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**“Thank You, Your Putin Has Already Congratulated Us”<sup>\*</sup>.  
Russian-German Late Resettlers in the Context  
of Anti-Russian Discrimination in Germany  
After February 24, 2022**

**Introduction**

Since the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, there have been increasing reports of aggressive Russophobic war-related offenses in Germany.

The incidents were targeted at Russians or people perceived as such, and thus also against, for example, Belarusians and Ukrainians. Offenses were committed both against private persons and groups, institutions and property, as well as in the media and on the Internet.

At that time also Russian-German late resettlers (*Spätaussiedler*) experienced discrimination in various forms. They were stereotypically perceived by the perpetrators as pro-Putin immigrants from post-Soviet countries, who could pose a threat to democracy and peaceful coexistence in Germany.

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<sup>\*</sup> The sentence taken from an article: E. Hussendörfer, „*Nicht mein Putin*“: *Russlanddeutsche spricht über den Hass gegen alles Russische*, “Focus” (online), 30 March 2022 (accessed: 28 December 2022): <[https://www.focus.de/politik/ausland/ukraine-krise/nicht-mein-putin-russlanddeutsche-spricht-ueber-den-hass-gegen-alles-russische\\_id\\_75117888.html](https://www.focus.de/politik/ausland/ukraine-krise/nicht-mein-putin-russlanddeutsche-spricht-ueber-den-hass-gegen-alles-russische_id_75117888.html)>.

Signaling only the political and international context of a full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 – the topic has already been extensively described<sup>1</sup> – it is necessary to highlight Russia’s hybrid warfare strategy, the elements of which have become, among others: Russia’s reaction to political changes in Ukraine after the massive Euromaidan protests (2013–2014) against the non-signing of the European Union-Ukraine Association Agreement by the then Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovich, which led to the Revolution of Dignity, and separatist actions provoked by Russians in the south-east of Ukraine, the military intervention in Crimea and its annexation (2014), the war in Donbas (2014–2015), the incident in the Kerch Strait (2018), the deployment of Russian troops to Donbas, after Russia’s State Duma recognized and President Putin approved the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk People’s Republics in eastern Ukraine as independent states (February 21, 2022). Linked to the Ukraine-Russia crisis were Russia’s demands for guarantees on non-expansion of NATO and reduction of activity on NATO’s eastern flank.

It is worth noting that the above incidents did not affect the perception of Russia by Germany’s leading political parties until the Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24. Hence, there was a revision of the assumptions of the hitherto *Ostpolitik*, which had shaped policy toward Russia for decades, initiated by Chancellor Scholz’s speech in the Bundestag on February 27, 2022, under the motto *Zeitenwende*<sup>2</sup>. The change in political course involved a retreat from the existing policy toward Russia and the transfer of military and financial support to Ukraine, as well as the allocation of a special fund of 100 billion euros for the Bundeswehr and a detachment from energy resources from Russia. In connection with the Russian attack, in a joint motion approved on April 27, 2022, entitled *Defending Peace and Freedom in Europe – Comprehensive Support for Ukraine*, the SPD, Alliance 90/The Greens, FDP, CDU/CSU parliamentary fractions appealed to the federal government to support Ukraine in its defense with “all means at our disposal” including heavy weapons and peaceful means<sup>3</sup>. The main proponent of lifting sanctions imposed on Russia is the AfD party, although supporters of this course can also be found in other parties: the AfD’s position is also shared by parts of Die Linke, as well as CDU vice-president and Saxony Prime Minister Michael Kretschmer.

In addition, the latest survey results conducted at the end of May 2023 indicate that 43% of respondents considered the German government’s previous military support of Ukraine as a response to the attack on Ukraine to be appropriate. About 42% of respondents considered previous sanctions against Russia inadequate<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> *Think Tank reports on the invasion of Ukraine*, “European Council. Council of the European Union” (online, accessed: 20 June 2023): <<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/documents-publications/library/library-blog/posts/think-tank-reports-on-the-invasion-of-ukraine/>>.

<sup>2</sup> *Regierungserklärung von Bundeskanzler Olaf Scholz am 27. Februar 2022*, “Bundesregierung” (online), 27 February 2022 (accessed: 15 January 2023): <<https://www.bundesregierung.de/bregde/suche/regierungserklaerung-von-bundeskanzler-olaf-scholz-am-27-februar-2022-2008356>>.

<sup>3</sup> *Antrag der Fraktionen SPD, CDU/CSU, Bündnis 90/Die Grünen und FDP. Frieden und Freiheit in Europa verteidigen – Umfassende Unterstützung für die Ukraine*, Berlin, 27 April 2022: <<https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/20/015/2001550.pdf>> (accessed: 15 January 2023).

<sup>4</sup> *Wie bewerten Sie folgenden Reaktionen der deutschen Politik auf den Krieg in der Ukraine?*, “Statista” (online), June 2023 (accessed: 6 June 2023): <<https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/1312216/umfrage/umfrage-deutsche-ukraine-politik/>>.

It should also be emphasized that the knowledge about the fate of the Russian-German late resettlers in Germany, or late resettlers in general, is scarce in German majority society. It is symptomatic that this group has become visible in the public sphere, especially in the media, in connection with the so-called Lisa’s case in January, 2016. The sudden media attention was caused by the alleged rape in Berlin of 13-year-old Lisa, a Russian-German late resettler, which was ultimately discredited. Moreover, the Lisa case turned out to be a visible example of the Russian Federation’s disinformation campaign, which sparked demonstrations of thousands of people, most of them born in post-Soviet countries, who took to the streets of more than 120 German cities to protest against the act<sup>5</sup>. While the case turned out to be an aggressive tool of the Kremlin’s foreign policy, it received disproportionate coverage from both the Russian and German media and was used politically, resulting in a wave of superficial media articles, often riddled with unacceptable generalizations about Russian-German late resettlers and insinuations: “Are the Germans from Russia Putin’s fifth column?”<sup>6</sup>. At the same time, the Lisa’s case in selected regions of Germany attracted some Russian-German late resettlers to the right-wing populist party AfD (Alternative für Deutschland – ‘Alternative for Germany’)<sup>7</sup>. It is important to point out that, apart from a few AfD flashpoints in West Germany, the Russian-German late resettlers are mostly AfD voters, is a myth. “In the 2017 federal election, the AfD received about 15% of the Russian-German late resettlers votes. This is only slightly more than 12.6% of the general population. In the 2021 federal election, 30% of Russian-German late resettlers declared that they voted for the SPD, Greens 28, CDU 20, AfD 6, Die Linke 2%”<sup>8</sup>. At the same time, it should not be overlooked that the community of Russian-German late resettlers, represents a potential electorate for the AfD, as evidenced by the fact that the party is the only one that offers its basic program in Russian translation and strives to attract this group of voters through social media. As for the attitudes of the Russian-German late resettlers towards Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, detailed research has not yet been carried out.

A separate question, going beyond the scope of this article but requiring quantitative-qualitative research, is also: to what extent is the community of Russian-

<sup>5</sup> J. Janda, *The Lisa Case. StratCom Lessons for European States*, Federal Academy for Security Policy, 2016 (Security Policy Working Paper, 11): <[https://www.baks.bund.de/sites/baks010/files/working\\_paper\\_2016\\_11.pdf](https://www.baks.bund.de/sites/baks010/files/working_paper_2016_11.pdf)> (accessed: 28 December 2022).

<sup>6</sup> D. Stratievski, *Russian-speaking Germans. Who are they?*, “Riddle” (online), 18 April 2018 (accessed: 23 January 2023): <<https://ridl.io/russian-speaking-germans-who-are-they/>>; as/bri (afp, dpa), *Angeklagter im “Fall Lisa” zu Bewährungsstrafe verurteilt*, “Deutsche Welle” (online), 20 June 2017 (accessed: 28 December 2022): <<http://www.dw.com/de/angeklagter-im-fall-lisa-zu-bew%C3%A4hrungsstrafe-verurteilt/a-39323265>>.

<sup>7</sup> M. Schaubert, *Russlanddeutsche. “Der Fall Lisa” – Entwicklungen in Berlin Hellersdorf-Marzahn*, “Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung” (online), 9 October 2018 (accessed: 28 December 2022): <[http://www.bpb.de/gesellschaft/migration/russlanddeutsche/271945/der-fall-lisa-entwicklungen-in-berlin-hellersdorf-marzahn?pk\\_campaign=n12018-10-10&pk\\_kwd=271945](http://www.bpb.de/gesellschaft/migration/russlanddeutsche/271945/der-fall-lisa-entwicklungen-in-berlin-hellersdorf-marzahn?pk_campaign=n12018-10-10&pk_kwd=271945)>.

<sup>8</sup> W. Schroeder, L. Drolshagen, *Putins Verbündete in Deutschland?*, “Neue Gesellschaft. Frankfurter Hefte” (online), 4 July 2022 (accessed: 15 February 2023): <<https://www.frankfurter-hefte.de/artikel/putins-verbueendete-in-deutschland-3469-1/>>.

-German late resettlers in Germany subjected to pressure from Russia to take a pro-Russian stance, and to what extent to pressure from Germans to loudly oppose the war, and to what extent is Putin's war against Ukraine forcing their identity definition ad hoc.

The aforementioned actions and the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 intensified negative stereotypes of the Russian-speaking community living in Germany, despite the fact that many of their organizations have very clearly positioned themselves against Russian aggression: through public letters and statements<sup>9</sup>, and through solidarity rallies for Ukraine.

It should also be taken into account the numerically small group of Russian migrants who oppose Russian aggression, identify themselves with the different-than-official white-blue-white Russian flag, are active on social media, and are involved in helping Ukrainian refugees and migrants (e.g., Boris-Nemzow Stiftung in Bonn, Zimin-Stiftung)<sup>10</sup>. Although the group remains marginal, it is nevertheless present in Germany's political landscape.

Russian-German late resettlers in Germany constitute a very diverse and heterogeneous group. Individuals display a highly complex national-ethnic, social, religious and cultural identity, as well as linguistic identity. These persons are recognized by the Federal Statistical Office of Germany (Statistisches Bundesamt, shortened: Destatis) as people with a migration background. According to the Destatis: "A person has a migration background if he or she or at least one parent did not acquire German citizenship by birth"<sup>11</sup>.

The status of resettlers and late resettlers in Germany is regulated by law. Within the meaning of the Basic Law resettlers are<sup>12</sup>: ethnic Germans or nationals who have

<sup>9</sup> *Pressemitteilung der Landsmannschaft der Deutschen aus Russland. Absagen der landsmannschaftlichen Wanderausstellung*, "Landsmannschaft der Deutschen aus Russland" (online, accessed: 15 May 2023): <<https://lmdr.de/pressemitteilung-der-landsmannschaft-der-deutschen-aus-russland/>>.

<sup>10</sup> J. Fomina, "Emigration mit Verantwortung". *Die Aktivitäten russischer demokratisch orientierter Migranten(innen) und ihre Reaktion in der EU auf Russlands Krieg gegen die Ukraine*, "Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung" (online), 16 May 2022 (accessed: 20 May 2023): <<https://www.bpb.de/themen/europa/russland-analysen/nr-420/508563/analyse-emigration-mit-verantwortung-die-aktivitaeten-russischer-demokratisch-orientierter-migrant-innen-und-ihre-reaktionen-in-der-eu-auf-russlands-krieg-gegen-die-ukraine/>>.

<sup>11</sup> *Well over one in four people in Germany had a migrant background in 2021. Population with a migrant background increased by 2.0% to 22.3 million in 2021*, "Statistisches Bundesamt" (online), 12 April 2022 (accessed: 31 July 2022): <[https://www.destatis.de/EN/Press/2022/04/PE22\\_162\\_125.html](https://www.destatis.de/EN/Press/2022/04/PE22_162_125.html)>.

<sup>12</sup> *Grundgesetz für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, BGBl. 1949, Art. 116, Para. 1, p. 1: <[https://www.bgbl.de/xaver/bgbl/start.xav?start=%2F%2F\\*\[%40attr\\_id%3D%27bgbl149001.pdf%27\]#\\_bgbl\\_%2F%2F\\*%5B%40attr\\_id%3D%27bgbl149001.pdf%27%5D\\_1696412598829](https://www.bgbl.de/xaver/bgbl/start.xav?start=%2F%2F*[%40attr_id%3D%27bgbl149001.pdf%27]#_bgbl_%2F%2F*%5B%40attr_id%3D%27bgbl149001.pdf%27%5D_1696412598829)> (accessed: 31 July 2023); *Gesetz zur Änderung des Grundgesetzes (Artikel 82)*, BGBl. 2022, T. 1, Nr. 54, p. 2478: <[https://www.bgbl.de/xaver/bgbl/start.xav#\\_bgbl\\_%2F%2F\\*%5B%40attr\\_id%3D%27bgbl122s2478.pdf%27%5D\\_1696412055287](https://www.bgbl.de/xaver/bgbl/start.xav#_bgbl_%2F%2F*%5B%40attr_id%3D%27bgbl122s2478.pdf%27%5D_1696412055287)> (accessed: 31 July 2023). See also: *Grundgesetz für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, "Deutscher Bundestag" (online, accessed: 20 December 2022): <<https://www.bundestag.de/gg>>.

suffered the consequences of war and who, after completion of the general expulsion measures before July 1, 1990 or thereafter by way of the admission procedure before January 1, 1993, have left the eastern German territories formerly under foreign administration<sup>13</sup>, Gdańsk<sup>14</sup>, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, the former Soviet Union, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Albania or China<sup>15</sup>.

In the official language since January 1, 1993, ethnic German late resettlers are people who have moved to Germany as part of the admission procedure as belonging to the German nation. Previously, according to the *Federal Expellees Act (Bundesvertriebenengesetz, BVFG)*, they were defined as ethnic German resettlers. The term primarily includes members of German minorities, some of whose families have lived for generations in Central and Eastern Europe, South-Eastern Europe, and some in Asia, and who have immigrated to the Federal Republic of Germany since 1950<sup>16</sup>.

In this article, the author has omitted scientific and public discussions and critique concerning the concept of migration background, being aware that this category is an artificial scientific and political construct, however, bound to social interactions and become real through daily enactments, as well as it structures social world once it enters a discourse<sup>17</sup>.

The aim of the article is an attempt to analyze the escalation of anti-Russian prejudices and discrimination in 2022 in Germany, also directed against Russian-German late resettlers, in the context of their migration history and sense of social integration. It is worth emphasizing that the stereotypes towards this group of Russian migrants are paradigmatic and not specific in nature, i.e. they are (they were before the outbreak of the war) also relevant to other groups of migrants, such as Muslims, and are also manifested in discrimination on the labor market<sup>18</sup>.

The presented case is unique because in a relatively short time it focused and highlighted, as if through a lens, all the most serious integration and identity problems faced by Russian-German late resettlers.

<sup>13</sup> Former eastern territories of the German Reich located east of the Oder-Neisse line, which before December 31, 1937 belonged to the Third Reich, and after the end of World War II in 1945 became part of Poland and the USSR (now Russia).

<sup>14</sup> More precisely: the territory of the Free City of Danzig.

<sup>15</sup> *Gesetz über die Angelegenheiten der Vertriebenen und Flüchtlinge (Bundesvertriebenengesetz – BVFG)*, §1, No. 2–3, §4: <<https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/bvfg/BJNR002010953.html>> (accessed: 20 December 2022).

<sup>16</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>17</sup> A.-K. Will, *The German statistical category “migration background”: Historical roots, revisions and shortcomings*, “Ethnicities” 2019, vol. 19, issue 3, p. 535–557; idem, *Migrationshintergrund – wieso, woher, wohin?*, “Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung” (online), 5 February 2020 (accessed: 28 December 2022): <<https://www.bpb.de/gesellschaft/migration/laenderprofile/304523/migrationshintergrund>>; T. Luckmann, P.L. Berger, *Die Gesellschaftliche Konstruktion der Wirklichkeit: Eine Theorie der Wissenssoziologie*, Fischer Taschenbuch-Verl., Frankfurt am Main 1990 (1st ed.: 1969); M. Foucault, *Archaeology of knowledge*, Routledge, London 2002; B. Latour, *Das Parlament der Dinge: Für eine politische Ökologie*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main 2001.

<sup>18</sup> M. Brusig, D. Frings, J. Kirsch, *Diskriminierungsrisiken in der Arbeitsvermittlung*, Nomos-Verlag, Baden-Baden 2017, p. 86, 281.

According to research, times of uncertainty, wars, large migration movements and economic crises trigger and intensify negative attitudes and opinions towards migrants or minority groups, and support negative stereotypes (individual and group). Each form of discrimination affects human capabilities, the sense of well-being in the social, psychological and economic sphere and their sense of agency. Long-term stigmatization is one of the key drivers of social exclusion, triggering a more or less conscious sense of fear, stress, inferiority, shame and even negatively affecting health<sup>19</sup>.

The article is written on the basis of available literature (e.g. scientific publications, press articles), legal acts, official statistics and materials of selected German ministries and offices, e.g. The Federal Statistical Office of Germany, The Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community, The Federal Criminal Police Office, the Federal Government Commissioner for Matters Related to Ethnic German Resettlers and National Minorities.

### Post-Soviet migrants in Germany: a general outline

The year 2022 clearly showed that the limit situation, which is the Russian invasion in Ukraine, deepened the discrepancies between the self-perception of Russian-German late resettlers and their looking-glass self<sup>20</sup>, i.e. the dependence of one's social self or social identity on one's appearance to others.

Due to certain ethnic/cultural/linguistic features, these people were directly identified with Russians – in the discussed context, supporters of Putin and the Russian regime<sup>21</sup>.

It is difficult to determine precisely how many Russian-German late resettlers currently live in Germany. However, it is possible to estimate the number based on census data, administrative data and research results.

In 2021, 22.3 million people had a migrant background, representing 27.2% of the population in Germany<sup>22</sup>. This was an increase of 2% compared with the 2020 microcensus: 21.9 million people in Germany (26.7% of the population) had a migration background<sup>23</sup>. This is more than in 2019, when 21.2 million people

<sup>19</sup> [L. Montiel, D. Bas (ed.)], *Leaving no one behind: the imperative of inclusive development. Report on the world social situation 2016*, United Nations, New York 2016: <<http://bit.ly/RWSS2016>> (accessed: 28 December 2022).

<sup>20</sup> The term *looking-glass self*, first introduced by Charles Cooley. See: C.H. Cooley, *Human nature and the social order*, Scribner's, New York 1902.

<sup>21</sup> E. Hussendörfer, „Nicht mein...

<sup>22</sup> *Gut jede vierte Person in Deutschland hatte 2021 einen Migrationshintergrund. Bevölkerung mit Migrationshintergrund wächst 2021 um 2,0% auf 22,3 Millionen*, “Statistisches Bundesamt” (online), 12 April 2022 (accessed: 28 December 2022): <[https://www.destatis.de/DE/Presse/Pressemitteilungen/2022/04/PD22\\_162\\_125.html](https://www.destatis.de/DE/Presse/Pressemitteilungen/2022/04/PD22_162_125.html)>.

<sup>23</sup> *Migrationsbericht 2020. Zentrale Ergebnisse*, Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, Nürnberg 2023, p. 15: <[https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Forschung/Migrationsberichte/migrationsbericht-2020-zentraleergebnisse.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=5](https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Forschung/Migrationsberichte/migrationsbericht-2020-zentraleergebnisse.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=5)> (accessed: 20 December 2022).

(26.0% of the population) with a migration background were recorded<sup>24</sup> and in 2018 – 20.8 million people<sup>25</sup>.

In 2021, almost 11.8 million people with a migrant background had German citizenship (53% of the population) and almost 10.6 million people had foreign citizenship (47%). Among those with a migrant background who have German citizenship, 54% have held it since birth, 23% came to Germany as late resettlers, 22% were naturalized and about 1% hold German citizenship through adoption<sup>26</sup>.

According to the 2020 microcensus, around 2.5 million late resettlers lived in Germany. Most of them came from post-Soviet countries – above all from Kazakhstan (673,000) and Russia (584,000). Considerable number of persons also came from Poland (622,000) and Romania (221,000)<sup>27</sup>.

In general, without going into methodological considerations, a downward trend in migration of late resettlers to Germany can be stated, which can be seen in the results of subsequent microcensuses: in 2018, 2.6 million persons lived in Germany, in 2017 – 2.8 million, in 2016 – 3.1 million, in 2014 – 3.1 million<sup>28</sup>.

However, the results of microcensuses in Germany on the issue of migration should be read and compared with caution, especially the results before and after 2017, due to the change in the method of data collection<sup>29</sup>. The most important fact is that since

<sup>24</sup> *Bevölkerung mit Migrationshintergrund 2019 um 2,1% gewachsen: schwächster Anstieg seit 2011. 52% der Menschen mit Migrationshintergrund sind deutsche Staatsangehörige*, “Statistisches Bundesamt” (online), 28 July 2020 (accessed: 20 December 2022): <[https://www.destatis.de/DE/Presse/Pressemitteilungen/2020/07/PD20\\_279\\_12511.html](https://www.destatis.de/DE/Presse/Pressemitteilungen/2020/07/PD20_279_12511.html)>.

<sup>25</sup> *Jede vierte Person in Deutschland hatte 2018 einen Migrationshintergrund. 52% der Menschen mit Migrationshintergrund sind deutsche Staatsangehörige*, “Statistisches Bundesamt” (online), 21 August 2019 (accessed: 20 December 2022): <[https://www.destatis.de/DE/Presse/Pressemitteilungen/2019/08/PD19\\_314\\_12511.html](https://www.destatis.de/DE/Presse/Pressemitteilungen/2019/08/PD19_314_12511.html)>.

<sup>26</sup> N. Friedrichs, J. Graf, *Integration gelungen? Lebenswelten und gesellschaftliche Teilhabe von (Spät-)Aussiedlerinnen und (Spät-)Aussiedlern*, Bundesamts für Migration und Flüchtlinge, Berlin 2022 (SVR-Studie, 1): <[https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Forschung/svr-studie-spaetaussiedlerinnen.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=10](https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Forschung/svr-studie-spaetaussiedlerinnen.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=10)> (accessed: 20 December 2022).

<sup>27</sup> *(Spät-)Aussiedler*, “Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung” (online), 1 January 2022 (accessed: 20 December 2022): <<https://www.bpb.de/kurz-knapp/zahlen-und-fakten/soziale-situation-in-deutschland/61643/spaet-aussiedler/>>.

<sup>28</sup> *Bevölkerung und Erwerbstätigkeit. Bevölkerung mit Migrationshintergrund – Ergebnisse des Mikrozensus 2018*, Statistisches Bundesamt, 2019 (Fachserie, 1, 2.2): <[https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bevoelkerung/Migration-Integration/Publikationen/Downloads-Migration/migrationshintergrund-2010220187004.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile](https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bevoelkerung/Migration-Integration/Publikationen/Downloads-Migration/migrationshintergrund-2010220187004.pdf?__blob=publicationFile)> (accessed: 20 December 2022); *Bevölkerung und Erwerbstätigkeit. Bevölkerung mit Migrationshintergrund – Ergebnisse des Mikrozensus 2017*, Statistisches Bundesamt, 2018 (Fachserie, 1, 2.2): <[https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bevoelkerung/Migration-Integration/Publikationen/Downloads-Migration/migrationshintergrund-2010220177004.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=4](https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bevoelkerung/Migration-Integration/Publikationen/Downloads-Migration/migrationshintergrund-2010220177004.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=4)> (accessed: 20 December 2022); *Bevölkerung und Erwerbstätigkeit. Bevölkerung mit Migrationshintergrund – Ergebnisse des Mikrozensus 2016*, Statistisches Bundesamt, 2017 (Fachserie, 1, 2.2): <[https://www.statistischebibliothek.de/mir/servlets/MCRFileNodeServlet/DEHeft\\_derivate\\_00037317/2010220167004\\_korr31082017.pdf](https://www.statistischebibliothek.de/mir/servlets/MCRFileNodeServlet/DEHeft_derivate_00037317/2010220167004_korr31082017.pdf)> (accessed: 20 December 2022).

<sup>29</sup> In December 2016, the *Microcensus Act* was amended in Germany. With regard to the collection of data on the issue of migration, the 2017 microcensus also included information on the

1990 most of the late resettlers are immigrants from the countries of the former Soviet Union, while in the years 1950–1989 majority of the late resettlers came from Poland. Between 1950 and 2020, Germany took in around 4.6 million late resettlers<sup>30</sup>, including, according to various data, from 2.3 million<sup>31</sup> to 2.5 million<sup>32</sup> Russian-German late resettlers. The key moment of migration was in 1989 and 1990, with the number of 400,000 migrants per year<sup>33</sup>.

Among citizens from post-Soviet countries, in addition to Russian-German late resettlers, the majority constitute ethnic German resettlers from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan and other former Soviet republics, along with 200,000 Jewish so-called quota refugees (*Kontingentflüchtlinge*) (in 2015), most of whom came from Russia and Ukraine<sup>34</sup>.

More accurate data on registered Russian-German late resettlers are provided by statistics of the Federal Office of Administration (Bundesverwaltungsamt – BVA), which indicate that in Germany, a total of 7,052 late displaced persons were registered in 2021<sup>35</sup>, with 7,046 from the former USSR<sup>36</sup>, the most from:

- Russian Federation – 3,595 (pursuant to §4 BVFG: 934 persons, §7 BVFG: 2,189, §8 BVFG: 472),
- Kazakhstan – 2,674 (pursuant to §4 BVFG: 608 persons, §7 BVFG: 1,570, §8 BVFG: 496),

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country of birth to determine the migration status of migrants. This enabled a more accurate recording of late resettlers. See: *Gesetz zur Durchführung einer Repräsentativstatistik über die Bevölkerung und die Arbeitsmarktbeteiligung sowie die Wohnsituation der Haushalte (Mikrozensusgesetz – MZG)*, “Bundesministerium der Justiz” (online), 7 December 2016 (accessed: 20 December 2022): <<https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/mzg/BJNR282610016.html>>.

<sup>30</sup> *Spätaussiedleraufnahmeverfahren*, “Bundesverwaltungsamt” (online): <[https://www.bva.bund.de/DE/Services/Buerger/Migration-Integration/Spaetaussiedler/spaetaussiedler\\_node.html](https://www.bva.bund.de/DE/Services/Buerger/Migration-Integration/Spaetaussiedler/spaetaussiedler_node.html)> (accessed: 20 December 2022).

<sup>31</sup> J. Panagiotidis, *Geschichte der Russlanddeutschen ab Mitte der 1980er Jahre. Dossier: Russlanddeutsche*, “Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung” (online), 18 July 2017 (accessed: 20 December 2022): <<http://www.bpb.de/gesellschaft/migration/russlanddeutsche/249842/geschichte-der-russlanddeutschen-abmitte-der-1980er-jahre>>; *Russlanddeutsche*, “Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung” (online), 16 October 2018 (accessed: 20 December 2022): <[http://www.bpb.de/gesellschaft/migration/russlanddeutsche/?pk\\_campaign=nl2017-07-26&pk\\_kwd=248009](http://www.bpb.de/gesellschaft/migration/russlanddeutsche/?pk_campaign=nl2017-07-26&pk_kwd=248009)>.

<sup>32</sup> V. Krieger, *Vom Kolonisten in Russland zum Bundesbürger*, “Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung” (online), 12 September 2017 (accessed: 20 December 2022): <<http://www.bpb.de/gesellschaft/migration/russlanddeutsche/255396/vom-kolonisten-inrussland-zum-bundesbuenger>>.

<sup>33</sup> *Spätaussiedler und ihre Angehörigen. Zeitreihe 1950–2019. Registrierung/Verteilung – Herkunftsgebiete*, Bundesverwaltungsamt, 22 June 2020: <[https://www.bva.bund.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Buerger/Migration-Integration/Spaetaussiedler/Statistik/Zeitreihe\\_1950\\_2019.html](https://www.bva.bund.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Buerger/Migration-Integration/Spaetaussiedler/Statistik/Zeitreihe_1950_2019.html)> (accessed: 20 December 2022).

<sup>34</sup> D. Stratievski, *Russian-speaking...*

<sup>35</sup> *(Spät-)Aussiedler und ihre Angehörigen. Jahresstatistik 2021. Herkunft – Verteilung – Alter – Berufe – Religion*, Bundesverwaltungsamt, 22 March 2022: <[https://www.bva.bund.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Buerger/Migration-Integration/Spaetaussiedler/Statistik/J\\_Jahresstatistik2021.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=3](https://www.bva.bund.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Buerger/Migration-Integration/Spaetaussiedler/Statistik/J_Jahresstatistik2021.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=3)> (accessed: 31 July 2022).

<sup>36</sup> See table *Registrierungen / Verteilungen Aussiedlungsgebiete 2021* in: *(Spät-)Aussiedler und ihre Angehörigen. Jahresstatistik 2021...*, p. 2.



- Ukraine – 407 (pursuant to §4 BVFG: 109 persons, §7 BVFG: 241, §8 BVFG: 57)<sup>37</sup>.

Of the above, most are distributed in the following federal states<sup>38</sup>:

- North Rhine-Westphalia – 1,486 (of which from former USSR: 1,482),
- Bavaria – 1,081 (of which from former USSR: 1,081),
- Baden Württemberg – 914 (of which from former USSR: 913).

Regarding the registrations and distribution by country of origin of late displaced persons and their relatives between 1950 and 2021, the BVA provides the following data:

- The period 1950–1969 – total: 659,741, of which from the former USSR: 22,151 (1950–1959: 13,580, 1960–1969: 8,571);
- The period 1970–1989 – total: 1,339,468, of which from the former USSR: 233,157 (1970–1979: 56,592, 1980–1989: 176,565);
- The period 1990–2009 – total: 2,503,452, of which from the former USSR: 2,100,013 (1990–1999: 1,630,107, 2000–2009: 469,906);
- The period 2010–2021 – total: 59,798, of which from the former USSR: 59,490 (2010–2019: 48,142, 2020–2021: 11,348)<sup>39</sup>.

Within German territory also live other individuals from post-Soviet countries, such as students, specialists (scientists, lecturers, medics and engineers) or persons with temporary resident status.

What connects and divides all these groups at the same time is origin from post-Soviet countries, differentiated identification with the country of origin, as well as varied knowledge of Russian and its everyday use (i.e. individuals for whom Russian is a mother tongue and those who have a communicative command of Russian).

For around 1.54 million people in Germany in 2021, Russian was the mainly spoken language at home. Based on the total population living in private households (81.88 million people), 1.9% spoke Russian mainly at home. Among the 1.54 million people who mainly speak Russian at home, 607,000 (39.3%) had a Russian migration background. This means that they themselves or at least one of their parents did not have German citizenship at birth. 495,000 (32.1%) of those who mainly spoke Russian at home, had a Kazakh migration background and 140,000 (9.1%) had a Ukrainian background<sup>40</sup>.

In addition, there are several organizations in the public sphere in Germany representing the interests of only part of the population from the former USSR countries, but no umbrella organization has been established. Among them, the following can

<sup>37</sup> See table *Registrierungen / Verteilungen ehemalige Sowjetunion 2021* in: *(Spät-)Aussiedler und ihre Angehörigen. Jahresstatistik 2021...*, p. 3.

<sup>38</sup> See table *Registrierungen / Verteilungen auf die Länder 2021* in: *(Spät-)Aussiedler und ihre Angehörigen. Jahresstatistik 2021...*, p. 4.

<sup>39</sup> See table *Registrierungen / Verteilungen Herkunftsstaaten* in: *(Spät-)Aussiedler und ihre Angehörigen. Registrierungen / Verteilungen nach Herkunftsstaaten. Zeitreihe 1950–2021*, Bundesverwaltungsamt, 7 April 2022, p. 2–6.

<sup>40</sup> *Bevölkerung*, “Statistisches Bundesamt” (online, accessed: 28 December 2022): <[https://www.destatis.de/DE/Im-Fokus/Ukraine/Gesellschaft/\\_inhalt.html](https://www.destatis.de/DE/Im-Fokus/Ukraine/Gesellschaft/_inhalt.html)>.

be mentioned: The Association of Germans from Russia (Landsmannschaft der Deutschen aus Russland e.V. – LmDR), Community of Interests of Germans from Russia in Hesse (Interessengemeinschaft der Deutschen aus Russland in Hessen – IDRH), The Ukrainians' Central Council (Zentralverband der Ukrainer in Deutschland) and the Association of Ukrainian Organizations in Germany (Dachverband der Ukrainischen Organisationen in Deutschland), religious communities, including Jewish communities and Orthodox parishes; cultural, student and educational organizations, as well as organizations stimulating social dialogue and promoting integration of Russian-speaking immigrants.

To all the above-mentioned groups should be added Russian and Ukrainian citizens who have flown or immigrated to Germany since the beginning of the war in 2022. By September 30, 2022, there were 999,000 Ukrainian citizens living in Germany, i.e. almost seven times more than at the end of February. The number of Russian citizens increased relatively slightly (+6.0%) over the same period, amounting to 252,000. According to the preliminary results of migration statistics, in November 2022, 33,366 immigrants from Ukraine were registered in Germany, of which 54% (18,161 people) were women. There are slight differences in the regional distribution, but North Rhine-Westphalia was the most popular federal state in 2021 for both people with a Russian and Ukrainian migration background. Every fourth person with a Russian migration background (26%) and every fifth person with a Ukrainian migration background (20%) lived there. Bavaria (17%) and Baden-Württemberg (14%) followed for people with a Ukrainian migration background. People with a Russian migration background also frequently lived in Baden-Württemberg (15%) and Lower Saxony (14%)<sup>41</sup>.

### **Between ethnic privilege and social exclusion**

The question that arises first in the recent political situation is whether the Russian-German late resettlers are (sufficiently?) integrated within German society. However, this question cannot be answered so easily and directly due to the huge diversity of the group.

The Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community defines integration as a long-term process aimed at integrating all people permanently and “lawfully living in [...] [Germany] into society and to grant them the related rights and duties. [...] Integration should ensure that immigrants have equal opportunities and the chance to participate in all areas, especially social, economic and cultural life. To do so, people who come to Germany intending to stay must learn the German language and acquire basic knowledge of [...] [German] history and [...] legal system, in particular the significance of Germany's free and democratic order, the party system, the federal structure, the welfare system, equal rights, tolerance and religious freedom. And they should be familiar with Germany's constitution and laws and should respect and abide by them”<sup>42</sup>.

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<sup>41</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>42</sup> *Integration*, “Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community” (online, accessed: 20 December 2022): <<https://www.bmi.bund.de/EN/topics/community-and-integration/integration/integration-node.html>>.

Without going into considerations on integration theories – there are countless of them – one can distinguish its main areas, i.e.: 1. structural integration, 2. acculturation (cultural aspect of integration), 3. identification (psychological aspect). It is worth emphasizing that in the case of Russian-German late resettlers, the opposite process is taking place at the same time, i.e. the process of dissimilation – the renaissance of ethnicity<sup>43</sup>.

Some researchers point to a relatively quick and good integration of late resettlers in Germany, despite many barriers, including cultural and language differences<sup>44</sup>. On the other hand, the vast majority of available studies highlight the problems that Russian-German late resettlers in Germany are constantly struggling with, i.e. linguistic, structural and economic.

Integration problems result mainly from the loss of or insufficient German language competence<sup>45</sup>.

According to Evgenii Sawinkin, the expectations of the rapid integration of the Russian-German late resettlers are exaggerated, because the part of them who grew up in the post-Soviet countries could not participate in the evolution of the German language, culture and the related value system<sup>46</sup>. The consequence of high expectations was the disappointment of the late resettlers and the sense of greater social alienation compared to other migrants (not ethnic Germans).

In the case of the discussed group, language (and/or accent) is a stigmatizing factor, has identity-forming potential and sets group boundaries<sup>47</sup>. The language used by the

<sup>43</sup> See: J.M. Yinger, *Ethnicity. Source of strenght? Source of conflict?*, State University of New York Press, Albany–New York 1994, p. 41–67; idem, *Toward a theory of assimilation and dissimilation*, „Ethnic and Racial Studies” 1981, vol. 4, No. 3, p. 249–264.

<sup>44</sup> A. Mack-Philipp, *(Spät-)Aussiedler sind in der Gesellschaft angekommen. Festveranstaltung würdigt 60-jähriges Bestehen des Bundesvertriebenengesetzes*, Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, Nürnberg 2013, p. 26; J. Panagiotidis, *Geschichte...*

<sup>45</sup> See: G. Dalos, *Geschichte der Russlanddeutschen. Von Katharina der Großen bis zur Gegenwart. Unter Mitarbeit von Zylla Elsbeth – deutsche Bearbeitung*, Beck, München 2014; H. Esser, *Migration, Sprache und Integration*, Arbeitsstelle Interkulturelle Konflikte und gesellschaftliche Integration, Wissenschaftszentrum erlin für Sozialforschung, Berlin 2006 (AKI-Forschungsbilanz, 4), p. 7.

<sup>46</sup> E. Sawinkin, *Kultur, Identität und Sprache Russlanddeutscher in der Russischen Föderation. Ergebnisse russischer empirischer Forschung*, in: M.C. Hermann, R. Öhlschläger (Hrsg.), *Hier die Russen – dort die Deutschen. Über die Integrationsprobleme russlanddeutscher Jugendlicher 250 Jahre nach dem Einladungsmanifest von Katharina II*, Nomos, Baden-Baden 2013, p. 67–70; T. Tsuda, *Conclusion. Diasporic homecomings and ambivalent encounters with the ethnic homeland*, in: T. Tsuda (ed.), *Diaspora homecoming: Ethnic return migration in comparative perspective*, Stanford University Press, 2009, p. 329ff.

<sup>47</sup> H. Esser, *Migration...*, p. 11; E. Oksaar, *Zweitspracherwerb. Wege zur Mehrsprachigkeit und zur interkulturellen Verständigung*, W. Kohlhammer, Stuttgart 2003, p. 64f; W. Oppenrieder, M. Thurmair, *Sprachidentität im Kontext von Mehrsprachigkeit*, in: N. Janich, C. Thim-Mabrey (Hrsg.), *Sprachidentität – Identität durch Sprache*, Gunter Narr Verlag, Tübingen 2003 (Tübinger Beiträge zur Linguistik, 465), p. 41ff; F. Saadaoui-El Amin, *Bi-heimisch, doch wurzellos? – Die Frage nach Zugehörigkeit. Eine empirische Studie über Jugendliche und junge Erwachsene, von denen ein Elternteil aus Deutschland und der andere aus einem außereuropäischen Land stammt*, LIT, Berlin 2013 (Erziehungswissenschaft, 67), p. 97; T. Tsuda, *Conclusion...*, p. 330ff.

Russian-German late resettlers is also (and was) the main factor in the ethnicization of this group by both outsiders and by themselves.

In the case of Russian-German late resettlers, the German language is perceived as a central factor of their identification and belonging to the majority society. Together with an ethnic origin, knowledge of the German language is a prerequisite and a key condition for admission to Germany as a late resettler. At this point, however, a distinction should be made between language identity (*Sprachidentität*)<sup>48</sup>, identity through language (*Identität durch Sprache*)<sup>49</sup> and actual linguistic competences.

Research conducted since 1990 clearly shows that not all Russian-German late resettlers have language competences at a sufficiently high level. This applies in particular to the younger generation, which had little contact with the German language in their country of origin. In turn, the older generation of late resettlers speak local dialects of the German language, which differ significantly from the language spoken in Germany and led to further stigmatization<sup>50</sup>.

The integration paradox is that these people, living in Germany with the status of ethnic German late resettlers, more and more often experienced alienation mediated by language, which led to group ghettoization and distancing from the majority society, and as a consequence, more and more frequent use of the Russian language within their own group<sup>51</sup>.

Moreover, from the 1990s through the decade of the 2000s until today, the media in Germany perpetuated a stereotypical, negative image of this group. The most telling example is the fact that in 2022 the Neue deutschen Medienmacher\*innen (NdM) (a German non-governmental organization and nationwide association of media professionals with and without a migration background) award the Golden Potato 2022 to the SWR Fernsehern (regional television channel) and the documentary “Russian Germans – Our Foreign Neighbors? Balance sheet of a difficult integration”<sup>52</sup>.

Many authors point to a double non-integration or a double alienation among Russian-German late resettlers: in the former Soviet Union they were perceived as

<sup>48</sup> C. Thim-Mabrey, *Sprachidentität – Identität durch Sprache. Ein Problemaufriss aus Sprachwissenschaftlicher Sicht*, in: N. Janich, C. Thim-Mabrey (Hrsg.), *Sprachidentität...*, p. 2.

<sup>49</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>50</sup> B. Dietz, H. Roll, J. Greiner, *Jugendliche Aussiedler. Porträt einer Zuwanderergeneration*, Campus, Frankfurt/Main 1998, p. 41; N. Frenzel, H.-J. Heringer, „Ich lächle zurück“: *Interkulturell basierte Schwierigkeiten russischer Aussiedler in Deutschland*, “Deutsch als Zweitsprache” 2007, H. 1, p. 23ff; N. Berend, *Russlanddeutsche Aussiedler in Deutschland: Ein Überblick*, “Deutsche Sprache” 2014, Jg. 42, H. 3, p. 199f; A.-K. Gärtig, A. Rothe, *Über Liebe zum Deutschen, Sympathie für Dialekte und Sorge um Sprachentwicklung. Was die Menschen in Deutschland über Sprache denken*, “Sprach Report” 2009, Jg. 25, H. 3, p. 6.

<sup>51</sup> B. Menzel, *Identitätsfalle oder Change? Russlanddeutsche SpätaussiedlerInnen als Sprach- und KulturmittlerInnen*, in: B. Menzel, C. Engel (Hrsg.), *Rückkehr in die Fremde? Ethnische Remigration russlanddeutscher Spätaussiedler*, Frank & Timme, Berlin 2014 (Ost-West-Express, 21), p. 71; J. Panagiotidis, *Geschichte...*

<sup>52</sup> Since 2018, the NdM has been awarding the Golden Potato to media or journalists who present a distorted picture of living together in Germany, a country of immigration, or to programs and formats that repeatedly grossly overstate problems and conflicts, reinforce prejudices and violate journalistic standards.

Germans, in Germany they are Russians. This double non-integration shows how important the question of belonging is – belonging attributed to oneself as well as by others<sup>53</sup>. It is worth emphasizing that already at the moment of settling in Germany, these people were granted the assigned status of ethnic German late resettlers, which automatically distinguished them from other German citizens and, moreover, was not necessarily consistent with their national/ethnic identification. This, in a sense, ethnic privilege of this group of migrants in terms of granting German nationality and their co-ethnic status does not facilitate their social or economic integration<sup>54</sup>.

It has its further consequences in the psychological sphere (e.g. feeling of inferiority), social sphere (e.g. isolation, communication difficulties, loss of family ties, educational barriers) or economic sphere (e.g. higher risk of unemployment)<sup>55</sup>. Depending on the migration history, the economic situation of Russian-German late resettlers varies greatly. The 2022 data shows that “the per capita income of many post-Soviet migrants is often lower in comparison to other migrants. Among late resettlers, the percentage of those in the labor force is 36%, much higher than for non-migrants (17%) and the rest of the population with a migrant background (33%). In addition, about a third of late resettlers aged 65 and older are affected by poverty in old age”<sup>56</sup>.

Representatives of one of the organizations gathering Russian-German late resettlers, i.e. the IDRH, are aware of their own good integration in the discussed areas of life, at the same time pointing to the barriers and challenges facing them in the near future.

In their opinion, there is a great need for catching-up integration, which, in turn, is hardly noticed by the authorities. This applies primarily to the young generation, which is exposed to an increased risk of social marginalization, alienation or entanglement in right-wing and anti-democratic political currents. Factors supporting this diagnosis were the latest political developments surrounding the Russian-Germans, such as the Lisa’s case, participation in rallies and demonstrations with xenophobic tendencies, sympathy for right-wing national political currents and parties such as AfD.

According to representatives of the IDRH within the group, there is “a high degree of dissatisfaction, [...] there are deficits in political orientation, [...] trust in the rule of law and the democratic legal system of the Federal Republic of Germany is dwindling among some [individuals]”<sup>57</sup>.

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<sup>53</sup> M. Kaiser, *Die plurilokalen Lebensprojekte der Russlanddeutschen im Lichte neuerer sozialwissenschaftlicher Konzepte*, in: S. Ipsen-Peitzmeier, M. Kaiser (Hrsg.), *Zuhause fremd. Russlanddeutsche zwischen Russland und Deutschland*, Transcript, Bielefeld 2006, p. 19–59.

<sup>54</sup> N. Cyrus et al., *Opportunity structures for immigrants’ active civic participation in the European Union: sharing comparative observations*, University of Oldenburg, Oldenburg 2005 (Politics-Working Paper, 2), p. 9.

<sup>55</sup> *Datenreport 2016. Ein Sozialbericht für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, Statistisches Bundesamt, Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung, Sozioökonomisches Panel am Deutschen Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung, Bonn 2016, p. 238.

<sup>56</sup> W. Schroeder, L. Drolshagen, *Putins...*

<sup>57</sup> *Bestandsaufnahme*, “Interessengemeinschaft der Deutschen aus Russland in Hessen” (online, accessed: 20 December 2022): <<https://idr-hessen.de/ueber-uns/bestandsaufnahme/>>.

At the same time, representatives of the group point to objectively existing problems – mainly systemic, identity and cultural ones. Among the many problems, the following should be mentioned: a high percentage of poverty among seniors and a reduced pension – which is perceived by the group as a generation injustice; problems with the recognition of university degrees and professional qualification from the regions of origin. In Germany, women in particular were unable to pursue the professions they had learned and thus ended up in the low-wage sector; lack of interest from democratic parties in Germany or insufficient extracurricular political education for young Russian-German late resettlers; identity struggles of the young generation, on the one hand, due to the loss of their homeland, and, on the other hand, difficult attempts to find it in Germany. However, faced with large waves of immigration, they are afraid of being overwhelmed by foreigners and losing their identity<sup>58</sup>.

### Russophobic clashes in 2022

The results of available research indicate that the Russian-German late resettlers are well integrated in the majority population in Germany, however, 2022 has sharpened more or less articulated problems that these people have been facing for many years, i.e. that distinctions based on language and ethnicity, related to migrant background, contribute to the deterioration of social well-being and deepening the sense of social exclusion.

War-related Russophobic incidents throughout Germany affected the Russian-German late resettlers to some extent. It can be assumed that their intermediate status – being perceived as Germans in Russia and Russians in Germany – has been strained and used to the limit.

Already on March 1, 2022 the former Federal Government Commissioner for Matters Related to Ethnic German Resettlers and National Minorities, Dr. Bernd Fabritius, condemned in a published report the exclusion and discrimination of Russian-German late resettlers. As he stated, he was receiving more and more information from the above-mentioned individuals who, due to the erroneous and imprecise classification of them as Russians, and their family members of different ethnic origin, experience exclusion and discrimination. According to Fabritius: “Aside from the fact that a free, democratic community based on the rule of law should counteract any form of discrimination – including based on origin – we as a society should also remember that the Germans from Russia are our compatriots”<sup>59</sup>.

A few days earlier, at the end of February 2022, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, as chair of the G7 countries, stated during a videoconference on the Russian invasion of Ukraine: “There is no justification for these actions. This is Putin’s war. Putin, having

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<sup>58</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>59</sup> Die Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Aussiedlerfragen und nationale Minderheiten, *Aufruf zur Solidarität*, “Bundesverwaltungsamt” (online), 1 March 2022 (accessed: 28 December 2022): <[https://www.bva.bund.de/SharedDocs/Kurzmeldungen/DE/Buerger/Migration-Integration/Spaetaussiedler/Meldung\\_01\\_Maerz\\_2022.html](https://www.bva.bund.de/SharedDocs/Kurzmeldungen/DE/Buerger/Migration-Integration/Spaetaussiedler/Meldung_01_Maerz_2022.html)>.

started his war, made a grave mistake”<sup>60</sup>, which was partly a nod to the inhabitants of Germany from the former USSR.

In addition, Fabritius’ successor as the Federal Government Commissioner, Natalie Pawlik, an MP from the SPD, stressed that a number of organizations of Russian-Germans condemned the war, which did not get through to public opinion, since the touchstone of a position on the war is whether or not it occurred during a large street demonstration<sup>61</sup>.

It is difficult to estimate the exact number of criminal offenses against the above-mentioned persons, but it can be indirectly assumed that many became victims of the escalation of stereotypes and prejudices related to the war in Ukraine.

Since the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, The Federal Criminal Police Office has registered 4,000 war-related crimes, including 1,700 cases by April 2022<sup>62</sup>.

The most damage was to property, but there was also aggression towards people – in the form of insults, verbal threats and physical harm. Among the damages to property, the most common were the destruction of shop windows, punctures of car tires or painting graffiti with inappropriate content on buildings. The offenses were directed against persons or enterprises, including but not limited to persons of Ukrainian and Russian origin and their enterprises. In individual cases, acts were directed against people from Belarus. For example, in Berlin and Bavaria, one in four crimes involved property damage. From the beginning of the war, Russian restaurants in Berlin were threatened, monuments were desecrated, a German-Russian school in Berlin was set on fire, a Russian church was pelted with bottles, and Russian-speaking children and children assumed to be Russian were mistaken because Russians had spoken out about school bullying.

By the end of April 2022, cases of violent offenses were also recorded. Of the federal states where they were recorded, North Rhine-Westphalia reported 55 violent offences, Lower Saxony – 43 and Schleswig-Holstein – 27. In the other federal states, the number of violence remained at single digits.

Propaganda crimes and other crimes under paragraph 140 of the German Penal Code also occurred to a greater extent<sup>63</sup>. In Baden-Württemberg, these were the majority of crimes mainly related to the use of the Z symbol, which became a sign of support for an aggressive war against Ukraine. Across Germany, more than 170 investigations have

<sup>60</sup> J. Süßmann, “*Das ist Putins Krieg*”, “Die Zeit” (online), 24 February 2022 (accessed: 15 May 2023): <[https://www.zeit.de/politik/ausland/2022-02/olaf-scholz-russland-ukraine-angriff?utm\\_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F](https://www.zeit.de/politik/ausland/2022-02/olaf-scholz-russland-ukraine-angriff?utm_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F)>.

<sup>61</sup> K. Belousova, *Warum protestiert “ihr” nicht gegen Putin?*, “ZDF” (online), 25 November 2022 (accessed: 20 May 2023): <<https://www.zdf.de/nachrichten/politik/russlanddeutsche-protest-ukraine-krieg-russland-100.html>>.

<sup>62</sup> C. Eubel, *Weniger Straftaten mit Bezug zum Ukraine-Krieg*, “Mediendienst Integration” (online), 25 November 2022 (accessed: 28 December 2022): <<https://mediendienst-integration.de/artikel/weniger-straftaten-mit-bezug-zum-ukraine-krieg.html>>.

<sup>63</sup> *Strafgesetzbuch (StGB). § 140. Belohnung und Billigung von Straftaten*, “Bundesministerium der Justiz” (online, accessed: 28 December 2022): <[https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/stgb/\\_140.html](https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/stgb/_140.html)>.

been opened for the use of the Z symbol by the end of April 2022, mainly in Lower Saxony (75), Saxony-Anhalt (29) and Berlin (22). Some federal states were unable to provide any figures.

Compared to the first weeks of the war, the number of criminal offenses in Germany decreased in the second quarter of 2022: while The Federal Criminal Police Office of Germany initially recorded around 200 crimes per week, the trend continued to decline from the end of May until double-digit incidents were recorded at the end of 2022. Most crimes were recorded in Lower Saxony, Berlin, Bavaria and North Rhine-Westphalia.

There were also acts of violence against people in the last months of 2022. Lower Saxony recorded the most attacks (73 crimes), Schleswig-Holstein reported 33 acts of violence, Berlin – 32, Bavaria – 20, North Rhine-Westphalia – 14 and Baden-Württemberg – 11. In the rest of the federal states, there were single digit numbers or no information was available.

Several thousand demonstrations and rallies have been held in Germany since the beginning of the war. According to The Federal Criminal Police Office, they were mostly unproblematic: by the end of November 2022, North Rhine-Westphalia had registered 15 crimes in 1,513 public meetings, in Hessen, single criminal investigations had been carried out in 1,400 public events, in Hamburg 17 torts in 244 public meetings. By the end of April 2022, more than 700 public events took place in Baden-Württemberg, more than 570 in Bavaria, around 430 in Lower Saxony and around 150 in Berlin<sup>64</sup>.

According to the Federal State Criminal Police Offices, most of the rallies were peaceful and solidarity demonstrations with Ukraine. However, several dozen pro-Russian demonstrations took place in the form of a motorcades. By the end of April 2022, there were 16 such rallies in Saxony-Anhalt, 8 in Baden-Württemberg, 6 in North Rhine-Westphalia, 4 in Bavaria, 3 in Lower Saxony and 2 in Schleswig-Holstein. Only over the weekend, from Friday, April 22 to Sunday, April 24, 2022, according to the announcement of the Deputy Minister President and Minister of the Interior, Digitalization and Migration of Baden-Württemberg, Thomas Strobl, 47 public meetings with around 5,800 participants were held throughout Germany. There were 18 demonstrations regarding the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. In Reutlingen, about 50 people in 25 vehicles took part in a pro-Russian motorcades. In Lahr/Ortenau District, around 250 people with around 200 vehicles took part in a pro-Russian motorcades<sup>65</sup>.

The image of the Russian-speaking inhabitants of Germany was certainly damaged by people behaving provocatively and pro-Russian, thus winding up the spiral of

<sup>64</sup> Data for other federal states: Schleswig-Holstein (238), Saxony (114), Hamburg (98), Saarland (69). See: F. Ghelli, A. Pürckhauer, *Anfeindungen im Zusammenhang mit dem Ukraine-Krieg*, “Mediendienst Integration” (online), 28 April 2022 (accessed: 28 December 2022): <<https://mediendienst-integration.de/artikel/anfeindungen-im-zusammenhang-mit-dem-ukraine-krieg.html>>.

<sup>65</sup> *Pressemitteilung*, Baden-Württemberg Ministerium des Inneren, für Digitalisierung und Kommunen Pressestelle, [Stuttgart], 25 April 2022: <[https://www.polizei-bw.de/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/20220425\\_PM-Bilanz-Wochenende.pdf](https://www.polizei-bw.de/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/20220425_PM-Bilanz-Wochenende.pdf)> (accessed: 20 December 2022).



aggression. An example is the Russian influencer/warfluencer, Yulia Prokhorova, who was deported from Germany for spreading Kremlin propaganda on her social media and harassing (online and in person) Ukrainian refugees on the streets of Germany and Austria.

In Saxony, a relatively higher proportion of criminal offenses was recorded: of the 306 recorded offenses, 111 were committed at public meetings. According to The German Federal Criminal Police Office, however, the demonstrations in Saxony covered a mix of different topics: in addition to the war in Ukraine, they were energy supplies, environmental and climate issues and the coronavirus pandemic.

Few federal states provided information on the nationality of the victims. However, it is known that in Berlin the crimes were directed equally against people of Russian and Ukrainian origin, as well as their property and institutions. In Bremen, out of 203 criminal offences, Ukrainians were registered as victims in 101 cases, and Russians in 6. In Hesse, 135 crimes against Ukrainians were registered, and in 11 cases the victims had Russian citizenship.

Very few federal states have been able to quantify the extent of attacks on Ukrainian properties and identify the cause. In Saxony, for example, some property offenses were classified by The Federal Criminal Police Office as right-wing crimes.

In many cases, the media (especially social media) in Germany have failed to fulfill the function of reliable journalism by presenting people with a post-Soviet migration background as a homogeneous and undifferentiated group and by repeating negative stereotypes that have been functioning for years. In addition, targeted disinformation campaigns distorted reality, exaggerating the scale of attacks and hostilities against people of Russian descent.

## **Conclusion**

Summarizing the above, it should be stated that the Russophobic war-related attacks in Germany in 2022 revealed a serious discrepancy between the auto- and heterostereotype (individual and group) of Russian-German late resettlers.

The stigmatization and multi-level discrimination of this group, lasting since the post-war period and intensified during the acute political crises of the last decade, in 2014 and 2022, is not conducive to further integration in the areas that the group considers the most crucial, i.e. identity, language and cultural issues, functioning in the labor market or political participation.

Their assigned status by law means that, on the one hand, this group is perceived as ethnically privileged, but on the other hand, it is systematically excluded in many spheres of social life. As a consequence, this group is doubly alienated from the majority population – the factors that attract people to migrate to Germany (pull factors) are at the same time push factors.

This permanent status in between, as a carrier and consequence of stereotypes and integration problems that have been growing for generations, is a serious challenge for the future both for the Russian-German late resettlers and for the majority population. Russophobic attacks in many German cities in 2022, which also affected many Russian-

-German late resettlers, have shown that Russian etiquette turns out to be a *longue durée* stereotype<sup>66</sup> that can appear at any convenient moment and context.

Therefore, it can be concluded that their ethnic origin is both their strength and a burden, which only confirms the belief in the necessity of constant constructive discussion and extensive education about the situation of this group (and generally about late resettlers) in Germany and its history.

## Abstract

**“Thank You, Your Putin Has Already Congratulated Us”. Russian-German Late Resettlers in the Context of Anti-Russian Discrimination in Germany After February 24, 2022**

Due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, Russophobic war-related crimes took place in Germany. The incidents were aimed at Russians or people perceived as such. At that time, the Russian-German late resettlers *Spätaussiedler* also experienced discrimination, being stereotypically perceived as pro-Putin immigrants from post-Soviet countries. The article analyzes the escalation of anti-Russian prejudices and discrimination in Germany in 2022, also directed at Russian-German late resettlers, in the context of their migration history and sense of social integration.

**Keywords:** Russian-German late resettlers, *Spätaussiedler*, migration, Germany, discrimination, war, Ukraine

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<sup>66</sup> H. Orłowski, *Stereotypy “długiego trwania” a procesy nation building*, in: A. Lawaty, H. Orłowski (red.), *Polacy i Niemcy. Historia – kultura – polityka*, Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, Poznań 2008, p. 302–315.

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