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Negotiating Germanness: National Socialist Germanization policy in the Wartheland

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Abstract

Given the crucial importance of the notion of *Volksgemeinschaft* in Nazi Germany one might assume that there existed a common understanding about who did or did not belong to it. Before the war, the Nazis clearly prioritised the latter with the *Volksgemeinschaft* taking shape in a process of excluding those deemed to be enemy of the people. When German troops crossed into Poland, the balance shifted. Conquering land that could only be turned into German living space when settled with Germans, the occupation authorities were suddenly confronted with the opposite. Establishing the German *Volksgemeinschaft* in multinational territories now meant sifting through the local population and separating Germans from Poles. One might have thought that it should be easy enough to answer what was a simple enough question: Who is German in annexed Poland? It was not, as I will show by looking at the selection procedure set-up by the provincial government in the Wartheland, the so-called German People's Register. Given the polycratic nature of the Nazi regime it was to be expected that this quickly descended into a bitter dispute with rival power factions with rather different ideas about how to define Germanness. What is surprising, however, is that it was loyal behaviour and not, for example, 'racial suitability' that emerged as the primary criterion. Surprising, too, is the extent to which the native population subjected to this process was able to influence its outcome by using every opportunity to convince the provincial government of its German credentials

Introduction

Volksgemeinschaft might yet prove to be the best way to get at what the National Socialist project was about.¹ A critical and emotionally highly charged catchword of German political discourse already before 1933, it moved centre-stage thereafter. As the recent historiography has shown, this—dystopian—vision of a new German *Volksgemeinschaft* is indispensable not only in understanding Hitler's rise to power, but also in becoming a critical driver in both, the authoritarian reshaping of German society and the willingness of so many Germans to participate in it.² The allure of this siren song did not stop at the German borders, however. For one thing, it was met with a resounding response by many ethnic Germans across Eastern Europe. Shedding their identity as *Auslandsdeutsche*, i.e. Germans abroad, and stressing their claim to be part of this wider German *Volk* by morphing into *Volksdeutsche* in a process of political self-radicalization, they provided the Nazi regime with the nucleus around which to establish the new *Volksgemeinschaft* across the German borders.³ With the invasion of Poland, this became a dominant strand in German occupation policy. After all, the German regime in Eastern Europe turned genocidal precisely because the Nazis did not content themselves with controlling or exploiting the territories they invaded but were instead bent on turning them into German land. It is this link between *Volksgemeinschaft* and *Lebensraum*, i.e. living space, that was to prove so murderous.

So far, the recent discussion on *Volksgemeinschaft* has not ventured into this field. While some of the contributions do explore German wartime society, the focus clearly is on Nazi Germany proper and here the consolidation of Nazi power in particular, and less on occupied Europe. In line with the other articles in this special issue, I will address this link between *Volksgemeinschaft* and *Lebensraum* by looking at one actor in the occupied territories: the civilian government in the Wartheland, a newly established province in annexed Western Poland. Amongst the many German institutions, what role did it play in turning these territories into German land and, more specifically, in expanding the German *Volksgemeinschaft* beyond

the borders of the *Reich*? In answering this question, I will focus on one aspect of Nazi population policies: the screening of the native population by the *Deutsche Volksliste*, or German People's Register (GPR), set up by the provincial government in October 1939 and in 1941 expanded to the other two provinces of annexed Western Poland. It was created to answer what seemed a simple enough question: who was German in the annexed lands? As obvious as the answer might have been to many at the start, such certainties soon gave way to bitter inter-agency disputes as well as protracted negotiation processes with the native population. On one level, this was a purely inner-German argument with the provincial government determined to hold its ground against interventions by rival power faction within the Nazi regime like the Interior Ministry and the SS. Although by no means entirely successful, the provincial government not only managed to retain overall administrative control of the German People's Register, but also resisted attempts that questioned its basic rationale. In opposition to demands by the SS to turn race into the determining criterion in the selection process, to mention just one dispute, I will show that the GPR continued to favour those thought to be willing and capable of assimilating into the German *Volksgemeinschaft*.

Maybe less obvious but no less decisive was another negotiating process, however, that took place on a very different level. Precisely because the German People's Register required people to proactively come forward to prove their commitment to the German cause, it could not function as a top-down process only but had to rely on the active participation by the native population. True, the nationality conflicts in the inter-war period provided the Nazis with a significant number of people who were more than eager to sign up while many more did so because the consequences of not being recognized as German were often lethal. Still, authorities in the Wartheland did not directly force anybody to apply. Instead, individual applicants were expected to make the first step, queue for questionnaires at the local Branch Office of the German People's Register and then submit their application to prove their commitment to Germanism. Tellingly, returning the questionnaire did not end the applicant's

involvement or his or her ability to influence the decision process. Applicants were often summoned before or petitioned the selection committee and in any case had recourse to a multi-level appeals process. No wonder then that complaints started to pile up right after the first rulings had been made with applicants sparing no effort and exploiting all legal means to appeal an unfavourable decision. It resulted in yet another drawn-out negotiation process. As I will show by utilising the abundance of personal files stored in the Poznan State Archive, a source hitherto untapped by historians, applicants became increasingly adept in understanding the selection criteria employed and changed their strategies accordingly.⁴

Making matters worse was the fact that these two developments overlapped in time: final rulings had to be revisited in line with regulatory changes or new arguments brought forward by resourceful claimants. In my article, I will retrace these arduous and often very lengthy disputes and negotiations by firmly embedding the assessment of how individual applicants took on the selection process into an analysis of genesis and operation of the German People's Register itself. Germanness, it will become clear, was an evasive fantasy, as difficult to define in Berlin as it was to establish in Poland.

Establishing the German People's Register

Nazi visions of the future were everything but optimistic with a sense of fear masking every act of aggression as self-defence.⁵ If the German people were to survive, its rebirth as a *Volksgemeinschaft* had to be accompanied and safeguarded by territorial expansion as only the conquest of new living space would provide for the necessary economic and demographic muscle to compete on the world stage. Given how central the living space theorem was for the Nazi dystopia it is surprising, then, how little effort their leaders spent on elaborating how they wanted to get there. Hitler is just the most telling case in point. If there is any consistency in his various utterances then it is, firstly, his conviction that German expansion must take place not overseas but in Europe and, secondly, to not repeat the mistakes from the past.⁶ While

conquered land could only be turned into German living space when inhabited by Germans, Hitler believed it a dangerous folly to assume that this could be achieved by simply assimilating its alien population into the German *Volk*. After all, ‘it is a hardly conceivable mistake ... to believe that ... a negro or a Chinese would become a German just because he learns German ... and perhaps to give his vote to a German political party’, Hitler states in *Mein Kampf*.⁷ No wonder that Prussian attempts to assimilate the Polish population in its eastern provinces failed, as Hitler elaborated in more detail in his sequel, the so-called *Second Book*. In contrast, a ‘völkisch state’ would have to radically change course and

muster the determination either to seal off these alien racial elements, so that the blood of its own people will not be corrupted again, or ... without further ado remove them and hand over the vacated territory to its own national comrades.⁸

A blueprint for Nazi population policy this was not. Given Hitler’s criticism of Prussian Germanization policies, for example, one will be surprised to find out that the annexation of Austria and later the Sudeten and the Memel territories did not lead to a comprehensive screening of the population to weed out non-Germans. Instead, every Austrian citizen simply became a German citizen as did Czechoslovaks and Lithuanians. True, the Nazis did make exceptions—but only by ruling those out who had moved into these territories after they had been severed from the Austrian or German empire. Indeed, the Interior Ministry explicitly stipulating that the automatic transfer of citizenship ‘is not dependent from belonging to a specific people or race’, including Jews, Czechs and Lithuanians.⁹ Here, annulling the consequences of the Paris Peace Treaties and restoring German power in Eastern Europe was clearly the overarching aim.

With the invasion of Poland, changes in policy seemed necessary. If, before the outbreak of war, collective transfer of citizenship was the rule in incorporated territories, this gave way to a more discriminatory selection process once large swathes of territories were annexed that had never belonged to Germany (or Austria) before. The first step in this direction was Hitler's decree of 8 October 1939 subdividing Western Poland into the three provinces of Danzig-West Prussia, Wartheland and—later—Upper Silesia and incorporating them into the German Reich. Unwilling to confer German citizenship to all the roughly nine million people living in these three provinces, the Nazis took recourse to the fracture introduced into German citizenship law in 1935 demoting Jewish Germans to lesser so-called state citizens (*Staatsangehörige*). In annexed Western Poland, however, Jews were now barred outright and the two-class system employed to distinguish between people of 'German or related blood' on the one hand and 'ethnic Germans' on the other, with only the latter becoming fully fledged *Reich* citizens (*Reichsbürger*).¹⁰ For Arthur Greiser, however, the new head of the provincial government and party in the Wartheland, this did not go far enough. Given that his province was established on territory which, before 1919, had mainly belonged to Congress Poland, he complained that these regulations would not allow him to exclude Poles who according to Nazi ideology were also of 'related blood'. Instead of waiting for further instructions from Berlin, he rushed to establish facts on the ground instructing Dr Karl Albert Coulon, the head of his nationality desk, to come up with a more exclusive screening system.¹¹ Dubbed the *Deutsche Volksliste*, or German People's Register, it was proclaimed on 28 October 1939 stipulating that '[a]nyone registered with the *Deutsche Volksliste* is German'.¹²

It was only one week later, that the party newspaper *Ostdeutscher Beobachter* announced the imminent 'registration of Germandom'. Residents of Posen, the provincial capital, who were either members of a 'German ... organization' or of 'German blood but due to Polish terror [had been] unable to act in German ways' were requested to collect a questionnaire at the offices of the new German People's Register during the second and third week of November.¹³

That the occupiers were not content with a record of German descent but additionally emphasised the applicant's behaviour could not have come as a surprise to anybody who still remembered the previous weekend edition of the paper. Under the headline 'It is conviction that matters', this edition devoted the first two pages to Greiser's official inauguration, during which he announced that his government would judge people primarily based on their willingness 'to work for Adolf Hitler and the National Socialist state'.¹⁴

Before the selection committees had a chance to even begin, the entire process came to a grinding halt. Unsettled by Greiser's solo act and concerned that an official recognition of an applicant as German would automatically entitle him or her to German citizenship and thus fall clearly under its jurisdiction, the Interior Ministry stepped in and imposed an immediate stop until it was ready to issue new guidelines.¹⁵ It did so only a few days later on 25 November 1939 by falling back on a definition of German ethnicity ('*deutscher Volkszugehörigkeit*') that the Interior Ministry had used after the break-up of Czechoslovakia to allow the minority ethnic German community living in the newly established so-called Protectorate to acquire German citizenship even though the Protectorate was not incorporated into the German Reich:

Of German ethnicity (*deutscher Volkszugehörigkeit*) is he who declares himself to be part of the German *Volk* provided this declaration is backed up by certain facts like *language, education, culture, etc.*¹⁶

In grounding citizenship in the applicant's ethnic identity and equating the latter with a specific social practice and commitment to Germandom one could assume that the Interior Ministry had taken some cues from Greiser's German People's Registry. However, this link between ethnic identity and compliant behaviour antedated the war. After all, the Nuremberg Laws of 1935 had followed a similar logic by stipulating that German citizenship was restricted to the person 'of German or related blood who proved through his behaviour that he was willing and able to

serve the German people'.¹⁷ If 'völkisch disloyalty' had thus become a criterion for expelling people from the German *Volksgemeinschaft*, it seemed only consistent to turn *völkisch* loyalty into a prerequisite to join the *Volksgemeinschaft*.¹⁸ According to the Interior Ministry's perspective, it also outweighed German ancestry:

Since the declaration of belonging to the German Volk is crucial it is in fact possible to accept as German a person who is partially or fully of alien stock. Vice versa, it is possible in particular circumstances that due to his commitment (*Bekanntnis*) somebody must be seen as belonging to an alien people even he is of partial or full German stock.¹⁹

This focus on the applicant's behaviour should have smoothed the conflict given that the ethnocrats in the Wartheland, too, considered this to be the crucial criterion. It did not. For once, they objected to the leeway allowing officials to base their final ruling on the applicant's 'overall behaviour'. If this was satisfactory and, moreover, the applicant deemed a 'desired addition to the population', then 'the decision ... must reflect this generously'.²⁰ More importantly, however, was the threat to how Greiser wanted to run the German People's Registry. While not in a position to impose his view on the governments across annexed Western Poland, Greiser was determined to resume the selection process brought to an abrupt halt from Berlin and do so with as little changes as possible. It is for this reason why the criticism quickly turned to the questionnaire proscribed by the Interior Ministry and deemed 'unfit ... to determine the applicant's ethnic identity in a responsible way'.²¹ If the provincial government wanted to ensure that, as Coulon put it, 'no *völkisch* dubious elements [was to] remain in the *völkisch* battle zone', more data had to be collected.²² So instead of replacing the questionnaire compiled in the Wartheland by the one imposed from Berlin, applicants were required to fill out an additional so-called supplementary questionnaire that would better allow

to determine the two key criteria for German ethnicity (*Volkszugehörigkeit*): ‘German’ heritage and, above all, the alleged ‘commitment to Germandom’ under Polish rule. The questionnaires had then to be filed with the Branch Office (*Zweigstelle*) of the German People’s Registry attached to the local county commissioner or city major which would also issue a first ruling within one week. Reflecting the significance of this procedure, the provincial government also introduced a comprehensive appeals process allowing applicants to lodge a complaint with the District Office (*Bezirksstelle*) and, in case of divergent rulings, bring their case for a final ruling at the Central Office (*Zentralstelle*) in Posen, headed by Greiser or his deputy.

The selection process resumed in early 1940, only weeks after the completion of the so-called first short term plan in which roughly 90,000 people were deported into the General Government from all over the Wartheland. On instructions by Reinhard Heydrich, whose SS Reich Security Main Office had assumed overall control over deportations from annexed Poland, they were to make room for 40,000 ethnic Germans from the Baltics. Arriving under the so-called Back-home-to-the-Reich scheme directed by Heydrich’s superior Heinrich Himmler as newly appointed Reich Commissioner for the Strengthening of Germandom, they were one of the first to follow German propaganda calls to exchange their ancestral homeland for settlement in conquered Poland. These population shifts are worth mentioning, as they might help to explain why officials were quickly inundated with applications, thousands of questionnaires piling up in Posen alone. Witnessing neighbours being dragged out of their houses and forced to leave within a few hours to make place for a family from Riga, for example, must have sent a strong signal in favour of a proactive engagement with the occupiers to avoid a similar fate. All the more so, as this first short term plan was followed by three more deportation waves that only came to a halt in March 1941 when they threatened to interfere with the invasion of the Soviet Union. By this time, more than 200,000 people had been removed from the Wartheland.²³

The intervention of the Interior Ministry notwithstanding, being recognized as German in the Wartheland was both more difficult than and different from the practices in the rest of annexed Poland. When the selection process resumed in spring 1940, the provincial government had made sure that it would follow the rationale drawn up before the Interior Ministry's had forced it to a halt. The German People's Register, at any rate, was not dissolved, nor was the idea dropped to instruct officials to further subdivide those registered into two groups A and B—a hierarchy not allowed for by the Interior Ministry and unique to the Wartheland. In line with the announcement in the *Ostdeutscher Beobachter* from early November 1939, group A was reserved for so-called Germans by commitment (*Bekennnisdeutsche*) while Germans by descent (*Stammesdeutsche*) were to be sorted into group B. The decisive criteria for both were the applicant's behaviour prior to the German invasion. As explained in a manual distributed by the provincial government in an attempt to keep the disruptions by the intervention of the Reich Ministry to a minimum: 'The fundamental prerequisite for belonging to the German *Volk* is: *The commitment to the German Volk in times of völkisch alien rule*'. For registration in group A, this was laid out to be rather straightforward and required the applicant to have taken an active role in the public life of the ethnic German minority before the German invasion whether this was by becoming a member of a German sports club or a German political party.²⁴ Heinrich Weiß, a pharmacist from Posen, was just this type of person: Born in 1902, he was a member of several German social, cultural and economic associations and a leading functionary in the *Jungdeutsche Partei*, the most active and right-wing party within the ethnic German community.²⁵ Moreover, he also reported about having been persecuted on behalf of his 'commitment to Germandom', which was a discrete field in the supplementary questionnaire, claiming to have suffered from economic boycott, house searches and eventually arrest and deportation during the first days of the war. Weiß was swiftly registered, receiving the first identity card issued by the German People's Register, and becoming a foremost supporter of the occupation regime.²⁶ Stanislaus Dokowicz,

a business man from Wollstein, was another model German. Although he had never joined a German political party, there were other ways to play a significant role in the life of the ethnic German community. In Dokowicz's case, by becoming a long-time member of the trade and school associations of the ethnic German community and—as he pointed out—sparing no expenses to allow his three children to attend a German private school. Obviously, he also claimed to have been persecuted, indeed 'destroyed economically by a boycott'. What makes this application so interesting, however, is that he did not even try something else. While he made much of having married a German woman and picking German names for his children, the selection committee surely could not have failed to notice that not only was his first and last name Polish but so were those of his parents and grandparents making him—at least according to the selection criteria of the German People's Registry—a person of Polish descent. In this case, it did not matter as commitment to the German cause trumped Polish ancestry. Stanislaus Dokowicz and his entire family were duly sorted into group A.²⁷

Interestingly, it was more difficult with the so-called Germans by descent as—unlike suggested by the term—German descent was a necessary, but not sufficient precondition. In line with the basic rationale of the German People's Register, the applicants also had to persuade the occupiers that it was only for 'Polish pressure that they had not dared to commit themselves to the German Volk'. Failure to do so, if, in other words, the screening commission concluded that they had 'committed themselves to the Poles', German descent was not enough as Richard Ast, an owner of a small company producing toiletries from Posen, was to find out. While he and his wife could prove that all their grandparents had German names, his family had lost its way. The green booklet specified several examples to help officials make their decisions noting, for example, that the language spoken at home could be taken as 'sign of their *völkish* commitment' as could sending their children to a Polish school, while, obviously, '[a]nyone' giving them Polish names 'is as a rule not German'.²⁸ Family Ast had done all this as they had to admit on the supplementary questionnaire: sent both of their children to Polish

schools although Posen did not lack German schools, named their daughter Halina and even failed to understand that her statement to have two native languages, German and Polish, would be seen by the selection committee as an indication for the family speaking Polish at home. Richard Ast's assurance, that it was only due to business considerations that he 'had not been able to commit himself to Germandom', did not convince the officials of the German People's Register.²⁹ He and his family were rejected in mid-April 1940. As in many other cases, however, this was the beginning and not the end of a protracted and complicated case that the provincial government took over three years to decide.

Modifying the German People's Register

It did not take too long, until the provincial government realised the degree to which the high expectations placed on the applicants' conduct during the inter-war curtailed the number of people accepted onto the German People's Register. This was bad news given that many more 'Germans' were needed to build up the party, staff the administration and, more generally, secure and strengthen the hold on a territory with nine out of ten people being Polish. Even the selection committees began questioning the process when they had to turn away applicants who they considered to be German but who—according to the strict criteria set out in the green booklet—were seen to have made just one compromise too much in their day to day life in Poland. Initially, these applications were compiled on a local level as so-called doubtful cases to be revisited later. But as the number increased significantly over the course of the first few months, officials of the German People's Register in the districts of Posen and Hohensalza apparently started to reconsider a recent argument with their colleagues in Litzmannstadt, the third district in the east of the Wartheland. There, the district president Fritz Uebelhoer had asked for special permission to roll-out a selection process that was even more fine-grained and comprehensive. Initially opposed by Coulon and the ethnocrats in Posen, they eventually had to admit that the key criteria of the German People's Register, the 'commitment to

Germandom', had to be interpreted in a more flexible manner in a territory that, like Litzmannstadt, had never belonged to Germany and where a much less pronounced German social and cultural life had exposed ethnic Germans 'much more ... to a slowly, non-violent Polonization, a percolation in ethnically alien (*völkischen Fremdboden*) ground'.³⁰ So instead of rejecting those who did not fit the criteria for groups A and B, Uebelhoer expanded the German People's Registry by three additional groups C, D and E. Whereas the criteria for A and B were similar to those in Posen, applicants with a 'deficient national identity' but only 'slightly Polonized' were not rejected as 'doubtful cases' in Litzmannstadt but sorted into group C, furnished with an identity card that entitled them to be treated as Germans, too, and to be put in line for German citizenship. Finally, applicants who while of German descent were found to be 'passively' or 'actively Polonized' were registered in groups D and E. Unlike members of the other groups, however, they were explicitly excluded from German citizenship with the latter being reported to the Gestapo as dangerous 'renegades'.³¹

From mid-1940 onwards, this model was finally extended to the western parts of the Wartheland with an update to the green booklet describing group C as reserved for 'people of German descent who, while having engaged with Polishdom in the past, today behave in a way that shows that they possess all the prerequisites to become full members of the German *Volksgemeinschaft*'.³² Many of those earlier classified as doubtful cases and previously rejected, were transferred into this group while others, who had applied later or appealed a previous ruling, could now do so with higher chances of success. Hedwig Swiatkowski, a married woman from Posen, for example, did encounter some difficulties at first. Applying in June 1940 because her father and brothers had already been recognized as Germans and feeling 'very bitter to be considered a Pole when amongst them', she was rejected initially.³³ As her further correspondence with the officials of the German People's Register indicates, she clearly grasped just how important it was to convince the authorities that at least when it came to her commitment to Germandom she could be counted on. In her appeal, she stated to have almost

been executed by the Polish government for espionage—a claim that remained unsubstantiated and was quickly dismissed by the German authorities. As the notes in the margins of her file reveal, the officials did, however, take umbrage at the Polish names of two of her grandparents and her husband who had refused to even apply.³⁴ In an angry reply she appealed the ruling with the District Office of the German People's Registry, challenging officials 'to prove that she has ever acted against the German interest' while 'brusquely rejecting' any notion that she went along with the Poles. Moreover, she asserted, she would only speak German with Gerhard and Rudolf, her two young sons. If, however, 'I am to be reproached only because I have a Polish husband', this would be a 'great injustice' given that it has not been a problem with so many 'thousands' of other women.³⁵ When she was told in no uncertain terms that her commitment to Germandom could only be trusted if she divorced her husband, she quickly changed her mind. Four days later, she notified the Central Office that she had filed for a divorce pleading to 'now' be issued with temporary identity cards that would allow her children to attend a German school.³⁶ With the divorce not yet settled when her appeal came up at the end of 1940, she was rejected again.³⁷ As she learned during yet another visit to the District Office not everything was lost, however, if she proved herself worthy to be recognized as German. As the official recorded in a note for his superiors: 'I have disclosed to her that after the divorce is finalised nothing would speak against admitting her'.³⁸ In a sign of good will, the District Office instructs the German school to admit her children and, two months later, accepted the entire family into group C after the courts had dissolved her marriage.³⁹

Still, being recognized as German remained harder in the Wartheland than in any of the other two provinces in annexed western Poland. Too hard for Richard Ast and his family when they appealed the first ruling of the GPR's Branch Office from April 1940. Putting more effort into his second attempt by trying to construct a life narrative that portrayed him as a model German in turbulent times, he pointed out that he was 'confirmed and married in German and educated according to German tradition', stayed away from any Polish associations and,

together with his entire family, was of 'pure German heritage'. It is unclear whether he was told the reasons why he was not accepted into the German People's Register as they were not usually communicated on paper when a person was rejected for the first time. But even if this had not been the case, by then word must have spread among the applicants what the Germans were looking for. In any case, when Ast lodged his complaint he had had a much better sense of what must have scuppered his application and addressed it head on: Yes, he had not sent his children to a Polish school, but only because as a manufacturer of perfumes he was dependent on the supply of ethyl alcohol provided by the government. This, he was made to understand, would dry up if he sent his children to a German school.⁴⁰ In line with the procedure set out in the green booklet, his complaint was forwarded to the GPR's District Office that requested all available records and a full report from the local Branch Office in preparation for its ruling.⁴¹ Defending its decision, the manager of the Branch Office did not deny that 'Richard Ast and his wife are of German origin'. What was decisive, however, was the fact that they 'had not committed themselves to Germandom and had been members of the Polish protestant community'. Still, given that this decision was taken in April 1940, i.e. at a time when the German People's Register consisted only of the two groups A and B, now the District Office 'might consider registration in group C'.⁴² The District Office, however, remained unconvinced and rejected the family again one week later.

No intention to give up, and apparently also not deterred from reading on the rejection form that 'this decision is final' and 'further submissions cannot be answered', Ast turned to help from outside of the Wartheland.⁴³ In early September, he petitioned Hitler personally, explaining that 'although of pure German origin' he was now in 'great danger' to lose his livelihood if he was not finally recognized as German.⁴⁴ For further details, he included another letter that he wrote to Himmler on the same day. Although Himmler was not yet directly involved in the German People's Register, he was responsible for resettling ethnic Germans from Eastern Europe in annexed Poland. In their case, however, Richard Ast claimed,

voicing some of the frustration many ethnic Germans felt in the Wartheland, nobody was interested whether they had belonged to a Polish organization or sent their children to a German school. In fact, he asserted, 'some of them cannot even speak German' and demanded to know whether 'we, of pure German origin and of German sentiment are ... really to be expelled from the German *Volksgemeinschaft*'?⁴⁵ Like many in Western Poland, Ast also had relatives in Germany. One of them, Otto Ast, a party leader in Cologne, now also intervened. In a sharp and angry letter to the provincial government he stated that there was 'nothing to question, neither whether [his cousin] belonged to the German people, since he had proven this, nor that he was of German sentiment'. In a barely veiled threat he wrote that his party district had asked one of their members on party business in Posen to look into this affair. He, in any case, would not let this rest as rejecting his cousin 'constituted the greatest humiliation for me as a political leader and I would do anything I can to prevent this from happening'.⁴⁶

According to the guidelines, the District's Office confirmation of the Branch Office's rejection should have closed Richard Ast's case for good. As with many others, however, it did not, particularly when the German People's Register came under pressure from outside to justify its decisions. Coulon reprimanded Otto Ast for his 'inappropriate claims', as he informed the District Office. But he also asked them to re-evaluate his case.⁴⁷ At first, it seems, the District Office bowed to this pressure accepting him for the first time onto the German People's Register, if only in group D. Only a month later, however, and before Richard Ast was informed, this ruling was reversed and he was again rejected. This time, however, the blow was softened by informing him that he might be granted German citizenship later.⁴⁸ Obviously, Richard Ast appealed again.

Extending the German People's Register across annexed Poland

There can be no doubt that the expansion of the German People's Register in the Wartheland in mid 1940 broadened the support base of the occupation regime. It was equally clear, however,

that the selection process and thus the transfer of German citizenship in the Wartheland remained both more restrictive than in the other two provinces in annexed Poland and at odds with the guidelines set out by the Interior Ministry.

Unsurprisingly, then, the more time passed, the bigger the dissatisfaction in Berlin and across annexed Poland with the provincial governments increasingly criticising each other in their handling of the selection process. New attempts to harmonize selection criteria were initially pushed mainly by the Interior Ministry and received a new sense of urgency when Himmler got involved too. After more than a year of acrimonious negotiations, a ‘new’ selection procedure was finally introduced all across annexed Poland in March 1941 that for all intents and purposes looked very similar to the one pioneered in the Wartheland.⁴⁹ Adopting not only the name from Greiser’s undertaking, the new German People’s Register had basically the same application, decision and appeals process and selected the applicants into equally finely graded groups, even if they were now reduced to four and had received Arab numerals, i.e. 1-4 instead of A-D. Coulon was clearly satisfied with the outcome claiming that ‘the concluded arrangement across the *Reich* would not have happened without the groundwork and the experience in the Wartheland’.⁵⁰ Still, older concerns about Berlin trying to bring in a more lenient selection process than the one pursued in the Wartheland had not been put to rest entirely. In particular there was little appreciation for the Interior Ministry’s position that—as set out in the introduction to the implementing provisions—‘active engagement for Germanism is ... no prerequisite for ... registration’ as ‘even an indifferent or bad German still remains a German’ resulting in slightly more inclusive formulations describing the selection criteria for each group.⁵¹ Still, Greiser saw no need to fundamentally revisit the rulings already made. Instead, the selection committees were instructed to finish processing all available applications first and only then proceed to regroup the applicants according to the new guidelines.⁵²

In practice, however, the German People’s Register did become more inclusive. Not

primarily, it seems, in the regrouping process as Greiser had made it clear that ‘it was generally ... to be expected’ that somebody sorted into group A would automatically end up in group 1 etc.⁵³ However, new applications were judged by the new and slightly more inclusive set of criteria as were the many appeals against either previous rejections or the sorting into a lower group. This is the way, in which Ast finally succeeded. Apparently, the second rejection by the District Office had been controversial even within the administration given that it annulled a previous one which, only a few weeks earlier, had advised his registration in group E. Moreover, it did clearly not make use of all the information that Richard Ast had or could have provided. An initial summons for him and his entire family to appear before the District Office was withdrawn, depriving Richard Ast to explain his case in person.⁵⁴ And just a few days after he had been rejected for the second time, three affidavits signed by well-known ethnic Germans from Posen arrived. Two of them were on a form issued by the German People’s Register for this purpose. Asking guarantors to confirm, amongst others, the applicant’s proper behaviour as a German during the inter-war period, they allowed a good insight into the priorities guiding the selection process. In this case, they were not quite as strong as Ast had hoped for. While confirming that the family spoke German at home and that the children were raised in German, both guarantors added that Polish was also spoken and that the family attended not only the German but also the Polish protestant church. They left no doubt, however, that over the last fifteen years they had known Ast he never tried to pass off as a Pole and that they always perceived him to be German.⁵⁵ Importantly, one guarantor, a salesman for a German company, also confirmed the strong economic pressure he had faced: boycotted because he was ‘known to be German’, he was finally ruined by ‘Polish banks denying him credit’.⁵⁶ This time, with fresh evidence and a slightly relaxed set of criteria after the introduction of a reformed German People’s Register in all parts of annexed Poland, his family was finally accepted in June 1941—into group 4.⁵⁷

Richard Ast was still not satisfied. After doggedly pursuing his appeals process that had

lasted almost as long as the German occupation, he was not willing to settle for the lowest group. True, he and his family had now secured access to, for example, German schools, pay and pensions and were protected from being treated as Pole and thus much better shielded from arbitrary discrimination, arrest or murder. But when Greiser had opted for a multi-tiered selection system with loyal behaviour determining not just whether applicants were recognized as German, but further specifying into which of the four groups of the German People's Register they were sorted, he had done so for a reason. Joining the Nazi party, for example, or advancing into positions of leadership in the administration or the economy, was possible only for the most trustworthy, i.e. only those in group 1, with members of group 2 yet to prove their dedication to the German cause and, for example, explicitly also barred from becoming university professors and, more generally, from any teaching that involved matters of ideology ('*Weltanschauungsfragen*'). And yet, as so-called *Bekennnisdeutsche* they were much better off than the *Stammedeutschen* in groups 3 and 4. Excluded from the civil servants, any teaching profession and even banned from joining most Nazi organization, they were, moreover, not entirely safe from expropriation and deportation to the Reich for re-education if their farm, apartment, shop or factory was needed, for example to house the incoming ethnic Germans from Eastern Europe.⁵⁸ In fact, the red identity card issued to Richard Ast as a member of group 4 would make him a preferred target for expropriation as they, unlike members of group 3, could not expect any meaningful compensation. No wonder, then, that Ast aimed for group 2 and the blue identity card—a long stretch given the enormous difficulties he had experienced to make it onto the German People's Register in the first place. He tried, nevertheless, and appealed for the fourth time, now demanding to be sorted into a higher group.

Astonishingly, he was successful again although he had to wait for more than a year until the District Office elevated him into group 3. The case ruling leaves no doubt, however, that officials thought that he had now reached the end of the line. While not ignoring the family's

German origin, they were not willing to forget that Ast had sent his children to Polish schools and attended a Polish church. Still, ‘although the family Ast has slipped into Polishdom, it cannot be proven that they acted against German interests. Therefore, sorting into group 3 seems justified’.⁵⁹ For Richard Ast this was still not good enough. On the one hand, he like many who appealed the rulings of the German People’s Register, was clearly upset by how their sense of being German could be questioned. As Ast had accused Coulon on a previous occasion, ‘he and his family had been wronged’ by the authorities.⁶⁰ On the other hand, reasonable security against arbitrary discrimination only came with group 2. So he appealed again, for the fifth time, now demanding the green identity card of group 3 to be replaced by a blue one.⁶¹ To bolster his chances, he made sure that the German People’s Register received yet another affidavit, which again stressed the severity of his boycott by the Polish government. If he had ‘sent his children to a Polish school’—the affidavit read—then ‘not out of inner conviction, but of necessity to earn the bread for his family’.⁶² Summoned to make his case before the Central Office, the final arbiter in the Wartheland, he was reproached for having picked Polish schools. However, Richard Ast eventually succeeded in a ‘personal discussion’ to convince Greiser, who chaired the panel, that he was ‘one of those people, who—forced by political circumstances and to avoid any economic or other disadvantages—had to make some concessions to the Poles but who were able to retain their Germandom’.⁶³ Finally, after a process that had started two and a half years earlier and was marred by many setbacks, Richard Ast had litigated his way through a comprehensive appeals process. After having been rejected twice outright, eventually family Ast had come out almost at the top of what was a hierarchically differentiated occupation society in Poland.

Racial Screenings

One question I have hardly touched on so far is that of race—in itself highly suggestive of the selection process in the Wartheland and by extension in the annexed Polish territories.

Interestingly, neither the Interior Ministry nor the occupation authorities in Poland felt the need for racial criteria in defining Germanness. Indeed, they would not easily fit a selection process that, like the German People's Register in the Wartheland, rewarded past compliant behaviour over everything else. Greiser's close relationship to Himmler notwithstanding, he did not give in when Himmler started to criticise that decisions were based on 'purely outward confessions to belong to the German *Volk* (language, upbringing, culture etc.)' when they should 'primarily' require a 'positive assessment of racial belonging'.⁶⁴ In fact, Greiser did the opposite when he promptly instructed officials that 'racial criteria are not a sound basis on which to decide whether the applicant belonged to the German people'.⁶⁵ Himmler did not let go, however. Not least, because a selection process favouring racial criteria would probably end up under his control as it was hard to see which other institution but Himmler's own SS Race and Settlement Main Office (*Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamt, RuSHA*) would have been capable of racially screening so many people. This seemed all the more desirable, as it would have greatly facilitated his task to resettle the rapidly increasing number of ethnic Germans. Given that people enlisted in the German People's Register were to be treated as Germans, the introduction of stringent racial criteria would drive rejection rates up and thus increase the number of houses, farms and companies that could be seized from those who remained Poles and handed over to Germans from the Baltics, Wolhynia or Galicia. After running against a brick wall with the heads of government in the provinces, Himmler changed tack and focussed his pressure on the Interior Ministry.⁶⁶ When the new German People's Register was eventually introduced across all annexed Poland in May 1941, it did not only—as I have pointed out—relax the existing selection criteria. It also introduced an entirely new requirement, if only for those in group 3: Before issuing the green identity card, officials had to establish that the applicant did not 'raise racial concerns'.⁶⁷ For Himmler, this was the much-anticipated opportunity to become directly involved in the selection process. Only one month later, the SS Race and Settlement Office demanded the right to re-visit all previous decisions

regarding applicants already sorted into group 3 and to be given a veto on all applications for this group in the future to ensure that only those were accepted who ‘according to their racial evaluation, were found suitable’.⁶⁸

Given the previous disputes on this matter, negative reactions, not just in the Wartheland, were to be expected. On the one hand, the provincial governments in annexed Poland saw this as an encroachment on their power which was to be resisted. More importantly, however, they understood very well that introducing race as a criterion would undermine the entire rationale of the selection process which, as I have demonstrated, aimed at creating a loyal power base for the German occupation. Nobody had formulated this clash quite as succinctly as Coulon in the previous arguments with Himmler. For him, the danger was that

the demand of the political reality of the day would entirely step back behind this purely biological demand. ... Among the ethnic Germans it creates the impression that the active engagement in the ethnic battles of the past would be little appreciated and that in the end a Pole with a positive racial assessment would be valued more than a proven ethnic German with a lower racial score... Therefore, the individual’s commitment to the ethnic battle must be the primary basis for the assessment.⁶⁹

When the RuSHA started to prepare for sending its men into the Wartheland to subject the roughly 70,000 people sorted into group 3 to a racial screening, this resistance only grew. Garnering support from Berlin, Coulon explained to the Party Chancellery that, obviously, nobody in the Wartheland administration was against racial screenings per se. ‘However’, Coulon continued, what needed to be done first was ‘to provide ethnic-political (*volkstumpolitisch*) clarity first’ in order to ‘create an ethnic-politically educated German *Volksgemeinschaft* ... and a working German administration’. After all, these were ‘war

important tasks ... and, therefore, had priority over anything else'. Prolonging the selection process and questioning decisions already made would threaten both.⁷⁰ In a very outspoken memorandum, Coulon reminded his superiors that

the inclusion of racial screening into the selection process of the German People's Register ... goes against ... its fundamental idea. The People's Register is a summary registration of those of German descent based on their behaviour for group 1 and 2, and of their descent for group 3 and 4. ... The principle ... must remain, to distinguish between ethnic questions and racial questions.⁷¹

In the end, Himmler managed to overcome this resistance only by giving in to Greiser's demand that those deemed racially unfit could be expelled from the German People's Register only, when the SS could guarantee their immediate deportation from the Wartheland to the Reich and thus reduce political friction within the province.⁷² The imperatives of the war economy were also not ignored: Picking up on a previous suggestion by Coulon, the SS discussed forcibly sterilising those deported to the *Reich* as it would 'eliminate them biologically' while retaining their labour power.⁷³ It was only after Greiser's consent that Himmler signed the decree instructing the RuSHA to screen everybody already in or applying for group 3 of the German People's Register ruling that '[a] negative result of the racial screening will necessarily result in the rejection of the application or the expulsion from the German People's Register'.⁷⁴

It is testament to just how unpopular this was that the criticism from within the administration did not die down even after Greiser had signed off on it. His district president in Posen, Victor Böttcher, protested that

racial screening is not just an addition to the German People's Register but

represents two conflicting approaches. While some ground their decision on whether somebody should be Germanized primarily on how the applicant was raised, his behaviour and his character traits, others are judging only by outer appearance.⁷⁵

It only got worse in the following months when the RuSHA dispatched four screening commissions with two so-called suitability testers (*Eignungsprüfer*) each. Driving from one Branch Office of the German People's Register to the next in April and May 1942, they managed to screen no less than 67,235 people in just eight weeks and in the end compiled a list of 6,227 allegedly 'racially unfit', i.e. of people who did not make it into racial groups I to III, but were sorted into IV.⁷⁶

For the provincial government, this high number seemed to have come as a surprise and they quickly moved to contain the damage. Firstly, they ruled out expelling anybody who had relatives in group 2 or 1—regardless of his or her assessment by the SS. In the end, expelling, for example, the mother who had been sorted into group 3 and was now classified as 'racially unsuitable' by the SS, meant her eventual deportation from the Wartheland thus tearing the family apart. The political unrest this would entail was not hard to imagine and for the provincial government it was too big a risk to take. Shortly thereafter, Rolf-Heinz Höppner, Coulon's successor as head of the nationality desk, made the RuSHA understand that, secondly, exceptions would also have to be made for anybody with four grandparents of German descent.

The last major confrontation erupted, thirdly, about those on RuSHA's list who were already drafted into the Wehrmacht. As the commander of the military district wrote to Greiser, he was alarmed that the RuSHA wanted to strike 748 conscripts off their roll, 53 of whom were already at the front. The army asked Greiser 'to proceed generously', particularly if there were 'no criminal aspects or serious racial concerns to consider'.⁷⁷ Greiser agreed,

telling his deputy that ‘obviously, everything must be avoided which might dampen the enthusiasm of a soldier drafted by the Wehrmacht’.⁷⁸ Instead, he allowed for the expulsion of only those who were sorted into racial evaluation group IVf, i.e. who the RuSHA thought to be of Jewish or other allegedly non-European descent. The rest had to be ‘digested’.⁷⁹ In the end, it is very unlikely that any of them were expelled: thirty of them had relatives in group 1 or 2 or had four grandparents of German descent while only one of the remaining was sorted into IVf. But by then, the provincial government had already ruled that anybody deployed to the front was to be exempted, too.⁸⁰

These exceptions notwithstanding, both the ruling on new applications as well as on appeal cases now normally required a clearance from the RuSHA if the applicant was to be sorted into group 3. Normally, this was done after the respective body of the German People’s Register had come to a decision so as to avoid to subject candidates for the higher groups to this screening. This is also how it happened in the case of Richard Ast When the German People’s Register District Office in Posen granted his appeal in August 1942 and elevated him and his family into group 3, local officials were ordered to issue the identity card ‘only if the result of the racial screening is positive for the family’.⁸¹ It was only after they had passed this test, too, that they received the green identity cards.

The RuSHA was clearly not satisfied with the exceptions they had to accept and eager to expand the number of people to screen beyond those in group 3. On the one hand, to further restrict admission to the German People’s Register by, for example, demanding to also make racial screening mandatory for those in groups 1 and 2 who could not clearly prove their German descent. They were flatly rejected by the provincial government and reminded that the criterion for registration in those groups was the applicant’s commitment to the German cause before the invasion—regardless of ancestry or even ‘racial suitability’.⁸² A few months later, they tried again, with Böttcher complaining that the SS apparently believed that ‘people with a positive racial evaluation could be retroactively accepted into the German People’s Register’.

This time it was not about limiting but, in contrast, about extending admission to those previously rejected but now found to be of exemplary racial value. Here, the SS failed again for elevating racial suitability from a necessary to a sufficient selection criterion would have in effect made race trump social and political behaviour and thus undermine the very basis of the German People's Register. For Böttcher, these cases 'were settled' and Greiser was asked to issue a directive to remedy any 'remaining lack of clarity' within the RuSHA.⁸³

It might have offered a way in for Franz Ryzkewicz, a butcher in Wollstein county, and his family. They were rejected for the first time in April 1943.⁸⁴ Not only had they applied very late, more than two years after the German People's Register was established. It was also that Franz Ryzkewicz's cover letter did not quite fit the expectations the German occupiers had of a loyal citizen. Admitting that if he applied 'against my conviction and against my will', he was doing so only because all his relatives were members of the German People's Register, some of them even fighting in the German Wehrmacht. 'Why should I together with my family remain excluded?'⁸⁵ It did not help either that three of his six children had Polish names and all of them had attended Polish schools. A police inquiry added that while the family spoke German at home and through 'their entire appearance according to language, social contact, behaviour of relatives show that they are of German kind', it could not be securely established that they were of German descent. Moreover, although they had been members of neither German or Polish organizations they had 'sided with Polishdom'.⁸⁶ Ryzkewicz's appeal was rejected in July with the District Office pointing to his late application and the lack of any 'commitment to Germandom before 1939'.⁸⁷ According to his personal file, he seemed to have accepted this ruling or at least refrained from appealing again. With the case closed, there was no need to subject him and his family to a racial screening. This is, however, what must have happened at some point during this application process. Interestingly, the RuSHA judgement differed significantly from that of the offices of the German People's Register classifying most family members as racially very desirable. It did not help Ryzkewicz. As Böttcher had

reiterated, 'racial suitability' might be needed for registration in group 3 but it would certainly not suffice.

The interesting question, then, is what exactly was the effect of Himmler's intervention into the selection process or, more generally, how successful was the attempt to link the definition of Germanness to race? Not particularly, it seems, certainly not in the Wartheland. The archival material does not allow any speculations about how many applicants were initially accepted into group 3 but then not issued with identity cards because they failed to pass the racial screening. The number has to be fairly limited, however, as most applications were already decided before Greiser agreed to the screening process. This leaves those 6,227 identified in the spring of 1942 who had already been registered. For those in the Wehrmacht, it is fair to assume that their status remained unchanged. Given the 'current situation with filling up the ranks of the Wehrmacht'—Höppner told the RuSHA laconically shortly after Stalingrad—it 'cannot be justified to potentially withhold from the army a larger number of recruits'.⁸⁸ This left those of no interest for or not yet drafted by the Wehrmacht. They seemed to have fared even better thanks to Greiser's proviso that allowed for expulsions of those found racially unsuitable only if the SS could also ensure their removal from the province. Deportations, however, had been halted in March 1941 amidst the preparations for the invasion of the Soviet Union and were never resumed. This might then also explain why there is no archival evidence to suggest that even a single person was expelled due to RuSHA racial screenings. In the end, the RuSHA might have done some a favour: While the screenings did not lead to the expulsion from the German People's Register, it did lead to those men not yet drafted being struck from the military roll. Continuing to enjoy the privileges that came with being a German citizen in the annexed territories they were—as even the office of the German People's Register in Litzmannstadt complained—effectively exempt from having to fight for them.⁸⁹ Given that the Wehrmacht lost most its men during the last phase of the war, RuSHA verdicts of 'racial unsuitability' had become a life saver.

In a sense, the Wartheland had not been the main target for Himmler when pressing for the introduction of racial criteria. After all, group 3 in the Wartheland never accounted for more than 15 per cent of the roughly 500,000 people in the German People's Register with 83 per cent sorted into groups 1 and 2. The situation was exactly the opposite in the other two provinces in annexed Poland with more than 70 per cent registered in group 3, altogether more than 1.7 million people.⁹⁰ Much of Himmler's criticism of the German People's Register took aim at the allegedly too lenient selection process in these two provinces. Introducing racial screening, Himmler had hoped, would put an end to this. No wonder, then, that Albert Forster and Fritz Bracht were even less inclined than Greiser to strike a deal. Forster, for example, simply denied the SS access to the people accepted by the German People's Register. He did not deny that in some cases it might be useful to ascertain an applicant's racial suitability. This, however, local officials were instructed, was a task not for the RuSHA but fell 'entirely' within the competence of the Race Policy Office, a party institution and thus under Forster's control. This would ensure that it would not just be about—and this was a side blow to the SS—'outward appearance', but that the 'outlook on life, lifestyle and character' also corresponded with the 'image of a German'.⁹¹ It seems that the only people the RuSHA did eventually screen were those, who applied from within a SS internment camp trying to avoid their imminent deportation. It was to no avail, however, as Forster waded in again, reminding the offices of the German People's Register that their decision had to be based on their own 'personal impression' about whether the 'applicant and his family were considered to be a desirable addition to the population or not'. Information supplied by the RuSHA, including the applicants' racial evaluation, 'were to be treated as non-binding for the decisions of the German People's Register'.⁹²

In Upper Silesia, the RuSHA's defeat was a slightly more drawn out affair. Initially, Bracht simply refused. Racial screenings, he wrote to the RuSHA, were 'absolutely unwanted' and he would have to 'reject any such undertaking with full force' citing potential political

unrest given the roughly one million people registered in group 3. Later, he suggested to the RuSHA to screen group 4 instead—something mentioned neither by the Interior Ministry nor in Himmler’s implementing provisions. With 50,000 people this should be enough—Bracht added laconically—‘to keep the RuSHA busy during the war’.⁹³ Bracht had no intention to keep even this promise. When the RuSHA started the racial screenings he sent a note to the heads of the Branch Offices, secret and by envoy, letting them know:

My opinion was and still is: The registration of individuals belonging to the German people with the Deutsche Volksliste cannot in principle be made dependent on the result of a racial screening..⁹⁴

There is little evidence that all 50,000 people in group 4 were screened and even less that anybody was expelled due to a negative RuSHA result. Instead, state officials decided to simply ignore the lists they started to receive from the RuSHA. In Beuthen-Tarnowitz, for example, the county commissioner did not even bother to forward them to his superiors—much to the chagrin of the local SS office. Deemed to be ‘not relevant for the [conduct] of war they were not to be processed for the time being’.⁹⁵

Conclusion

It is not without irony that it was the Nazis who by establishing the German People’s Register initiated the largest assimilation project in modern German history turning no less than three million Poles into Germans. No less surprising is how this was done given that historians largely seem to agree that—to cite Eli Nathans—‘the Nazi state relied primarily on racial categories to determine whether a person was a German’ or that—now in the words of Oliver Trevisiol—‘the population policy in the National Socialist racial state followed the principles of racial selection’.⁹⁶ Even Isabel Heinemann, in the first detailed study of the SS Race and Settlement Office, concurs. Himmler, she writes, not only put ‘almost two million people, the members of group 3 and 4 of the German People’s Register, in line for racial selection’, he

allegedly also succeeded in screening ‘a large part ... before the end of the war’.⁹⁷ Following what I would call the ‘racial turn’ in Nazi historiography during the late 1980s it has almost become *de rigeur* to see Nazi Germany as —this the aptly chosen title of a study by Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wippermann—a ‘racial state’.⁹⁸ It seems hard to resist imagining the Nazi dystopia of a *Volksgemeinschaft* as anything else than a ‘racial community’ and it is telling that in one of the most impressive recent studies of Nazi Germany the party’s mouthpiece *Völkischer Beobachter* morphed into the ‘Racial Observer’.⁹⁹ Terminology does matter, however. Substituting ‘Rasse’ for ‘Volk’ not only simulates ideological coherence where there was a multiplicity of often conflicting strands of right-wing German thought but, more importantly, eliminates the very catchword that was instrumental in tying so many Germans to the Nazi project. *Volk*, however, was neither in popular perception nor in the many ways used by the party or its officials solely or even primarily defined in racial terms but evoking and conserving more traditional and often historical and cultural understandings of belonging going back to Herder and Fichte.¹⁰⁰

People at the time and people in power knew this—not least those tasked with sorting out the citizenship of the population caught up in the German collapse in the east. Without wanting to dedicate too much attention to the legacy of the German People’s Register beyond the turning-point of 1945, I think it is precisely this focus on the applicant’s ethnic identity as expressed in his or her political and social behaviour as well as economic indispensability and not the person’s alleged racial suitability that granted these files a second lease of life in both post-war West-Germany and Poland. In West-Germany, they came in handy when deciding which refugees from Eastern Europe could claim German citizenship. Soon, German authorities were back investigating whether the applicant was an ethnic German—the essential, and until 2000 the only, prerequisite for acquiring German citizenship. According to the Federal Expellee Law (*Bundesvertriebenengesetz*) from 1953 and still valid today:

Of German ethnicity (*deutscher Volkszugehöriger*) as defined by this law is he who has declares himself to be part of the German *Volk* in his homeland provided this declaration is backed up by certain facts like descent, language, education, culture.¹⁰¹

Not only is this a more or less exact copy of the *Reich* Interior Ministry's decree from 29 March 1939 that had guided the screening commissions of the German People's Register.¹⁰² West-German authorities even decided to accept the decisions made by their Nazi predecessors foregoing further inquiry if applicants still had an identity card issued by the German People's Register. Additionally, they proved as flexible as the occupation authorities before when it came to establishing the degree of Germanness necessary for German citizenship: During the Cold War, i.e. a time of small numbers of refugees from Eastern Europe, West-Germany was happy with accepting all members of groups 1-3. After the collapse of the socialist regimes, i.e. confronted with a potentially much larger number of applicants whose integration, moreover, could no longer be turned into an example of Western largesse overcoming Eastern tyranny, German authorities became more choosy suddenly accepting only applicants from groups 1 and 2.¹⁰³ In Poland, too, ample use was made of the vast material produced by the German People's Register and left behind when the occupiers fled in haste. Polish authorities simply turned the tables and—determined to get rid of the German minority once and for all while concerned with the loyalty of the population in the borderlands—putting those in groups 1 and 2 first in line for forced labour and expulsion. And when the authorities started with the so-called rehabilitation action, it was made very easy for members of groups 3 and 4 to recover their Polish citizenship whereas members of group 2 were subjected to a much more rigorous screening process and those in group 1 rejected entirely.¹⁰⁴

It is not hard to see why the Polish authorities embraced the results of the selection procedure carried out by their enemies. After all, the German People's Register was primarily

about political loyalty. Fine-tuned over the course of five years, in hundreds of offices by many thousands of bureaucrats and affecting millions of people across annexed Poland, the Germans had created a selection procedure carefully calibrated towards identifying those who held the promise of easy assimilation into the occupation regime and the wider Nazi mission in Eastern Europe. Whereas the RuSHA personnel sent to Poland was deliberating where to draw the line between an—alien—‘black-brown, ... mostly sinister looking’ eyes and a—German—‘rich, velvety brown (cow’s eyes brown)’, the ethnocrats in the provincial governments were primarily interested in the applicants’ German-friendly behaviour and/or descent.¹⁰⁵ It is important to remember, however, that both criteria did not carry equal weight with the so-called *Bekennnisdeutsche* ranked above the *Stammesdeutsche*. In particular, it would be missing the point to assume that they represented two categorically different avenues to German *Volkszugehörigkeit*. After all, German descent was primarily established by checking whether the applicant’s grandparents had German sounding names—in other words whether they, in turn, had preserved their German identity in the past. No wonder then that genealogical ‘deficiencies’ could easily be offset by loyal behaviour whereas the active participation in a Polish nationalist organization, for example, was something even four German grandparents could not fix. Consequently, descent was not simply understood in racial terms or seen as an equivalent for racial suitability. If this would have been the case, if racial screenings had indeed been intended to settle doubts about an applicant’s descent, the screenings would not have targeted those in group 3 and 4 who had to provide proof about their German descent anyway to compensate for their alleged lack in loyal behaviour, but those in groups 1 and 2 instead who were registered on the merits of their loyalty to the German cause alone. As it happened, the provincial government was prepared to see Richard Ast, whose German descent was beyond doubt, to be rejected by the RuSHA, but not Stanislaus Dokowicz, his four Polish grandparents notwithstanding.

While it is not hard to see why occupation authorities tasked with consolidating German

rule in the annexed lands and fully exploit its economic potential gravitated towards a selection process that favoured compliant behaviour over racial-anthropological features, this was not without its drawbacks. Unlike racial screening, informed entirely by hegemonic knowledge and allowing to issue finite decision to a large number of people in little time, assessing behaviour was bound to result in a drawn-out and messy process with plenty of leeway for determined applicants to argue their case. No matter how hesitant the officials of the German People's Register were to advertise the selection criteria beyond the very general information published in calls for the population to apply, with every appeal more information trickled into the open. I would like to pause for a moment to re-call the brutality of German rule in occupied Poland. So, while decimating the Polish intelligentsia, executing tens of thousands deemed to be a security threat, deporting even more either to the General Government or in so-called Polish reservations and pressuring Himmler to agree to murder the Jews in the Wartheland in what would become the first Nazi extermination camp at Kulmhof, the provincial government was at the same time establishing a lengthy selection procedure and granting applicants a comprehensive appeals process. Shrewd claimants got away with time and again ignoring allegedly final decisions and challenged official rulings by enlisting help from friends and relatives from the Reich, pleading with Hitler, Himmler or other Nazi dignitaries and besieging the offices of the German People's Register. In dire need of broad support it is little surprising that the German People's Register was rolled out as an "offer for collaboration" to recruit people who could be trusted with staffing the new German administration, running schools, taking over businesses and, more generally, speeding up the Germanization of the conquered land.¹⁰⁶ It is equally unsurprising, however, that the whole procedure soon morphed into a negotiating process in which the applicants' latitude rose in line with their growing insight into what criteria mattered and how they were applied. Richard Ast, to refer to a successful case discussed, would have faced expropriation and deportation had he accepted the first ruling by the Local Branch of the German People's Register. The most surprising aspect of his case and

that of many others is not that he appealed—after all too much was at stake. Surprising is, rather, that officials granted his repeated appeals even after having rejected him twice and thus technically brought to a close, eventually allowing Ast to bring his case all the way to the Central Office and convince Greiser of his loyalty to Germandom and be promoted to group 2.

This focus on individual behaviour also allows, I think, to better understand that the *Volksgemeinschaft* Greiser, or Forster and Bracht for that matter, had in mind was not a ‘racial community’ but a ‘perpetrator community’. The Germans in the annexed territories were a mixed lot, comprising the three million in the German People’s Register, roughly one million so-called ethnic German resettlers from the east and a much smaller number of adventurers from the *Reich*. They did not have much in common either: drawn from many different parts of Europe and Germany proper and often with only little or no German as the large number of German classes indicate that many members of the German People’s Register had to attend. What bound them together, however, was that their very existence in this occupied land depended on a German victory—a strong motive if ever there was one to encourage their radicalization into a community of fate and deed, compelled to do everything in their power to contribute to this victory. It might not come as a surprise, then, that in the end *Volk* and ‘völkisch belonging’ trumped *Rasse* and ‘racial suitability’ precisely because it allowed for a more flexible discursive framework that was better suited to compute and cloth the political requirements of the occupation regimes.

Given the fractured nature of polycratic rule in Nazi Germany, it would obviously be premature to assume that the logic determining the selection process in the Wartheland extended to all other occupied lands where the German administration had started screening the local population. Race was envisaged to play a much bigger part in, for example, Reinhard Heydrich’s plans for the Germanization of occupied Czechoslovakia¹⁰⁷, in the various iterations of the General Plan East concocted in Himmler’s Main Office for Strengthening of Germandom and the Reich Security Main Office¹⁰⁸ and not least as a justification for

radicalising anti-Jewish policies¹⁰⁹. It is worth pointing this out as it highlights the fractured nature of the National Socialist regime making every observation about power relations by necessity dependent on time and place. In this case, it clearly shows the decisive role the provincial governments played in formulating occupation policies and the power it had to push it through—even in if this meant opposing Himmler. However, divided the various German power factions were about what made a German and who was fit to be assimilated into the German *Volksgemeinschaft*, in annexed Poland, in any case, it was Greiser together with Forster and Bracht as the heads of the civilian administration who set the tone. One might be excused to think that in what supposedly was a ‘racial state’ the party with the racial argument would win. In this case, however, it was Himmler who had to admit defeat. Access to the *Volksgemeinschaft* was determined not by race but by loyalty to the German cause, a—as it turned out—surprising negotiable matter battled out between the provincial government and the population in annexed Poland.

Endnotes

¹ For a persuasive account, see Michael Wildt, *Geschichte des Nationalsozialismus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Rupprecht, 2008).

² For a comprehensive overview over one of the most interesting discussions in the recent Nazi historiography see Frank Bajohr and Michael Wildt (eds.), *Volksgemeinschaft. Neue Forschungen zur Gesellschaft des Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2009), Detlef Schmiechen-Ackermann (ed.), *‘Volksgemeinschaft’. Mythos, wirkungsmächtige soziale Verheißung oder soziale Realität im ‚Dritten Reich‘. Zwischenbilanz einer kontroversen Debatte* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2012) and Martina Steber and Bernahrd Gotto (eds.), *Visions*

of community in Nazi Germany. Social engineering and private lives (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

³ For the radicalization of the ethnic German communities, see Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, *Nationalsozialistische Außenpolitik 1933-1938* (Frankfurt am Main and Berlin: Alfred Metzner, 1968) and Marianne Hausleitner and Harald Roth (eds.), *Der Einfluß von Faschismus und Nationalsozialismus auf Minderheiten in Ostmittel – und Südosteuropa* (München: IKGS, 2006). More specifically on Czechoslovakia see Ralf Gebel, 'Heim ins Reich!'. *Konrad Henlein und der Reichsgau Sudetenland, 1938-1945* (München: Oldenbourg, 1999), pp. 25-60, Volker Zimmermann, *Die Sudetendeutschen im NS-Staat. Politik und Stimmung der Bevölkerung im Reichsgau Sudetenland, 1938-1945* (Essen: Klartext, 1999), pp. 35-70, on Poland Gerhard Wolf, 'Die deutschen Minderheiten in Polen als Instrument der expansiven Außenpolitik Berlins', in Jerzy Kochanowski and Maike Sach (eds.), *Die 'Volksdeutschen' in Polen, Frankreich, Ungarn und der Tschechoslowakei. Mythos und Realität* (Osnabrück: fibre, 2006), pp. 22-52, on Romania Johann Böhm, *Nationalsozialistische Indoktrination der Deutschen in Rumänien 1932-1944* (Frankfurt am Main etc.: Peter Lang, 2008).

⁴ Personal files by applicants to the German People's Register form a large part not just of the holdings of the State Archive at Poznań but of all state archives in territories occupied by Germany during the Second World War with the biggest collections in Gdańsk, Bydgoszcz and Katowice. Of the tens of thousands of personal files at the State Archive in Poznań, only those of four Branch Offices are indexed and accessible to researchers. The case files used in this article are all from the Branch Offices in Wollstein or Posen-Stadt.

⁵ See for more Frank-Lothar Kroll, *Utopie als Ideologie. Geschichtsdenken und politisches Handeln im Dritten Reich* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1998).

⁶ Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1941), p. 182.

⁷ Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p. 588.

⁸ *Hitler's Secret Book*, introduced by Telford Taylor (New York, 1962), pp. 47-48. See also Andreas Wirsching, 'Man kann nur Boden germanisieren': Eine neue Quelle zu Hitlers Rede vor den Spitzen der Reichswehr am 3. Februar 1933', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, Vol. 49, No. 3, 2001, 517-50.

⁹ Decree by the Interior Ministry on the 'Acquisition of German citizenship by previous Czechoslovak citizens', 25 May 1939, *Reichsministerialblatt für die Innere Verwaltung* (hereafter: *RMBliV*), 1939, p. 1233, reproduced in Matthias Lichter and Werner Hoffmann (eds.), *Staatsangehörigkeitsrecht* (Köln: Carl Heymanns, 1966), pp. 431-437, here p. 433. The Interior Ministry used the exact same wording in regulating the citizenship of the inhabitants of the Memel territory, 15 November 1939, *RMBliV* 1939, p. 2349, reproduced in Lichter and Hoffmann: *Staatsangehörigkeitsrecht*, pp. 470-473, here p. 472.

¹⁰ Hitler's decree on the structure and administration of the eastern territories, 8 October 1939, printed in Karol Marian Pospieszalski (ed.), *Hitlerowskie 'prawo' okupacyjne w Polsce. Wybór dokumentów i próba syntezy: Ziemie 'wcielone'*. *Documenta Occupationis*, Vol. 5 (Poznan: Institut Zachodni, 1952), pp. 84-88.

¹¹ Coulon's report on the course and the windup of the GPR in the Wartheland, 5 February 1941, State Archive Poznan (hereafter APP) 406/1109, pp. 320-332.

¹² Greiser's decree on the establishment of the GPR, 28 October 1939, APP 406/1105, p. 1.

¹³ 'Erfassung des Deutschtums im Warthegau', *Ostdeutscher Beobachter*, 6 November 1939, p. 5.

¹⁴ 'Maßgebend ist die Gesinnung', *Ostdeutscher Beobachter*, 4 November 1939, pp. 1-2.

¹⁵ See district president of Litzmannstadt to local authorities, 5 December 1939, APP 406/1113, p. 384.

¹⁶ Decree Interior Ministry, 29 March 1939, RMBliV 1939, p 783. Italics in the original.

¹⁷ Nuremberg Laws, Reichsgesetzblatt 1935, part 1, p. 1146.

¹⁸ Cornelia Essner, *'Nürnberger Gesetze' oder die Verwaltung des Rassenwahns 1933-1945* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2002), p. 154.

¹⁹ Decree Interior Ministry, 29 March 1939, RMBliV 1939, p 783.

²⁰ Decree Interior Ministry, 29 March 1939, RMBliV 1939, p 783.

²¹ Egon Leuschner, the head of the GPR in the district of Litzmannstadt, to Friedrich Uebelhoer, the district president, 6 April 1940, APP 406/1108, pp. 54-61.

²² Coulon's report on the course and the windup of the GPR in the Wartheland, 5 February 1941, APP 406/1109, pp. 320-332.

²³ Gerhard Wolf, *Ideologie und Herrschaftsrationalität. Nationalsozialistische Germanisierungspolitik in Polen* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2012), pp. 148-164 and pp. 191-265.

²⁴ Guidelines for the registration of people belonging to the German *Volk* with the German People's Register (green brochure), undated, probably from the end of January 1940, APP 406/1106.

²⁵ On the Jungdeutsche Partei see Richard Blanke, *Orphans of Versailles. The Germans in Western Poland, 1918-1939* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1993), 170-182 and Albert S. Kotowski, *Polens Politik gegenüber seiner deutschen Minderheit* (Wiesbaden: Harassowitz, 1998), 272-277.

²⁶ Personal file Heinrich Weiß., APP Zweigstelle Posen-Stadt/4685. For his later career in the Nazi party see BArch BDC, PK file Heinrich Weiß.

²⁷ Personal file Stanislaus Dokowicz, APP Zweigstelle Wollstein/545.

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- ²⁸ Guidelines for the registration of people belonging to the German *Volk* with the German People's Register (green brochure), undated, probably from the end of January 1940, APP 406/1106.
- ²⁹ Personal file Richard Ast, APP Zweigstelle Posen-Stadt/211.
- ³⁰ Coulon's report on the finalization of the selection process in the Wartheland, 5 February 1941, APP 406/1109, 320-332.
- ³¹ Undated notes by the German People's Register in Litzmannstadt, most likely from mid 1940, State Archive Łódź (hereafter APL) 897/53, 1-4.
- ³² Central Office of the German People's Register in Posen, 1 July 1940, BArch PL 170/67, pp. 1-3.
- ³³ Swiatkowski to GPR Branch Office Posen, 13 June 1940, personal file Hedwig Swiatkowski, APP Zweigstelle-Posen Stadt/11139.
- ³⁴ Questionnaire Hedwig Swiatkowski, 20 June 1940, personal file Hedwig Swiatkowski, APP Zweigstelle Posen-Stadt/11139.
- ³⁵ Swiatkowski to GPR Central Office, 20 September 1940, personal file Hedwig Swiatkowski, APP Zweigstelle Posen-Stadt/11139.
- ³⁶ Swiatkowski to GPR Central Office, 24 September 1940, personal file Hedwig Swiatkowski, APP Zweigstelle Posen-Stadt/11139.
- ³⁷ GPR Branch Office Posen to District Office Posen, 30 October 1940 and GPR District Office Posen to Swiatkowski, 15 November 1940, personal file Hedwig Swiatkowski, APP Zweigstelle Posen-Stadt/11139.
- ³⁸ Note GPR District Office Posen, 7 February 1941, personal file Hedwig Swiatkowski, APP Zweigstelle Posen-Stadt/11139.
- ³⁹ GPR District Office to head of German elementary school in Posen, 10 February 1941.

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- ⁴⁰ Ast to the GPR Branch Office Posen, 27 April 1940, personal file Richard Ast, APP Zweigstelle Posen-Stadt/211.
- ⁴¹ GPR District Office Posen to Branch Office Posen-Stadt, 15 August 1940, personal file Richard Ast, APP Zweigstelle Posen-Stadt/211.
- ⁴² GPR Branch Office Posen-Stadt to District Office Posen, 22 August 1940, personal file Richard Ast, APP Zweigstelle Posen-Stadt/211.
- ⁴³ GPR District Office Posen to Ast, 31 August 1940, personal file Richard Ast, APP Zweigstelle Posen-Stadt/211.
- ⁴⁴ Ast to Hitler, 10 September 1940, personal file Richard Ast, APP Zweigstelle Posen-Stadt/211.
- ⁴⁵ Ast to Himmler, 10 September 1940, personal file Richard Ast, APP Zweigstelle Posen-Stadt/211.
- ⁴⁶ Otto Ast to the provincial government, 19 September 1940, personal file Richard Ast, APP Zweigstelle Posen-Stadt/211.
- ⁴⁷ Coulon to GPR District Office Posen, 11 October 1940.
- ⁴⁸ Note GPR District Office, 17 January 1941 and District Office to Ast, 17 January 1941, personal file Richard Ast, APP Zweigstelle Posen-Stadt/211.
- ⁴⁹ Decree about the German People's Register and German citizenship in the incorporated eastern territories, 4 March 1941, *Reichsgesetzblatt* (hereafter RGBl.) 1941, part 1, pp. 118-120 and the implementing provisions by the Interior Ministry, 13 March 1941, APP 406/1105, pp. 9-28, printed in Pospieszalski, *Hitlerowskie 'prawo' okupacyjne*, pp. 122–139.
- ⁵⁰ Coulon's note, 18 November 1940, APP 406/1109, pp. 141-2.
- ⁵¹ Interior Ministry's implementing provisions, 13 March 1941, APP 406/1105, pp. 9-28, printed in Pospieszalski, *Hitlerowskie 'prawo' okupacyjne*, pp. 122–139.

⁵² Greiser to district presidents and county commissioners, 6 April 1941, APP 834/2, pp. 13-22.

Groups D/E would form the new group 4.

⁵³ Greiser to district presidents and county commissioners, 6 April 1941, APP 834/2, pp. 13-22.

Groups D/E would form the new group 4.

⁵⁴ See note by the Branch Office Posen, 14 January 1941, personal file Richard Ast, APP

Zweigstelle Posen-Stadt/211.

⁵⁵ Affidavits by Paul Arndt and Marie Zickler, 17 and 19 January 1941, personal file Richard

Ast, APP Zweigstelle Posen-Stadt/211.

⁵⁶ Affidavit by M. Tita, 18 January 1941, personal file Richard Ast, APP Zweigstelle Posen-

Stadt/211.

⁵⁷ Ruling by GPR District Office Posen, 20 June 1941, personal file Richard Ast, APP

Zweigstelle Posen-Stadt/211.

⁵⁸ Greisers tot he heads of Gau administrations, party leaders and district presidents regarding

the consequences of the German People's Register the administration, the party and the

economy, secret, 15 February 1941, APP 406/1130, pp. 402–406.

⁵⁹ Ruling by GPR District Office, 31 August 1942, personal file Richard Ast, APP Zweigstelle

Posen-Stadt/211.

⁶⁰ Ast to Coulon, 4 January 1941, personal file Richard Ast, APP Zweigstelle Posen-Stadt/211.

⁶¹ Ast to GPR Branch Office Posen, 30 November 1942, personal file Richard Ast, APP

Zweigstelle Posen-Stadt/211.

⁶² Affidavit Oswald Hering, 20 December 1941, personal file Richard Ast, APP Zweigstelle

Posen-Stadt/211.

⁶³ Ruling by GPR Central Office, 13 June 1943, personal file Richard Ast, APP Zweigstelle

Posen-Stadt/211.

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- ⁶⁴ Note by Dr Walter, Main Office of the Reich Commissioner for Strengthening of Germandom, 20 May 1940, Bundesarchiv Berlin (hereafter BArch) R 49/61, p. 47-48.
- ⁶⁵ Guidelines for the registration of people belonging to the German *Volk* with the German People's Register (green booklet), undated, probably from the end of January 1940, APP 406/1106.
- ⁶⁶ See for example the very aggressive exchange between Greiser and Ulrich Greifelt, the head of Himmler's office as Reich Commissioner for the Strengthening of Germandom, in November 1940, APP 406/1112, pp. 28–39.
- ⁶⁷ Implementing provisions by the Interior Ministry, 13 March 1941, APP 406/1105, pp. 9-28, printed in Pospieszalski, *Hitlerowskie 'prawo' okupacyjne*, pp. 122–139.
- ⁶⁸ Guidelines for carrying out racial screenings within the German People's Register, 25 April 1941, Archive of the Main Commission for the Crimes against the Polish Nation (hereafter: AGK) 167/39, pp. 32-33.
- ⁶⁹ Coulon's comment to a draft of the decree, 12 November 1940, APP 406/1109, pp. 45-58.
- ⁷⁰ Coulon to Dr Gottfried Neeße from the Party Chancellery, 26 August 1941, APP 406/1131, pp. 27-32.
- ⁷¹ Coulon's memorandum, 10 September 1941, APP 406/1131, pp. 41-45.
- ⁷² Himmler to Greiser, secret, 30 September 1941, APP 406/1114, pp. 3-4.
- ⁷³ RuSHA to Herbert Mehlhorn, Coulon's superior, 10. September 1941, APP 406/1131, pp. 9–11.
- ⁷⁴ Himmler's decree, 30 September 1941, APP 406/1114, pp. 5-6, printed in Pospieszalski (ed.), *Hitlerowskie 'prawo' okupacyjne*, pp. 144-145.
- ⁷⁵ Böttcher to Greiser, 13 January 1942, APP 406/1131, pp. 341-346.

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- ⁷⁶ Detailed report of the RuSHA field office to the provincial government, 9 July 1942, APP 406/1131, 163-175. See also Dongus final report, 29 May 1942, APP 406/1131, 138-154.
- ⁷⁷ The commander of the military district XXI to Greiser, 17 July 1942, APP 406/1117, p. 89.
- ⁷⁸ Greiser to Jäger, 24 July 1942, APP 406/1117, p. 94.
- ⁷⁹ Höppner's note, 31 July 1942, APP 406/1117, pp. 103-105.
- ⁸⁰ Herbert Mehlhorn to the military district XXI, January 1943, APP 406/1117, pp. 150-151
- ⁸¹ Ruling GPR district office Posen, 31 August 1942, personal file Richard Ast, APP Zweigstelle Posen-Stadt/211.
- ⁸² See head of the RuSHA field office in Litzmannstadt, Walter Dongus, to provincial government, 27 January 1942, APP 406/1131, pp. 81-83 and the comments on this letter.
- ⁸³ District President Posen, Viktor Böttcher, to Central Office, 14 May 1942, APP 406/1131, pp. 123-124.
- ⁸⁴ GPR branch office Wollstein to Ryzkewicz, 9 April 1943, personal file Franz Ryzkewicz, APP Wollstein/3452.
- ⁸⁵ Ryzkewicz to GPR Branch Office Wollstein, 10 January 1943, personal file Franz Ryzkewicz, APP Wollstein/3452.
- ⁸⁶ Police station Rakwitz to county commissioner in Wollstein, 15 January 1943, personal file Franz Ryzkewicz, APP Wollstein/3452.
- ⁸⁷ Ruling of the GPR District Office Posen, 10 July 1943, personal file Franz Ryzkewicz, APP Wollstein/3452.
- ⁸⁸ Höppner to the RuSHA field office in Litzmannstadt, 15 February 1943, APP 406/1117, pp. 157-158.

⁸⁹ District Office of the German People's Register in Litzmannstadt to provincial government, 18 January 1943, APP 406/1117, pp. 12-13. Höppner again rejected any suggestion that they might be expelled, see Höppner's reply, APP 406/1117, pp. 14-15.

⁹⁰ For the last statistical overview see the numbers of SS Office of the Reich Commissioner for the Strengthening of Germandom from 1 April 1944, collated on 27 September 1944, BArch 49/467.

⁹¹ Walther Kühn, deputy district president in Danzig, to the Branch Offices of the German People's Register, 20 August 1941, AGK NTN/200, pp. 123-127.

⁹² Forster to the District and Branch Offices of the German People's Register, 9 February 1943, State Archive Bydgoszcz (hereafter: APB) 9/380, p. 243.

⁹³ Bracht to RuSHA, 1 March 1942, BArch. NS 2/80, 68-70.

⁹⁴ Bracht's undated note, probably 25 January 1943, APK 117/140, p. 116.

⁹⁵ County commissioner of Beuthen-Tarnowitz, Walrab von Wangenheim, to Springorum, 30 May 1943, Special Archive in the Russian Military Archive in Moscow (hereafter: SMR) 1232/37, p. 34-35.

⁹⁶ Eli Nathans, *The politics of citizenship in Germany* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2004), pp. 228 and Oliver Trevisiol, *Die Einbürgerungspraxis im Deutschen Reich, 1871 – 1945* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), pp. 206.

⁹⁷ Isabel Heinemann, *Rasse, Siedlung, deutsches Blut. Das Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamt der SS und die rassenpolitische Neuordnung Europas* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2003), p. 260.

⁹⁸ Important here Jane Caplan and Thomas Childers (eds.), *Reevaluating the Third Reich* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1993), a collection that emerged from a conference in 1988, and the aptly titled study Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wippermann, *The racial state: Germany 1933-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). For a first comprehensive critical

engagement with this historiographical paradigm see Devin Pendas, Mark Roseman and Richard F. Wetzell (eds.), *Beyond the Racial State: Rethinking Nazi Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming 2017).

⁹⁹ See for example in Burleigh and Wippermann, *Racial State*, p. 181-182 and Richard J. Evans, *The coming of the Third Reich* (New York: Penguin, 2004), p. 283. Mark Roseman highlights Evan's (mis-)translation in his contribution to Pendas, Roseman, Wetzell, *Beyond the Racial State*.

¹⁰⁰ See Ulrich Prehn, 'Metamorphosen radikalen Ordnungsdenkens im ,europäischen Großraum'. Ethnopolitische und 'volkstheoretische' Konzepte Max Hildebert Boehms vom Ersten bis zum Zweiten Weltkrieg', Michael Garleff (ed.), *Deutschbalten, Weimarer Republik und Drittes Reich* (Köln: Böhlau, 2008), pp. 1-70, Peter Walkenhorst, *Nation—Volk—Rasse: radikaler Nationalismus im deutschen Kaiserreich 1890-1914* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), Uwe Puschner, *Die völkische Bewegung im wilhelminischen Kaiserreich. Sprache - Rasse - Religion* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2001).

¹⁰¹ Law regarding matters of the expellees and refugees, paragraph 6, available at http://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/bvfg/_6.html. Retrieved 26 April 2016.

¹⁰² See endnote 16.

¹⁰³ See Götz Aly and Susanne Heim, *Vordenker der Vernichtung. Auschwitz und die deutschen Pläne für eine neue europäische Ordnung* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1991), p. 146.

¹⁰⁴ Andreas R. Hofmann, *Die Nachkriegszeit in Schlesien. Gesellschafts und Bevölkerungspolitik in den polnischen Siedlungsgebieten, 1945-1948* (Köln: Böhlau, 2000), pp. 239-254, 265-331, Hugo Service, *Germans to Poles. Communism, nationalism and ethnic cleansing after the Second World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 158-165 and Michael G. Esch, 'Gesunde Verhältnisse'. *Deutsche und polnische*

Bevölkerungspolitik in Ostmitteleuropa 1939-1950 (Marburg: Herder-Institut, 1998), pp. 299-323.

¹⁰⁵ Instructions by the head of the Race Department within the RuSHA, Otto Hofmann, 14 October 1939, SMR 1372-6/26, 16-19

¹⁰⁶ Götz Aly and Susanne Heim, *Vordenker der Vernichtung. Auschwitz und die deutschen Pläne für eine neue europäische Ordnung* (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 1997), p. 138.

¹⁰⁷ Chad Bryant, *Prague in Black. Nazi rule and Czech nationalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), pp. 139-178.

¹⁰⁸ The best overview over genesis and content of the various stages see Czesław Madajczyk (ed.), *Vom Generalplan Ost zum Generalsiedlungsplan* (München: Saur, 1994).

¹⁰⁹ See most prominently the argument in Götz Aly, *Final solution: Nazi population policy and the murder of the European Jews* (London: Arnold, 1999).