

# Drang nach Osten

## The German Migration to the East – Part One

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### *About the Author*

*Jerry Frank is an amateur genealogist specializing, since 1986, in the research of Germans who migrated to or through Congress Poland and Volhynia. He has written three family books, **Frank Migrations** (about his paternal family), **From Nagold to Thalberg** (his maternal line), and **Ask the Former Generations** (a compilation of the previous two). Jerry was previously involved with *Wandering Volhynians* magazine as a contributor of articles and maintainer of the surname data base.*

*Jerry is also an amateur cartographer, having created two new maps showing German settlements in Russian Poland and in Volhynia. Both represent the most current and comprehensive resources available. They bring together the independent works of several historical map makers into a single resource and then add the most up to date listings of villages from such sources as the St. Petersburg Consistory records and other SGGEE (Society for German Genealogy in Eastern Europe) extractions.*

*Jerry has spoken at a variety of conferences including FEEFHS, SGGEE, ASGHR (Calgary and Edmonton Chapters), and the Medicine Hat GR Festival. He is currently active as webmaster for SGGEE.*

The following is a text version of a presentation made by Jerry Frank in recent years at several different venues.

### Publication Copy

#### **INTRODUCTION**

For those of you that don't know me, I have been hooked on genealogy for almost 20 years and have been active in one way or another in learning about and promoting the history and genealogy of Germans in Russian Poland and Volhynia. In that process, I have managed to trace my maternal Hemminger family from Manitoba to Volhynia, through Russian, Poland, and all the way back to 1560 (with an assumption to 1531) in Nagold, Wuerttemberg.

I want to emphasize that I am an amateur genealogist, not a professional historian. I am speaking to you today because I have taken the time in my genealogical study to research the movements of the German people to the east, and then finally to North and South America. My ancestors did not leave any verbal or written history behind them so I undertook this research to gain a better understanding, in a general sense, of their movements. Because I am not a professional historian, I may not be able to answer all of your specific questions. I also may present - no I will present - some ideas which vary from some traditional thoughts on the history of Germans in eastern Europe.

I was a little concerned about using the topic heading, Drang nach Osten. Those of you familiar with the German language might be aware of this historical term that has been around for many years. Unfortunately, it carries a double meaning, which I want to clarify right at the start. For those citizens of the east (Slavs, Poles, Kashubians, Rus, Ukrainian, etc.), the term has meant "the German push to the east" - a push in which the Germans have attempted to take over their land. From a political and military point of view, their interpretation may well be correct. Certainly we are aware of German attempts, especially in recent history, to take over land to the east.

As the heading for my talk, I want to use it in a more correct German sense. My German / English dictionary says that "Drang" carries the context of pulling, or attraction. So from a German point of view, the east had an attraction for the common man. It was a desirable place to live. The common German was prepared to move eastward to live among foreign people and be subject to foreign rule. He had no desire to take over the land but rather to live there in harmony with the locals, just as many immigrants to America today.

Before we talk specifically about the German migration, I would like to spend a few minutes on migration in a general sense. I spend a lot of my genealogical research time on the Internet. Over and over again I see people posting questions like, "What happened in 1850 in Prussia that would have caused my great grandparents to move to Canada?" or, "What disaster could have occurred in 1810 that would have caused my German ancestor to move from Congress Poland to Bessarabia?"

Show your hands please - how many here have moved from one country to another, or one state or province to another? You are immigrants! You might have been a solitary migrant or you might have been part of a general movement but regardless of the circumstance, you are immigrants.

For those that are immigrants, how many moved because of:

- some military reason (war, displacement because of war, draft)?
- climate or possible physical danger (too cold, too many earthquakes)?
- political oppression (lack of freedom)?
- religious persecution or oppression
- a friend or relative encouraging you to follow them?
- promise of jobs or improved economic situations?

The list could go on. There are as many reasons for migrating as there are people in this room. Let me ask you this: Will your great great granddaughter understand why you migrated when she studies her genealogy? Will she ask, "What happened in North Dakota in 1985 that caused my great grandparents to move to California?" Unless you specifically write down your reasons, the probable answer is no.

It is my contention that most people, including our ancestors, migrate for economic reasons. Circumstances are very bad where they are or they simply look a lot better where they are going. I will even go out on a limb to suggest that most Mennonites migrated for economic reasons. This group makes much of the fact that, as pacifists, they went to Russia because they would not have to serve in the armed forces. Certainly that factor is evident. However, many of them stayed behind in Prussia so they obviously were not only motivated by religious altruism. Others migrated later, after that privilege had been revoked. They went for economic gain or improvement. You will see this theme again as I go through my presentation.

The rest of this discussion will cover the migration trends of the Germans to Eastern Europe. You still may not discover why your ancestor moved but hopefully you will have a better general understanding of the migration trends.

### **EARLY GERMAN - SLAV CONFLICT:**

When we talk about the migration of the Germans to the east, we are talking about their movement from historical German territory to historical Slavic territory. The border between these two territories has not changed much over the centuries. It has been the same for most of recorded history. It is true that political boundaries have moved in both easterly and westerly directions. At times Germans controlled Slavic lands while at other times the Slavs controlled German lands but over all, the boundary is aligned with the old eastern boundary of the Holy Roman Empire of 1250 AD.

One of the most powerful of the Slavic nations for centuries was Poland. It was Poland that requested the assistance of the Germanic Teutonic Knights in protecting portions of its land holdings along the Baltic

coast. These knights brought significant German settlement with them to areas that later became Prussian territory. This early move eastward (1100+) was motivated by military action.

Along with this early migration of Germans came the inevitable intermarriage with other ethnic groups like the Slavs and Magyars. In the process, some tribes, like the Prus (from which Prussia gets its name), were eventually wiped out. Others like the Kashubians from the region southwest of Gdansk, assimilated into both German and Polish cultures. There are very few people left today who can still speak the ancient Kashubian language. Because of these assimilations, it is important to be aware that speaking the German language and practising German customs does not mean that your ethnic origins are purely German. This is especially true for those of you with Germanic origins in Prussian and Silesian regions (modern north and southwest Poland) and to a lesser extent Hungarian regions. On the other hand, if your surname is something like Novak, Lewandowski, Berkowski, Girschewski, etc., it is quite possible that you might have strong Germanic connections.

More peaceful migration took place because the technical skills of the Germans proved to be beneficial to the more medieval nations like Poland-Lithuania, Bohemia-Moravia, and Hungary-Croatia. These countries invited Germans in to develop agriculture and mining in their regions and later to further their industrial causes.

### ***DEVELOPMENT OF GERMAN LAW CITIES:***

As Germans developed colonies to the east of the Holy Roman Empire through the centuries between 1200 and 1500, they also brought with them not only models of urban layouts but also models for legal and governmental control in their cities and towns. The distinctive of their legal control is that the residents were allowed to direct their economic activity and government through the election of local city councils who were able to act independently of the temporal (Catholic bishop) or secular (duke) ruler. These councils often had their own court system (controlling criminal and some civil matters) and sometimes their own militia.

This system of government was known as German city law, and it comprised three basic types with many variants: Luebeck Law, Magdeburg Law, and Nuernberg-Vienna Law.

As Germans, primarily tradesmen, migrated to new areas in the east, they brought this law and associated privileges with them. The spread of this law into Slavic lands began in the early 13th century in three areas. The first was in territory along the Vistula River controlled by the Teutonic Knights. The second area was in the upper Oder River valley where a weakened Polish State granted them the privileges. The third area was to the southeast - Bohemia, Moravia, and Hungary / Croatia where the respective kings had initiated significant immigration.

By the 14th century, German migration to the eastern cities had spread throughout Poland, Galicia, as far east as Volhynia, and south into Transylvania. Use of Germanic law continued to spread eastward in the 15th century but it was no longer the Germans who were introducing it but rather the government of Poland-Lithuania. Even Russia favoured it, granting the privileges of Magdeburg Law to cities like Kiev, Smolensk, Orsha, and others. This law remained in effect in different parts of Russian controlled territory as late as 1830.

While the spread of Germanic city law through the migrations of German city dwellers did not result in large numbers of migrants, it is very important in the future spread of German settlement throughout the east. Many of these cities had, at least for periods of time, German mayors and judiciary who helped to develop the law systems. Royalty and nobility in the east, the primary motivators of much of German migration, were familiar with German ideas, laws, and customs. They did not fear the Germans in these early years and encouraged them to come to their lands.

As the migration developed in a more rural manner, the concepts of Germanic city law also trickled down to the village level. The primary form of German village was based on the Schulzendorf system. The landowning noble would make a deal with an enterprising person who would guarantee a certain amount

of settlers in exchange for rights to double the amount of land that a settler would normally receive. This Schulz would also generally gain the right to own the flour mill, brewery, and other perks.

The Mennonites who came to Poland in the early 1500s rejected this form of village government. They insisted, and were granted the right, to establish their own village laws with freedom of the individuals within the village. This form of village government, similar in nature to the Germanic city law, was known as a Hollendry.

With ongoing settlement in Poland, other religious groups also adopted this form of village government.

### **THE DANUBE SWABIANS**

Up until about 1700, German migration was gradual and somewhat evenly spread out over a lengthy period. It is after the demise of the Ottoman Empire that we begin to see waves of migration spreading into pockets of land further to the east. One of the first migration waves comes with the movement of the Danube Swabians to the frontier regions of the Banat, Backa, and Slavonia.

Swabia is a region with its own dialect in northern Wuerttemberg, centring around Stuttgart. While this region gives its name to this migration movement, it is important to note that most of these immigrants actually came from other southern German and Austrian provinces. Three waves of settlers moved into this area of central Hungary in the years 1718-37, 1744-72, and 1782-87.

The Austrian Hapsburgs, who gained control of this region through the Treaty of Passarowitz in 1718, wanted to achieve three goals:

- fortify the land against invasion
- develop the farm land
- solidify the hold of the Roman Catholic Church on those areas

To encourage settlement by Catholic Germans, they were offered:

- free agricultural land and home sites
- construction material and livestock
- exemption from taxes for a limited period of time

Most of the people who accepted the offer were of the poor peasant class, accustomed to heavy taxation and military conscription. Reference to the Danube comes from their prime transportation route. Starting at the city of Ulm, they boarded "Ulmer Schachtel", a type of boat that sailed that river. Some also travelled beside the river in covered wagons.

This migration was particularly extensive. I don't have a number for the first wave but we know that at least 15,000 of them died from either Turkish raids or from plagues. The second wave of 75,000 immigrants was, in part, brought in to replace those losses. The third wave of 60,000 immigrants built on the first two and ended up with reasonable economic prosperity. In all, more than 1000 villages were established in southern Hungary.

### **THE VOLGA GERMANS**

Another very large and significant German migration, the one which went farthest to the east, was that of the Volga Germans. This migration was a peaceful one that took place under the invitation of the Russian Czaress, Catherine the Great. To understand this migration, we need a bit of background as to how it occurred. There are similarities to the Danube Schwabian migration but the target immigrant was much different and the perks given were more extensive.

In 1762, Russia, under the leadership of Catherine II (Catherine the Great), issued a manifesto inviting foreigners to settle in Russia. While some artisans were attracted by it, it generally was not considered very successful. Russia had vast territories to the east which it wished to settle. There were two reasons for this. The first was to encourage cultivation of the vast steppes and development of mining, commerce, and manufacturing. This was the reasoning used and promoted in the manifesto. A more

subtle reason hidden in the background was the development of land in a region that was causing them military problems by way of raids by Mongols on the eastern frontiers. New settlement would provide a buffer zone between the eastern hordes and the Russians.

When the first manifesto failed, Catherine introduced a second one in 1763 which included privileges that made it more attractive. The primary ones included:

1. For those who could not afford it, travel expenses would be paid for by Russia.
2. Free land was granted for tillage in certain limited areas, primarily in the Volga River region.
3. Freedom to practice their religion (assumed to be Christian) and to build churches. They were not to proselytise their religion to the Russians but they were free to encourage Moslems on their borders to convert.
4. Freedom from paying taxes and tributes - for 30 years for those colonizing uncultivated territory; for five years for tradesmen in certain stipulated cities and 10 years for all other cities.
5. Free lodging for the first six months.
6. Interest free loans to build houses and to purchase farm equipment and cattle, repayable within 10 years.
7. Right to internal government of separately established colonies.
8. Freedom from import duties on all goods brought with them.
9. Freedom from military service.
10. Other inducements for manufacture of goods.

With these new enticements in hand, Russian representatives abroad, along with their hired agents, began to aggressively pursue immigrants. For various reasons, non-Germans did not respond well. Some countries that allowed free publication of the invitation were already enjoying relative prosperity and had their own overseas colonies. For example, an English-speaking colony in America would be more attractive to an Englishman than would be the strange and remote land of Russia. Moslems from Turkish lands foresaw enslavement by the Russians. The Hapsburgs in Austrian controlled lands were interested in maintaining their own settlement programs in Hungarian territory and forbade emigration. Similar situations existed in other parts of Europe with the result that active promotion could only take place in free cities and states where such laws did not exist.

The inability of some of the German states to control emigration, combined with long-standing suffering from widespread poverty, malnutrition, and unemployment brought on by feudal infighting, wars, religious persecution, and the general politics of the day - all these factors combined to make the German migration as extensive as it was. The extent of this migration was so great (4000 families in 1767 alone) that further migration was forbidden by the Prussian Emperor Joseph II. Migration to the Volga effectively ended within a short time but not before at least 25,000 made their way to Russia over a period of about four years. Most of them were from Hesse and the southwest states but nominally from other areas as well. The original migration resulted in the establishment of 104 villages. To keep perspective here it should be understood that the style of a village in the Volga area was different from other places. The "villages" here were often very good size towns. For example, the town of Norka had more than 2000 residents. In contrast, the region of Volhynia had more than a thousand villages with German residents, many of them with only a dozen or so families.

Most historians have accurately stated that this invitation was open to all foreigners. However, the emphasis on the Germanic involvement by several German authors has left many people with the impression that the connection between German born Catherine and the Germans of the Volga River region was particularly significant and important. In talking to some people, one almost gets the impression that Catherine the Great personally appeared at the door of their ancestor to invite them to Russia. Furthermore, the traditional story of her invitation has been inaccurately applied to Germans in Galicia, Congress Poland, Volhynia, and even Prussia. Of these four, only Volhynia was under her rule but there the Germans did not arrive in significant numbers till well after her death.

Here is an example of how such distortions can occur, quoting from an on line historical document:

"Much of this [territory in the Black Sea region] became Crown land upon which Catherine wished to settle industrious farmers whose well-kept fields might serve as models for the shiftless nomadic tribes about them. Catherine had perhaps heard of the Mennonites and their work of reclamation in the swamps of the lower Vistula, through her generals who had spent several winters in eastern Prussia during the Seven Years War. At any rate, however that may be, it was in the above year [1786] that she held out liberal inducements through her special representative at Danzig, George van Trappe, to the Mennonites of that region to migrate to her Crown lands in South Russia."

The writer does qualify his statement by saying that, "Catherine had **perhaps** heard of the Mennonites." The casual reader conveniently forgets the **perhaps** word and in relating the story to his friends, conveys some form of special relationship between Catherine and the Mennonites. The story also becomes slanted by the author's reference to the **special** representative, George van Trappe. He was indeed a representative but he was no more special than the other agents of the crown who were scampering about Europe soliciting new settlers for Russia.

The simple truth is that Catherine had left behind her German heritage, marrying into Russian royalty as a young teenager. She didn't just invite Germans and the Germans received no privileges that other foreigners did not receive, either at the time of migration or later on.

The migration of the Mennonites does require specific mention because they are somewhat unique within the German migration context. The earliest Mennonites in the east were actually Dutch who used their dike building skills to reclaim extensive arable land from the Vistula River delta region in Prussia. They began to arrive in the early 1500s. It did not take long for them to be mixed with Flemish, German, and to a lesser extent, Swiss Mennonites. In addition, some of Polish and Swedish origin became mixed into the migration. Because of their close ties to German traditions, and their use of the Plattdeutsch dialect of northern Germany, they tend to all get lumped together as Germans.

The pacifistic Mennonites from Prussia were especially attracted by the promise of freedom from service in the military - a privilege that did not carry a time limit with it. Thousands of them took the challenge to migrate to the east.

By 1816, there were no new settlements but the population had almost tripled and new colonies became essential. By 1865 there were 170 German Volga villages with a population of more than 259,000. Much of this growth was simply the result of large families but there was on going new migration into the area by Mennonites, Lutherans and Catholics. By 1914, they had grown to more than 500,000.

Part of the population problem was eased with the establishment of daughter colonies in the Caucasus regio, which attracted significant numbers of Germans away from the Volga River area.

Finally, it should be pointed out that other isolated colonies were established - some by other religious denominations than the major ones, others at the request of certain isolated land holding nobility.

### **BALTIC GERMANS**

Germans in Baltic areas had a presence there for hundreds of years. However, they were primarily highly placed people - those with specialty trades, connections to nobility or politics, as well as clergy, etc. Part of this presence also stemmed from the control of the Estonian, Livonian, and Kurland provinces by the Teutonic Knights.

Under the Manifesto of 1763, several smaller groups of Germans were able to establish themselves in the Baltic regions under a special contract with private individuals or government agencies. Over 300 families answered the initial calls with a 1000 or so individuals following later. Most settled in villages, under a private contract, in relatively close proximity to St. Petersburg.

## **THE BLACK SEA AREAS**

In the next few years, Catherine the Great expanded Russian territory dramatically by conquering Turkish controlled land to the south and Polish land to the west. Catherine again wanted Germans to help in developing her new territories, especially around the north side of the Black Sea. This time her government turned to the Mennonites of West Prussia.

The Prussian king, Frederick William II was demanding payment of heavy fines in lieu of military service and forced the Mennonites to pay tithes to the established Lutheran Church on earlier land purchases from Lutherans. They were particularly attracted to Russia by the offer of freedom from military service. In 1789, 228 Mennonite families arrived at Chortitza on the Dnieper River. They had been preceded to the general region by a smaller group of Lutherans. The Mennonite migration continued into the area for another 80 years with thousands more families answering the call. Thousands of other Germans followed the Mennonites.

Lutherans and Catholics began flooding into the area, especially after the Napoleonic wars (1803 through 1810). They not only came from the southwest German states but also from West Prussia, Hungary, and Poland. Hundreds of German colonies sprang up in a semi circle around Odessa, now in the Ukraine. In 1804, the new Czar, Alexander I extended another invitation to settlement in this region. His invitation however was more specific than Catherine's. He wanted people who were particularly skilled in agriculture and handicrafts - well to do farmers with skills in viniculture and management and breeding of livestock. While they received some travelling assistance, they were also expected to bring along a significant worth of cash and goods.

Travel to the Black Sea region was by two primary routes. The first was the Danube River, where they travelled right past the Danuswaben settlements on their way to their new home. Travel was conducted on boats called Ulmer Schachtel. They were crammed with a crew of four or five boatmen and as much goods and passengers as could be fitted, even if overcrowded. With a load of up to 200 passengers, it carried them as far as Vienna where they transferred to larger 300 or 400 passenger boats called Zillen.

The other route was overland. Travel started on the Danube but, where it turned south, the colonists took to wagons pulled by oxen to make their way through the Carpathian mountains and then east to the Black Sea, much like the wagon trains crossed the American west during the 1800s.

I was not able to find a statistical population summary for this area but it is safe to say that, like the Volga River area, the region around Odessa and into the Crimean peninsula supported hundreds of German villages and hundreds of thousands of Germans.

## **BESSARABIA**

Another war with Turkey brought Russia more territory, the region of Bessarabia on the west side of the Black Sea. In the meantime, Napoleon was marching through Europe, taking over vast quantities of land, including central Poland. Many Germans who had moved there after the third partition were now feeling persecuted by the Poles who were placed in power. The Russians took advantage of this by inviting them to move further east. Some went to the Black Sea region while others moved to Bessarabia.

By 1816, more than 1500 German families moved into this area, most of them from Poland. They initially founded 12 villages, many with French names that reflected battle fields where the Russians had joined the Germans in fighting the French - Arcis, Brienne, Fere Champoise, Paris, and so on.

Migration continued slowly but steadily with population increases coming from Baden, Wuerttemberg, Hesse, and Alsace. By 1842, more than 2000 families had settled in 24 villages. Only 114 of these families were Catholic, the rest were Protestant, mostly Lutherans. As with other areas, the German population here grew rapidly. To accommodate the growth, another 80 villages were established and many left for opportunities elsewhere. After accounting for the emigration, about 65,000 Germans remained in Bessarabia in 1905.

Several smaller areas around the Black Sea also received significant migrations of Germans throughout the 19th century. South of Bessarabia is the Dubrudja region of Romania. This area was settled primarily by Germans who left Bessarabia.

Bukovina is a small region at the northwest end of Bessarabia. This area received, under the encouragement of the Austrian Emperor, an ethnical mix of migrants, among them a significant number of Germans.

To the east side of the Black Sea, there were German settlements in the south Caucasus and, by the end of the 19th century, even Kazakhstan and Siberia were receiving German colonists.

## **GALICIA**

We will now turn to Galicia which is sort of in the centre of the eastern migration area.

Galicia was a region that experienced a lot of different cultures and political control due to inept rulers. Its population was primarily a mixture of Polish and Ukrainian with lesser numbers of Ruthenians and of course Germans. Control over the years bounced back and forth between Poland, Russia, and Austria. The area came under Austrian rule in the first partition of Poland in 1772 and remained so with some border variations until WW I.

German migration started early, at least in the western regions of Galicia, with an initial wave of soldiers, artisans, and traders arriving in the 14th and 15th centuries under the protection of Magdeburg city law. Most of these Germans assimilated into the Polish culture by the 16th century.

The second wave of settlers came in at the invitation of Austrian Emperor Joseph II between about 1781 and 1785. More than 15,000 arrived, primarily with origins in the Pfalz (Palatinate) region of the German states. Among them were significant numbers of Swiss Mennonites who later left for settlements in Russia. These were supplemented by another 6000 after the turn of the century. These Germans were primarily Catholic and Lutheran with, as mentioned, a smaller number of Mennonites. While these Germans in general retained their cultural distinctiveness, significant numbers of the Catholic Germans did assimilate into the Polish culture.

While there was strong Austrian political influence in the early years, the Poles eventually won semi-autonomy to the extent that Polish even became the official language. The Germans did well in this state of relative political stability but for some reason they did not experience the same growth in numbers that other regions did. A 1910 census indicated only 65,000 living in Galicia.

This situation is in large part explained by the fact that many Germans did not, for whatever reason, set down permanent roots. Starting with the Swiss Mennonite movement to Russia, there was a relatively constant outflow of Germans to many other parts of eastern Europe. Some moved northward into southeastern Poland, others east to Volhynia, Bukowina, northern Bessarabia, and the Black Sea regions. Still others turned west to Slovakia, Hungary, and even to Bosnia.

Some 165 Germanic villages were established in Galicia with many of their descendants finally ending up in North America.

End Part One

# Drang nach Osten

## The German Migration to the East – Part Two

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#### **POLAND AND VOLHYNIA**

We've reviewed the migration to the northeast, the far east, and the southeast. We will now finish this discussion by looking at the central near eastern areas of Congress Poland and Volhynia. We will look at these two areas together as they are closely related in their migration pattern.

As we mentioned, the northern region of what is now modern Poland had a very early Germanic presence. This presence intensified with a royal marriage between a Polish king and a German princess in 960 AD. By 1150 AD, the Catholic Church was beginning its mission through Poland, bringing with it German monks and farmers who settled in villages under jurisdiction of the church cloisters. And finally, in 1230 AD, the Teutonic Knights were invited in to help control the rebellious Prus tribe in the northern areas. The knights brought with them the German city law, which we discussed earlier. In what is modern Poland, more than 250 cities and towns were established with German city law.

The Catholics of Poland provided strong resistance against the Protestant Reformation of the early 1500s, which resulted in significant anti-German sentiment among the Poles. German culture and identity were virtually eliminated during this time either by expulsion or assimilation. This situation however left the Polish nobility with fewer skilled people to develop their lands with the result that they once again slowly started to invite Germans back into their country to work for them. These Germans established the Schulzendorf and Hollendry villages we discussed earlier.

To further understand the influx of Germans to this region, we need to briefly look at the partitions of Poland. A weak Polish monarchy allowed Russia, under the rule of Catherine the Great, to gain significant territories from them. Both Prussia and Austria feared this Russian expansionism and, in 1772, they agreed to take equal portions of Poland.

Continuing political unrest in Poland led to a second partition in 1793 with each of the three powers taking more land. The western portion, which contained most of the Hollendries and Schulzendorf, was taken over by Prussia. It was also at this time that most of Volhynia was annexed by Russia. Finally, in 1795, the rest of the land was split. The remaining western portion of Volhynia went to Russian control and Poland ceased to exist as a nation.

Prussia used this time to establish a new form of German settlement called a colony. Although the settlers invited in by the Prussians did not enjoy the same privileges as their predecessors, they did receive things like free travel expenses, and additional assistance in building their farms. Most of the immigrants in the early years were Swabians from Wuerttemberg. Many of them were cloth makers who were attracted to that industry in the region surrounding Lodz.

Napoleon marched through Europe, taking over central Poland and Warsaw in 1807. He established the semi-autonomous state of the Duchy of Warsaw. Anti German sentiment by the Poles became common

and resulted in the massive migration of Germans to Bessarabia discussed earlier. However, in 1814, Napoleon's reign was cut short through his defeat and in 1815, the Congress of Vienna renewed the previous partition boundaries except that Prussia lost some of the central area to Russia. This central area included the Lodz region which had large numbers of Germans in it.

This central and eastern area of modern Poland was subject to Russian rule but was allowed to operate in a semi-autonomous fashion. The anti German sentiment was not as strong so Germans continued to migrate in significant numbers to this area, now known as Russian Poland, Congress Poland or the Kingdom of Poland. In the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Russia referred to it as the Vistula territory.

In addition to the Swabians we have mentioned, large numbers of Kashubian, Pommeranian, and other Germans joined the migration. The Kashubians were actually a Slavic tribe that lived on lands southwest of Gdansk, originally controlled by Pomerania and Poland. When the Germans eventually took control of Pomerania, they moved into this Kashubian territory. For whatever reason that I have not been able to pinpoint, the Kashub intermarried with both Poles and Germans. Today there are very few people that can still speak the ancient Kashubian language. The Germans intermarried with the Kashub, adapting many of their customs. They became known, often in a derogatory sense, as Kashubian.

There is some dispute among historians as to whether the migration of Germans to the Lodz region were Kashubian or Pomeranian. They were all Pomeranian in the sense that they came from that province of Prussia but there were probably distinctions in their dialect and culture.

The area around Lodz was especially noted for the cloth making industry in the city and surrounding areas. No matter which historical position is correct regarding Kashubian vs. Pomeranian influence, all would agree with Polish author, Dr. F. Bielschosky who says, in the closing paragraphs of her book about the textile industry in the Lodz district, written in 1935, "The Lodz textile industry was founded by German culture, German will, and today it still is mostly in German hands; and their story is the story of establishing culture in the Slavic east by Germans."

Probably 50% or more of all Germans in Congress Poland lived within a 50-mile radius of Lodz. Some were farmers and tradesmen but many were cloth makers. A few had come as early as 1730 but most arrived after the region was taken over by Prussia in the final partition of Poland. Some suggest that the cloth making industry did not develop here till after Napoleon's defeat but my own maternal ancestors were part of that trade and arrived in 1803 from Wuertemberg where they had been cloth makers for the past 300 years.

We must also remember that many of the Germans in Poland were farmers. In studying farm life in Poland in the 19th century we encounter descriptive terms such as serf, peasant, illiterate, landless - and begin to wonder just what the true social status of the farmer was. It would take a whole book to provide that detail.

The first fact to consider is that the hundred years prior to 1863 were a time of transition from feudalism to capitalism and the emancipation of the serfs. There really was no one way for a landlord to deal with his subjects, no one way for a government to control what was going on. The lord was obviously interested in protecting his financial investments and land holdings but at the same time recognized that absolute power was slowly slipping away with the increasing threat of the rural proletariat.

The second problem is that each governing power resulting from the partitioning of Poland had its own idea of how to introduce emancipation, how to define ownership, how to regulate the new laws, etc.

Finally, defining the occupation of farmer was very difficult. An 1810 census conducted by Napoleon in Congress Poland shows that, "The population was divided in nineteen categories, eight of them having to do with rural inhabitants . . . Each category was again divided into still more numerous subgroups: for example, fourteen subgroups of farmhands, eleven subgroups of peasants."

Land holdings in eastern Europe were, for the most part, quite large. An estate was usually divided into

the manorial farm and village land. The peasant lived in the village and had some land to provide for his own subsistence. The manor was farmed under compulsory or hired labour by the villagers. The peasant had no legal right to his land. He could not sell or mortgage it nor could he legally pass it on by inheritance to a child. By custom it would be assigned to a son upon the death of the elder but this was not a legal requirement.

The landlord usually established a verbal, or in some cases, a written contract with his villagers. There is nothing to suggest that there was any consistency in the terms of these contracts either over time or in different locations within the country. Two neighbouring manors could have entirely different contracts with different terms. Two villagers within the same manor could have different contracts. While these contracts provided the appearance of giving the peasants significant rights, the fact was that the landlord continued to hold the upper hand with the right to change the terms at any time or under any circumstance.

One of the biggest differences between contracts was whether the peasant paid rent for his village land or if he retained right to it by providing compulsory service on the manor farm. If he was trying to attract more peasants to his estate the landlord might offer a rental system. This apparently was the case for most of the Germans who moved to Poland and lived in Hollendry. If the market for certain crops was down, it would be to the landlord's advantage to charge rent so that he could maintain a reasonable income. If the market was good, he would demand labour to increase his crop production through the breaking of new ground in undeveloped areas. In the good market, he would also tend to increase his contingent of hired labourers.

While there were many different technical names for various categories of peasant farmers, they could be split into three broad categories. There was the peasant who had the contract with the landlord and enough land to support his own family (in Polish, a 'gospardz'). This word for some reason implied a rich farmer so in later years its use was usually replaced with a more general form for farmer, 'rolnik'. Then there was the one who had some land but not enough to live on (several names but usually 'zagrodnik'). This peasant would have to supplant his income from other sources. The last category was the landless peasant who would work for hire ('bezrolni' or 'parobek'). He could be employed by the landlord or by the gospardz. The last category would consist mainly of the unmarried sons and daughters of the peasants. While the peasants could be categorized by the above, there apparently was no class distinction between them - a peasant was simply a peasant regardless of function.

The last part of Congress Poland to receive German settlers was in the east, the region around Lublin and Chelm where some 230 colonies were established between 1850 and 1890. Many of these Germans were actually transplants from central Poland.

Most of the Germans in Congress Poland were Lutheran. There were a few Mennonites along the Vistula River west of Warsaw. There were also some Baptists and Moravians in some areas. The larger towns did have significant numbers of Catholic Germans.

It is difficult to establish a good count for these migrants because they moved around a lot and many, as we have seen, moved on to new areas within a generation. Oscar Kossmann provides a list showing about 360,000 German members of the Lutheran Church alone in 1913. Using maps of a variety of authors who depict historic settlements, I have compiled a list of almost 3000 unique villages of German settlement in Russian Poland.

### ***The Germans in Volhynia***

Volhynia is a province of present day Ukraine - the northwest corner bordering on Poland to the west and Russia to the North. Principal cities, relative to German settlements in this area, are Rowno and Zhitomir. Abe Unruh, in his book, *The Helpless Poles*, describes it this way:

"The land in Wohlynien is not of rich black soil like the Volga and Dnieper river plateaus, but of a sandy loam like soil. In order to establish a village and build homes in the hilly terrain, the soggy wooded areas had to be drained and cleared. After the land was cleared and the swamps drained, with sufficient rainfall and adequate fertilizer, the ground yielded fairly good crops. The climate was well adapted for wheat, rye, buckwheat, oats, and millet.... The climate was especially proficient for potatoes, peas and beans.... Fruit trees thrive well, especially the pear tree. The forests yielded wild apples and berries of all kinds. Strawberries grew in large quantities.... All grain was cut with scythes and tied into bundles. The men and boys would swing the scythe from early to late, while the house mothers, daughters and maids would tie the grain into bundles and shock it. After the grain was cut and shocked, it was taken into sheds and stored to be thrashed during the winter months.... Nearby were also large river bottoms. In these river bottoms the winter's hay supply was made for the livestock. Villagers kept only enough milk cows for their use and a few young stock to preserve their future herd. Only enough hogs were kept to supply the family table with pork. Excess livestock was sold to the Jews, and driven to market on foot; only enough chickens were kept for egg production for the home.... There were no modern saw mills like we see today. All lumber was cut by means of a cross cut saw; quite frequently a tree was cut down, leaving a stump standing the height they wanted the length of the boards. Then one man would stand on a raised platform and the other man stood on the ground. They began sawing at the top of the long stump and cut down till they reached the bottom, thus cutting their boards to the desired thickness...."

We don't know why Catherine the Great did not promote this area as a settlement region for Germans. There were a few Germans in the cities but none in the rural areas when Russia claimed this area for itself in 1793. One of the first significant settlements was that of a group of German workers and management who, in the 1780s, established a porcelain factory in the town of Korist, east of Rowno.

This was followed a few years later by the establishment of several villages by a group of Mennonites. They only stayed for a few years before selling their villages to some Lutherans sometime prior to 1830 and then moving on to the Black Sea areas. Another group of Mennonites came from the Netze district around 1830 and settled in villages around Ostrog [south of Rowno]. In 1874-1876 they sold their villages to Lutheran and Baptist Germans and migrated to the United States.

In 1860 there were approximately 4000 - 5000 Germans in Volhynia. By 1914, this number had exploded to about 200,000, not including approximately another 100,000 Volhynian Germans who had already migrated to the Baltic States, the Banat, and to North and South America.

What caused this mass influx of Germans? Again some people suggest that it was the result of invitations by the Russian monarchy, especially Catherine the Great. That suggestion simply does not have any documented evidence. Furthermore, Catherine the Great died in 1795 so any migration after that could not have been at her invitation. Some think that the peasants were fleeing the battles taking place between Poland and Russia. There could be some truth to this but one has to remember that similar skirmishes were taking place in Volhynia and Galicia as well. Still, others suggest the invitation by Polish landlords with large land holdings in Volhynia. This reason is also valid but misses part of the story.

The first large number of Germans to arrive came after the first Polish rebellion of 1831. The insurrection, easily defeated by the Russians, resulted in loss of privileges and institution of more rigid controls over the general populace. In addition, automation of the cloth industry was resulting in massive unemployment for many Germans. Some 4000 or so moved in during the mid 1830s, almost all from Congress Poland. With some of these moving on to Podolia, Bessarabia, and other regions, the population remained fairly constant.

The 1831 rebellion did not seem to have a direct impact on the Germans who were living in the major regions west of Warsaw and around Lodz. There was also significant unrest in the western portion of Volhynia. It would therefore seem that the battles had little to do with the migration though the resulting downturn in the economy might have influenced them.

In January of 1863 we see the start of an insurrection, fought not by an organized Polish army, but rather by partisans who organized guerilla warfare against the Russians. They were defeated a year later. After promising the peasants that they would now be able to own land, rather than labouring for landlords, the Russian Czar ordered the rebellious Poles shipped off to Siberia. The Kingdom of Poland lost its name and became known as the Vistula Territory.

The result of this emancipation decree (March 4, 1864) was that "peasants in the Kingdom of Poland were granted land on much more favourable conditions than in **any other part of the Russian Empire**". [Emphasis mine - this other part of the empire would have included Volhynia!] Although the Polish nobility retained literal ownership, the peasants gained rights to the land on which they lived. Then too, "over three thousand estates belonging to members of the gentry who had fought in the Insurrection [of 1863] were confiscated."

How many Germans were now living on this confiscated property? How much of their land was now being claimed by their Polish neighbours? Kurt Luck ("Die Siedlungen in Volhynian - 1931" - [The German Settlements in Volhynia]) and other historians suggest that the need for land became acute.

In the meantime, as some have pointed out, the Polish and Ukrainian peasants of Volhynia were also granted freedom in 1862 but they did not gain rights to the land. A map showing the distribution of serfs in Russia in 1860 indicates that in Volhynia, over half the peasants still lived as serfs. With no rights to the land, these peasants left the farms for work in the cities. The Polish landlords who still held vast tracts of land in Volhynia invited the Germans of Russian Poland to come and farm their land. Along with their ability to produce very large families, this mass migration of Germans from central Poland to Volhynia between 1860 and 1890 resulted in the large German population reported earlier.

Oskar Kossman provides an interesting description of this migration which further points to the economic aspect of this migration. I hope I can do justice to the original with the following translation:

"In the years 1863 - 1867 the roads from Warsaw through Brest, Kowel, Luck, Rowno, Zhitomir to Kiev (and also Warsaw through Lublin, Chelm, Kowel and to Kiev) were strewn with German covered wagons, pulling to the east. Promotional agents frequently encouraged the colonists to leave Congress Poland. Others waited on the streets to escort them and their goods to their new settlements. The agents without exception hunted down the settlers, overburdening them with their promises.

Pastor Hermann Steinberg, serving the absent minded people of the congregations in Congress Poland which were scattered widely in that area, had this concise comment about the emigration: "Then the devil filled the people with a pulling spirit that placed the beloved Volhynia ahead of the heavenly kingdom. They were attracted to Volhynia by various methods - naturally to the benefit of the landlords. For example, we have the following colonists Song of Lies:

'There is a place on earth,  
There everything will be full of happiness,  
Only the path is a little crooked.  
This is a very good land,  
Man cannot find any sandy ground,  
Because the farmer with gladness harvests his fields twice,  
And can shear his sheep twice.  
Peas, lentils, sweet peas and beans grow big as melons  
even on the worst of the land . . . !"

The migration to Volhynia continued each year and through the decade. Pastor Rosenberg of the Gostynin parish wrote about this in 1875: . . . "There is a second factor (besides the conversion to sects) that caused the people to be overcome with the fury of emigration to Volhynia. Here the people made a good living from difficult ground and they were always well off. The value of the land went up every year, and the Pole now finds himself in possession of this abandoned place . . . I believe that not ten years will pass before there are no more dead to bury. The remaining will, from year to year, decide to take up their walking sticks for the pilgrimage to Volhynia, abandoning the dead and their graves to their destiny. In villages where there used to be 30 evangelical families, there are now only two. As they move out into the wide world, it is inevitable that the Pole will apply his ploughshare to the consecrated places and church yards (cemeteries) and they will just be a memory."

This prophecy has in essence come true as today most of the German cemeteries lie in a state of disrepair or have been ploughed over.

Most of the other areas we have discussed were settled by Germans at the invitation of royalty. In contrast to that, the Germans in Volhynia were invited there by these landlords. They received no special privileges or freedoms in exchange for their move.

Most of the migrants to Volhynia were Lutheran Germans with some Catholic, Baptist, Moravian, and Mennonite. The Lutheran parish of Zhitomir alone, not counting the parishes of Rozyzszcze and Heimtal, shows more than 2100 baptisms per year in the early 1880s.

Between the two World Wars, Volhynia was split in half. The western half with Rowno as a principal city was returned to Poland while the Eastern half with Zhitomir as a principal city was retained by Russia - leading to the terms Polish and Russian Volhynia. Many of the Germans exiled to Siberia before and during WW I managed to return to Volhynia while others stayed and became settlers in Siberia or Kazakhstan. For 1931, population statistics indicate that Kreis Rowno only had 7458 Germans left out of a total population of 253,000. After World War II, virtually all Germans were expelled from Volhynia, either to Siberia or Germany. Many of those followed relatives to the Americas where they were known as displaced persons. All of Volhynia was then rejoined and became a province of the Ukraine. Today, as the far east Germans gain the new freedom to return to Germany, we are being contacted by more and more of them who had origins in Volhynia.

### ***Expulsions and Repatriation***

While there were a few other small areas of German settlement in the east that we have not had the time to review, this pretty well covers the story of the German migration to the east. However, I don't think it is fitting to end with all these Germans living there prior to World War I. Most of these Germans had come to these strange lands with peaceful intentions. But their lives were to be dramatically altered by the impact of two world wars taking place within a 27-year span. I would like to close with a brief look at what happened to them.

Many of our ancestors were fortunate to have left Europe for North or South America prior to WW I. They may have envisioned future problems in Russia and other parts of Europe but more than likely they were attracted by specific opportunities that were available in the Americas. Those who remained behind were not so fortunate.

A general policy of ruling powers both during and after WW II was to reestablish political boundaries on the basis of ethno linguistic boundaries. Unbelievably large numbers of people, German and others, were impacted by this policy. Some 16.3 million perished during WW II due to military, political or racial policies. Another 15.1 million were displaced between 1939 and 1943 while a further 31 million were

displaced between 1944 and 1948 - a staggering total of 62.4 million people.

As for the Germans, the Nazis had decided that those who lived in conquered Slavic lands should be moved to new areas in northern Poland - more than 3/4 of a million were moved thusly during WW II. But the biggest war time migration back westward for these Germans was the 5.6 million who left both the original and the resettlement areas as the Soviet army pushed westward starting in 1944. That count does not include those who fled from Hungary after the Red Army invaded that country.

Of those who didn't make it out of the Soviet occupied zones, some 500,000, were forcibly deported eastward into the deeper regions of the Soviet Union. After the War, another 6.5 million Germans were repatriated out of Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Hungary to both western and Soviet occupied zones of Germany. Many of these displaced Germans made their way to the Americas after the War.

And finally, hundreds of thousands of Germans remained trapped in the Soviet Union, most of them deported to nether regions of Kazakhstan and Siberia, many of them into forced labour camps. A few managed to stay in their home towns, mostly as the result of intermarriage with local ethnic groups. The result of all this is that most of us ethnic Germans with east European roots still have cousins in many different areas of Germany, Poland, Hungary, and especially in areas of the former Soviet Union.

The German migrations to the east have come to an end. With the fall of communism, many are now making their way back to the west, once again migrating with hope for the future - a future filled with peace and an improved life for themselves and their descendants.

End Part Two

# Drang nach Osten — The German Migration to the East

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