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The Past, the Present, and Virtual Reality: A Comparative Assessment of the German *Landsmannschaften*

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Abstract: This article seeks to examine contemporary perceptions of *Heimat* held by the various *Landsmannschaften* (Homeland Organizations) that claim to represent the interests of ethnic German expellees, refugees and subsequent German migrants from the Czech Republic/Czechoslovakia and Poland. The attitudes and standpoints of these organizations are compared with those of the *Deutsch-Baltische Landsmannschaft im Bundesgebiet* (German-Baltic Homeland Association in the Federal Area/DBLiB), which performs an analogous role for ethnic Germans whose origins lie in Estonia and Latvia. The early part of the article presents some observations on the origins, role and nature of these organizations. Their activities with regard to the former *Heimat* are then assessed. The paper demonstrates that the *Landsmannschaften* show clear and obvious interest in their former countries of residence. Yet their perception of *Heimat* is of the "virtual" variety. In other words their perceptions correspond to the concrete world, and are not wholly separate from it, but nevertheless, they are guided by nostalgia for what has vanished and can never be restored.

This article is concerned with ethnic Germans from Poland as within its borders established at Potsdam in 1945, Czechoslovakia, and the Baltic states of Estonia and Latvia.[1] The objective of the study is to examine the activities of the respective *Landsmannschaften* of these groups, and why these have come to possess highly similar rationales. An important difference between the two cases is that whereas ethnic Germans from Poland and Czechoslovakia either fled from their homes, or were expelled by the domestic governments with the explicit approval of the international community, the fate of the Baltic Germans was somewhat different. In the wake of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Agreement of 23 August 1939 it was agreed that the Baltic Germans be "evacuated" from Estonia and Latvia and resettled in Germany. The Nazis conveniently labeled this policy "*Heim ins Reich*" (Back to the Homeland) (Rimscha 1959, 27).[2] The Baltic Germans were informed that resettlement was their patriotic duty and given that the alternative was residence in the Soviet Union, the large majority obeyed with varying degrees of enthusiasm. For that reason, only those with a particularly strong tie to the *Heimat*, convinced anti-Nazis, and a tiny number of communists elected to stay. By the time the

Red Army reappeared in Estonia and Latvia in the autumn of 1944, over 88,000 Germans had left the area (von Taube and Thomson 1973, 15).[3]

There are two further differences that we must consider. The first is that the number of Germans who either fled or were expelled from post-war Czechoslovakia and Poland ran into the millions. Approximately 3,000,000 came from Czechoslovakia, and up to 9,000,000 arrived from post-war Poland. This difference was later to have a clear and obvious impact upon expellee politics in Germany. Finally, we should note that Germans from Estonia and Latvia were overwhelmingly drawn from the (former) elites of their homelands, whereas the socio-economic background of Germans from (post-war) Poland and Czechoslovakia was much more mixed.

The Development of Organizational Structures

Between 1945 and 1949, huge numbers of ethnic Germans either fled or were expelled from their homelands. In the early post-war years their political organization was prohibited by the Allies, but the foundation of the Federal Republic in 1949 offered the opportunity for expellees and refuges to organize themselves politically and socially. Initially a powerful political actor, since the mid-1960s their influence on German domestic and foreign policy has declined markedly. The unfavorable position which all expellees/refugees found themselves in after 1945 did not prevent political activists within their ranks from keeping the issues of expulsions and the territorial losses Germany had incurred on the domestic political agenda of the Federal Republic. Expellees and refugees had not only suffered the trauma of being forced from their ancestral homelands, but also of being transported to underdeveloped areas of rural Bavaria, Lower Saxony, and Schleswig Holstein. Despite the popular mythology cultivated by the political authorities of the newly emergent Federal Republic, the indigenous population did not necessarily welcome the incomers with open arms (Hoffman 1996, 77). Their customs and dialects were different, and in some cases, as with arrivals from Russia and Romania, the incomers spoke varieties of German that had long-since disappeared from Germany itself. Others, Kashubes and Masurians from Poland for instance, often spoke little or no German. On top of this, the refugees were generally viewed as being a further unwelcome burden upon the scant resources available. Opinion surveys in 1949 found that as much as 61 percent of the indigenous population viewed the expellees and refugees as unwelcome intruders (Franzen 2001, 224). Unemployment rates for the expellees and refugees were particularly catastrophic. It was further estimated in 1949 that they constituted 38 percent of the total number of unemployed, and as

late as 1956 they still formed a disproportionate 24 percent of the jobless (Filaretow 1990, 216-17).

The Western Allies faced something of a conundrum when dealing with expellees and refugees that had in part been uprooted as a result of decisions taken at Yalta and Potsdam. Germany had not only been defeated, it had been destroyed. With regard to the expellees and refugees the trick was how to integrate them before they developed a special refugee group identity (Franzen 2001, 231). Eventually it was decided to reverse an early ban on the formation of expellee organizations in the hope that such societies would in fact aid rather than hinder the integration process. Particularly after the Prague coup of 1948, the Allies recognized that the refugees constituted a staunchly anti-communist reservoir of support. The danger was that if they remained outside the political fabric of the emergent Federal Republic they might become prey to National Socialist remnants. So although an official ban on expellee organizations in all three Western occupation zones existed until 1949, refugees and expellees began to organize themselves at the local level as early as July 1945, often in close association with churches (Franzen 2001, 257).

The Baltic Germans were among the first to organize in this way, and it has been claimed that their sense of group solidarity was unmatched by other refugee/expellee communities (Rexheuser 1991, 18). Following the rescinding of the ban on the formation of statewide organizations, competing structures arose. A lengthy period of organizational consolidation was then entered into. This process of unification was completed in October 1957, and the *Bund der Vertriebenen-Vereinigte Landsmannschaften und Landesverbände* (Union of Expellees-United Regional-Cultural Associations and State Organizations/BdV) came into being. It consisted of twenty regional cultural associations,[4] eleven state organizations (one in each of the federal states at the time, with a further five being founded after German unification in 1990), and seven special interest groups.[5] Then as now, the various *Landsmannschaften* and related organizations were organized at local, district and provincial levels, with a national peak organization. Obviously, some have been more active than others, membership levels and age being the main factors. Shortly after its foundation, the BdV's main publication, the *Deutscher Ostdienst* (*German Eastern Service/DOD*), published a statement by the first President of the BdV, Hans Krüger, in which he defined the mission of his organization as one of mediation between East and West (Krüger 1999 [1958]).

In June 1945, the Allies declared all Nazi legislation on (among other matters) nationality to be null and void (Filaretow 1990, 308). Consequently, the *Sudetendeutsch*, as well as *Volksdeutsch* from pre-war Poland and the Baltic states were classified as "displaced persons" rather

than refugees. With the creation of the Federal Republic in 1949, the government moved quickly to defuse a potentially explosive situation. A key demand of the emergent *Landsmannschaften* was some form of compensation for loss of material possessions, but as displaced persons, their members could not obtain this. With the passing of the *Lastenausgleich* (equalization of burdens) law of 1952, such displaced persons were recognized as Germans under German law, and accorded the legal status of refugees and expellees. In that way compensation could be paid, and social integration was further promoted (Filaretow 1990, 266).

The political agenda of the various expellee organizations was laid down in the 1950 Charter of the German Expellees. This primary document has guided expellee demands and policies ever since and is a vivid expression of the identity of expellees as a particular group in post-war (West) Germany. In the Charter, the expellees proclaimed their willingness to forgo revenge and retribution, to support the creation of a united and free Europe, and to contribute to the reconstruction of Germany and Europe. On this basis, they demanded complete equality in West Germany and that the entire population share the financial burdens brought about by flight and expulsion. Despite their emphasis on integration in West Germany, the expellees insisted on their right to return to their *Heimat* and demanded that this be recognized as a fundamental human right.[6] Interestingly enough, even in these early years the DBLiB was engaged in a debate which continues to this day and affects wider public perceptions of the various *Landsmannschaften* in Germany and abroad. Figures such as pre-war Baltic German right-wing activist Axel de Vries were keen to identify Poland as a *Kernproblem* (core problem) in terms of the ability of the expellees to fulfill their aspirations. That Poland and its inhabitants could still be viewed in that way, and not as actors with a legitimate point of view and concerns speaks volumes concerning the mentality of such individuals. Even at this early stage, however, others such as fellow Baltic German Herbert Girgensohn were pointing out that the *Heimat* had been lost above all as a result of German actions. Girgensohn simultaneously warned about the cultivation of a *Heimat* mythology, and added that "Those who cannot come to terms with the past are also unable to reside in the present" (Filaretow 1990, 298). That to this day these debates continue within the *Landsmannschaften* is perhaps indicative of the fact that through their activities, surviving expellees and their descendants sometimes articulate a view of the past that is overly romantic, and as a consequence have difficulty in coming to terms with the present.

The continued demand for the right of collective return continues to cloud relations between the BdV and wider Czech and Polish society. In this regard, the contrast with the Estonian and Latvian cases is notable. It is

simply not a significant political issue in the latter states. First, the theoretical numbers are much smaller in both absolute terms and percentage terms *vis-à-vis* the host population. Secondly, due to *Heim ins Reich*, claims for property restitution do not play the same role in the Baltic states as they do in the Czech Republic and Poland. Thirdly, wartime occupation policies were less harsh in the Baltic states than they were in Czechoslovakia and especially Poland, which in turn means that for some in Estonia and Latvia, memories of occupation are less bitter.

The expellees' articulation of a common suffering and loss of homeland did not initially result in the creation of a common political platform. Their political party the *Bund der Heimatvertriebenen und Entrechteten* (Union of Expellees and Disenfranchised/BHE) was founded in Kiel in 1950, and met with spectacular early success in a series of *Landtag* (provincial parliament) elections (Filaretow 1990, 264). Between 1948-49 and 1952 two wings within the broad spectrum of expellee and refugee organizations fought for political leadership. One wing focused on the so-called "national principle" and made the recovery of the lost homeland its political priority. Oriented towards the political far right, it did not manage to generate sufficient electoral support. The other, more moderate wing was more concerned with promoting the interests of expellees and refugees within the emergent Federal Republic. All the *Landsmannschaften* under consideration here were active in this debate. This is referenced by the aforementioned controversy that broke out among the Baltic Germans. Of particular relevance to us is how, at such an early stage, the *Landsmannschaften* were divided between those who saw their future in post-war Germany, and those who believed that somehow the past could be resurrected. As we shall see, this backward looking strand of thought is by no means absent today, and helps to explain the perception problem that exists over the *Landsmannschaften* and many of their activities.

In November 1952, following success at local and provincial elections, the BHE enhanced its profile. Yet the greater the social and economic integration of the expellees, the less this population group felt the need for a distinct political party. The BHE's failure to form a permanent and stable coalition with other smaller right-of-centre parties meant that it fell below the 5 percent threshold in the federal elections of 1957 and again in 1961 after it had been subsumed within the *Gesamtdeutsche Partei* (All-German Party/GdP), which in turn was eventually assimilated within the *Christlich-Demokratische Union/Christlich-Soziale Union* (Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union/CDU/CSU). The CDU/CSU sought not only to embrace the BHE's concerns, but also to provide speedy integration into (West) German society by providing *Wohnung, Nahrung und Arbeit*

(accommodation, sustenance and food) (von Taube *et al* 1995, 118). The ultimate failure of the BHE serves as testament to the success of this strategy.

The Preservation of Identity, 1955-1990

By the mid-1950s (West) Germany's integration into the Western world had sufficiently progressed through membership in NATO and the precursor institutions of today's European Union (EU), and its leadership could more confidently turn eastwards again. The first step the federal government took in this direction was the Soviet-German Treaty of 1955. This was supplemented in 1970 by a second treaty between the two governments that effectively gave the green light to Willy Brandt's strategy of *Ostpolitik*. Treaties with Poland (1970) and Czechoslovakia (1973), both of which were rejected by the apposite *Landsmannschaften*, followed. They specifically addressed the sensitive issue of borders, confirming that the German government of the day respected the territorial status quo (Bulletin der Bundesregierung 1970, 1815 and 1973, 1631). Nonetheless, rulings by the German Constitutional Court in 1973, 1975, and 1987 rejected any suggestion that the treaties with Moscow and Warsaw violated the assertion of Germany's Basic Law. This meant that in the absence of a peace treaty, Germany still continued to exist *de jure* within its borders of 1937. While this interpretation pleased the BdV, it did not have a practical impact on the foreign policy of the federal government, nor did it improve the opportunity structure for the BdV to become more actively involved in foreign policy matters.

From the mid-1960s the BdV lost influence, at first with the left, and then also with the CDU. The shrill nature of its rejection of the *Brandtschen Ostpolitik* carried echoes of both the language of the 1930s, and of the Federal Republic's neo-Nazi movement. Only the BdV leadership and activists failed to see how they helped to bring others to this conclusion. Having said that, the extra-parliamentary left, which in turn later helped to spawn the Greens, was itself keen to portray those who rejected the *Ostpolitik* as potential neo-Nazis. It was only in the late 1980s, when the rhetoric between the BdV and the left had moderated, that each side was able once again to recognize the legitimacy of the other's view (Meckel 2004). As far as its relationship with the CDU/CSU is concerned, the BdV was to be sorely disappointed when the party returned to government.

Up until the late 1980s, the insistence of leading BdV officials that the border question with Poland and Czechoslovakia was still open led to serious disagreement with the CDU-led government. The political

impotence of the expellee organizations became strikingly obvious in 1985, when, after a personal intervention by Chancellor Kohl, the motto for the twenty-first annual convention of the Silesian expellees had to be changed from "Forty Years of Expulsion -- Silesia Remains Ours" to "Forty Years of Expulsion -- Silesia Remains Our Future in the Europe of Free Peoples." The marginality of the *Landsmannschaften* was further illustrated in 1987 when Herbert Hupka, the chairman of the *Landsmannschaft Schlesien*, lost his safe seat on the CDU list for the forthcoming federal elections. The message was clear: the CDU was not prepared to tolerate any initiatives that might disturb the blossoming relationship that the Federal Republic was beginning to enjoy with the GDR. Nor was it prepared to see its wider *Ostpolitik* disturbed by initiatives that might unsettle Germany's relationship with Poland.

However, in the late 1980s, when the fortunes of the BdV were at their lowest ebb, a surprising twist of fate came to pass that had the effect of reviving German interest in East-Central Europe and beyond. Activists, including many who had already been born in the Federal Republic, took advantage of the crumbling of the Soviet bloc. They began to commit more time and funds to helping ethnic German resettlers from Central and Eastern Europe (*Aussiedler*) integrate into German society, preserving their own cultural heritage and traditions, and developing and increasing cross-border human contacts with Czechoslovakia and Poland and other host-states of ethnic German minorities in Central and Eastern Europe.

Meeting the Challenge: Expellee Organizations in Post-Communist Europe

Realizing that the changed conditions after 1990 required a fundamentally different foreign policy approach, the German government embedded its external minority policy into the wider framework of its efforts to promote democracy, prosperity, and security in Central and Eastern Europe. Given the ethnopolitical demography of the region, and the consequent potential for border disputes and related inter-ethnic frictions, it was obvious that the role of minorities would assume great importance. The ultimate test of successful democratization would have to include an assessment of whether or not members of national minorities, both individually and collectively, were entitled to full equality and the right to preserve, express, and develop their distinct identities in their host-states. Furthermore, it would not be possible to operate a viable European collective security system without settling existing ethnic and territorial conflicts and establishing frameworks within which future disputes could

be resolved peacefully. Taking these assumptions as a starting point, the German government concluded that national minorities could play a crucial part in bringing about results in these two interrelated processes, as they could bridge existing cultural gaps (*Bundestagsdrucksache* 13/10845). Importantly, the government sought to draw the *Landsmannschaften* into this process. In so doing, it hoped that constructive engagement would steer these organizations away from their old obsessions and simultaneously demonstrate that they were not armed to the teeth and ready to invade (Rossmanith 2004).

This was a particularly sensitive issue in Poland, where since the early 1960s official estimates of the German minority had rested the assumption that there were "a few thousand" Germans resident in Poland. From this time onwards, migrants to Germany had increasingly been dismissed as nothing more than "*Volkswagendeutsch*" who sought to cover their desire for economic advancement by exploiting largely bogus links with Germany. By drawing the *Landsmannschaften* into its post-1990 *Ostpolitik*, the German government sought to promote responsible thinking and behavior within these organizations toward Poland. However, the BdV's insistence that up to one million Germans resided in Poland, and its constant demands for property restitution, compensation, and the collective right of return resulted in the Polish side being extremely wary of their engagement. Indeed as of 2005, although the relationship between the two is better, it is by no means perfect.

Soon after it came to power in 1998, the new Red-Green coalition government began to re-conceptualize German external minority policy. In 1999, it decided to abandon all large-scale investment plans, as it was felt that these did not have any measurable positive effect on ethnic Germans' calculations as to whether to emigrate to Germany or not. Instead, various small-scale plans were drawn up. These seek to: concentrate resources on projects that facilitate self-help, in particular through providing seed funding for small and medium-size businesses; to improve the services offered by the meeting centers for ethnic Germans abroad (*Begegnungsstätten*); to increase training and qualification programs, to provide more after-school German classes; to fund initiatives by communal partnerships; and to intensify social work with young ethnic Germans. Furthermore, the government decided to focus these efforts primarily on Russia and Poland (BMI-Pressemitteilung 1 September 1999; BMI-Pressemitteilung 10 August 1999). Aid programs for German minorities in other countries, such in Estonia and Latvia, were not phased out. Rather, they were scaled down and directed increasingly towards social work, in line with the fact that outside of Poland and Russia, the German communities are overwhelmingly elderly and fragmented, as well as being

poor (BMI-Pressemitteilung 2 July 1999; BMI-Pressemitteilung 21 October 1999).

While expellee organizations generally acknowledge the need for structures that are more efficient and accept that spending cuts in the area of external minority policy cannot be completely avoided, they have in general criticized this concept for the promotion of the "German Culture of Eastern Europe." The new concept proposed the centralization of the network through the grouping of various organizations and institutions on a "broad regional basis" -- northeastern Europe (Pomerania, East and West Prussia, parts of the former Soviet Union, and the Baltic states), Silesia, the Sudetenland, and southeastern Europe. The government justifies these changes by claiming that expellee organizations have not fully come to terms with post-1989 geopolitical changes. Moreover, the policy presumes that on the grounds of old age alone, the expellees of 1945-50 no longer could nor should serve as the main conduit of cultural exchange.

The collapse of communism came as unexpectedly for the expellee organizations as it did for the German government. Yet between the two, the perception of the opportunities arising from the dramatic events of 1989-90 was rather different. Many in the leadership of the BdV viewed government policy as unacceptable and treacherous. The federal government sought to achieve unification at the price of abandoning all territorial claims and formally guaranteeing the eastern border of the GDR as that of the united Germany. Antediluvian Nazis and romantics aside, demands for the further revision of Germany's borders were restricted to elements of the Polish and Czech(oslovak) *Landsmannschaften*. For example, activists proposed that a referendum be held in (Polish) Silesia under the motto *Frieden durch freie Abstimmung* (Peace through Free Choice). This strange initiative raised completely unrealistic hopes among many members of the German minority in Poland, particularly in rural Upper Silesia where the response to the signature campaign in support of the referendum had been strong.[7] Their hopes were dashed when Chancellor Kohl declared at an event celebrating the fortieth anniversary of the Charter of the German Expellees in 1990 that the recognition of the Oder-Neiße line as Germany's eastern frontier was the price that had to be paid for the reunification with East Germany.

Even though a border question similar to that between Germany and Poland never existed in the relationship between the Federal Republic and Czechoslovakia/the Czech Republic, the rhetoric of expellee activists has, if anything, been more aggressive on the Sudeten German issue. Such a posture suggests that many (older) SdL activists are quite simply unable to accept that the Czechs have any sort of a case with regard to the Sudetenland or the wider issues that surrounded the expulsion of ethnic

Germans from Czechoslovakia. This attitude is epitomized by a 1991 collection of essays written by leading figures of the Sudeten German community (Eibicht 1991). In one of the essays, Roland Schnürch, Vice President of Federal Assembly of the *Sudetendeutsche Landsmannschaft*, stated the claims of some Sudeten Germans to Czech territory with particular force. He "decisively" rejected the "belonging of the *Sudetenland* to any Czechoslovak state." From this, he concluded that "the border question has not yet been solved." (Schnürch 1991, 83). Another contributor, Willi Wanka (1991, 75), a member of the advisory committee on foreign affairs of the Sudeten German Council, insisted that "without the return of the Sudeten areas to the Sudeten Germans, there will be no resolution of the Sudeten German question." As late as 2005, the SdL's website was still proclaiming the collective right of return, and restitution/compensation, whilst simultaneously confirming its support for greater understanding among the people of Europe, and especially between Czechs and Germans (Sudetendeutsche Landsmannschaft 2005).

Given a wider lack of interest in these themes on the part of German society as a whole, the SdL has the field to itself. It can therefore present itself in the Czech Republic as being the sole and authentic voice of Sudeten German society (Handl 2004). The fact that large sections of German society have only the vaguest of notions about where the Sudetenland is (or was), is not apparent to wider sections of society in the Czech Republic (Pick 2004). Naturally enough, the Czech media focuses upon those elements of German society who evince an interest in the Czech Republic. In effect the SdL is allowed to present itself as something that it is not. The fact is that membership lists of all the *Landsmannschaften* are constantly shrinking, and have done so ever since the early 1960s (Rouček 1990, 37).[8]

The most controversial and potentially most explosive issue in German-Czech relations is that of the Beneš Decrees, which form the political-legal foundations of the current Czech Republic. In part they also dealt with the confiscation of German (and Hungarian) property in Czechoslovakia and citizenship issues in relation to members of the two ethnic groups. In recent years, the matter has resurfaced at a number of levels, some of which have been exploited by expellee activists. The astonishing capacity that the expulsion of the Sudeten Germans has to affect Czech-German relations is thus not only a matter for bilateral and international relations, but also plays a part in domestic politics. Just as government and opposition in Germany traded blows over the issue in the run up to the federal election of September 2002, it has also been a topic for Czech domestic pre-election politics. On the same day that Edmund Stoiber demanded the strict application of the EU Copenhagen criteria,

(former) Czech Prime Minister Zeman declared during a memorial act at the former concentration camp of Theresienstadt/Terezín that as they had supported the idea of '*Heim ins Reich*', the expulsion had in fact fulfilled the desire of the *Sudeten deutschen* to live in Germany. Czech Interior Minister Stanislav Gross, Vice Premier Vladimir Špidla and leading opposition politicians further justified the post-war expulsions as having contributed to European peace and stability after 1945. Both have since toned down their rhetoric, and the Joint Czech-German Declaration of July 2003 can be taken as an attempt by the Czech side to take into account German sensitivities.

The Struggle to be Heard

The fact that most Germans have no interest in re-fighting the battles of over sixty years ago is to some extent lost upon the target audience of the *Sudetendeutsche Landsmannschaft* (SdL) and its sister organizations. As indicated in the previous paragraph, increasingly that audience is not German, but for example Czech or Polish. What for most Germans are archaic and odd institutions can present themselves in countries such as the Czech Republic and Poland as the authentic voice of the dispossessed. What facilitates this venture in the Czech Republic in particular is the maintenance and prevalence of stereotypical ideas of Germany and the Germans that permeate wide sections of society. In part this is a generational factor that is held in common with Poland. That more should be done in all three countries to combat such stereotypes is beyond dispute (Schwall-Düren 2003). Given the legacy of history, the extent to which that is possible is open to question. More progress has been achieved in the sphere of German-Polish relations than has been the case with regard to German-Czech relations. In part this is due to the fact that Polish-German dialogue began in the late 1960s, and included Polish intellectuals who operated in an environment very different from that which existed in Czechoslovakia. Correspondingly, Polish attitudes toward the *Landsmannschaften* are somewhat more relaxed. Some Czech commentators go as far to claim that as an organization the SdL's role in German-Czech relations is quite simply counter-productive. From this perspective, the SdL represents a mindset which is unable to get past September 1938 (Brod 2004). Similarly, elements from within the Polish *Landsmannschaften* are still unable to make the connection between their own fate and the German occupation of Poland.

There are two further issues still influencing Germany's relations with the Czech Republic and Poland which serve to differentiate these two cases from those of Estonia and Latvia. They are restitution of property or

adequate compensation thereof, and the right of expellees to settle in their former homelands. During the summer of 1999, the demand for property restitution (or compensation) entered a new phase. First, the SdL decided to support the filing of a collective court case in the United States against the Czech Republic. Second, ethnic German resettlers from Poland who had left the country between the 1950s and 1970s brought their case for restitution or compensation to the Polish Supreme Court.[9] At the same time, the BdV and the SdL demanded on several occasions that accession to the European Union be made dependant upon the restitution of property to expellees, or alternatively that they be adequately compensated. This stance did not go unnoticed in the Czech Republic (Brod 2004). In March 1999 Chancellor Schröder made it clear that his government would not support Sudeten German property claims. Expellee organizations nevertheless persisted in their demand to link EU accession with a satisfactory resolution of the property question, often pointing to the examples of Hungary and Estonia, who had already introduced legislation to this effect. The BdV was unsuccessful in its objective. In neither the Czech nor the Polish case has such a link been established. The German government refuses to support such claims, and for the Polish and Czech governments the matter is closed, having been regularized in international law by various wartime and post-war agreements (Handl 2004). Instead what is implicit to the accession agreements is the fact that all Germans have the same rights as any other EU citizen who wishes to purchase property or reside in either state. That said, this issue still raises concerns among huge sections of Polish society that the BdV will encourage some kind of German "land grab" of Polish territory (Sakson 2004).

Likewise, the issue of the right for expellees to settle in their former homelands returned to prominence in the political debate about the accession of Poland and the Czech Republic to the European Union. The expected extension of EU principles, including the right of residence in both countries, caused considerable unease in Poland and the Czech Republic. In Poland in particular the question of land ownership was, and continues to be instrumentalized by national conservative circles as a means of evoking fears of a sell-out to returning Germans (Schwall-Düren 2003). The extent to which refugees and expellees, or indeed, increasingly their descendants would actually wish to move to either Poland or the Czech Republic is open to question. Since the early 1960s, opinion polls have consistently shown that the desire to return wanes with the passing of the years. In fact, what seems to be articulated is not so much the desire to return to either an unknown *Heimat* or to one that has changed out of all recognition, but rather an aspiration and the right of free residence with the EU. Problems result from the factors cited toward the end of the previous

paragraph and the sheer stridency of the BdV's message, coupled with their reluctance to contextualize the expulsions within a wider framework.

The precise nature of the relationship between Czech and Polish society and the apposite *Landsmannschaften* is difficult to ascertain. Sometimes it seems as if different commentators, politicians and others engaged in the field simply wish to airbrush out aspects of reality with which they are uncomfortable. This applies equally to Czechs, Poles and Germans, and cuts across the ideological spectrum. Moreover, the *Landsmannschaften* do not constitute a uniform whole. Within the Polish context, for example, the much more conciliatory approach adopted since the mid-1990s by the *Landsmannschaft Schlesien* must be contrasted with that of the more consistently hardline of its East Prussian counterpart. This latter *Landsmannschaft* can be distinguished from many of the others by the bitter tone of its coverage of the past. For instance, articles such as "*Schindluder mit den Opfern*" ("Playing Fast and Loose with the Victims") and "*Immer an der Seite der Sieger*" ("Always at the Victors' Side"), published in the *Preußische Allgemeine Zeitung* in 2005, condemned both the attitude of the German government toward the destruction of Dresden and its relations with Russia. On the other hand, the East Prussian *Landsmannschaft* is simultaneously quick to distance itself from refugee/expellee groups that are explicitly linked to the German neo-Nazi movement (Das ostpreussenblatt 2005). Some Polish observers are just as aware of these internal differences as are their German counterparts (Reiter 2004). The extent to which any relaxation of attitudes permeates wider Polish society is a matter of conjecture. The BdV itself likes to portray a rosy picture.

All sides acknowledge that when individual and small groups of BdV activists actually engage in face-to-face cooperation relations are actually good. Expellees and the current inhabitants find that their shared interest in a given locality binds them together with one another (Reiter 2004). However, with regard to the *Landsmannschaften* as organizations, there is in fact little common agreement. German observers claim that the relationship is generally positive (Rossmanith 2004), but Czech observers in particular claim the opposite to be true (Žák 2004). Similarly, some German observers point out that in light of EU expansion, the time is right for the BdV to amend the 1950 Stuttgart Charter that addresses the question of the right of return (within the immediate context of the expulsions), an issue which EU enlargement has rendered irrelevant (Lintzel 2004).

As hinted at earlier, once people actually engage with one another, the aforementioned reservations and issues of high politics are placed firmly on the back burner. This applies as much to members of the

Landsmannschaften as it does to ordinary Germans, Estonians, Latvians, Czechs and Poles. Examples of cooperation include partnerships between towns in the Federal Republic and in the former homelands of expellees, especially in Upper Silesia, the Czech Republic and the Polish part of former East Prussia. Such activities include the restoration of churches, theatres, cemeteries and monuments, the creation of small *Heimat* museums and so forth (Larischová 2004). Increasingly, the various *Landsmannschaften* and allied organizations such as the *Ackermann-Gemeinde*, which is linked to the SdL, have made efforts to foster dialogue with their former host states at various levels. Joint workshops have taken place in all four countries that bring together officials and activists from both sides and explore the past and, even more importantly, ways in which to build the future. Similarly, information trips (*Informationsreisen*) to the former home towns and villages of expellees are designed with a view to assessing the specific needs of these regions and initiating aid programs. Even less formally, many expellees and their children and grandchildren have become involved individually in projects that facilitate the reconstruction of their former homelands after decades of communism, most of them without any intention of encouraging mass resettlement, promoting border revisions, or the like.

In the Polish case, Andrzej Sakson points to how elements of the Polish right use the BdV chair, Erika Steinbach, as an example of how wider German society and the BdV in particular "remain unreconciled" to the territorial status quo (Sakson 2004). Apart from her obvious enthusiasm for the European project and the increasing permeability of inter-state borders between EU states, there is no evidence to support claims that Mrs Steinbach covets Polish territory. Yet this message is lost on large sections of Polish society, who similarly see the BdV's plan to build a memorial center to the expelled *of Europe* (author's emphasis) in Berlin as further evidence of the organization's plans to reverse by stealth the results of World War Two. Despite the fact that as early as September 2000 (Mildenberger 2001, 29), Chancellor Schröder announced that his government did not and would not support the project, the issue still provokes calls in Poland for the German government to intervene in some way. Similarly, in 2004, the German government came under enormous pressure from its Polish counterpart with regard to the activities of the *Preußische Treuhand*. This organization is comprised of hardline members of the BdV, and seeks to obtain compensation for expellees and their descendants from the Czech and Polish governments via the international courts. For decades, successive German governments have distanced themselves from such claims. However, the fact that in a liberal democracy the separation of powers constrains the executive with regard to the judicial

process seems in this instance to have been missed by considerable sections of Polish society. On a more positive note, despite such problems, other Polish commentators take a more nuanced view of the BdV. Although pointing to the fact that there are real differences of opinion and over the interpretation of fact between the two sides, the BdV is not always dismissed out of hand as a nationalist organization (Góralski 2004).

Like all the various *Landsmannschaften*, the various "Polish" groups show a keen interest in the history of their former *Heimat*. The *Pommersche Landsmannschaft,* for example, publishes a quarterly magazine that is exclusively devoted to the investigation of Pomeranian culture and history. Similarly, there is a Society for Pomeranian History, a Pomeranian Museum, and until the recent past the *Pommersche Landsmannschaft* had a good working relationship with the *Ostsee-Akademie* (Pommersche Landsmannschaft 2005).

It is worth pausing a while here to consider the relationship between the *Landsmannschaften* and such institutes. Two recent cases illustrate neatly the problems certain circles within the *Landsmannschaften* have in accepting Germany's changed relationship with the states of what we might loosely term "eastern Europe." The first concerns the dispute between the *Pommersche Landsmannschaft* and the *Ostsee-Akademie,* and the second -- even more disturbing -- involves the *Landsmannschaft Ostpreußen* and the *Ostpreußischen Landesmuseum.* The former dates back to 2000, and the dismissal of the *Ostsee-Akademie's* long-term head. Under German law, the various *Landsmannschaften* act as the trustees to such institutes. In 2000, hardline factions of the *Pommersche Landsmannschaft* succeeded in bolstering their position within the organization. They then used this newfound strength and legal position to sack the head of the Academy, ostensibly over administrative and organizational matters. In reality the sacking occurred because the academic leadership was seeking to redefine the work of the Academy and embed it within the context of German-Polish rapprochement (www.dietmaralbrecht.de, 2005). For their part, the hardliners within the *Landsmannschaft* were opposed to any such endeavor. Instead they sought to promote a picture that emphasized historical injustices perpetrated against ethnic Germans and arguably disregarded the overall context in which these occurred. The end result was that both the *Land* and German federal governments withdrew funding from the Academy, leaving it effectively incapable of promoting any substantive work.

The dispute that broke out in 2004 between the *Ostpreußischen Landesmuseum* and the *Landsmannschaft Ostpreußen* was broadly similar, but even more worrying. Once again the *Landsmannschaft* sought to use its legal position in order to promote a change in the academic direction of the

institute. However, in this case the spokesman of the *Landsmannschaft Ostpreußen* not only sought to interfere in the institute's work, but simultaneously became embroiled in a separate dispute on the Jewish holocaust in which he accused his opponents of adhering to "Jewish truths" (*jüdische Wahrheit*), and of supporting "institutional historical fiction" (*institutionellen Geschichtsfiktion*). The end result was as predictable as it was tragic. A parliamentary enquiry was established which found in favor of the academic leadership (*Zukunft Ostpreußisches Landesmuseum* 2005). The financial and political consequences have been similar to those detailed in the previous paragraph.

These rather nasty episodes not only render understandable Polish and Czech fears that the *Landsmannschaften* have some kind of hidden agenda, they also highlight a broader issue. That is, what should and could be the exact nature and role of such institutes in post-communist Europe? (Rheinscher Merkur 2000). In both cases we have commented upon, the academic leadership sought to rid their institutes of a backward-looking mentality that all too often sought to portray the Germans as being more dynamic than other peoples of the region. The inference is clear enough. The fact that leading figures within both *Landsmannschaften* felt that they could dictate to the academic leadership, and apparently fail to appreciate the reaction of the political authorities shows the extent to which some activists inhabit a closed world.

A less controversial, although equally pertinent example, comes with the *Westpreußisches Landsmannschaft* and its association with the *Erik-von-Witzleben-Stiftung* (Landsmannschaft Westpreußen 2005). A further flavor of how these organizations view the present can be gained from perusing the *Westpreußisches Landsmannschaft's* calendar of events for 2005. Apart from concentrating on history and internal administrative matters, in June 2005 a seminar was held with the title of "Fifteen Years of German Unification in West Prussia" (Landsmannschaft Westpreußen 2005). The area to which they were referring today lies largely in Poland, and is therefore overwhelmingly inhabited by Poles. A glance at the activities of the *Bund der Danziger* and the *Oberschlesisches Landsmannschaft* reveals a similar pattern of activities. One finds symposia and reads numerous articles on the history of the requisite region (Landsmannschaft Oberschlesien, Bund Der Danziger 2005). Once again, the overall impression is that despite protestations to the contrary, there is a certain reluctance to engage with the contemporary situation of what crucially is today's Poland, and not yesterday's Germany. We also need to be aware of the fact that the various outputs that are produced by such activities are sometimes controversial, and partial in terms of their assessment of past and present relationships between Poles and Germans.

Of the "Polish" *Landsmannschaften*, the *Oberschlesisches Landsmannschaft* and the much larger *Landsmannschaft Schlesien* represent the few of their kind that have a reasonably active youth organization. The outward flow of migration from all parts of Silesia, but especially Opole Silesia, has facilitated greater contacts with and a greater understanding of Poland than is apparent in many of the other "Polish" *Landsmannschaften*. Having said that, once again we feel the dead hand of the past. Youth activities centre upon depictions of an idealized folkloric "virtual" Silesia that celebrate a rural idyll whose prior existence is open to question. By its own admission it seeks to celebrate (German) Silesian folklore, although it does also seek to acquaint its members with the changing face of Poland (*Schlesische Jugend* 2005). The extent to which it is still engaged in past battles is evidenced by a symposium it sponsored in October 2004 on whether EU enlargement would afford expellees the opportunity to recover or receive compensation for expropriated property (Schlesien Landsmannschaft 2005).

With regard to the activities of the DBLiB, we find that the *Deutsch-Baltischer Kirchlicher Dienst* (the German-Baltic Ecclesiastical Service), founded in 1946, is still active. It seeks to provide pastoral and cariative care in both Germany and the Baltic states (Deutsch-Baltische Landmannschaft 2002). The deeds of the DBLiB mirror those of their various counterparts in the wider BdV. Unsurprisingly the DBLiB is much more active in Germany than it is in any of the Baltic states. Like all other *Landsmannschaften*, the organization is divided into a number of regional and district groups that form the backbone of the various educational, social and recreational activities with which it busies itself. The extent to which a majority of its membership and that of the other *Landsmannschaften* is genuinely active is open to question. In Germany all such organizations have an image problem with the younger and middle generations. In general terms the DBLiB seeks to preserve the cultural and social interests of its members and to nurture relations with the Baltic states and their governments. As with many other *Landsmannschaften*, it likes to view itself as a bridge between different societies and cultures (Deutsch-Baltische Landmannschaft 2003). Its claimed membership of 3,000 places it among the smallest of the *Landsmannschaften*.[10] Incidentally, given that the various *Landsmannschaften* tend to be very hazy about membership figures, the fact that the DBLiB makes any figure at all available is quite unusual. Its small membership is a reflection not only of the relatively small number of Baltic Germans still alive in Germany, but also of the passing of the years.

The DBLiB's round-robin newsletter *Deutsch-Balten Heute* (*Baltic Germans Today*) is distributed to "more than" 400 addresses (Deutsch-

Baltische Landmannschaft 2002). The newsletter is in turn complemented by the *Baltische Briefe*, which although published independently of the DBLiB, are supported by it. As with the other *Landsmannschaften*, a glance through the DBLiB's webpages and related hard copy documentation leaves the occasional visitor with the sense that s/he is peering into a closed community that seeks to recreate the past with at least as much vigor as it looks toward the future. On the whole, everyday contact with the Baltic states tends to be uneven. Since 1988, the Society for German Baltic Culture in Estonia has been active, and the *Domus Rigensis* Society, which is sponsored by both the German and Latvian governments, has operated in Latvia. Such institutes share certain common objectives and pursue a common agenda. They seek to break down inter-communal barriers, and seek to present the centuries-long contribution made by Baltic Germans to the area to the current generations (von Taube *et al.* 1995, 103). Clearly there is a permanent dialogue among academics, politicians, public officials, members of the artistic community, and those who have a particular interest in prior and current engagements between Germans, Latvians and Estonians. However, the extent to which such engagement penetrates the popular consciousness of the bulk of society in any of the states under consideration in this section is an entirely different matter.

Similarly, the marginality of the German fragment in Latvia and Estonia contrasts quite vividly with the situation of the *Landsmannschaft Schlesien,* and its newspaper the *Schlesische Nachrichten,* which often carries articles (frequently less than complementary in tone) about life in Poland today. On the rare occasion that contemporary issues are mentioned by the DBLiB, the tenor tends to veer between the neutral and the complementary. Thus, Latvia and Estonia in particular are characterized as the "economic locomotive" of that part of the Baltic region, the states that have "progressed the furthest in terms of the development of a democratic capitalist system." Accordingly, the DBLiB welcomed the accession of Latvia and Estonia to the EU almost without reservation (Deutsch-Baltische Landmannschaft, 2004). Such praise is neatly juxtaposed with reference to the wider German heritage and the German stamp that is visible on the architecture of Tallinn and other Baltic (Hanseatic) ports (Deutsch-Baltische Landmannschaft 2002). The attitude of DBLiB here stands in contrast to that of the *Preußische Treuhand* who have sought to link the question of EU membership of Poland and the Czech Republic to renewed claims for restitution and compensation.

Turning to media representation, the only German-language newspaper that purports to represent the interests of the Baltic Germans is the Vilnius-published monthly *Baltische Rundschau.*[11] It features interviews with German and Baltic politicians, seeks to propagate German culture and to

stimulate German business links with the area. It occasionally carries features on Baltic-born Germans, and the contemporary remnant communities in Germany, but rarely features news on the contemporary German minorities in the region.

As with the Polish and Czech cases, DBLiB members are keen on preserving the memory of the past, and in disseminating knowledge of the *Heimat* to the wider public. There are also a number of (independent) academic institutes that busy themselves with the preservation and dissemination of knowledge of the Baltic Germans. Once such institute is the *Karl Ernst von Baer Stiftung* (Karl Ernst von Baer Institute) based in Kiel. Similarly, the *Baltische Gesellschaft in Deutschland* (Baltic Society in Germany) is an organization based in Bonn that seeks to disseminate information on the Baltic states to a worldwide audience. A third is the *Academia Baltica* (Baltic Academy), which specializes in promoting reconciliation and understanding between the peoples of the Baltic region. The *Carl-Schirren Gesellschaft* (Carl Schirren Society), active since 1932, and specializing in the preservation of the Baltic cultural inheritance, constitutes a fourth (Deutsch-Baltische Landmannschaft 2003). There is also a Baltic Historical Commission which collects and publishes archival material, and as such parallels the activities of a number of analogous institutes that work on former areas of (eastern) German settlement.

The DBLiB also possesses a youth wing, and among others a stamp collectors' society (Rexheuser 1991, 73ff). Given the overall lack of numbers and age profile, it is by no means beyond the realm of probability that membership of the latter exceeds that of the former. A further glance at the DBLiB webpages reveals that its members engage in other activities fairly typical of organizations grouped within the BdV. To this end exhibitions, lectures, publications and the like form the core of the activities. Interestingly enough, the DBLiB is also active in trying to promote greater investment in the Baltic states, and in particular the growth of a *Mittelstand* or entrepreneurial middle class, that has proven to be so important to the post-war German economy (Deutsch-Baltische Landmannschaft 2002). Given the overall age profile of DBLiB activists, the DBLiB's youth wing the *Deutschbaltischer Jugend-und Studentenring*, may well be fighting a lost cause. Whatever the case, it meets around ten times per year, and engages in a series of activities that mirror those of the parent body. Given the paucity of Germans in Estonia, as elsewhere in the Baltic states, its activities are also centered upon Germany (Ostee-akademie 2005).

With regard to the maintenance of links with the *Heimat*, examples are patchy. Where such contact occurs outside of the academic environment, the emphasis is on practical help. For example, in 2004 an initiative was

launched to donate 1,000 bicycles to Latvia (Deutsch-Baltische Landmannschaft 2004). It has already been noted how, unlike in some other parts of Europe, the residual German community is small, scattered and elderly. The majority of its activities are, in fact directed toward the Baltic German community in Germany itself, and the presentation and representation of the history and role of the German community in ancient Livonia. The situation in the Czech Republic, where according to the census of 2001 only 39,000 thousand remain is little better. It is only in Opole Silesia in central-southern Poland that a viable German community, of perhaps 400,000 individuals remain.

Concluding Remarks

The democratization of the formerly communist societies in Central and Eastern Europe created new opportunities for Germany's external minority policy. These include extended possibilities to involve German expellees in this process, and a genuine interest on the part of former communist countries in improving their relationship with Germany, which was seen as an important stepping stone towards accession to the European Union and NATO. Yet a certain schizophrenia exists. In fact, it could be argued that in the early 1990s, the BdV missed a golden opportunity to engage fully with Czech (and Polish) society (Žák 2004). It is argued that rather than engage, the BdV saw Czech and Polish desires to join the EU as the perfect occasion to wring concessions concerning the expulsions and their aftermath. Perhaps the allure of the past proved to be stronger than that of the future.

Germany's stated desire to bridge the gap between cultures and across history can only be fulfilled through reconciliation and mutual understanding. Part of this process was the eventual unconditional recognition of the borders with Poland and Czechoslovakia. This process of creating a common future for Germany and its eastern neighbors cannot be secured without addressing the situation of the German minorities in these countries and the suffering of the post-war refugees and expellees. On the basis of numerous treaties and within the framework set out by the 1990 Copenhagen Declaration of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), Germany and Poland, and Germany and the Czech Republic have developed relationships that allow them to tackle the issue of minority protection and external support for ethnic Germans and that include representatives of the minorities and the expellee organizations in this process. Yet, for historical as well as contemporary reasons, this has remained a very sensitive problem. The situation is not helped by the

aforementioned continuing claims for compensation and/or property restitution on the part of a small number of BdV activists.

Inter-state relations between Germany and Estonia on the one hand, and Germany and Latvia on the other may be characterized as essentially good. The issues that burden Germany's relationship with Poland and especially the Czech Republic are not prominent. First of all, the German population of pre-war Estonia and Latvia was smaller than that of Poland and Czechoslovakia in both absolute and percentage terms. Secondly, the pattern of German migration, flight and expulsion from Estonia and Latvia was more nuanced than in the other cases. Moreover, in the case of Latvia some limited property restitution already has been made to former citizens of German ethnicity. In the case of both Baltic states, given that the German minority is now so tiny in absolute and percentage terms, there is little for diplomats to do in the way of affording consular protection. As elsewhere in post-communist Europe, the German government has been active in attempting to re-establish a German presence that recalls an earlier period of engagement in the east, one which has its roots in the pre-national era and the growth of attendant rivalries. To that end it has been active in improving educational links between the three countries and has also been active in the area of social welfare, which was an area of particular importance in the early 1990s.

The halting integration of expellee organizations within the process of reconciliation has been vital, despite the difficulties it has sometimes caused. For the success of the reconciliation process, it is essential that the human dimension in the relationship between Germany and its neighbors in the east is not ignored. Only the collective effort of the ethnic German minorities, in conjunction with the wider host population and the expellees, supported by their respective governments, will provide a framework within which old wounds will not be reopened. Increasingly the *Landsmannschaften* have become institutions whose primary function is the preservation of historical memory. Yet they still claim to be more than that. As this survey shows, the evidence for this latter claim is patchy. There is an obvious problem of physical distance that is compounded by the issue of emotional estrangement from the everyday reality of the post-1945 situation.

EU membership notwithstanding, the past will never be recreated. In their efforts to preserve *Heimat* and to make that *Heimat* relevant to the contemporary world, all the *Landsmannschaften* are left with is "virtual Estonia" and "virtual Latvia," that coexist in cyberspace and the imagination, alongside "virtual Poland" and "virtual Czechoslovakia." In other words, in both cases technology, symposia, a stream of research activities and some day-to-day engagement facilitate an appreciation of

both past and present. However, that understanding is in some ways based upon an idealized perception of the past. Painful episodes are dealt with through suppression of memory. The *Landsmannschaften* exhibit a tendency to lay the blame for the disasters experienced by the expellees on the rise of nationalism in the nineteenth century. In so doing they create the impression that prior to the rise of nationalism, social interaction between the various peoples of the region were almost universally harmonious. They do so as if the religious and dynastic wars that preceded national wars were momentary exceptions in time. At another level such activists wish to engage with a German culture and presence that was almost completely destroyed as a consequence of the Nazis' failed strategy of total war.

Perhaps what is also being expressed is a desire to recreate political structures that will supercede and replace the nation-state. In that sense, what the *Landsmannschaften* seeks to build are transnational links, and perhaps analogous communities. Indeed, if one examines their day-to-day activities and their support for European integration there seems to be a case to be made for such a claim. Yet that case must be qualified in two ways. First, as we have seen, claims for compensation and restitution are pursued in such a manner that can only harm the cause of reconciliation and transnationalism. Similarly, and in particular with regard to the SdL and indeed large sections of Czech society the issue of just how many Germans died during the expulsions and by what means, further subordinates transnational desires to national antagonism (Kučera 2001).

Furthermore, and in part with regard to their transnational aspirations, we need to consider the emphasis that the *Landsmannschaften* place upon the past. Given the emphasis upon history, and the lack of a substantive contemporary German presence in areas of former German settlement, the researcher also sometimes senses that an attempt is being made to restore a simpler, more pastoral past that was characterized by the absence of inter-ethnic conflict, social stability, and a more gentle approach to life. These themes of longing and idealization permeate much of the refugee literature. What counts for such people is not the bitter reality of the past, but rather the way in which that reality robbed them of their futures. In the absence of a viable future as Baltic Germans, or as German citizens of former Czechoslovakia and Poland, the only thing that they and their active descendants can latch onto is a romanticized version of the past. It is a past that is all too often presented in an idealized fashion and as much as anything else provides a refuge from the present. The idea of creating a "Europe of the Regions" that renders borders more permeable, and dissipates the power of the nation-state, is one that holds great appeal to many such activists. However, as the current debate on the European constitution shows, attachments to the nation-state are remarkably

tenacious. As previously stated, in the face of this ongoing tenacity, many members of the *Landsmannschaften* under consideration here perhaps inhabit a "virtual world" that corresponds to the real world, but runs parallel to it. These words are not offered as criticism. Rather I am seeking to convey the fact that today for the overwhelming majority of Germans, Poles, Czechs, Latvians and Estonians, such concerns and activities are not central to their lives.

Notes

1. The author wishes to acknowledge the support of the British Academy, LRG-35361. He would also like to thank Stefan Wolff, Andrzej Dybczyński and Zdenek Hausvater for their assistance in the preparation of this article. Throughout the article, unless explicitly stated Poland is taken to mean Poland as reconstituted in 1945. Although the *Ostpreußisches Landsmannschaft* also concerns itself with the Kaliningrad *oblast,* in order to maintain clarity of focus this paper does not. Similarly, for reasons of space, consideration of the situation of refugees and expellees and refugees in the German Democratic Republic has been omitted from the paper.
2. This policy was later extended to incorporate Germans from (former) eastern Poland, parts of the USSR, Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia and Poland.
3. Other authors cite slightly different figures. Nevertheless, the figures offered here can be taken as representative.
4. Baltic Germans; Banat Swabians; Berlin-Mark Brandenburg; Bessarabian Germans; Bukowina Germans; Germans from Danzig; Dobrudscha and Bulgarian Germans; Danube Swabians; Carpathian Germans; Lithuanian Germans; Upper Silesian Germans; East Prussians; Pomerania; Russian Germans; Sathmar Swabians; Lower and Upper Silesia; Transylvanian Saxons; Sudeten Germans; Weichsel-Warthe; and West Prussia.
5. Industrialists, youths, students, women, athletes, deaf people, and farmers.
6. The existence of such a right has recently been recognized by the UN. On 28 May 1995, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, José Ayala-Lasso, affirmed in a message to the German expellees that "the right not to be expelled from one's ancestral homeland is a fundamental human right."
7. Aside from its German and Czech fragments, Silesia consists of Lower Silesia to the west, the central area of Opole Silesia, and the eastern belt of Upper Silesia
8. Indeed, it is difficult to get any detailed information on this matter from the BdV or any of its affiliated organizations.
9. While the legal situation of both groups of claimants is different, their action was, to some extent, triggered by a resolution of the US House of Representatives (1998).
10. The BdV is dominated by the large and well-organized Sudeten, Silesian and Prussian *Landsmannschaften.*
11. Self-evidently, given that Vilnius is the capital of Lithuania, the place of publication falls outside of the territory "represented" by the DBLiB.

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