Germans in the Russian Empire, Soviet Union and Their Successor States, and Their Descendants’ Subsequent Life in Germany and the Western Hemisphere: A Historical Timeline, 1549-Present

Compiled by Dr. Eric J. Schmaltz, Associate Professor of History, Department of Social Sciences, Northwestern Oklahoma State University in Alva

Compiler’s Note: I translated many of the following entries directly from the German and Russian languages out of numerous academic and popular sources. For some translated entries, I took the liberty to make careful modifications of words and phrases or include corrections and additional pertinent information. Like an expanding coral reef, key historical dates, personalities, events and developments continue to be collected, layer upon layer. Documentation of both our individual lives and family histories remains enmeshed by this accumulation of knowledge. Different versions of the complete historical timeline have already appeared in two significant publications: Eric J. Schmaltz, “Chronicle of Events for Ethnic Germans in Russia, 1549-Present,” Heritage Review 32:1 (Mar. 2002): pp. 26-31, 33-44; and Schmaltz, An Expanded Bibliography and Reference Guide for the Former Soviet Union’s Germans: Issues of Ethnic Autonomy, Group Repression, Cultural Assimilation and Mass Emigration in the Twentieth Century and Beyond (Fargo, ND: Germans from Russia Heritage Collection, North Dakota State University Libraries, 2003), pp. xiii-xxxvi. Copyright permission is granted by both publications. For this series, I made several necessary revisions and updates to the timeline.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1549</td>
<td>In Vienna, Siegismund zu Herberstein publishes the Latin-language book <em>Rerum Moscovitarum commentarii</em>, containing his travel reports to Moscow in the years 1516-1517 and 1526-1527; it notes that more than around 1,500 German soldiers or “mercenaries” serve under the Russian state.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1613</td>
<td>Election of Michael Romanov to Russia’s throne after years of civil war; the Romanov Dynasty lasts until 1917.</td>
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<td>1618-1648</td>
<td>As the last of Europe’s major wars of religion, the disastrous Thirty Years’ War rages across much of Germany (the Holy Roman Empire).</td>
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<td>1652</td>
<td>In Moscow, the founding of the “German Suburb” (<em>Nemetskaya Sloboda</em>).</td>
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<td>1703</td>
<td>Under Tsar Peter I the Great (1682-1725), the founding of the port city of St. Petersburg along the Baltic Sea.</td>
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<td>1727</td>
<td>The first German newspaper in Russia, the <em>St. Petersburger Zeitung</em>, appears; it is banned in 1916, then is started up again in 1991.</td>
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<td>1756-1763</td>
<td>Destructive Seven Years’ War in Europe.</td>
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<td>22 July 1763</td>
<td>Tsarina Catherine II the Great (1762-1796) issues a manifesto calling on foreigners to immigrate to Russia, offering incentives and promising special rights and local self-administration.</td>
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<td>1764</td>
<td>The first German colony is established along the Volga River in Russia.</td>
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<td>1765</td>
<td>The first Herrnhuter colony is founded in Sarepta along the Volga in Russia.</td>
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<td>1774-1792</td>
<td>In two wars waged against the Ottoman Empire (Turkey), Russia acquires all the coastal land by the Black Sea between the Dnieper and the Kuban Rivers, including the Crimea (called New Russia).</td>
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<td>1789-1799</td>
<td>The French Revolution, later sweeping across much of Europe.</td>
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<td>July 1789</td>
<td>The first Mennonite colony of Chortitza is founded by the Dnieper River in South Russia.</td>
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<td>1793</td>
<td>Russia’s founding of the port city of Odessa along the Black Sea.</td>
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1799-1815 -- Reign of French military dictator Napoleon Bonaparte; Napoleonic Wars devastate much of Europe.

6 Sept. 1800 -- Tsar Paul I (1796-1801) grants special privileges to the Mennonites.

1803 -- Germans (mostly Schwaben) establish themselves in Odessa.

20 Feb. 1804 -- The manifesto of Tsar Alexander I (1801-1825) invites Germans from Baden, Württemberg, Alsace, the Pfalz and other German states to settle in the Black Sea Region.

1804-1824 -- The founding of numerous colonies in the Black Sea area by immigrants from Southern Germany and Danzig-West Prussia.

1806 -- Napoleon abolishes the Holy Roman Empire (the First German Reich); creates the Confederation of the Rhineland in its place, consolidating some of its German territories as well.

1806-1815 -- Under Napoleon, the establishment of the Confederation of the Rhineland.

1814 -- The beginning of the German migration to Bessarabia.

1815-1866 -- Following Napoleon’s defeat, the creation of the German Confederation.

1816 -- West Prussians, Rheinländer, Pfälzer, and Württemberger settle in Volynia (today northwestern Ukraine).

1817-1818 -- Migration of Württemberger Separatists to Transcaucasia in Russia.

9 Nov. 1838 -- Tsar Nicholas I (1825-1855) confirms the colonists’ privileges.

1842 -- In the Russian Empire, the codification of all prerogatives, responsibilities, and privileges of the colonists and the granting of civil rights to the colonists.

1853-1856 -- The Crimean War. Russia loses this conflict against Great Britain, France, Sardinia-Piedmont (Italy), and Turkey (Ottoman Empire); in response, Russia undergoes a period of sweeping reforms in coming years.

1854-1859 -- Mennonites from West Prussia establish the Samara Colonies in Russia.

1861 -- The abolition of serfdom in Russia under Tsar Alexander II (1855-1881).

1863 -- In Odessa, Ukraine, ethnic Germans start up the Odessaer Zeitung (Odessa Newspaper), which endures until World War I’s outbreak in 1914; it runs again briefly in 1917-1918.

German immigrants from Silesia and Poland settle as colonists in Volynia.

1864 -- Reform of local government in Russia; establishment of the zemstvos (organs of district and provincial government designed to bring effective administration below the level of central government).

Judicial reform enacted in Russia.

1867-1871 -- The establishment of the Prussian-dominated North German Confederation.

1870 -- In Moscow, the Moskauer Deutsche Zeitung is published until 1914; it resumes operation in April 1997.

4 June 1871 -- Russia abolishes self-government and the special status for “foreign colonists.”

1871-1918 -- Prussian Otto von Bismarck’s unification of Germany (the Second German Reich); tensions between the new German Empire and Russia increase in subsequent decades, culminating in World War I.
1 Jan. 1874  --  The introduction of compulsory military service in Russia; for Mennonites, forestry service is permitted as an alternative; the first emigration wave of Russia’s Germans overseas (to North and South America) occurs, continuing until World War I.

1881  --  “Russification” policy begins under Tsar Alexander III (1881-1894).

1882  --  The beginning of German migration to Turkestan.

1887  --  Russian law sets restrictions in Volynia and Podolia on landholding and land acquisitions by foreigners.

1892  --  Russian law makes land acquisitions by foreigners impossible.

1894  --  The founding of German settlements near Orenburg, Russia (near the Urals).

1894-1917  --  Reign of Tsar Nicholas II, the last ruler of Russia’s Romanov Dynasty.

1904-1905  --  Russo-Japanese War; Russia’s defeat leads to partial liberation for ethnic Germans and others; new economic and cultural upswing in German settlements until World War I.

1906  --  In Saratov, Russia, the Deutsche Volkszeitung (German People’s Newspaper) is published until 1911.

The Deutsche Rundschau (German Review) is circulated in Odessa, Ukraine, until 1914; it resumes brief circulation again in 1917-1918.

In Tiflis (the Transcaucasus), the Kaukasische Post (Caucasus Post) runs until 1914, then again from 1918 to 1922.

German settlements near Ufa, Russia, are founded.

1907  --  German settlements near Aktyubinsk in Kazakhstan are founded.

1908  --  Closed region of German settlement around Slavgorod on the Kulunda Steppes.

1914-1918  --  After World War I’s outbreak, the 1.7 million ethnic Germans living in Russia are declared “internal enemies” of the empire; during the war, however, about 300,000 of them actually serve in the tsar’s army, especially on the southern (Caucasus) front fighting the Ottoman Turks.

2 Feb./13 Dec. 1915  --  Russia’s “Liquidation Law” is enacted for German-owned land in an area within 150 km of the empire’s western borders; the forced mass deportation of 50,000 Volynian Germans is carried out; later these emergency measures also are to apply to areas as far as the Ural Mountains, but are prevented from implementation because of the subsequent unfolding of political events in Russia (the Revolution of February 1917).

27 May 1915  --  Pogrom against ethnic Germans in Moscow, where many German shops are looted, 40 Germans wounded, and 3 Germans murdered.

1915-1917  --  Under the last tsar, Nicholas II, a total of about 60,000 ethnic Germans (civilians) die in Russia.

Feb. 1917  --  The February (First Russian) Revolution; Tsar Nicholas II is forced to abdicate, soon followed by the Provisional Government’s suspension of the 1915 “Liquidation Law.”

18 Mar. 1917  --  In Odessa, the convening of the First Congress of Delegates of the Association of German Colonists in the Black Sea Region (1. Delegierten-Kongreß des Verbandes der deutschen Kolonisten im Schwarzmeergebiet); the Second Congress meets on 1-3 August 1917.

28 Mar. 1917  --  The founding of the “All-Russian Union of Russian Germans” (Allrussischer Bund Russischer Deutscher) in Odessa.
20-22 Apr. 1917 -- In Moscow, the gathering of German representatives from all the German colonies and various cities; this occasion marks the first time that ethnic Germans from across Russia meet as a representative assembly to discuss common aspirations and concerns.

25-27 Apr. 1917 -- In Saratov, 334 district authorities of the Volga German colonies gather (Versammlung der Kreisbevollmächtigen der Wolgakolonien).

17 May 1917 -- In Slavgorod, 1,500 representatives of the Germans of Siberia assemble.

1-3 Aug. 1917 -- In Odessa, the convening of the Second Congress of Delegates of the Association of German Colonists in the Black Sea Region (2. Delegierten-Kongreß des Verbandes der deutschen Kolonisten im Schwarzmeergebiet); the First Congress had convened on 18 March 1917.


1917-1924 -- Bolshevik leader Vladimir I. Lenin seizes power in Russia; he stands as the father of the Soviet totalitarian state, but during his last two years personal health problems diminish his ruling effectiveness; Joseph Stalin serves as the Soviet Nationalities Commissar.

1917-1921 -- The bloody Russian Civil War takes place; after a long struggle, the Bolsheviks (Soviet Communists) emerge victorious, reclaiming much of the former Russian Empire in the process.

1918-1925 -- As a result of the Russian Civil War and the forced grain requisitions by the Bolsheviks, approximately 300,000 ethnic Germans perish; famines in German villages continue in some areas until as late as 1925; this period overlaps with the Great Famine of 1921-1923 in the Volga Region and parts of Ukraine.

24-28 Feb. 1918 -- The Warenburg Conference of ethnic Germans along the Volga; delegates approve of the “Project of a National Union of All Volga Colonies for an Independent Volga Republic in the Russian Federative State.”

3 Mar. 1918 -- The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk between Germany and Soviet Russia; the German military occupies western parts of the former Russian Empire until the end of World War I; a repatriation clause is approved in favor of ethnic Germans in western parts of Russia.

24 Apr. 1918 -- The founding of the German Section of the Communist Party of Russia (Bolsheviks); in the Volga German autonomous republic during the 1920s and 1930s, the Volga Germans (as the majority of its population) remain under-represented in the Communist Party, Komsomol, and Young Pioneers.

30 May 1918 -- Announcement of the “General Statute of the Commissariat for German Affairs in the Volga Region.”

30 June-1 July 1918 -- The First Soviet Congress of Volga German Colonies.

19 Oct. 1918 -- The Council of the Peoples Commissariat of Russia approves the decree on autonomy in the settlement of Volga Germans.

1919-1933 -- Weimar German Republic.

19 Feb. 1919 -- The Association of Mennonites of South Russia is established.

1921-1927 -- The USSR’s New Economic Policy (NEP) is in effect; a temporary and relative recovery in ethnic German settlements.

1921-1923 -- The Great Famine in the Volga Region and parts of Ukraine.

Apr. 1921 -- Responding to the plight of Black Sea Germans during the Great Famine, the North Dakota Citizens’ Relief Association (NDCRA) is formed in Bismarck, North Dakota, operating until 1923; businessman Jacob Rothschiller of Bismarck, North Dakota, directs this effort, which is
coordinated with Herbert Hoover’s American Relief Administration (ARA).

11 Aug./11 Sept. -- 1921

Responding to the Great Famine, the nucleus of the Volga Relief Society (VRS) is formed in Portland, Oregon, on 11 August, while the organizational chapter appears in Lincoln, Nebraska, on 11 September; efforts are coordinated with Herbert Hoover’s American Relief Administration (ARA).

1922

Administrative “streamlining” of the territory of Volga Germans through the integration of Russian, Ukrainian, and Tatar villages.

4 Nov. 1922

The Portland, Oregon, and Lincoln, Nebraska chapters of the Volga Relief Society (VRS) are consolidated, operating until 1926; Dr. H. P. Weckesser of Lincoln, Nebraska, serves as its first president.

1923

The Soviet authorities register all churches.

16 May 1923

The founding of the All-Russian Mennonite Agricultural Society.

20 Feb. 1924

The territory of Volga Germans is raised to the status of an Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR).

12 June 1924

In the Volga German ASSR, German is introduced as the language of administration and class instruction.

1926

The Volga German ASSR’s constitution is approved.

In Moscow, the first issue of the Deutsche Zentral-Zeitung (German Central Newspaper or DZZ) is published; abolished in 1938, the DZZ is considered by many ethnic Germans to be an early incarnation of the Moscow newspaper Neues Leben (New Life), which appears in 1957.

1927

Volga German intellectual Peter Sinner’s Herbstgedanken (Autumn Thoughts) is published, a poem well-known among later generations of ethnic Germans (notably émigrés); it prophesizes his ethnic people’s, as well as his own, ultimate demise in the USSR’s emerging new socio-political order; even during the NEP period, several of his writings and those of some other ethnic German writers dwell on this death theme; in the 1930s, most of the ethnic German ethnic elite are killed or exiled under Stalin.

1927-1953

Joseph Stalin is supreme Soviet leader after consolidating his authority during the mid-1920s.

1928-1938

During Stalin’s forced collectivization campaigns, enforced famines, and mass political purges, around 300,000 ethnic Germans die inside the USSR.

Dec. 1929

Approximately 14,000 Germans and their families across the USSR head to Moscow hoping to receive exit permits; Germany accepts 5,671 after long negotiations, but only for transit; from Germany, those accepted are sent to North and South America; for the majority not permitted to leave the USSR, they are forced to return to their homes under poor conditions.

1 July 1931

Ninety-five percent of Volga German farmers now work on kolkhozes (cooperative farms); numerous ethnic German churches are converted into so-called cultural centers.

1932-1933

Under Stalin, the Great Soviet Famine in Ukraine (called the Holodomor or Murder-Famine) and along the Volga.

1933-1945

Nazi Germany (the Third German Reich) under Adolf Hitler.

1935

The liquidation of the German National Rayon of Pulin-Volynia.

1937

All ethnic German churches are desecrated in the USSR; the Volga German autonomous republic receives its socialist constitution.

Mar. 1938

The Russian language is made compulsory in Soviet schools; politically tenuous as it is, the
German language is still formally legal in the Volga German ASSR until its official abolition in late August 1941.

5 Nov. 1938 -- The liquidation of the German National Rayon in the Altai.

Mar. 1939 -- The dissolution of German National Rayons in Ukraine.

23 Aug. 1939 -- In Moscow, the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact is signed.

Sept. 1939-May 1945 -- The outbreak of World War II; in Russia, after the Nazi invasion of June 1941, it is called the “Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945.”

Late 1939 -- As part of a Nazi-Soviet agreement, most of the remainder of ethnic Germans in the independent Baltic States are repatriated to Nazi Germany before the Soviet annexation of that region in 1940.

1940 -- Following most of the great German migrations, prominent émigré scholar Dr. Karl Stumpp in Germany at the time estimates the breakdown according to country of Germans from Russia and their immediate descendants living in the Western Hemisphere: 200,000 in Canada; 350,000-450,000 in the United States (with a solid plurality in the Dakotas); 30,000 (mostly Mennonites) in Mexico; 250,000 in Brazil; 150,000-170,000 in Argentina; 4,500 in Paraguay; 2,500 in Uruguay; thus the total number of Germans from Russia in the Western Hemisphere by this point had reached more than one million, with about 630,000 in North America and roughly 407,000 in South America.

Late 1940 -- As part of a Nazi-Soviet agreement, all Bessarabian Germans from 52 villages are resettled by the Nazis to the Greater German Reich (Heim ins Reich); shortly later, the Soviets annex Bessarabia from Romania (which Russia had lost in 1918).

22 June-Aug. 1941 -- Nazi Germany invades the USSR; by July and August the Soviet authorities deport ethnic Germans from the western parts of the USSR (the Crimea, the Caucasus, parts of the Black Sea Region) to the eastern territories; most ethnic Germans west of the Dnieper River escape exile to the Soviet East because the Nazis quickly overtake the region.

1941-1949 -- During the brutal Nazi-Soviet war and the immediate postwar period of the forced resettlement of entire peoples to Soviet Siberia and Central Asia, about 350,000 ethnic Germans perish in the USSR.

28 Aug. 1941 -- In response to the Nazi invasion of the USSR and for fear of “fifth columns,” the decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR “Concerning the Removal of Germans Residing in The Districts in the Volga Region” is signed.

10 Jan. 1942 -- The resolution of the State Committee of Defense (Gosudarstvenny komitet oboron) “Concerning the Kind of Use for German Evacuees of Conscript Age from 17 to 50 Years.”

14 Feb. 1942 -- The resolution of the GKO “Concerning the Mobilization of German Men of Conscript Age from 17 to 50 Years Permanently Residing in Districts, Localities, and Autonomous and Union Republics”; the so-called Labor Army (Trudarmiya) is created.

19 Mar. 1943 -- The Nazi Government bestows German citizenship to ethnic Germans (Volksdeutsche).

1943-1945 -- With the retreating Nazi armies, about 350,000 Ukrainian (Black Sea) Germans from the USSR flee to Poland’s Warthegau and the Greater German Reich; around 275,000 of them are forcibly deported back to the USSR as “repatriated Soviet citizens” under Allied agreements, mostly ending up in the “special settlements” of Soviet Siberia and Central Asia; a majority of the remaining 75,000 Ukrainian Germans stays in what will become West Germany; for almost four decades, the pressing issue of family reunification becomes a point of contention between West Germany and the USSR.

8 Jan. 1945 -- The resolution of the Soviet Peoples Commissars of the USSR “Concerning the Legal Status of the Special Resettlers Assigned by Order to the Special Settlement.”
May 1945 -- Soviet Russia (the RSFSR) annexes from Germany northern East Prussia (with Königsberg); Königsberg is promptly renamed Kaliningrad.

1947 -- The forced-labor units (Trudarmiya) are formally disbanded; however, for the next several years, the USSR’s deported peoples remain confined to remote regions under special surveillance in the so-called “special settlements.”

1947-1948 -- In Kaliningrad, the publication of the German-language newspaper Neue Zeit (New Time); with respect to the USSR’s poor treatment of its many ethnic Germans at this time, this Soviet concession is an exception to the rule; the gazette runs until all the remaining Germans are deported from the region.

The deportation of Germans from northern East Prussia into the Soviet Occupation Zone of Germany (the future Communist East Germany).

26 Nov. 1948 -- The decree of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet “Concerning the Criminal Responsibility for Escape from the Place of Mandatory and Permanent Settlement of Persons Evacuated to the Remote Regions of the USSR at the time of the Patriotic War” is signed; exile is in effect “forever,” and a punishment of 20 years of hard labor is set for those who attempt to leave the “special settlements” without special permit.

1949 -- In the course of three and a half decades, from World War I until the late Stalin era, the death total for ethnic Germans in Russia and the USSR reaches approximately one million, most of which resulted from unnatural deaths or excess mortality rates; this relative physical destruction of the Lenin-Stalin years will be followed by a substantial cultural assimilation of remaining ethnic Germans in the post-Stalinist USSR.

23 May 1949 -- The Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) or West Germany is founded; Article 116 of its Basic Law (Constitution) guarantees citizenship to all Germans living abroad; this West German policy stems from the nation’s guilt over the recent Nazi past and its desire for the reunification of German families across Europe.

7 Oct. 1949 -- The German Democratic Republic (GDR) or Communist East Germany is founded.

1949-1963 -- Konrad Adenauer of the CDU/CSU (Christian Democratic Union/Christian Socialist Union of Bavaria Party) is West Germany’s first chancellor.

Late 1940s- Early 1950s -- Approximately 30,000 former Soviet German “Displaced Persons” (DP’s) emigrate from West Germany to the United States, Canada, South America, and Australia for economic reasons and for fear of the Soviets (i.e., the danger of repatriation to the East as “Soviet citizens”); in the United States, for example, the Displaced Persons Acts of 1948 and 1950 open up the country to refugees who cannot return to their homes in Communist-controlled countries of Eastern Europe; refugee families also are sponsored to go overseas, but it remains difficult, as their sponsors have to guarantee them housing and employment.

23 Oct. 1949 -- Founding of the Gemeinschaft der deutschen Siedler aus Bessarabien (Society of German Settlers from Bessarabia) in Stuttgart, West Germany; later around 1958 it is renamed the Landsmannschaft der Bessarabiendeutschen (National Association of Bessarabian Germans).

22 Apr. 1950 -- After the founding of the FRG, well-known representatives of ethnic Germans from the USSR and some relief agencies decide to organize associations for resettlers from the East (Ostumsiedler).

5 Aug. 1950 -- In Stuttgart, West Germany, the “Charter of the Germans Expulsed from Their Homelands” (Charta der deutschen Heimatvertriebenen) is signed.

15 Oct. 1950 -- At the historic Paulskirche in Frankfurt, West Germany, the Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Ostumsiedler (The Work Group of Resettlers from the East) is established at an assembly of federal delegates; at this time, the delegates demand that the West German government attempt to secure the release of those ethnic Germans detained in Soviet labor camps or special settlements; also they call for the equal treatment of displaced persons from the USSR with all other displaced persons in West Germany; a few years later, this new organization is renamed the Landsmannschaft der Deutschen
aus Rußland (National Association of Germans from Russia), based in Stuttgart.

1951 -- The Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Ostumsiedler begins publishing the monthly journal Volk auf dem Weg (People on the Move).

1953-1964 -- Nikita Khrushchev is Soviet leader.

1954 -- The Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Ostumsiedler begins publishing regular editions of the Heimathbücher (Books on the Homeland), which continues into the present day.

1955 -- In Stuttgart, West Germany, the Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Ostumsiedler changes its name to the Landsmannschaft der Deutschen aus Rußland (National Association of Germans from Russia).

22 Feb. 1955 -- The West German Bundestag accepts the decision to recognize the validity of citizenship (naturalization) for those ethnic Germans, primarily from western Ukraine, who had obtained it during World War II.

9-13 Sept. 1955 -- The visit of West German Chancellor Adenauer to Moscow; the establishment of formal diplomatic relations between both countries; in the course of negotiations for the first time after the war, the sensitive question about the ethnic Germans’ condition in the places of special settlement is touched upon.

1 Dec. 1955 -- In Barnaul in Russia’s Altai Region, the first ethnic German newspaper Arbeit (Labor) is published inside the USSR since the war; it runs until 1957.

13 Dec. 1955 -- The decree (war amnesty) of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet “Concerning the Removal of Restrictions in the Legal Status from the Germans and Their Family Members Found in the Special Settlement” is signed; however, there is no return of property confiscated during deportation and exile, nor are ethnic Germans allowed to return to their old homelands and native villages.

24-25 Feb. 1956 -- At the Twentieth Party Congress, Khrushchev gives his so-called “Secret Speech,” in which he condemns Stalin personally for past political crimes.

1957 -- In the USSR, the first German-language radio transmission is permitted.

1 May 1957 -- The central newspaper Neues Leben (New Life) begins publication; many ethnic Germans consider it the successor to the Deutsche Zentral-Zeitung (DZZ), which ran in Moscow from 1926 to 1938.

15 June 1957 -- In Slavgorod, Russia, the newspaper Rote Fahne (Red Banner) is started up for ethnic Germans; in 1991, it is renamed Zeitung für Dich (Newspaper for You).

1958 -- In Stuttgart, West Germany, the Gemeinschaft der deutschen Siedler aus Bessarabien (Society of German Settlers from Bessarabia) is renamed the Landsmannschaft der Bessarabendeutschen (National Association of Bessarabian Germans).

8 Apr. 1958 -- The West German-Soviet agreement on issues of the reunification of family relations and the collaboration of both countries’ Red Cross organizations.

24 Apr. 1959 -- The West German-Soviet agreement on the issue of family unification.

6 Aug. 1960 -- In Stuttgart, West Germany, the “Declaration to the Charter of the Germans Expelled from Their Homelands from 5 August 1950” (Deklaration zur Charta der deutschen Heimatvertriebenen vom 5. August 1950) is signed.

1963-1966 -- Ludwig Erhard of the CDU/CSU is chancellor of West Germany.

29 Aug. 1964 -- The decree of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet “Concerning the Insertion of an Amendment in the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR from 28 August 1941 ‘Concerning the Removal of Germans Residing in the Volga Region’” is signed; this “partial rehabilitation” policy does not allow the ethnic Germans to return to their old homelands, nor does
it provide for the re-establishment of a Volga German republic and various national districts; the decree is not published widely in Russian, nor is it publicized to the general populace for the next twenty-five years.


2 Jan. 1965 -- On the issue of ethnic autonomy, the reception of the first delegation of nine ethnic Germans by the Chairman of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet, Anastas I. Mikoyan.

15 June 1965 -- On the issue of ethnic autonomy, responsible officials of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CC of the CPSU) speak with thirty of the forty-three members of the second delegation of ethnic Germans, who present a petition of over 4,000 signatures from ethnic Germans; among the delegates is a young Hugo Wormsbecher, who in the late 1980s and 1990s stands as a leading ethnic German activist in the "Rebirth" autonomy movement and other ethnic associations.

7 July 1965 -- On the issue of ethnic autonomy, the meeting of leading members of the second delegation of ethnic Germans with the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, Anastas I. Mikoyan.

9 July 1965 -- Expressing their disappointment over the meeting, several members of the second delegation of ethnic Germans, among them Hugo Wormsbecher, write a harsh letter to Mikoyan (with copies distributed to some of the top Soviet leadership, including Brezhnev); in 1972, *Der Spiegel* in West Germany publishes part of this letter as well as excerpts from the 7 July 1965 meeting with Mikoyan.

1965-1985 -- About 12,000 ethnic Germans are allowed to emigrate from the USSR to Communist East Germany (the German Democratic Republic), with the vast majority of them doing so during the first half of the 1980s.

1 Jan. 1966 -- In Kazakhstan, the newspaper *Freundschaft* (Friendship) begins publication; in 1991, it becomes *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* (German General Newspaper or DAZ).

1966-1969 -- Kurt Kiesinger of the CDU/CSU is chancellor of West Germany.

July 1967 -- A small delegation of ethnic Germans seeking to reestablish ethnic autonomy arrives in Moscow, but is not allowed to speak with high-ranking officials.

1968 -- In North America, the founding of the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia (AHSGR), becoming one of the major archival collections on the ethnic group; it is first based in Greeley, Colorado, but in 1973 moves to Lincoln, Nebraska; the *Landsmannschaft der Deutschen aus Rußland* cooperates with the AHSGR; by the early 1990s, the AHSGR establishes numerous links with the former USSR’s ethnic Germans and the growing emigré community in Germany.

1969-1974 -- Willy Brandt of the SPD (Social Democratic Party of Germany) is chancellor of West Germany; he ushers in the era of Ostpolitik (Eastern Policy) to improve relations with the Soviet Bloc countries and the USSR.

12 Aug. 1970 -- The Moscow Treaty between the USSR and West Germany concerning the mutual renunciation of military force; the number of ethnic German emigrants from the USSR to the West subsequently increases until Cold War tensions worsen in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

1970-1975 -- About 30,000-35,000 ethnic Germans leave their places of residence in Kazakhstan and Siberia for Moldavia, Estonia and the North Caucasus in the hope of soon receiving permission to leave for West Germany in order to reunite with their relatives and gain freedom.

9 Jan. 1971 -- In Bismarck, the founding of the North Dakota Historical Society of Germans from Russia (NDHSGR); on 14 July 1979, members vote to change its name to the Germans from Russia Heritage Society (GRHS); the *Landsmannschaft der Deutschen aus Rußland* cooperates with the GRHS; by the early 1990s, the GRHS establishes links with the former USSR’s ethnic Germans.
and the growing émigré community in Germany.

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<td>1972</td>
<td>In the USSR, the “Association of Germans Wishing to Emigrate” (Vereinigung der auswanderungswilligen Deutschen) is illegally formed; this dissident network is based in Estonia with contacts in Lithuania, Moldavia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and elsewhere.</td>
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<td>23 Apr. 1972</td>
<td>At Moscow’s Main Telegraph Office, a sit-down strike of thirty ethnic Germans wishing to emigrate.</td>
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<td>June 1972</td>
<td>A group of twelve ethnic Germans want to present personally to the Chairman of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet, Nikolai Podgorny, their demands for permission to leave for West Germany; however, this delegation is only permitted to meet with the desk clerk of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet.</td>
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<tr>
<td>June-July 1972</td>
<td>In West Siberia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, another small delegation of ethnic Germans seeking to reestablish ethnic autonomy is organized, but Soviet security learns of its plans and prevents the delegation from traveling to Moscow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late 1972</td>
<td>Kazakh authorities for the first time consider establishing an ethnic German autonomous region in Kazakhstan near Bayan-Aul, Tselinograd and Taldy-Kurgan, where there would already be a sizeable ethnic German population.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Nov. 1972</td>
<td>The decree of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet “Concerning the Removal of Restrictions in the Choice of the Place Residence Stipulated in the Past for the Separate Category of Citizens” is signed; however, this decree is not published in the USSR, nor is it consistently enforced by Soviet officials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 May 1973</td>
<td>A sit-down strike of ethnic Germans is held at Moscow’s Intourist-Hotel.</td>
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<tr>
<td>18 May 1973</td>
<td>A twelve-member delegation of ethnic Germans delivers to the USSR Supreme Soviet a memorandum on the condition of the German people in the USSR, an appeal to the UN General Secretary Kurt Waldheim, and the signatures of 7,000 German families (about 35,000 persons in all) wishing to emigrate from the USSR.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 Sept. 1973</td>
<td>In Karaganda, a controversy occurs between ethnic Germans wishing to emigrate and Kazakh officials; according to eyewitnesses, over 400 soldiers and about 500 militia are called upon in order to disperse nearly 400 ethnic Germans who were holding a rally.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Feb. 1974</td>
<td>As a protest, Ljudmila Oldenburger and her two sons chain themselves in front of the building of the CC of the CPSU in order to carry through their emigration to West Germany.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974-1982</td>
<td>Helmut Schmidt of the SPD is chancellor of West Germany.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>On the eve of the one hundredth anniversary of the first migrations into the country, the Volga Germans of Argentina organized the Association of the Descendants of Volga Germans in Argentina (Asociacion Argentina de Descendientes de Alemanes del Volga).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 July-1 Aug. 1975</td>
<td>The international signatories to the Helsinki Agreement accept the territorial boundaries of post-war Europe (which is in the USSR’s interests); in turn, the USSR formally promises to respect its citizens’ human rights, freedom of travel, and freedom of belief.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Mar. 1977</td>
<td>Ten former German residents of the Volga Region are arrested for protesting in Red Square and demanding emigration rights.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1978</td>
<td>The Germans from Russia Heritage Society (GRHS) creates the Germans from Russia Heritage Collection (GRHC) at the Institute for Regional Studies, North Dakota State University (NDSU) Libraries, Fargo; it becomes one of the major archival collections on the ethnic group; the Landsmannschaft der Deutschen aus Rußland and Landsmannschaft der Bessarabiendeutschen cooperate with the NDSU Libraries; by the early 1990s, the special collection at NDSU Libraries establishes extensive links (particularly through electronic information sources) with the former USSR’s ethnic Germans and the growing émigré community in Germany; from 1996 to 2013, it</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
also organizes popular annual tours to Alsace, Germany and Ukraine.

31 May 1979 -- The passing of the resolution of the Politburo of the CC of the CPSU “Concerning the Formation of the German Autonomous Region” in Kazakhstan.

16-19 June 1979 -- In Tselinograd and other cities in Kazakhstan, a demonstration of 5,000 Kazakh students against Moscow’s intended establishment of an ethnic German autonomous region near Ermentau (120 km north of Tselinograd) takes place; the demonstration is organized by Kazakh professors with the approval of officials under the motto “Kazakhstan for Kazakhs” and “Kazakhstan is indivisible”; a large outbreak of public violence by agitated Kazakh youth is barely avoided.

31 Mar. 1980 -- A group of ethnic Germans demonstrates in Moscow’s Red Square for the right to emigrate to West Germany.

Dec. 1980 -- In Tselinograd, Kazakhstan, the German dramatic theater begins operation.

1981 -- In Moscow, the “Soviet German” (Communist) almanac Heimatliche Weisen (Rodinye Prostory/Native Expanses) begins publication; Hugo Wormsbecher becomes one of its contributing editors.

Nov. 1982 -- An airplane high-jacking to Turkey as part of the struggle by ethnic Germans in the dissident emigration movement to get permission to leave the USSR.

1982-1984 -- Yuri Andropov is Soviet leader.

1982-1998 -- Helmut Kohl of the CDU/CSU is chancellor of West Germany; in October 1990, he becomes chancellor of united Germany (under West Germany’s Basic Law).

1984-1985 -- Constantine Chernenko is Soviet leader.

8 Nov. 1984/ 28 Mar. 1985 -- Debates in the West German Bundestag on the situation of Germans in the USSR and on the severe decrease in Aussiedler (ethnic German “settlers from abroad”) immigration; unanimous summons to the West German federal government to take measures for the improvement of the situation of ethnic Germans.

28 Dec. 1984 -- The Politburo of the CC of the CPSU orders measures against the “propaganda campaign in the West on the situation of citizens of German nationality in the USSR.”

1985-1991 -- Mikhail Gorbachev is Soviet leader; he soon launches the reform-era of glasnost and perestroika (sometimes called the “second NEP”).


19-21 Nov. 1985 -- During the Geneva Summit between the two world superpowers, U.S. President Ronald Reagan, at the request of West German Chancellor Kohl, speaks with General Secretary of the USSR Gorbachev about the forced resettlement of Germans living in the Soviet Union.

28 Nov.-3 Dec. 1985 -- A Bundestag delegation under the leadership of Dr. Philipp Jenninger speaks in Moscow on the forced settlement of Germans from the USSR.

1 Jan. 1987 -- Soviet emigration reform legislation goes into effect for the “rehabilitation” of separated family relations; in 1987, a noticeable increase in the number of ethnic German emigrants to (West) Germany begins and peaks dramatically in the mid-1990s; between October 1989 and May 1991, the Soviet government permits the right to the freedom of travel for all its citizens, regardless of
family separation (the law goes into full effect by 1 January 1993).

19 Mar. 1987 -- In a government statement, West German Chancellor Kohl announces: “Our criteria for real progress in East-West relations is and remains the condition of people in our divided nation and on our continent. We welcome the first signs of a change for the better in Soviet human rights policy, and we hope that these signs develop further. We hold to our demand that political prisoners be released, also in all countries of the Warsaw Pact. And we expect that the new emigration legislation of the Soviet Union finally alleviates the suffering of long-separated families; at the same time we are not thinking only of our fellow German countrymen, who are affected.”

Nov. 1987 -- Soviet leader Gorbachev publicly condemns Stalin’s crimes.

12-14 Apr. 1988 -- In Moscow, the so-called “third” major delegation (the first two significant delegations took place in 1965) consisting of fourteen ethnic Germans is received by the CC of the CPSU.

11 July 1988 -- In Moscow, the leadership of the so-called “fourth” major delegation of ethnic Germans is received by the CC of the CPSU; this delegation has fifty-six members.


16 Jan. 1989 -- The decree “Concerning Additional Measures for the Rehabilitation (Restoration) of Justice with Respect to the Victims of Repression, Who Possessed a Residence in the 1930s and ’40s and Started Anew in the 1950s” is passed by the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet.

Mar. 1989 -- Across the USSR, national elections including non-Communist Party candidates.

28-31 Mar. 1989 -- In Moscow, the First (Constituent) Conference of the “All-Union Socio-Political, Cultural-Educational Society of Soviet Germans ‘Rebirth’ (Wiedergeburt/Vozrozhdenie)”; Dr. Heinrich Groth is elected as the society’s international (all-union) chairman, a position he holds until early 1993; the “Rebirth” will become the largest ethnic German umbrella-organization.

25 Apr. 1989 -- The speech of the First Secretary of the Volgograd Regional Committee of the CPSU, V. Kalashnikov, at the Plenum of the CC of the CPSU, in which he rejects the idea of restoring ethnic German autonomy along the Volga.

5 May 1989 -- The meeting of the Ideological Commission of the CC of the CPSU, in which a member of the CC, a state farm machine-operator, N. Gellert from Kazakhstan, presents his speech on the problem of ethnic Germans.

12 June 1989 -- A Deputy Committee on the Problems of Soviet Germans is formed by the resolution of the Soviet Nationalities of the USSR Supreme Soviet; Peoples’ Deputy of the USSR, G. N. Kiselev, heads it.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12-14 Sept. 1989</td>
<td>First Plenum of the Coordination Center of VOSN (the All-Union Society of Soviet Germans or Vesoyuznoe obshchestvo sovetskikh nemtsev) “Rebirth.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>13 Sept. 1989</td>
<td>In the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet, a meeting of the members of the Presidium of the Coordination Center VOSN “Rebirth” with the Chairman of the Soviet of Nationalities of the USSR Supreme Soviet, R. N. Nishanov, Deputy Chairman of the Soviet Nationalities of the USSR Supreme Soviet, I. O. Bisher, Chairman of the Committee on International Relations of the Soviet Nationalities of the USSR Supreme Soviet, G. S. Tarazievich, Departmental Director on the Question of International Affairs of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet, A. A. Grishkevich, and Chairman of the Committee on the Problems of Soviet Germans of the Soviet of Nationalities of the USSR Supreme Soviet, G. N. Kiselev.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Sept. 1989</td>
<td>At the Plenum of the CC of CPSU, N. Gellert appears with an exposition on (rendering of) the problems of ethnic Germans.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3-7 Oct. 1989</td>
<td>Journey of the Commission of the Workers Association on the Problems of Soviet Germans of the Soviet Nationalities of the USSR Supreme Soviet to the Kazakh SSR.</td>
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<td>11 Oct. 1989</td>
<td>In the Literary News, an article is published by A. Nikitin, “German Autonomy: Where? When? How?” in which, for the first time, the possibility of a constitutional republic in the territory of the Kaliningrad Region (the former German East Prussia) is discussed publicly; through the mid-1990s, the Kaliningrad issue generates interest among ethnic Germans and foreign observers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 1989</td>
<td>The Commission on the Problems of Soviet Germans of the Soviet Nationalities of the USSR Supreme Soviet prepares the plan for the urgent measures to solve the problem of ethnic Germans, in which the necessary restoration of an autonomous republic along the Volga to its former status and boundaries is recognized.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8-9 Nov. 1989</td>
<td>Fall of the Berlin Wall.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14 Nov. 1989</td>
<td>The USSR Supreme Soviet adopts the declaration “Concerning the Declaration of Illegal and Criminal Repressive Actions against Peoples, Exposing the Violent Repression, and Guaranteeing Their Rights.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>14-16 Nov. 1989</td>
<td>The Second (Extraordinary/Emergency) Plenum of the Coordination Center of the VOSN “Rebirth.”</td>
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<td>15-16 Nov. 1989</td>
<td>In Moscow, the All-Union Research-Practice Conference takes place, devoted to the historical and contemporary problems of the ethnic Germans.</td>
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<tr>
<td>28 Nov. 1989</td>
<td>The resolution of the USSR Supreme Soviet “Concerning the Conclusion and Proposal of the Commission on the Problems of the Soviet German and Crimean Tatar People” is signed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 Dec. 1989</td>
<td>Residents of the Saratov Region arrive in Moscow for organized pickets and meetings as a sign of protest against the decision of the USSR Supreme Soviet concerning the restoration of the German state along the Volga.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Dec. 1989</td>
<td>In the decision of the Soviet Ministers of the USSR, a commission is created under Chairman L. Voronin for carrying out the resolution of the USSR Supreme Soviet “Concerning the Conclusion and Proposal of the Commission on the Problems of the Soviet German and Crimean Tatar People.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Jan. 1990</td>
<td>West Germany’s “Immigrant-Assimilation Law”; considerable cutbacks in social services for ethnic German emigrants or settlers from abroad (Aussiedler) and an assignment to a temporary place of residence for two years.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 10 Jan. 1990 | After twenty-five years, the newspaper Neues Leben (New Life) publishes in Russian the entire 29
August 1964 “rehabilitation” decree.


29 Jan. 1990 -- The State Commission on the Problems of Soviet Germans under Chairman Viktor Gusev is formed by the Soviet of Ministers of the USSR with a total of twenty-eight members, six of whom are ethnic Germans; it continues until August 1991; it prepares the proposal about the creation of an “association” of Soviet Germans as a governmental administration without territory (“extra-territorial” or cultural autonomy); soon an Organizing Committee (Orgkomitet) consisting of ethnic Germans assists the State Commission.

Feb. 1990 -- The “Rebirth” claims 50,000 members.


Apr. 1990 -- In Ulyanovsk, Russia, the German newspaper Nachrichten (The News) begins circulation; in 1998, it is renamed Rundschau (The Review/Panorama).

6 Apr. 1990 -- The meeting of the State Commission on the Problems of Soviet Germans considers the situation in the Volga Region and the pace of preparation for proposals on the repeal of governmental acts restricting the rights of ethnic Germans.

17-19 Apr. 1990 -- The Third Plenum of the Coordination Center VOSN “Rebirth.”

27 Apr. 1990 -- On a journey through the Sverdlovsk Region, USSR President Gorbachev expresses his view on the problematical restoration of German autonomy in the Volga Region.

25 May 1990 -- The Executive Committee of the State Commission on the Problems of Soviet Germans listens to the report about activity conducive to the treatment of the German population in Kazakhstan, and considers the complex program of restoring the cadre (trained personnel and officials) of German nationality.

25 June 1990 -- At the Executive Committee of the State Commission on the Problems of Soviet Germans, the decision of the Reven Local Soviet Red-Army Rayon of the Saratov Region concerning the repression of ethnic Germans from new dwellings and old lodgings is condemned; consideration of the pace of preparation of the First Congress of Soviet Germans of the USSR, discussions of suggestions about the status of former members of the Labor Army; adoption of an essential program of providing for the needs of ethnic Germans in the formation of and preparation for the cadre (trained personnel and officials) of German nationality.

July 1990 -- In Moscow, the Politburo rejects the USSR Supreme Soviet’s recommendation for a Volga German republic; government proposals for an “extra-territorial association” is rejected by the overwhelming majority of “Rebirth” delegates in August 1990.

1 July 1990 -- (West) Germany’s “Ethnic German Immigrant-Admission Law”; proceedings for admission must be carried out from the country of origin.

9 July 1990 -- In (West) Germany, the adoption of the “Law of Entry and Residence of Foreigners in the Federal Republic.”

16 July 1990 -- The Committee on Nationality Policy and International Relations of the Soviet of Nationalities of the USSR Supreme Soviet and the State Commission on the Problems of Soviet Germans accept the decision “Concerning the Preparation for and Realization of the Congress of Soviet Germans”; Dr. Boris Viktor Rauschenbach becomes Chairman of the Organizing Committee on the Preparation for and Realization of the (First) Congress of Soviet Germans; the Congress is originally scheduled for 11-15 December 1990, but the date is later postponed until March 1991;
following another government delay in March 1991, the First Congress does not meet formally until October of that year.

17 July 1990 -- “The Situation Concerning the State Commission on the Problems of Soviet Germans” is affirmed by the Deputy Chairman of the Soviet Ministers of the USSR, L. Voronin.

13 Aug. 1990 -- The decree of USSR President Gorbachev “Concerning the Rights of All Victims of Political Repression from the 1920s-1950s” is signed.


14-19 Aug. 1990 -- The Third (Special) Conference of VOSN “Rebirth” in Moscow, which accepts the participation of representatives of 70 regional units; from the members of the society’s leadership emerge Hugo Wormsbecher and his supporters.

At the Third (Special) Conference, the rejection of the “Association Plan” (“Cultural Autonomy without Territory”).

Sept. 1990 -- In the Lower Tagil of the Sverdlovsk Region of Russia, the first memorial to Soviet Germans of the Stalinist genocide is made public (opened).

13 Sept. 1990 -- Established in 1957 as a central information source for the USSR’s ethnic Germans, Neues Leben (New Life) is registered for the first time as an independent newspaper; it no longer falls under the political and ideological supervision of Pravda and the CC of the CPSU.

14 Sept. 1990 -- The State Commission on the Problems of Soviet Germans at its meeting considers the motion of preparing the First Congress of Soviet Germans, and it considers measures on the widening of the publication of books and periodicals in the German language.

17 Sept. 1990 -- The Secretary of the CC of the CPSU, A. Girenko, conducts the conference on the problems of ethnic Germans.

3 Oct. 1990 -- Under Chancellor Kohl, the political unification of West and East Germany is formally completed.

27 Oct. 1990 -- The CC of the CPSU accepts the position concerning the preparation for and the realization of the selections of delegates to the First ( Constituent) Congress of Germans of the USSR.

30 Oct. 1990 -- In the next session of the State Commission, the work of the Saratov and Volgograd Regional Deputies on the creation of conditions for the fulfillment of the ethnic Germans’ national demands is discussed, and the pace of preparation toward the First Congress is considered.

Nov. 1990 -- In Moscow, the Confederation of Repressed Peoples is formed; several ethnic Germans serve as leaders on its presidium, including Wiedergeburt chairman Dr. Heinrich Groth.

9 Nov. 1990 -- “The Treaty on Friendly Relations, Partnership, and Cooperation between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the Federal Republic of Germany” is signed by USSR President Gorbachev and German Chancellor Kohl, a series of clauses of which are concerned with the situation of the ethnic Germans in the USSR.

14 Nov. 1990 -- The newspaper Neues Leben (New Life) publishes an open letter from the Germans of Chelyabinsk, Russia, to USSR President Gorbachev and German Federal Chancellor Kohl with requests to permit resettlement (migration) to Germany by all those who wish to do so.

24 Nov. 1990 -- The resolution “Concerning the Preparation for and Realization of the Congress of Soviet Germans” is adopted by the Soviet Ministers of the USSR.

21 Dec. 1990 -- In Saratov, Russia, the Zeitung der Wolgadeutschen (Newspaper of the Volga Germans) is started up; in July 1994, it is renamed the Wolgazeitung (Volga Newspaper).
27 Dec. 1990 -- The State Commission once again considers the problems of organizing the ethnic Germans in the USSR.


3 Jan. 1991 -- From the membership of the Organizing Committee for Preparing the First Congress of Soviet Germans, Dr. Heinrich Groth and his supporters walk out, impatient with the pace of events in Moscow.

2-3 Feb. 1991 -- The conference of leaders of the subdivision (regional) VOSN “Rebirth” in Novosibirsk, Siberia, Russia.

26 Feb. 1991 -- Chairman of the USSR Supreme Soviet, A. Luk’yanov, receives the leadership of the Organizing Committee for Preparing the First Congress of Soviet Germans.

7 Mar. 1991 -- The resolution “Concerning the Repeal of Legal Acts in connection with the Declaration of the USSR Supreme Soviet from 14 November 1989 ‘Concerning the Declaration of Illegal and Criminal Repressive Actions against the People, Exposing the Violent Repression, and Guaranteeing Their Rights’” is accepted by the USSR Supreme Soviet.

The postponement of dates for the carrying out of the First Congress of USSR (Soviet) Germans is officially declared.

11 Mar. 1991 -- The meeting in the Kremlin of the Commission on Nationality Policy and International Relations of the USSR Supreme Soviet, G. Tarazevich, Chairman of the State Commission on the Problems of Soviet Germans, Viktor Gusev, and Secretary of the CC of the CPSU, A. Girenko, with a representative number of delegates, who are attending the First Congress of the USSR Germans.

12-15 Mar. 1991 -- In Moscow, the arrival of delegates opens the First Congress, which is called by them as an emergency (defying the Soviet government’s delay); subsequently, it receives the status of the “first stage” of the First Congress of the USSR Germans (the “second stage” occurs in October 1991); this “first stage” is led by Dr. Heinrich Groth and about 500 delegates (half of all ethnic German delegates selected for the First Congress) who support him.

18 Mar. 1991 -- USSR President Gorbachev and Germany’s Minister of Foreign Affairs H.-D. Genscher discuss the problem of ethnic Germans.

The meeting of Germany’s Minister of Foreign Affairs H.-D. Genscher with representatives of the ethnic Germans in the USSR.

25 Mar. 1991 -- In the Russian-language press, an interview of the USSR President Gorbachev is reproduced in the German journal Der Spiegel, in which the conversation concerns a resolution to the problem of Soviet citizens of German nationality.

17 Apr. 1991 -- The Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR signs the Decree “Concerning the Rehabilitation of Victims of Political Repression in Ukraine.”

22 Apr. 1991 -- The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) accepts the resolution “Concerning Urgent Measures over the Settlement of the Problem of Soviet Germans in the Territory of the RSFSR”; the Commission of the Presidium of the RSFSR Supreme Soviet is created on account of the problem of ethnic Germans, the chairman of which is Alexander Bier.

26 Apr. 1991 -- The RSFSR decree “Concerning the Rehabilitation of Repressed Peoples” is accepted; the groundbreaking decree also publicly acknowledges that the USSR had waged “slander and genocide” (genotsid) in the 1940s against the “repressed peoples,” including the ethnic Germans.

7 May 1991 -- USSR President Gorbachev meets with representatives of the ethnic Germans, many of whom are moderates like Hugo Wormsbecher and Peter Falk; there is general agreement to proceed with a gradual restoration of autonomy across the USSR, based more or less on the notion of cultural autonomy or on an “extra-territorial” model (i.e., “association”).
10-12 May 1991  --  The Fourth Conference of VOSN (the All-Union Society of Soviet Germans or Vsesoyuznoe obshchestvo sovetskikh nemtsev) “Rebirth” convenes.

14 May 1991  --  The State Commission on the Problem of Soviet Germans debates during its session of a general meeting of the USSR President with members of the Organizing Committee for Preparing the First Congress of Soviet Germans.

In opposition to Dr. Heinrich Groth’s wing of the “Rebirth,” the Constituent Commission gathering of the Union (Association) of USSR Germans (Verband der UdSSR-Deutschen/Soyuz nemtsev SSSR) takes place; the charter of the Union of USSR Germans is worked out; Peter Falk and Hugo Wormsbecher are leading figures; in the early to mid-1990s, this moderate wing of the movement also goes by a number of similar names, including the Bund der Deutschen der UdSSR (Union of the Germans of the USSR), the Verein der UdSSR-Deutschen (Association of USSR Germans), the Vervaltung von Angelegenheiten der Deutschen in der GUS (Administration for the Affairs of the Germans in the CIS [Commonwealth of Independent States]), and the Zwischenstaatlicher (Internationaler) Verband der Rußlanddeutschen/Mezhdunarodny soyuz rossiyiskikh nemtsev or IVRD/MSRN (International Association of Russian Germans).

22 May 1991  --  The meeting of a member of the Presidium of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) of Germany, E. Barr, with representatives of the Organizing Committee for the Preparation of the First Congress of USSR Germans and the “Rebirth” Society.

28 May 1991  --  A talk between the Chairman of the State Commission of Nationalities (Goskomnats), L. Prokop’ev, and members of the Organizing Committee for the Preparation of the First Congress of USSR Germans.

Meeting of the leadership of the Organizing Committee with the FRG envoy in Moscow, K. Blech.


18 June 1991  --  The Executive Committee of the Altai Kray’s Council of Peoples’ Deputies accepts the decision “Concerning the Restoration of the German National Rayon in the Territory of the Altai Kray.”


28 June 1991  --  At the Constituent Conference, the International Association of German Culture (Internationaler Verband der deutschen Kultur or IVDK/Mezhdunarodny soyuz nemetskoy kul’tury or MSNK) is formed; Heinrich Martens is chairman.

29-30 June 1991  --  In Moscow, the First (Constituent) Conference of the Union of USSR Germans (Verband der UdSSR-Deutschen/Soyuz nemtsev SSSR) meets; Peoples’ Deputy of the USSR, Peter Falk, becomes the Union’s chairman; this organizational move signifies a formal split inside the autonomy movement between Dr. Heinrich Groth’s more aggressive faction and Falk’s and Hugo Wormsbecher’s more moderate supporters.

1 July 1991  --  The German National Rayon in the Altai Region (Halbstadt/Nekrasovo) of Russia is re-established.

2 July 1991  --  With FRG delegates, the leadership of the State Commission of Nationalities of the RSFSR discusses the problem of ethnic Germans.

10 July 1991  --  By winning the popular election, Boris Yeltsin becomes president of the Russian Federation.


2 Aug. 1991  --  The Cabinet of Ministers of the USSR accepts the resolution “Concerning the Committee on the Problem of Soviet Germans.”
In anticipation of the rescheduled First Congress of USSR Germans (Second Stage) for 18-20 October 1991, the State Commission on the Problems of Soviet Germans headed by Viktor Gusev is formally abolished on recommendation of the Organizing Committee; the Organizing Committee is also no longer financed, as it has completed its duties.

19-29 Aug. 1991 -- Attempted coup by conservative Soviet leaders, who arrest USSR President Gorbachev in the Crimea; with various supporters standing beside him (one of whom is ethnic German activist Alexander Bier), Russian President Yeltsin leads a peaceful, popular uprising in Moscow against the plotters; Gorbachev returns to Moscow and resigns as General Secretary of the Communist Party; in most Soviet republics, Communist Party activities are temporarily suspended, pending an investigation of its role in the attempted coup.


6 Sept. 1991 -- Appearance in Moscow of the Union of USSR Germans (Verband der UdSSR-Deutschen/Soyuz nemtsev SSSR), led by Peter Falk and Hugo Wormsbecher.

1 Oct. 1991 -- Chairman of the State Commission of Nationalities, L. Prokop’ev, meets with representatives of the ethnic Germans in the USSR.

13 Oct. 1991 -- Twenty-seven villages of the former Asovo Rayon of Omsk Oblast in Russia vote in a referendum for the formation of the German National Rayon.

15 Oct. 1991 -- In the State Committee of the RSFSR for Nationality Affairs of the Cabinet of RSFSR Ministers, an administration is created for the affairs of peoples who do not have national statehood; later, the affairs of ethnic Germans is raised to the status of a Ministry Department, then down to a Ministry Section, and quickly back again to a Department; as deputy chairman, Peter Falk is the first to direct it; because of special political support from Germany, the ethnic Germans become Russia’s one nationality group that holds its own Ministry Department.

16 Oct. 1991 -- The FRG Minister of Foreign Affairs, H.-D. Genscher, discusses the problem of ethnic Germans with Kazakhstan’s President Nursultan Nazarbaev.

18 Oct. 1991 -- RSFSR President Boris Yeltsin signs the decree “Concerning the Rehabilitation of Victims of Political Repression.”

18-20 Oct. 1991 -- In Moscow, the First Congress of USSR Germans (Second Stage); the carrying out of its original plans from 23-25 August (preparations had been delayed by the attempted Soviet coup).

At the First Congress (Second Stage), the formation of an International Council for the Rehabilitation of Germans of the Former USSR (Zwischenstaatlicher Rat zur Rehabilitierung der Deutschen der ehemaligen UdSSR) under Dr. Heinrich Groth; a later modified incarnation of this council comes under several similar names, including the Rat der Rußlanddeutschen (Sovet nemtsev Rossii), Rat der Deutschen der ehemaligen UdSSR, Zwischenstaatlicher Rat der Deutschen der Ex-UdSSR and Zwischenstaatlicher Rat der Rußlanddeutschen/Mezhgosudarstvenny sovet nemtsev byvshego SSSR (ZSRD/MGSN).

The First Festival of German Culture in the soon-to-be former USSR.

21 Nov. 1991 -- In the course of Russian President Yeltsin’s visit to Germany, a joint declaration is signed; Point 12 concerns the possibility of restoring the German republic along the Volga; Yeltsin’s declaration on the possibility of placing the restored republic on the military firing (shooting) range of Kaputsin Yar; this proposed site remains unpopular among ethnic Germans.

Dec. 1991 -- In two rayons of Samara Oblast in Russia, land is set aside for ethnic German settlers.

In Moscow, the All-Russian Fund for rehabilitation and assistance is registered for victims of Stalinism and the Labor Army.

The RSFSR Supreme Soviet imposes a moratorium on territorial changes through July 1995.
<table>
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<tr>
<td>12 Dec. 1991</td>
<td>The Russian Parliament ratifies President Yeltsin’s call to establish a new Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) open to all former members of the USSR.</td>
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<tr>
<td>21 Dec. 1991</td>
<td>The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) is created, including Russia and ten of the former Soviet republics; however, the CIS is not a country and is without a capital city or even a flag.</td>
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<tr>
<td>25 Dec. 1991</td>
<td>After seventy-four years, the formal demise of the USSR following President Gorbachev’s resignation.</td>
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<td>1992</td>
<td>In Kiev, Ukraine, the German newspaper <em>Deutscher Kanal (German Channel)</em> is started up.</td>
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<td>After the USSR breaks up, the VOSN becomes known as the International Union (Association) of Germans of the Former USSR “Rebirth” (Zwischenstaatlicher Vereinigung der Deutschen der ehemaligen UdSSR “Wiedergeburt” / Mezhgosudarstvennoe ob’edinienie nemtsev byvshego SSSR «Возрождение» or ZSVD/MON); in 1992, the “Rebirth’s” membership climbs to about 100,000.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Jan. 1992</td>
<td>The appearance of Russian President Yeltsin in Saratov Oblast, where he actually rejects the restoration of the Volga German republic.</td>
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<tr>
<td>23 Jan. 1992</td>
<td>By the edict of Ukrainian President Kravchuk, the Ukrainian-German Fund is created; Ukraine invites German resettlers from Siberia, Central Asia, and Kazakhstan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Feb. 1992</td>
<td>The RSFSR Supreme Soviet decides on the founding of the German National Rayon of Asovo in the Omsk area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Feb. 1992</td>
<td>The edict of the President of the Russian Federation “Concerning the Urgent Measure for the Rehabilitation of Russian Germans” is signed; the formation of a German National Rayon and Okrug (District) in the Saratov and Volgograd areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-22 Mar. 1992</td>
<td>In Moscow, the Second Congress of Germans of the Former USSR.</td>
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<tr>
<td>21 Mar. 1992</td>
<td>By the resolution of the government of the Russian Federation, the Russian part of the Intergovernmental (Joint Governmental) Russian-German Commission on the preparation of the joint program of legislative measures directed at ensuring a gradual restoration of statehood for ethnic Germans is established.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Apr. 1992</td>
<td>By order of the government of the Russian Federation, a representative commission on the problem of ethnic Germans is created, led by the Chairman of the State Commission of Nationalities, V. Tishkov.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Apr. 1992</td>
<td>The resolution of the government of the Russian Federation “Concerning the Organizing Committee for the Consideration of Questions and Preparation Proposals Connected with the Formation of the German National District in the Volgograd Oblast, the German National Rayon in the Saratov Oblast, and the Restoration of Statehood for Russian Germans” is accepted, and its managerial staff (personnel) is appointed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 May 1992</td>
<td>The edict of the President of the Russian Federation “Concerning the Creation in the Volga Region of a Settlement for Russian Germans on an Agricultural Basis and Guarantees for Their Socio-Economic Development.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29-31 May 1992</td>
<td>The Congress of the Union of Germans of the Former USSR (<em>Verband der Deutschen der Ehemaligen UdSSR/Soyuz nemtsev byvshego SSSR</em>) under Peter Falk and Hugo Wormsbecher</td>
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</table>
convenes; delegates change the association’s name to the Zwischenstaatlicher (Internationaler) Verein (Verband) der Rußlanddeutschen/Mezhdunarodny soyuz rossiyskikh nemtsev (International Association of Russian Germans or IVRD/MSRN); also, Wormsbecher succeeds Falk as its chairman.

June 1992 -- The Bogdashkin Village Council of Ulyanovsk Oblast in Russia is given the status of a German national council.

18 June 1992 -- A session of the Engels Rayon Council of Saratov Oblast in Russia rejects the organization of German national-territorial formation.


10 July 1992 -- A protocol is signed between Russia and Germany about the eventual restoration of the republic on the Volga; this is to be accomplished in phases (over 4-5 years); a public opinion poll shows that a Russian majority opposes ethnic German autonomy in the region (in rural areas as high as eighty percent).

The passage of a Russian Federation law on education; for the citizens of Russia, basic training in the native language is formally conceded.


16 Sept. 1992 -- The meeting of Bundestag delegates of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) with members of the Russian Federation’s Supreme Soviet commission on the repressed and deported peoples.

20 Sept. 1992 -- The meeting of Kazakhstan’s President Nursultan Nazerbaev with leaders of the ethnic German national movement.


7 Oct. 1992 -- The meeting of the FRG Minister of Foreign Affairs, Klaus Kinkel, with community leaders of the ethnic Germans in Russia.


24 Oct. 1992 -- President Yeltsin signs the order “Concerning the Immediate Steps for the Development of the Relationship between the Russian Federation and the Federal Republic of Germany,” in which among other things is the matter of the creation of an ethnic German university.

29-30 Oct. 1992 -- In Almaty, the First Congress of Germans in Kazakhstan is held.

Nov. 1992 -- In Almaty, Kazakhstan, the German embassy is opened.

7-8 Nov. 1992 -- In Omsk, the Second Conference of the “Rebirth” Society of Germans of the Russian Federation takes place.

Dec. 1992 -- Jakob Maurer is selected as the “Rebirth’s” regional chairman in the Russian Federation and serves in this capacity for the next few years; this move stems in part from the formal decision to organize the “Rebirth” regionally in the aftermath of the USSR’s fissure into independent states; Dr. Heinrich Groth formally remains the “Rebirth’s” international chairman until late February 1993, when he leads an independent association affiliated with the “Rebirth” (the ZSRD/MGSN).

In Russia, the Orenburger Allgemeine Zeitung (Orenburg General Newspaper) is established; it
prints its first issue at the beginning of 1993.

2 Dec. 1992  --  By order of the government of the Russian Federation (consisting of the Academy of the Peoples’ Economy), the Russian-German higher school administration is formed.

15 Dec. 1992  --  President Yeltsin signs the edict “Concerning the Creation of the Fund ‘Russian Germans.’”

15-16 Dec. 1992  --  A visit by German Chancellor Kohl to Moscow and a talk with Russian President Yeltsin; Kohl also meets with representatives of Russia’s Germans.

Late 1992- Early 1993  --  Based in Cincinnati, Ohio, the Society for German American Studies (SGAS) submits a report at Bill Clinton’s Presidential Transition Roundtable Meeting in Little Rock, Arkansas; it calls for establishing basic human rights for the ethnic German minority group in Russia, as well as for ethnic German minority groups in Poland and Eastern Europe.

1993  --  At its peak, “Rebirth” membership reaches about 170,000 (other estimates put it as high as 200,000-250,000).

The Sidney Heitman Germans from Russia Collection at Colorado State University in Fort Collins, Colorado, is established; it is devoted to late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Volga German immigrants involved in the beet farming industry of Colorado and western Nebraska.

1 Jan. 1993  --  Feeling the pressure of mass immigration, Germany issues a decree regulating legal compensation for war-induced losses (Kriegsfolgenbereinigungsgesetz) and guarantees for legal entry of all those ethnic Germans who wish to go to united Germany; along with some cutbacks in social services, the establishment for the first time of an annual quota in Germany’s admission of ethnic settlers from abroad (Aussiedler), which is set at 225,000 (from both the former USSR and Eastern Europe, with the vast majority of Aussiedler coming from the CIS); more restrictions soon follow, including language competency tests for immigration applicants (i.e., the heads of families, and later for their family members); the German government’s official distinction between the Spätaussiedler (those Germans abroad who had experienced World War II and forced resettlements and who are only now returning to Germany) and their descendants (Abkömmlinge) is more clearly formulated; in Germany, legal distinctions between the “more German” pre-1990 Aussiedler (typically older individuals) and the “more Russified” or “non-German” post-1990 émigrés (usually younger and more ethnically mixed families) are taking shape.

4-6 Feb. 1993  --  In Saratov, the First Congress of Volga Germans; the creation of the National Organization of Volga Germans (Landsmannschaft der Wolgadeutschen), led by Yuri Haar for the next few years.

26-28 Feb. 1993  --  As the last of the major international congresses of all ethnic Germans, the Third Congress of Germans of the Former USSR in Moscow establishes an intergovernmental council of ethnic Germans and the election of a preliminary (provisional) parliament (Vorparlament) of ethnic Germans as part of a proposed future German republic.

1 Mar. 1993  --  Out of the Third Congress of Germans of the Former USSR, the International Council of Germans of the Former USSR “Rebirth” (Zwischenstaatlicher Rat der Deutschen der ehemaligen UdSSR “Wiedergeburt”) is formalized; no longer the “Rebirth’s” all-union (international) chairman, Dr. Heinrich Groth heads this council; it grows out of his earlier council by a similar name and is also known as the Rat der Rußlanddeutschen (Sovet nemtsev Rossii) and the Zwischenstaatlicher Rat der Rußlanddeutschen/Mezhgosudarstvenny sovet nemtsev byvshego SSSR (ZSRD/MGSN); some of its delegates also come from the moderate wing of the autonomy movement led by Peter Falk and Hugo Wormsbecher.

5-6 Apr. 1993  --  In Bonn, the Third Session of the Intergovernmental (Joint Governmental) Russian-German Commission for the Affairs of Russian Germans; includes the decision over the opening of Germany’s embassies (consulates) in Novosibirsk, Kaliningrad and Volgograd.

25 May 1993  --  In Moscow, the session of Dr. Heinrich Groth’s Council of Germans of Russia (Rat der Rußlanddeutschen/Sovet nemtsev Rossii or ZSRD/MGSN), in which the decision over the participation of the representatives of ethnic Germans in the work on Russia’s Constitutional Convention is accepted.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27 May 1993</td>
<td>In Moscow, the session of the Executive Committee of the International Council of Germans of the Former USSR (Zwischenstaatlicher Rat der Deutschen der ehemaligen UdSSR/Mezhgosudarstvenny sovet nemtsev byvshego SSSR or ZSRD/MGSN) under Dr. Heinrich Groth.</td>
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<tr>
<td>28-30 May 1993</td>
<td>In Moscow, the session of the International Council of Russian Germans (Zwischenstaatlicher Rat der Rußlanddeutschen/Mezhgosudarstvenny sovet nemtsev byvshego SSSR or ZSRD/MGSN) under Dr. Heinrich Groth.</td>
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<td>10 June 1993</td>
<td>Joint declaration concerning basic relations between Germany and Ukraine; Article 15 is devoted to the ethnic Germans in Ukraine.</td>
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<tr>
<td>22 Sept. 1993</td>
<td>The chairman of the Council of Ministers of Russia, Viktor Chernomyrdin, signs the governmental order “Concerning Customs Privileges” for freight directed by the government of the FRG to the ethnic Germans to be free of charge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 Nov. 1993</td>
<td>In St. Petersburg (former Leningrad), the Fourth Session of the Intergovernmental (Joint Governmental) Russian-German Commission for the Affairs of Russian Germans; in the Region of Leningrad, a new settlement of ethnic Germans is supposed to be created.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 Dec. 1993</td>
<td>A new Russian Constitution under President Boris Yeltsin is adopted, delegating to the president considerable powers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>19-20 Dec. 1993</td>
<td>In Moscow, the session of the Zwischenstaatlicher Rat der Rußlanddeutschen/Mezhgosudarstvenny sovet nemtsev byvshego SSSR (ZSRD/MGSN); using this occasion to protest against the perceived slow pace of full rehabilitation, Dr. Heinrich Groth steps down from his various leadership posts in the <em>Wiedergeburt</em>, the ZSRD/MGSN, and the Confederation of Repressed Peoples; as a colleague of Russia’s “Rebirth” chairman Jakob Maurer, Viktor Diesendorf replaces Groth as the head of the ZSRD/MGSN.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1994-2005</td>
<td>Leonid Kuchma serves as Ukraine’s second president.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9-11 Mar. 1994</td>
<td>In Bonn, the Fifth Session of the Intergovernmental (Joint Governmental) Russian-German Commission for the Affairs of Russian Germans; it is decided among other things to set aside in West Siberia and along the Volga living space for ethnic German settlers from Central Asia and Kazakhstan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 May 1994</td>
<td>The governmental order of the Russian Federation “Concerning the Establishment of a Fund for the National and Cultural Revival of the Peoples of Russia.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 June 1994</td>
<td>The Second Session of the German-Kazakh Government Commission on Questions of Germans in the Republic of Kazakhstan; the promotion of German citizens of Kazakhstan in the areas of education and culture receives particular attention.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4-11 Sept. 1994</td>
<td>The Festival of German Culture in the Volga Region (Saratov, Volgograd, Samara, Ulyanovsk).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Dec. 1994</td>
<td>Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is signed in Budapest, Hungary; this major post-Cold War agreement between the Russian Federation, Ukraine, the United States, and the United Kingdom (Britain), later including France and China, requires independent Ukraine to relinquish its Soviet-era nuclear arsenal to Russia; Ukraine in turn receives formal international recognition of its sovereignty and territorial boundaries; Russia’s forced annexation of Crimea in March 2014 breaks that agreement.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 15-16 May 1995 | In Novosibirsk, Russia, the Sixth Session of the Intergovernmental (Joint Governmental) Russian-German Commission for the Affairs of Russian Germans; among other things it is decided by the wish of the Russian side that the project Natsia in the Region of Leningrad is not to proceed any
further; instead of this, another resettlement project in Strenla should be promoted; it is decided that
by decree a “German House” in Moscow be placed as a central organization of Russia’s Germans.

29 May 1995 --  President Yeltsin meets with leading representatives of Russia’s Germans.

22-23 June 1995 -- In Bishkek, the Third Meeting of the German-Kyrgyz Government Commission on Questions of Germans in Kyrgyzstan; in 1995 an agreement between Germany and Kyrgyzstan in favor of Kyrgyzstan’s German minority is still supposed to be settled.

24-25 June 1995 -- In Almaty, the Second Congress of the Germans of Kazakhstan takes place.

26 June 1995 -- The Third Session of the German-Kazakh Government Commission on Questions of Germans in the Republic of Kazakhstan; the common goal is the settlement in 1995 of a bilateral agreement in favor of Kazakhstan’s German minority.

4-6 July 1995 -- The founding of a Writers’ Union of Russian Germans (Schriftstellerverband der Rußlanddeutschen); one of its proponents is Dr. Eugen N. Miller of Ulyanovsk, Russia, who also serves as its chairman.

16 Sept. 1995 -- Russian President Yeltsin signs the decree “Concerning Measures for the Realization of the Territorial Rehabilitation of Repressed Peoples.”

Dec. 1995 -- After a two-year hiatus from the former USSR’s political scene, Dr. Heinrich Groth (who has lived in Berdyansk, Ukraine) becomes chairman of the (regional-level) “Rebirth” in Ukraine.

1996 -- For the ethnic Germans, Bruno Reiter replaces Peter Falk in the Ministry of Nationality Affairs of the Russian Federation; Falk had served in this capacity since the early 1990s; in the next year or so, Vladimir Bauer replaces Reiter.

Russian President Yeltsin wins re-election and begins his second term.

Jan. 1996 -- The Russian resolution concerning the establishment of the first regional cultural autonomy of ethnic Germans in the Volga Region.

1 Mar. 1996 -- The law concerning the determination of a temporary living space for Spätaussiedler is amended (i.e., changes are made to Germany’s “Law on the Assignment of a Place of Residence” or Wohnortzuweisungsgesetz); on 22 December 1997, the law is changed again, effective until 15 July 2000.


31 May 1996 -- An agreement is signed between Germany and Kazakhstan concerning cooperation on the support of citizens of German nationality in Kazakhstan.

7 June 1996 -- The decree of Russian President Yeltsin “Concerning Measures for Guaranteeing the Rehabilitation of the Russian Germans.”

15 June 1996 -- Russian President Yeltsin ratifies the “Conception of the State Nationalities Policy of the Russian Federation.”


3 Sept. 1996 -- An agreement between Germany and Ukraine concerning cooperation in the affairs of persons of German heritage living in Ukraine.

8-9 Nov. 1996 -- The First Congress (Peoples’ Congress) of the Germans of the Crimea; the Peoples’ Parliament as an executive body is elected, and the concept for the self-organization of the Crimean Germans from 1996 to 2015 is passed.

15 Nov. 1996 -- In Bonn, the Seventh Session of the Intergovernmental (Joint Governmental) Russian-German
Commission for the Affairs of Russian Germans; for 1997, Russia plans 103 billion rubles, and Germany 89.5 million DM, for the interests of ethnic Germans.

24 Nov. 1996 -- The First Congress of Ukrainian Germans elects a Peoples’ Council (Volksrat der Deutschen der Ukraine), with Dr. Heinrich Groth as its chairman.

The General Council of the International Association “Rebirth” is created (Generalrat der Zwischenstaatlicher Vereinigung “Wiedergeburt”).


1 Mar. 1997 -- The session of the Executive Council of the “Rebirth” of Ukraine.

14-15 Mar. 1997 -- In Bishkek, the Fourth Congress of the German of Kyrgyzstan; in Kyrgyzstan, the total of around 100,000 ethnic Germans has declined to about 20,000 in recent years (an eighty percent decrease).

17 Mar. 1997 -- In Kurgan, a youth circle of Russian Germans is formed with a place in Moscow.

Apr. 1997 -- The first issue of the Moskauer Deutsche Zeitung (Moscow German Newspaper) appears; the newspaper’s predecessor ran from 1870 to 1914.

4-5 Apr. 1997 -- In Saratov, the Third Congress of Volga Germans is held; the delegates directs an open letter to Russian President Yeltsin and German Chancellor Kohl with the request for additional assistance in financing the return-settlement program for the Germans on the Volga.


May 1997 -- Russia and Ukraine sign the Peace and Friendship Treaty, in which Moscow rules out any territorial claims to Ukraine; in a separate agreement, both countries establishes the conditions of Russia’s long-term lease of territory, facilities, and resources in the port of Sevastopol and the Crimea; Sevastopol continues to serve as the naval base of the post-Soviet Black Sea Fleet of Russia.

2 May 1997 -- German Chancellor Kohl meets in Almaty with the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Nazarbaev; both politicians request that Kazakhstan’s Germans remain in the country and contribute through personal engagement to the building of relations between both countries.


14 July 1997 -- The Organizational Committee for the Support of the Social Unity of Russian Germans and the Realization of Their Particular Rights in the “Federal Law on National-Cultural Autonomy” is established; Vladimir Bauer, the Representative Nationality Minister, becomes chairman.

30 July 1997 -- The German Foreign Office makes a verbal statement to the Ukranian government concerning measures for the integration of ethnic Germans who resettled in Ukraine between 1992 and 1995 (Ukraine’s German population is still rather small).

20 Aug. 1997 -- Through Russian President Yeltsin, the “Federal Program” of the Russian government from 8 July of that year receives the status of a “presidential (executive) program.”

29 Nov. 1997 -- In Fulda, Germany, the founding of the émigré association “Homeland” (Heimat); with its own candidates, the association commits itself to participating in the Bundestag election campaign.
19-20 Dec. 1997 -- In Moscow at a congress of Russian Germans, the establishment of the “National-Cultural Autonomy of Germans in Russia” (Nationale Kulturalautonomie der Deutschen in Rußland); Vladimir Bauer, the Representative Nationalities Minister of Russia, is elected chairman; the organization is also known as the Föderale nationale kulturelle Autonomie “Rußlanddeutsche” or FNKA (Federal National-Cultural Autonomy “Russian Germans”); as a new autonomy movement for Russia’s Germans, the FNKA soon competes with other autonomy organizations and ethnic special interests, resulting in some political controversy among activists within the larger ethnic community; this new association is most concerned with issues of German education, language and culture, not with receiving humanitarian assistance from Germany.

26 Jan. 1998 -- In Falkenberg (Elster), Germany, the Federative Union of German Late Settlers from Abroad (Bundesverband deutscher Spätaussiedler or BUDESA) is founded; the major request of the Union is the integration of Spätaussiedler into German society.

Late Jan. 1998 -- The Zwischenstaatlicher Rat der Rußlanddeutschen/Mezhgosudarstvenny sovet nemtsev byvshego SSSR (ZSRD/MGSN) in Moscow demands that ethnic Germans from Russia be represented in Germany’s Bundestag.

12 May 1998 -- The Department for Russian Germans in the Ministry for Regional and National Policy of Russia is moved down a level to a Ministry Section; Arthur Weber becomes the Section Chief; this change is temporary, however.

22 Sept. 1998 -- Amid administrative reshuffling, the Ministry for Regional and National Policy of Russia is split into two ministries; Ramazan G. Abdulatipov becomes the Minister for Nationalities Questions; the Department for the Affairs of Russian Germans is reestablished, and Vladimir Bauer is appointed as its chief.

1998-2005 -- Gerhard Schröder of the SPD is chancellor of Germany.

Late 1998 -- According to reliable estimates, about 500,000 ethnic Germans remain in the Russian Federation (some of whom had recently migrated from Central Asia); about three-quarters of the more than

Jochen Welt of the SPD is named the new German Government Representative of Spätaussiedler Affairs, replacing the long-serving Horst Waffenschmidt of the CDU/CSU.

Late 1998 -- In Kazakhstan, where at the start of the 1990s approximately one million ethnic Germans lived, only about 250,000 remain (around a seventy-five percent decrease); in Uzbekistan during the same period, the ethnic German population declined from about 101,000 to around 10,000 (roughly a ninety percent decrease); most of these ethnic Germans have gone to Germany, and a smaller share to the Russian Federation (particularly West Siberia).

1999 -- In Nuremberg, Germany, the Historischer Forschungsverein der Deutschen aus Russland or HFDR (Historical Research Association of Germans from Russia) is established.

Late 1999 -- During a fifty-year span beginning in 1950, a total of 1,885,333 Spätaussiedler emigrated from the regions of the former USSR to Germany; about ninety-five percent of this total (or 1,790,226) left for Germany only in the period after 1986 (the era of significant emigration policy relaxation in the former USSR).

31 Dec. 1999 -- Only a few months before Russia’s scheduled presidential election, an ailing and scandal-ridden President Yeltsin steps down from power; his then popular 47-year-old prime minister and former KGB intelligence officer Vladimir Putin assumes Russia’s presidency.

2000 -- The fiftieth anniversary of the Landsmannschaft der Deutschen aus Rußland in Stuttgart, Germany.

According to reliable estimates, about 500,000 ethnic Germans remain in the Russian Federation (some of whom had recently migrated from Central Asia); about three-quarters of the more than
two million Germans listed in the 1989 Soviet census have since left the regions of the former USSR for Germany; of those staying in Russia, approximately fifteen percent of them want to emigrate to Germany at this time, and another thirty percent wish to do so in the near future.

2000-2008 -- After completing the brief remainder of Yeltsin’s term in office, Vladimir Putin is elected as Russian President for two successive terms.

18 Mar. 2000 -- In Moscow, the so-called “rebirth” of the old Wiedergeburt Society; a conference of the Moscow-based “Coordination Council” takes place under the leadership of the Fund of Russian Germans; the Russian Federation’s current “Rebirth” chairman Ivan (Johann) Becker wishes to create a rejuvenated social-political movement for Russian Germans, to consolidate activities, and to solve the group’s still pressing political and cultural challenges; fast becoming a competitor with Vladimir Bauer’s FNKA—“Russian Germans,” this “new” organization is now called “Rebirth-Unity-Harmony” (Wiedergeburt-Einigung-Eintracht/Vozrozhdenie-Edinenie-Soglasie).

12-13 Apr. 2001 -- In Moscow, an expanded session of the FNKA’s presidium takes place; the Russian Germans must confront many problems, especially concerns over regional differences, varying political priorities, and the proper oversight and use of financial resources designated for “rehabilitation”; some express hope that “national-cultural” steps toward statehood can still be achieved; this “international” gathering of different ethnic representatives and leaders, including Dr. Heinrich Groth (the chairman of the Ukrainian “Rebirth”) signifies renewed efforts to work together, if possible; in yet another attempt to coordinate remaining ethnic Germans across the CIS, the FNKA produces more documents and establishes more councils and committees, but concrete results for “rehabilitation” and autonomy remain elusive.

For all these recent political coordination efforts, the FNKA is still not cooperating fully with other ethnic German organizations and the German government; the FNKA, concerned that the German government is “ignoring” it, also continues to seek recognition from Berlin as the one legitimate organization for all ethnic Germans in the former Soviet Union; most of all, the bitter rivalry between the FNKA and the “Rebirth-Unity-Harmony” continues to frustrate more constructive “rehabilitation” efforts on behalf of the remnant of ethnic Germans still living in the region; the Moskauer Deutsche Zeitung (Moscow German Newspaper) under chief-editor Heinrich Martens (who also directs the International Association of German Culture [Internationaler Verband der deutschen Kultur or IVDK/Mezhdunarodny sooyz nemetskoy kul’tury or MSNK]), also takes sides in this emerging intra-ethnic rivalry, supporting Ivan Becker’s Wiedergeburt.

27-28 Aug. 2001 -- The international congress of all Russian Germans convenes in Moscow, led by Vladimir Bauer’s FNKA—“Russian Germans”; however, Ivan Becker’s “Rebirth-Unity-Harmony” refuses to attend; the congress calls for “full rehabilitation,” but Russian officials, seeing no need to provide for a “separate rehabilitation” of Germans since “all repressed peoples” are already “rehabilitated,” continue to endorse the notion of “national-cultural” autonomy rather than territorial autonomy; oddly enough, Russian nationalist and Russian Duma Deputy Speaker Vladimir Zhirinovsky tells the congress that Moscow’s failure to restore German territorial autonomy inside Russia is a “grave mistake.”

At the international congress of all Russian Germans in Moscow, the FNKA under Vladimir Bauer recalls the sixtieth anniversary of the Stalinist mass deportations of Volga Germans; during this solemn ceremony, Bauer and his associates at the congress announce their decision to decorate Russian President Putin with its highest award, the Catherine the Great Medal, a gesture of goodwill and appreciation toward Russia; interestingly, Putin, who speaks some German, had served as a KGB agent years earlier in Dresden in the former Communist East Germany.

2003 -- In more recent years, with annual Spätaussiedler immigration levels hovering around 100,000, the German government decides at the start of the new millennium to reduce by half this quota to about 50,000 per year; this new policy is to take effect in 2003.

With considerable publicity, Ukraine and its Diaspora community abroad commemorate the seventieth anniversary of the Holodomor (the Murder-Famine under Stalin).

Nov. 2004-Jan. 2005 -- Ukraine’s bloodless, pro-democracy “Orange Revolution”; supporters wear orange ribbons to symbolize non-violent protests; a brief period of Ukrainian unity follows.
2005-Present -- Angela Merkel of the CDU/CSU is chancellor of Germany.

2005-2010 -- Viktor Yushchenko serves as Ukraine’s “pro-Western” president.

2006 -- Starting this year, further reductions take effect on Spätaussiedler immigration levels into Germany, with only a few thousand per year now permitted entry.

2007 -- Russian President Putin calls upon “homesick” émigrés in the West to return to the Motherland; because of its potential demographic implosion, Russia continues to entice its former citizens to come home; thanks to oil and natural gas revenues, Putin and his supporters are convinced that distributing cash and social benefits over the next several years will lure at least some of these former citizens back to Russia; in 2007, Moscow implements a program worth more than 2.8 billion rubles ($109 million) to improve housing, health care, and education and perhaps in this way help to convince ethnic Germans to immigrate eastward; only a handful heed the call.

Germany and Kazakhstan for the past decade have tried to build diplomatic bridges and mutual economic incentives by keeping productive citizens of German ancestry in Central Asia; both governments hope that the ethnic Germans in Kazakhstan might one day establish a geopolitical “bridge” to permit united Germany and the Soviet successor states various opportunities to advance a mutually beneficial relationship; for instance, in recent years Kazakhstan’s President Nursultan Nazarbayev has issued state citizenship to about 2,000-3,000 German returnees.

12 June 2007 -- The International Memorial to the Victims of Communism is unveiled in Washington, DC, dedicated to the estimated 90-100 million people who have died under such regimes worldwide since the early twentieth century; approximately one million ethnic Germans perished in late tsarist Russia and the early Soviet Union between roughly 1915 and 1950.

2008-2012 -- Putin’s political ally Dmitry Medvedev serves as Russian president for one term, while Putin assumes the office of Russian prime minister.

Summer 2008 -- The Center for Volga German Studies (CVGS) is created at Concordia University in Portland, Oregon.

Aug. 2008 -- The Russo-Georgian War, sometimes now called the Five-Day War or August War; under President Medvedev and Prime Minister Putin, Russia intervenes militarily and occupies South Ossetia in Georgia on the grounds of protecting ethnic Russians there; the Russians continue to hold the area today.

Dec. 2008 -- The International Center for German-Russian Studies is established through the signing of a significant strategic partnership between Colorado State University in Fort Collins, Colorado, and Saratov State University in Saratov Province of Russia; it has offices on both university campuses; its expressed purpose is to advance the study of German-Russian history and culture worldwide.

Spring-Summer 2010 -- Kyrgyzstan’s revolution, ousting President Kurmanbek Bakiyev; violence and the physical displacement of ethnic Uzbeks from the country also take place.

2010-Feb. 2014 -- Viktor Yanukovych serves as Ukraine’s “pro-Russian” president, but is later forced from office during a violent pro-democracy and pro-Western popular uprising; he is exiled across the border in Russia.

1 Jan. 2011 -- In January 1993, the German government established a closing date (moratorium) for future ethnic German immigration; ethnic German descendants (Abkömmlinge) born after 31 December 1992 will no longer enjoy the right to make a personal request for immigration to Germany; this policy now takes effect.

2012-Present -- Putin is elected again to serve as Russian president.

2013 -- The two-hundred-fiftieth anniversary of Tsarina Catherine II the Great’s manifesto inviting foreigners to immigrate to Russia.
Nov. 2013- -- Ukraine’s violent and bloody revolution in Kiev’s city square (Maidan), removing “pro-Russian” President Yanukovych; over 100 killed and 1,100 injured in the protests; the event soon precipitates Russia’s intervention into the Crimea in March 2014, highlighting Ukraine’s split along ethnic and regional lines; greater pro-Russian sentiments are found especially in the eastern part of the country as opposed to stronger pro-European Union (EU) attitudes in the western part.

Feb. 2014

2014 -- The year 2014 marked several landmark anniversaries recognized among Germans from Russia worldwide:

The two-hundred-fiftieth anniversary of the initial arrival of Germans into Russia along the Volga under invitation of Tsarina Catherine II the Great (1764);

The two-hundred-twenty-fifth anniversary of the first Mennonite and other German colonists into Ukraine and the Crimea under Tsarina Catherine II the Great (1789);

The two-hundred-tenth anniversary of Tsar Alexander I’s manifesto that made possible the migrations of Germans and others into South or New Russia, including Bessarabia and Ukraine along the Black Sea (1804).

The two hundredth anniversary of the first German settlements in Russia’s newly acquired territory of Bessarabia under Tsar Alexander I (1814).

The one hundredth anniversary of the First World War’s tragic outbreak, which held enormous implications for the fate of the German from Russia Diaspora and many others (1914).

The seventy-fifth anniversary of the Second World War’s terrible outbreak, which radically transformed the course of history for the German from Russia Diaspora and numerous others (1939).

The seventieth anniversary of Germany’s mass evacuation (called the “Long Trek”) of 350,000 ethnic Germans from Soviet Ukraine to Nazi-occupied Poland (1944).

The fiftieth anniversary of the official Soviet “rehabilitation” of ethnic Germans following World War II (1964).

The twenty-fifth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, launching the end of the Cold War (1989).

A total of about 2.5 million ethnic Germans have emigrated from Russia to Germany and the West since the end of the Cold War, as scholar Dr. Timothy Kloberdanz has observed, this fairly recent exodus represents the largest mass population movement in the long history of the German from Russia Diaspora, easily surpassing the initial German population movements eastward in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the German emigration from Russia to the Americas in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and even the forced mass population removals of ethnic Germans in the USSR under the Hitler and Stalin regimes during the 1940s.

Kazakhstan, with a total population of about 18 million, claims only about 180,000 ethnic Germans; however, in more recent years, the ethnic German population there has stabilized; according to 2010 data, the group has even experienced slight growth, thanks in part to natural birth rates, Kazakhstan’s relative political stability, and Germany’s economic and cultural support.

In Ukraine, slightly over 33,000 Germans are found out of a total population of more than 44 million.

In the Russian Federation, with a total population of around 140 million, only about 400,000 ethnic Germans remain, some having fled the Central Asian states in recent years.

Other former Soviet republics in Central Asia have also witnessed a severe depletion in the number of their citizens of German ethnicity, many of whom had once ranked among their most celebrated workers.

According to the German Embassy in Argentina, an estimated 1-2 million descendants of Volga Germans and other Germans from Russian today reside in that country out of a total population of
approximately 41 million; this number is comparable to the approximately one million Volga
German and other German from Russia descendants today in Canada out of a total population of
about 35 million; other sources claim that Brazil today is home to about 1.2 million German from
Russia descendants out of a total population of more than 200 million; according to one source,
about 45,000 descendants of Germans from Russia are now living in Paraguay out of a total
population of almost 7 million; the contemporary German from Russia population figure in the
United States roughly compares with those of Argentina and Canada (i.e., about one million out of
a total U.S. population of nearly 320 million).

7-23 Feb. 2014 --
The 2014 Winter Olympics are held in Sochi, showcasing to the world President Putin’s new,
confident Russia; two women known to claim German from Russia heritage compete at the
Olympic Games in Sochi.

On 9 February, Olga Graf of Omsk, Siberia, Russia, who speaks Russian, German and English,
wins the bronze medal in the women’s 3,000-meter speed skating competition; she is also the first
Russian athlete to win a medal at the 2014 Games; Putin praises her shortly afterward, stating:
“You brought an unforgettable moment of triumph and utter joy to millions of fans, taking the first
medal for our team.”

With family roots in Saskatchewan, Canada, ice hockey player Hayley Wickenheiser has
participated in five Winter Olympics, winning a Canadian women’s record of four gold medals and
one silver medal; she also has represented Canada in the sport of softball at one Summer Olympics;
at Sochi, she leads Canada’s national women’s hockey team to a thrilling overtime victory over the
United States.

Feb.-June 2014 --
Parliament Chairman Oleksandr Turchynov serves as head of the Ukrainian interim government
during its crisis with Russia in the Crimea.

21 Mar. 2014 --
Under President Putin, the Russian Federation formally annexes the Crimea from Ukraine shortly
after holding a favorable referendum there; a large majority of ethnic Russians lives in the Crimea;
this move provokes highly popular in Russia, even supported by Putin critic and former Soviet leader
Mikhail Gorbachev; this action in the Crimea represents a clear violation of the December 1994
Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons signed in Budapest, Hungary, as well as the

17 Apr. 2014 --
On Russian TV, Russian President Putin resurrects the late eighteenth-century imperial notion of
“Novorossiya” (New Russia) when referring to a large portion of modern Ukraine.

21 Apr. 2014 --
Russian President Putin signs a rehabilitation decree for the Crimean Tatars and other “repressed”
national minorities in the Crimea, including ethnic Armenians, Greeks, and Germans; it is intended
to reassure these peoples in wake of Russia’s recent takeover of the Crimea from Ukraine.

June 2014- Present
Petro Poroshenko serves as beleaguered Ukraine’s president; Poroshenko seeks Western military
aid and diplomatic support in the continuing crisis with Russia.

Mid-Late 2014 --
Growing international tensions in Eastern Europe and the Black Sea Region as result of the Russo-
Ukrainian crisis; the United States and Western Europe start to impose economic sanctions on
Putin’s Russia in response to the crisis; in the United States and elsewhere, public speculation
arises about “Cold War II” or a “New Cold War” breaking out between Russia and the West.

Russia responds to the West with retaliations and threats: Russia continues to build ties with
former Soviet republics, especially in Central Asia, to serve as a new Eastern Bloc to the West;
Russia maintains a strong military presence along the Ukrainian border and moves forward with the
arming of pro-Russian rebels across the border; some Russian covert armed forces start entering the
eastern part of Ukraine; Russian rebels shoot down a Malaysian airliner and other aircraft over
Ukraine; the United States publicly confirms that Russia is breaking the 1987 Missile Test Ban
Treaty; Russia begins to boycott certain food imports from the West; Moscow further tests Western
resolve with an increase of incursions by Russian strategic nuclear bombers into northern air
defense zones of the United States, Canada, Scandinavia, the North Sea, and the Baltic; Russia
continues to pursue its geopolitical interests in the Arctic Region; Putin still plays host to American
exile Edward Snowden of NSA spying fame; and the Kremlin threatens to cut off oil and natural
gas supplies to Ukraine and much of Europe this winter (vis-à-vis the Gazprom pipelines).