden and Revelstoke before the highway over Rogers Pass was completed in 1962. He states: “I threw up twice on that way, it was so bad. If we had already been Canadian citizens, we could have gone through the United States, so as soon as we got back from that trip, I applied – and if the judge had asked me why I applied, this is what I would have told him.”<sup>7</sup> His wife added that they did not have the means to travel out of the country before then, so there had been no need to become naturalized.

Several other interviewees only applied to become Canadian in order to qualify for government employment or for a pension. For example, Arnold Hirschhorn and Leonhard Lange took Canadian citizenship to join the army.<sup>8</sup> Brunhilde Wiehler’s husband had to become a citizen when he accepted a job as a cook in a prison in Alberta, while Helmut Reither states: “I applied when I started working for Air Canada, which was a crown corporation at the time. This was in 1979 and I became a Canadian citizen in 1980.”<sup>9</sup> Also based on practical considerations, Gerhard Fennig only applied for citizenship when he retired, in order to access his pension fund.<sup>10</sup> In contrast to the cases above, for Richard Nikolaj it was a pre-condition to marry his Canadian wife in 1957. He

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<sup>6</sup> Heinrich Wessels Interview (pseudonym), Kelowna, B.C., October 15, 2005. Also Adina Frank Interview, Kelowna, B.C., October 14, 2005. Adina Frank applied for Canadian citizenship in 1967 after nineteen years in North America to visit her mother in Germany for the first time the following year.

<sup>7</sup> Waldemar and Sara Belter Interviews, Vernon, B.C., October 12, 2005. Waldemar came to Canada in 1949 and Sara arrived in 1950.

<sup>8</sup> Leonhard Lange Interview, Comox, B.C., April 21, 2006; and Arnold Hirschhorn Interview, Courtenay, B.C., April 22, 2006.

<sup>9</sup> Brunhilde Wiehler Interview, Kelowna, B.C., October 17, 2005; and Helmut Reither Interview, Richmond, B.C., May 26, 2006.

<sup>10</sup> Gerhard Fennig Interview, Vernon, B.C., October 10, 2005.

explains: “My wife and brother-in-law insisted that I became a Canadian citizen, so that my kids would not be ‘little DPs.’ So, I took the citizenship.”<sup>11</sup> Therefore, there was certainly a wide range of very practical considerations to apply for Canadian citizenship that influenced the decisions of ethnic Germans and German nationals alike. None of those decisions, however, was based primarily on a feeling of attachment or loyalty to the new country, not to say anything about a willingness to fight for Canada in the case of war, as Frank Oberle admits.<sup>12</sup>

Though applying for Canadian citizenship to simplify travelling and finding work was common to both ethnic Germans and German nationals, there were nevertheless distinctions between the two groups. Ethnic Germans like Albert Kropp and Henry Fehling became Canadian citizens as soon as they could, simply because Canada was now their home and they had nowhere else to go. The reasoning is expressed well in Albert Kropp’s short statement: “Because this became my home, so why shouldn’t I become a Canadian citizen? This was to my own advantage.”<sup>13</sup> Similarly, Henry Grub did not have any attachments to Europe after his immigration and since he was interested in politics he wanted to be able to vote in Canadian elections. Henry Fehling brings these widespread sentiments among ethnic Germans to the point when he states: “Well, I thought, I live in this country, I like this country, so I should become a Canadian.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Richard Nikolaj Interview, Kelowna, B.C., October 14, 2005.

<sup>12</sup> Oberle, *Finding Home*, 273: According to Frank Oberle, Judge Henry Castillou asked one of the applicants for Canadian citizenship at the hearing in Lillooet in 1956 whether he would be willing to fight for Canada in the case of war. Oberle writes at this point: “Fortunately, when it came my turn, he spared me from having to respond to this particular question. I doubt that I would have come up with the answer His Honour expected.” Other immigrants clearly felt the same way after escaping the horrors of the Second World War.

<sup>13</sup> Albert Kropp Interview, Kelowna, B.C., October 15, 2005.

<sup>14</sup> Henry Fehling Interview, Penticton, B.C., October 9, 2005.

For German nationals, becoming Canadian citizens was more complex since they had to renounce their German citizenship. In the process they would sever family ties and emotional links to their homeland. Frank Oberle describes the experience of signing the form to switch his allegiance to Canada in his memoirs and finally concludes: “It would be a long time before I found the courage to confess to Joan [his wife] that as the price for becoming a citizen of Canada ... I had to cut off the last bridge linking me to my German heritage.”<sup>15</sup> Similarly, Klay Schumann only applied for Canadian citizenship several years after his father’s death, when there was less reason to return to Germany. Although he needed a Canadian passport for work, he added that his father would have never understood this decision.<sup>16</sup> In these two cases the disapproval of close family members was a major factor explaining the difficulty of the decision.

More important, however, was the finality of the move, because it precluded the option of returning to Germany in case the immigration to Canada failed. Erika Riemer and her husband, for instance, applied for Canadian citizenship in 1960, after eight years in North America, at a time when her husband’s family in Germany urged them to return to Europe.<sup>17</sup> So, under pressure from relatives, they were forced to decide between the two countries and made their choice final by severing the formal connections to Germany. Gertrud Dinter waited sixteen years to apply for Canadian citizenship because she felt homesick and missed the culture and her family and friends. She had also given up a good job in Germany to join her husband on Vancouver Island. Only after they

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<sup>15</sup> Oberle, *Finding Home*, 273.

<sup>16</sup> Klay Schumann Interview, Richmond, B.C., September 1, 2005.

<sup>17</sup> Erika Riemer Interview, Kelowna, B.C., October 17, 2005. Though Erika Riemer was an ethnic German born in Bessarabia, her husband was a German national and his whole family was still in Germany.

bought their own land and opened a nursery near Duncan, B.C. did she start to feel at home and securely established enough to become a Canadian citizen.<sup>18</sup>

The different emotional and practical attachments to West Germany that made many German nationals reluctant to become Canadian citizens are even clearer in the cases of the three who retained their German passports. Mina Schmidt was still German in 2005 because she owned some land near her hometown. For a long time, Germany did not allow foreign citizens to possess land and, since she did not want to sell it, she remained a landed immigrant in Canada. But she says: “I found that it does not make a big difference that I am not a Canadian citizen, except that I am not allowed to vote.”<sup>19</sup> While Mina’s reasoning is based again on practical considerations, that of Horst Godlinski shows a more emotional attachment to his German background. Since he had been a German soldier during the Second World War, he did not want to swear allegiance to the Queen of England. Christel in turn remained German because of her husband’s decision, though she would otherwise have become a Canadian citizen. Nevertheless, though they did not apply for citizenship, both of them feel strongly Canadian and consider Canada their home. She explains: “We consider ourselves as Canadians in the sense that we have lived here, made a living here, raised our children here, and this is our home. I would not think that Germany is my home any more, but our roots were there.”<sup>20</sup>

Therefore, neither the citizenship itself, nor the time it took to apply for Canadian citizenship, is a clear indicator for the self-identification of immigrants. The Godlinskis never became Canadian citizens, though they feel Canadian, while Irene Salamon became

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<sup>18</sup> Bernhard and Gertrud Dinter Interviews, Duncan, B.C., October 23, 2005. Bernhard Dinter, an expellee from Silesia, already became a Canadian citizen after five years while Gertrud came from Hessen.

<sup>19</sup> Mina Schmidt Interview, Kelowna, B.C., October 15, 2005.

<sup>20</sup> Horst and Christel Godlinski Interview, Comox, B.C., April 22, 2006. Horst was an expellee from East Prussia, while Christel was born in Westphalia where both of them met in the early 1950s.

a citizen, but still feels German at heart and would like to visit her home in Hungary some time.<sup>21</sup> Historian Russell A. Kazal has observed a similar pattern among German immigrants to the United States. He writes that “respondents of German as well as English background had a relatively low sense of ethnic identity, often identifying simply as ‘American.’” Nevertheless, he found that despite this general tendency, some people emphasize their German ethnic identity and concludes that “Americans of German background could still be found among both the ‘white ethnics’ and the ‘unhyphenated Americans.’”<sup>22</sup> Though Kazal describes this as a “paradox of German-American identity” in the subtitle of his book, a survey of the origins of the immigrants represented in his study might well have pointed to a distinction between ethnic Germans and German nationals that becomes quite apparent in the case of British Columbia.

The interviewees’ self-identification tells quite a different and more complex story than their decision to apply for Canadian citizenship. Ethnic Germans tend to identify more positively with their German background in general and the language and culture in particular. Despite their generally early applications for Canadian citizenship, a majority of ethnic Germans continued to identify as either German-Canadian or German. In contrast, German nationals delayed a change in citizenship or never applied for one, yet did not self-identify as German and a majority claimed to be Canadian. Though 13.3% of ethnic Germans still declared themselves German and another 53.3% as German-Canadian, none of the German nationals identified as German and only 40% said that they were German-Canadian. On the other end of the spectrum, only 30% of ethnic

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<sup>21</sup> Irene Salamon Interview, Kelowna, B.C., October 14, 2005.

<sup>22</sup> Russell A. Kazal, *Becoming Old Stock. The Paradox of German-American Identity*. (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), 280.

Germans said that they were Canadian as compared to 55% of German nationals. These numbers strongly suggest distinct self-perceptions among the two groups.

The differences become even more pronounced when taking into account that at least six of the nine ethnic Germans who identified as Canadian came to North America as children or young teenagers and went to school in Canada, while among the German nationals a vast majority in this category were adult immigrants. In sum, ethnic German immigrants who came as adults are far more likely to hold on to their German identity than German nationals. This pattern clearly supports the findings on home language discussed in the previous chapter.

Identity:	total (50)	Ethnic (30)	National (20)
German	(4) 8%	(4) 13.3%	(--) ---
German-Canadian	(24) 48%	(16) 53.3%	(8) 40%
Canadian	(20) 40%	(9) 30.0%	(11) 55%
Other (neutral, BC resident)	(2) 4%	(1) 3.3%	(1) 5%

**Table 10.3:** Self-Identification of Ethnic Germans and German Nationals.<sup>23</sup>

The integration routes that ethnic Germans chose are closely paralleled by other groups of refugees, such as the Lithuanians and Estonian immigrants to Canada studied by Henriette von Holleuffer. She describes the social integration of Lithuanian displaced persons as a combination of “imposed ‘Canadianization’ and self-selected ‘ethnicity retention.’” They preserved their cultural heritage by actively founding new ethnic

<sup>23</sup> Based on fifty interviews conducted in British Columbia.

churches, cultural centres, and clubs.<sup>24</sup> Karl Aun's contribution to the "Generations Series" shows similar tendencies for Estonian displaced persons.<sup>25</sup>

Like these refugees, the ethnic Germans established their own churches, clubs, and choirs in Canada, thereby preserving their cultural and linguistic heritage. At the same time many decided to become Canadian citizens. This high degree of citizenship acquisition among refugees, who, like the ethnic Germans, did not have a European home to return to, is also reflected in a survey conducted by the 'Canadian Estonian History Commission' in 1965. At that point, 90% of Estonian postwar immigrants in the sample had already become Canadian citizens.<sup>26</sup> For ethnic Germans who were born in foreign countries, it was not citizenship that defined their identity, but culture and language. Caroline Leitner, born in the southern Ukraine, still identifies as German, while Waldemar and Sara Belter stated that they are "German-Canadian, but German first and then Canadian," a phrase used by several ethnic Germans.<sup>27</sup> Others who characterized themselves as German-Canadian or Canadian, like Reinhold Ponto and Richard Person, nevertheless declared their pride in being German *and* Canadian.<sup>28</sup> Very few German nationals would describe themselves in a similar fashion.

Most noticeable is the fact that not a single person among the twenty German nationals would identify as German. Furthermore, of the eight who said they were

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<sup>24</sup> Karl Aun, *The Political Refugees: A History of the Estonians in Canada*. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1985).

<sup>25</sup> Henriette von Holleuffer, *Zwischen Fremde und Fremde. Displaced Persons in Australien, den USA und Kanada 1946 – 1952*. (Osnabrück: Universitätsverlag Rasch, 2001), 363–364.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 365.

<sup>27</sup> Caroline Leitner Interview (pseudonym), Sidney, B.C., August 25, 2005; Waldemar and Sara Belter Interviews.

<sup>28</sup> Richard Person Interview, Kelowna, B.C., October 16, 2005. He was born near Lodz in central Poland in 1932 and came to Canada at age twenty in August 1952. Richard Person was one of the few ethnic Germans who came to Canada as adults and identify as Canadian. Also Reinhold Ponto Interview, Kelowna, B.C., October 16, 2005. Reinhold Ponto, born in Rumania identifies himself as German Canadian, but also states that he is proud to be German and Canadian.



German-Canadian, most apologetically explained the German part. For example, Helmut Reither said: “I am German-Canadian. This is impossible to deny. As soon as I open my mouth to speak English, it is clear that I am of German descent.”<sup>29</sup> In a similar fashion, Rolf Ullrich answered the question with: “Our roots cannot be denied, even though we lived in Canada for most of our lives. But the youth, to the age of 25 still had a strong influence. So, though we are Canadian citizens, I do not think of myself only as Canadian. I am a Canadian with German background, so a German-Canadian.”<sup>30</sup> Lucia Fallot also stated “that the German will never go away,” while Willy Godlinski characterized himself as German-Canadian and then immediately adds: “As I said, one should not be ashamed of his past.”<sup>31</sup> Though some of the interviewees clearly appreciated part of their German background, they saw the German segment of their identification as having negative connotations, as something that either does not go away or can not be denied. The negative stereotyping in Canada and the feeling of guilt as a result of the Second World War and the Holocaust combine to create a negative self-image that seems to characterize the German past as a sign of an incomplete integration among German nationals, while ethnic Germans perceive their heritage as a positive addition to their Canadian identity.

In this light, it is not surprising that a majority of German nationals identify as Canadian.<sup>32</sup> Yet even here, some explicitly point to the experiences of the Second World War to explain their answers, like Brunhilde Wiehler who feels Canadian and has no

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<sup>29</sup> Helmut Reither Interview, Richmond, B.C., May 26, 2006.

<sup>30</sup> Rolf and Brigitte Ullrich Interview, Victoria, B.C., August 9, 2005.

<sup>31</sup> Lucia Fallot Interview, Sidney, B.C., August 9, 2005; and Willy Godlinski Interview, Vancouver, B.C., May 27, 2006. Also Gerhard Fennig Interview, Vernon, B.C., October 10, 2005. Gerhard Fennig responds: “German-Canadian. I am a Berliner. Well, I am Canadian, but in my heart, I am still a Berliner.”

<sup>32</sup> See for example Günther Beck Interview, Summerland, B.C., October 9, 2005. Also Bernhard Dinter and Klay Schumann Interviews.

attachment to Germany because of her horrible experiences at the end of the Second World War and the immediate postwar period.<sup>33</sup> Becoming Canadian, therefore, can also be a way to create distance from the memories of the past. However, as some of the remarks by interviewees indicated, their identity is not only shaped by their own self-perception, but also by the host society in general. A person speaking English with an accent might self-identify as Canadian, but will remain recognizable as an immigrant to the Canadian-born population.

Horst Godlinski tells the story of an encounter in a coffee shop in Terrace, B.C., where another customer congratulated him on his good English before asking him where he was from and how he liked Canada. Horst asked in return how old the man was and after finding out told the person that he had immigrated to Canada long before the man had even been born.<sup>34</sup> For the anonymous customer in the coffee shop, Horst's accent suggested that he was not Canadian, though he had spent most of his life in this country. Therefore, being Canadian has multiple meanings. Every person with a Canadian passport clearly is officially Canadian, even though, as we have seen, this does not necessarily coincide with the self-identifications of immigrants. Those immigrants who state that they are German-Canadians could certainly claim to be part of the Canadian mosaic, though, in the case of Mina Schmidt, some are not Canadian citizens. Even those immigrants who are Canadian citizens and identify strongly as Canadians but speak the language with an accent will at times find that Canadian-born native English speakers will identify them as immigrants. Therefore, only those who arrived in Canada young enough to speak English without an accent could be considered assimilated into the host

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<sup>33</sup> Brunhilde Wiehler Interview.

<sup>34</sup> Horst and Christel Godlinski Interview.

society, though even then, people like Rosa Stuver express pride in their German heritage while feeling strongly Canadian.<sup>35</sup>

Apart from citizenship and self-identification, some immigrants changed their names in order to fit in. Reinhard Klaffke, who settled with his young family in Vancouver in 1951, decided to change his name to Norman Kelly. Working for a North American company, he was reluctant to introduce himself to clients with a German name, a situation he thinks is quite different today. Kelly had also observed German-Jewish immigrants to Vancouver, like the Blockbauers and Piecks, who had difficulty securing cutting permits for timber on crown land from the Chief Forester, a Scotsman, because of their names. As a result, Blockbauer changed his name to Bentley and Pieck to Prentice. This, Kelly claims, made their social upward mobility easier, so that Bentley's son Peter became CEO of Canfor, one of the biggest forest products companies in North America. With this in mind, a name change seemed advisable to Reinhard Klaffke.<sup>36</sup>

However, name changes were relatively rare among the immigrants interviewed in BC, as was also the case among immigrants who settled in Alberta.<sup>37</sup> The most common was a change of one's first name into the English version to simplify pronunciation, like turning Heinrich into Henry, Johann into John, and Gerhard into

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<sup>35</sup> Rosa Stuver Interview, Richmond, B.C., May 26, 2006. Rosa Stuver had been born to ethnic German parents from the Ukraine in Southern Germany in 1945 and was six years old when the family immigrated to Canada.

<sup>36</sup> Bernd W. Baumgartel, *Mit den Wölfen heulen. Deutsche Einwanderer in Kanada erzählen*. (Herdecke, Germany: Scheffler-Verlag, 1999), 81. Bentley and Prentice were brothers-in-law and came to B.C. in 1938. They started what later became Canfor shortly thereafter.

<sup>37</sup> In her study of Germans in Edmonton, Andrea Koch-Kraft also found that only a small number of her 240 subjects changed their names, and they did so to shorten and simplify them. Overall, only 10.3% changed their first names and 6.3% their family names. Therefore, she concludes that name changes are not necessarily an expression of adaptation. Only four out of twenty-five who changed their names adopted English first and family names. Andrea Koch-Kraft, *Deutsche in Kanada – Einwanderung and Adaption. Mit einer Untersuchung zur Situation der Nachkriegsimmigration in Edmonton, Alberta*. (Bochum: Universitätsverlag Dr. N. Brockmeyer, 1990), 234–235.

Garry.<sup>38</sup> Similarly, Günther Beck's original family name was Schnakenbeck.<sup>39</sup> He shortened it, however, for simplification, not to hide his German background, which would have required a change of his first name too. In a few cases name changes occurred during the immigration process, because immigration officials anglicised names in the documents. In this way, for example, Franz Oberle became Frank.<sup>40</sup>

In other cases, immigrants changed their names due to outside pressures. Lotte Clerke explains that her son was beaten up at school because of his German background and had to go to hospital. Therefore, the family decided to move from Toronto to Vancouver and change their name to Willow, while also adopting English as their home language to disguise their heritage. This, she said, made it easier at school for her children.<sup>41</sup> As in the case of citizenship applications, name changes were generally based on practical considerations and were therefore not an indicator of assimilation into Canadian society.

In general, all the immigrants interviewed were well integrated into Canadian society and considered Canada their home, where they had spent in most cases more than fifty years of their lives. Most of them had become Canadian citizens and considered themselves German-Canadian or Canadian, though most still speak English with an accent and are therefore distinguishable from the Canadian-born population. As I have argued in this chapter, however, even after such a long time, there are significant differences between ethnic Germans and German nationals that define the process of adjustment of the immigrants to Canada. The nature of the immigration movement in the

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<sup>38</sup> For example, Henry Grub and Gerhard Fennig Interviews.

<sup>39</sup> Günther Beck Interview.

<sup>40</sup> Oberle, *Finding Home*, 179. Also his wife's name was changed from Johanna to Joan when they got married in Bralorne, B.C. by the local RCMP officer. See p. 248.

<sup>41</sup> Lotte Clerke Interview conducted by Monica Schmid in Vancouver, Summer 2004.

late 1940s and in the 1950s was unique because of the divide among German immigrants that was not present in any other ethnic group. Ethnic Germans were basically refugees and behaved in ways that are comparable to other refugee groups, like the displaced persons who came at the same time. As a general rule, they kept up German traditions in Canada and were the driving forces behind the founding of German churches and clubs.

In contrast, German nationals who had not lost their homelands came for various other reasons, from a sense of adventure to economic improvement. They share patterns of integration and assimilation similar to later German immigrants and also to other non-refugee groups from Northern and Western Europe, like the Dutch.<sup>42</sup> German nationals were very likely to integrate into Canadian society, and to identify as Canadian.

Nevertheless, they were less likely and slower in applying for Canadian citizenship than ethnic Germans. In particular when they left behind secure jobs it took significantly longer to overcome homesickness and self-doubt about whether emigration was the right decision. There was some re-migration, but those who stayed generally made a strong commitment to become Canadians. This is obviously not a black and white pattern, and there are a lot of shades of grey, based on individual decisions, experiences, and preferences. But the basic outcome is that the ethnic organizations, especially those founded in British Columbia by the 1950s immigrants, are foremost ethnic German organizations and are very specific to their interests of preserving language and traditions. They had only a limited appeal to many German nationals and even less to later German immigrants, who were born in Germany and generally arrived in Canada equipped with better English skills and a more secure foothold in the new country.

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<sup>42</sup> See for example Frans J. Schryer, *The Netherlandic Presence in Ontario. Pillars, Class and Dutch Ethnicity*. (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1998), 294–296.

Today, the German clubs and choirs are in decline because their members are aging and they are not able to attract new ones. German immigration has dropped significantly from a peak of almost 23,000 annually in the 1950s to an average of only about 1,500 per year in the 1970s to 1990s. Its nature has also shifted noticeably in terms of occupational background and destination within Canada.<sup>43</sup> While many of the immigrants in the 1950s either had an agricultural background or a trade and arrived with one or two suitcases, later immigrants were better educated, usually spoke English, and came with a substantial portion of their household effects. The older immigrants jealously, but also with a sense of pride in their own achievement, refer to these newer arrivals as “Containerdeutsche.”<sup>44</sup> Many of these new immigrants did not feel the need to join the German clubs and churches established by their predecessors, mostly from Eastern Europe, which meant that ethnic organizations no longer profited even from this small infusion of younger people from Germany.

As a result, the German diaspora in British Columbia, defined as the organized network of people identifying as Germans, is disappearing. With the significantly reduced volume and changing nature of immigration after the end of the 1950s, postwar ethnic churches and clubs gradually found themselves catering to aging, and often very traditional groups that had little appeal to the second and third generations.<sup>45</sup> Though Horst Kopplin, a former president of the Victoria Edelweiss Club, believed that the only way to preserve the German clubs was to “try to instil our traditions and values into the

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<sup>43</sup> Government of Canada, *Immigration Research Series, Profiles Germany. German Immigrants in Canada*. (Ottawa, 1996), 1 and 4; and: Citizenship and Immigration Statistics 1996, Table IMM 13. (Ottawa: Government Publication, 1999), 58.

<sup>44</sup> Brigitte Ullrich Interview. “Containerdeutsche” refers to the fact that these later German immigrants shipped their possessions in containers.

<sup>45</sup> Personal conversations with pastors and members of Holy Cross Church in Kelowna and Good Shepherd Church in Victoria.

second generation,”<sup>46</sup> it seems that German language and tradition holds only a limited attraction for the children of the postwar immigrants in Canada. Therefore it is likely that most German organizations, at least in British Columbia, will disappear within the next decade or two. Though they provided an important network for immigrants in the past, they are no longer useful to the small number of new arrivals or the second generation.

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<sup>46</sup> Horst Kopplin Interview, transcript, 22.

## Conclusion

Based on personal interviews, this dissertation created a “collective biography” of German-speaking immigrants to British Columbia. It covered a series of migrations westward that started in parts of Eastern Europe at the beginning of the Second World War and increased in volume at the end of the conflict, when the Red Army swept a major wave of ethnic German refugees and German nationals (expellees) in front of it. From the destroyed and economically depressed postwar Germany, a new migration wave crossed the Atlantic to arrive in Canada after 1947. Few of the immigrants who came to North America before 1961 immediately settled in one place, most moved at least once more until they finally arrived in British Columbia.

During the 1950s, Canada witnessed its first major immigration wave after the Great Depression and the Second World War had reduced the numbers of arrivals to a mere trickle for almost two decades. Immigrants from Italy and the over 200,000 German-speakers formed the two largest non-British ethnic groups entering Canada during this decade. Though the Canadian mainstream characterized all these German-speaking arrivals collectively as Germans, without distinction of place of birth or previous nationalities, the results of my interviews with postwar immigrants in British Columbia and other life stories strongly question a singular German-Canadian identity, or the existence of a single German diaspora. In *Becoming Old Stock*, Russell A. Kazal examined the paradox that some Germans assimilated very quickly and became part of the American mainstream, while others retained their ethnic identity. He concludes:



As singular as German America's internal diversity was . . . even today, class, religious, and other fissures make it less than completely monolithic. The German case points to the wide range of ways that the members of one European ethnic group conceive of their [integration into the mainstream], given that group's internal divisions, and to the power of those class and religious divides to shape such racial self-conceptions.<sup>1</sup>

Despite class, religious, and other distinctions, Kazal starts from the basic assumption that German-speaking immigrants to the United States generally perceived themselves as part of the same ethnic group. However, my research strongly suggests that German identity was neither singular, nor universally accepted. There were certainly class and religious divisions within the group, but more significant was the distinction between ethnic German refugees and German nationals. Ethnic Germans from Eastern Europe certainly thought of themselves as part of a larger cultural and linguistic German group and were perceived as such by their former countries of residence which, after all, led to their expulsions. When they arrived in Germany at the end of the war, however, they were stranded in a place that was not their home. The situation was aggravated by the fact that the refugees were neither welcome nor accepted as Germans. They felt treated as second-class citizens, while the local population usually referred to them as refugees, Russians, or Poles. This distinction between ethnic Germans and German nationals in terms of their background, migration, and settlement patterns -- one of the major themes of this dissertation -- is one of few instances where refugee and voluntary migrations coincided chronologically and geographically.

The permanent loss of their homes and property in Eastern Europe and the difficult conditions in postwar Germany made the experiences of ethnic Germans similar

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<sup>1</sup> Russell A. Kazal, *Becoming Old Stock. The Paradox of German-American Identity*. (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), 281.

to those of the Displaced Persons, though they were not recognized as such by the International Refugee Organization (IRO) created by the United Nations to solve the displaced persons problem through resettlement schemes. Nevertheless, if they had not become German citizens, Canada did not exclude ethnic Germans from family sponsorship and even provided financial and material support for the privately organized Canadian Christian Council for the Resettlement of Refugees (CCCRR) which, starting in 1947, had the explicit goal of bringing ethnic German refugees and other groups outside the mandate of the IRO to Canada. In addition, because of immigration patterns in the interwar period, many ethnic Germans had relatives in Canada who were in a position to sponsor them. In turn, they would often bring other family members to North America, afterwards, creating a pattern of chain migration.

In contrast to the situation of this refugee group, German nationals (and also Austrians) were categorically excluded from immigration to Canada until Ottawa revoked their enemy alien status in September 1950. However, few of them had family members in Canada to sponsor them, given the low numbers of interwar migrants. In the absence of these connections and since the West German government had imposed strict limitations on currency exchanges, German nationals disproportionately relied on sponsorship through the Canadian Assisted Passage Loan Scheme or, after Bonn loosened the currency restrictions, paid for their own fares. A further distinction between the two groups was that ethnic Germans often brought their extended families to Canada, while most German nationals immigrated either as singles or young married couples. Therefore, in the case of the latter, chain migration was rare, while almost all German

nationals left immediate family members in Europe and so maintained a strong personal connection with their place of birth.

Not only patterns of sponsorship and family size distinguished the two groups, but also the reasons for emigration show some distinct characteristics. For ethnic Germans shortly after the end of the Second World War, the situation in Germany did not promise a new start economically or socially, so emigration to North America seemed to offer a welcome opportunity, especially if relatives could help with the transition. In most cases, ethnic Germans did not speak any English, knew virtually nothing about Canada when they came, but strongly believed that it must be better than the refugee existence they left behind in Germany. A majority of German nationals also emigrated for reasons that generally fit the description of economic migration. Nevertheless, many of them did not perceive their migration as a permanent move and had at least the psychological security of a place to return to in case of failure. A significant number of German nationals also emigrated because they wanted to see more of the world or from a sense of adventure, a sentiment that was generally absent among ethnic Germans. Though a majority of German nationals also did not speak English, they were at least more likely to have some knowledge of the language. They were also more likely to have read some information about Canada before they arrived, though even that rarely matched the realities that confronted them.

Despite all the differences that existed before their departure from Germany, once German nationals were allowed to immigrate to Canada, all the successful applicants shared the experiences of the examination process and trans-Atlantic voyage, as well as the first impressions of their new homeland. These memories of the processing at the

overseas visa offices, the ocean voyage, and the long train ride were certainly prominent features of most immigrants' stories in the 1940s and 1950s, but with the arrival at the destinations, differences between ethnic Germans and German nationals reappear. Since many ethnic Germans had an agricultural background and were sponsored by relatives, they went, initially at least, to the place where their relatives had settled in the interwar period. In most cases, these were the farming districts of the Prairie Provinces where the men usually worked as agricultural labourers before moving to the towns and cities in search for better-paid employment. Many German nationals, in contrast, had learned a trade and generally went immediately to urban centres where their job qualifications were in demand, based on the information of overseas immigration officers.

Despite these recommendations, many experienced serious difficulties in the beginning. Because of a lack of language skills and because most trade certificates were not transferable, most men and women had to accept unskilled and badly paid positions. Over time, however, all the immigrants interviewed were able to establish themselves, though women were far less likely than men to escape low-paying jobs. The generally favourable economic situation in Canada in the 1950s and the mostly welcoming social climate certainly helped these immigrants to get established and feel at home. However, it should be kept in mind that those who did not succeed were probably less likely to volunteer for interviews, might have returned home, or moved to places that seemed more promising.

Though many of the immigrants established themselves well in Canada, distinct patterns nevertheless remain discernible between ethnic Germans and German nationals. Ethnic Germans tended to be more likely to preserve their traditions and language at

home and to support the establishment of German churches, clubs, and choirs. Persons born in Germany, in contrast, were more likely to switch to English as their home language and to socialize more with Canadians. The major reasons for these differences can be found in the self-perceptions and general family structures. Ethnic Germans often perceived themselves as victims of Hitler's war of aggression and therefore did not equate their German identity with Nazism whereas many German nationals wanted to distance themselves from Germany's Nazi past. In addition, the overall larger family units of ethnic German immigrants helped to preserve language and traditions at home. The children of both groups, however, have become Canadians, at least partly because of negative stereotyping at school, and peer pressure.

From the beginning, the most successful immigrants to Canada at least in material terms, were single men with reasonable English skills and possibly a good educational background or a trade that allowed them to become self-employed within a short time after arrival. This group was followed by young immigrant couples with at most one child where both partners could contribute to the family income, or a couple with children who were able to work and thereby increase the resources of the family. The most disadvantaged group included couples without English skills and two, or more, young children and single mothers who were usually trapped in low-paying, unskilled positions. They had to rely on only one income to feed the family, pay rent, and cover other living expenses.

In general, language skills were more important for a successful immigration and integration than trade or professional qualifications which were often not transferable and in many cases had to be acquired again after immigrating to Canada. Therefore, few

returned to their original occupations, but, with increasing language skills, many found their niches and often did very well in construction, trades, and gardening. Some immigrants were able to start academic careers after resuming their studies at a Canadian university as did Christian Stieda and Günther Beck's sister Gisela who became a professor at the University of Alberta. Yet, for some immigrants as the Rabien family and the Leitners, lifestyle choices could be more important than material prosperity or upward mobility, ultimately leaving the definition of success bound to the dreams and expectation of the individual.

Given the limited knowledge about Canada among German-speaking immigrants in the 1940s and 1950s and the fact that many spoke no English when they arrived, the question arises: how did they find out about the possibilities to move to Canada and how were they able to establish themselves? This aspect is covered by another major focus of this dissertation, the working of informal and formal support networks. Both, in Europe and in North America these networks were an integral part of the immigration process, disseminating information that helped with deciding on destinations, and finding accommodation and employment. The informal and formal ethnic networks were overall more important in shaping the migration movement than Ottawa's advertising campaigns overseas or Canadian employment offices.

Already in Europe, information networks spread the word about the possibilities to emigrate to Canada and other destinations. In many cases, these networks would start with persons who had relatives overseas and men who had been prisoners of war in North America. These people spread the word about migration possibilities among family, friends, and coworkers. In the climate of social and economic insecurity in postwar

Germany, the information would snowball. Only a small percentage of the interviewees actually heard about the possibilities directly through Canadian job advertisements and information tours. The vast majority found out by word of mouth. The Lutheran Fallots, for example, came to Canada with the help of the Baptist World Alliance, which they heard about from Baptist refugees. Therefore, since a majority of the immigrants interviewed did not rely on “official channels” for their information, the West German government’s attempts to limit advertisement in the press and to discourage potential emigrants at the information centres ultimately had little impact.

These informal networks became even more important after arrival in Canada, to help with the adjustment to the new environment and to find accommodation and employment. All the sponsored immigrants had a place to stay and work, but when they left these positions, they were on their own, like those without sponsorship. In many cases, help came from family and friends. Yet examples show that even brief acquaintances became part of the support networks, either by recommending where to look for work, or volunteering to translate at job interviews. In many cases, networks operated between members of the same ethnic group, especially where language skills were lacking, but in some cases, like Joy Moulds’ boarding house, the networks transcended ethnic lines. This informal support was especially important for immigrants who came to British Columbia in the 1950s because of a general absence of formal German ethnic organizations outside of Vancouver.

Where German clubs and churches existed, they often worked as formal support networks with members sharing information about job opportunities and housing, and providing English lessons, and other services that helped the immigrants to adjust to the

new country. In turn, many of the postwar immigrants, in particular ethnic Germans, helped found new ethnic churches, clubs, and choirs after their arrival. These organizations helped with the ongoing adjustment and integration by providing a little bit of the old home and a forum to discuss strategies to cope with the challenges of the transition arising, for example, between parents and children. Since immigration from Germany dropped significantly by the end of the 1950s, these organizations were not quite as important for the settlement process of later newcomers who were far more likely to have decent language skills and often had job contracts. As a result, the members of German churches, choirs, and clubs in British Columbia are aging – likely leading to the dissolution of most of the ethnic organizations they founded over the next decade.

Historians have usually acknowledged that the majority of German immigrants to Canada in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century came from Eastern Europe and not from Germany itself. In the few studies of postwar German immigration, however, this distinction largely moves into the background, because all of them inevitably emigrated from West Germany. Before the so-called “economic miracle” hastened their integration in the late 1950s, however, ethnic Germans had not been part of West German society. Therefore, their immigration experiences continued to distinguish them from immigrants originating from Germany itself. Even though Canadian society largely recognized both as belonging to the same ethnic group, my research has shown that in terms of sponsorship and settlement patterns, and also cultural adaptation to the new environment, ethnic Germans have more in common with displaced persons while German nationals shared many characteristics with other immigrant groups from Western and northern Europe. Over time, with the end of the refugee crisis in Germany in 1961, and the largely



successful integration of ethnic German refugees into West German society, these distinctions become less important. Yet, for the early postwar period, this distinction remains crucial to understanding the immigration and integration patterns of German-speaking newcomers to Canada.

Apart from contributing to the historiography of postwar German immigration to Canada, the findings of this dissertation indicate broader migration patterns applying to other ethnic groups in the postwar period and likely today. Though more research is needed to confirm these assumptions, it appears that displaced persons from the Baltic States, Poland, and the Ukraine, like ethnic Germans, were quite active in their efforts to found ethnic organizations and newspapers to maintain their traditions and language. German nationals, like postwar immigrants from the Netherlands and other Northern and Western European countries, were mostly economic immigrants in search of a better future for themselves and their immediate families. Since they had the option to return to their home countries, they did not have to recreate their homeland abroad, and therefore were more likely to integrate quickly into the Canadian mainstream, making them largely “invisible” within the Canadian mosaic, a process that was more difficult for some immigrants from Southern Europe like Italians especially where hair and skin colour exposed them to prejudices.

By extension, the assumption could be made that immigration and integration patterns among refugee groups arriving in host countries today show some similarities with those of ethnic Germans. Canadian immigration regulations, for example, still include preferential treatment for refugees and other immigrants with family members living in Canada. Since refugees did not voluntarily leave their homelands they are more

likely to attempt to recreate aspects of their former identity. In contrast, voluntary immigrants who chose between staying in their countries of origin and moving to a place where they expected better opportunities (however defined), are more likely to accept that their integration into the host society is part of their decision. They, too, are likely to feel some need to converse in their own mother tongue once in a while and might cherish some idealized images of their homes, but often have the option of returning home, either for visits or permanently, to reconnect with their past.

An immigration country like Canada, with its ultimate authority to grant visas, could decide which individuals had the privilege to enter the country while a liberal state like the Federal Republic could not restrict individuals' rights to leave. In addition, reasons for emigration from destroyed and economically depressed Germany to prosperous Canada seemed obvious after the end of the Second World War. Yet, this study of individual migration stories shows a far more complex picture diverging from basic economic push and pull factors. Not only did refugee and voluntary immigration from Germany coincide, but a range of motivations lead members of both groups to decide to migrate. Economic reasons certainly figured quite prominently; however, they were usually combined with other considerations ranging from fear of a new war to adventure. Even after arriving in Canada, the new immigrants' settlement and integration processes did not follow any schematic pattern, but was influenced by past experiences, family structures, and self-identification. Similarly, the level of importance that members of a group assigned to the preservation of language, culture and religious community varied. Through second language acquisition and with the help of informal and formal support networks, all of the German speaking immigrants interviewed in British

Columbia succeeded to a degree that they would consider themselves well-integrated into Canadian society.

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## Appendix

**Catalogue of Questions for Interview**

**Name of Participant(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Date and Time of Interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer(s) present: \_\_\_\_\_

**Personal Information:**

Place of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Year of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Parents' origin: \_\_\_\_\_

Place of education: \_\_\_\_\_

Degree of education: \_\_\_\_\_

English / French skills (self-rated): \_\_\_\_\_

Participant(s)'s learned profession: \_\_\_\_\_

Family status at departure (single / married / children): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Leaving Europe:**

Reason(s) for leaving Europe: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Time of first interest to leave Europe: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of arrival in Canada: \_\_\_\_\_

Family or friends in Canada? \_\_\_\_\_

Original destination in Canada (Province, town): \_\_\_\_\_

Previous knowledge about Canada: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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How did you find out about possibility of immigrating to Canada? \_\_\_\_\_

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Was Canada the first choice as destination? \_\_\_\_\_

Date of arrival in British Columbia: \_\_\_\_\_

**Process of Application and Itinerary:**

Visa application procedure: \_\_\_\_\_

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Passage paid by: \_\_\_\_\_

Modes of Transportation (Ship's name, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_

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Itinerary to Canada: \_\_\_\_\_

**Life in Canada:**

First impressions of Canada: \_\_\_\_\_

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Problems of finding work: \_\_\_\_\_

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First job in Canada: \_\_\_\_\_

Later jobs: \_\_\_\_\_

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Living conditions after arrival: \_\_\_\_\_

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Family in Canada: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Adaptation to life in Canada**

How did you learn English (improve language skills)? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Was it possible to return to your old profession? \_\_\_\_\_

How long did you wait before applying for Canadian citizenship? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Would you have liked to go back to Europe? \_\_\_\_\_

If so, why? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Was there a point when you were at peace with being in Canada? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How would you describe yourself today (German – German-Canadian – Canadian)?

\_\_\_\_\_

Language retention: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Club involvement (German clubs, churches, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Other remarks: \_\_\_\_\_

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