I. INTRODUCTION

The Baltic Countries

The Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania lie on the Baltic Sea in northeastern Europe. Though small, they are strategically significant for European trade and security. As a result they have experienced a turbulent history and a long road to independence.

OUR SHARED HISTORY

10500 –9000 BC

PREHISTORY

- End of Ice Age in the region, first known habitants along Baltic coast
- Pulli, oldest known settlement established in Estonia
- Territory of Estonia is inhabited by Finno-Ugric people
- Baltic tribes arrive on Baltic coast

9500 BC – 6500 BC

3000 BC – ca 98

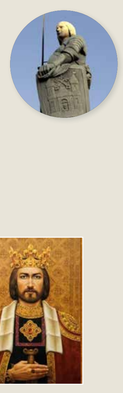
PRE-VIKING/VIKING ERAS

- Tacitus in his «Germania» mentions Aestii people (Estonia originated from Aestii), allegedly Baltic
- Establishment of traditional villages & village society
- Viking raids & counter-raids around Baltic Sea
- First mention of Lithuania's name in written records of Quedlinburg Annals, Germany

600–800 – 1200

NORTHERN CRUSADES

- Bishop Albert from Germany founds Riga
- German crusaders conquer & Christianize Latvia, Estonia & create Livonia, ruled by Teutonic Knights of Livonia
- King of Denmark conquers Northern Estonia
- Feudal system with Baltic German nobility as privileged social class
- Lithuanian tribes are united by Mindaugas, who is crowned king



1009 – 1200s

1300s –1400s

- Livonian Order purchases Northern Estonia from Denmark
- Lithuania is Christianized but resists conquest by crusaders

1520s

- Protestant Reformation spreads to Latvia & Estonia

1558–1583

- Ivan the Terrible defeats Livonian Order, Livonian lands are redistributed to Lithuania, Denmark & Sweden

RUSSIAN DOMINATION

1700s

- Baltic lands are conquered by Russian Empire, which guarantees privileges & local authority to Baltic German nobility

1850–1900

- Increased Russification
- First «national awakening,» including song festivals, create foundation for Estonian & Latvian nation states
- Rebirth of Lithuanian nationalism

REVOLUTION & FIRST WORLD WAR

1905–1907

- Revolution in Russia spreads to Baltic provinces, manor-burning in Baltics

1914–1918

- First World War & occupation by Imperial German Army

1917

- Revolution in Russia, collapse of Russian Empire

1918

- Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania declare independence

1918–1920

- War of Independence in the Baltics

YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE

1920

- Peace treaties with Soviet Russia
- Vilnius region seized by Poland

1920–1922

- Baltic States adopt democratic constitutions

1919–1925

- Major land reforms initiated, Baltic German manor lands expropriated, redistributed among peasants & veterans of Independence Wars

1926

- Political coup d'état, end of parliamentary democracy in Lithuania

1934

- Coups d'état, end of parliamentary democracy in Estonia & Latvia
- Entente between Baltic States

1939

- Klaipeda (Memel) seized by Nazi Germany

SECOND WORLD WAR

1939

- Nazi-Soviet Pact & beginning of Second World War, Soviet military bases established in Baltic States, resettlement (Umsiedlung) of Baltic Germans from Estonia & Latvia

1940

- Incorporation of Baltic states into Soviet Union

1941

- Soviet mass deportations

1941–1944

- Baltic States occupied by Nazi German troops

1944

- Red Army reconquers Estonia, Latvia & Lithuania
- More than 140,000 Latvians, 75,000 Estonians, 65,000 Lithuanians flee to Germany & Sweden

ANNEXATION BY SOVIET UNION

1944

- Re-occupation of Estonia, Latvia & Lithuania by Soviet Union

1944–1956

- Forest Brothers' War against Soviet rule

1949

- Collectivization & Soviet mass deportations

1953

- Death of Stalin

1956–1964

- De-Stalinization & Khrushchev Thaw

1986

- Gorbachev declares policy of Perestroika in Soviet Union

REFUGEE EXPERIENCE

1945–1952

- DP (Displaced Persons) camps in Germany, Austria & Italy

1946

- Canada opens doors to European refugees, first Polish war veterans arrive

1947

- Bulk-Labour Programs recruit DPs from European camps for industrial jobs in Canada

1948

- Canada's first boat refugees arrive from Sweden on SS Walnut

1949–1950

- 1,593 «boat people» from Sweden arrive in Canada

INDEPENDENCE

1987

- First demonstrations against Soviet regime

1988

- Singing Revolution, Baltic Popular Fronts founded, Estonia declares sovereignty

1989

- «Baltic Chain» of nearly 2 million people from Tallinn to Vilnius

1990

- Lithuania declares independence from Soviet Union

1991

- Independence of Estonia, Latvia & Lithuania recognized

1993–1994

- Russian troops withdraw from Baltic States

2004

- Estonia, Latvia & Lithuania become members of European Union & NATO

ESTONIA

Estonia is a democratic parliamentary republic with a population of 1.3 million. Its capital is Tallinn. Estonians revere nature and about half of the country is forested. Estonia has a long tradition of music and choral singing.

After being ruled by Denmark, the German knights of the Livonian Order, and Sweden in and following the middle ages, Estonia became part of the Russian Empire in the 18th century. The country declared independence in 1918 but was occupied and annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940, then occupied by Nazi Germany in 1941 and re-occupied by the Soviet Union in 1944. Estonia re-established its independence in 1991.

Estonians began to arrive in Canada in the early 1900s, with a large wave of immigration taking place after the Second World War. In 1944, 72,000 fled to Sweden and Germany to escape Soviet rule, and of these nearly 14,000 immigrated to Canada. Many were professionals and settled in cities after completing required work terms on Canadian farms.

Today, Toronto has the largest Estonian community in Canada.

LATVIA

Latvia is a democratic parliamentary republic with a population of 2 million. It is one of the world's greenest countries and its capital Rīga is the largest Baltic city. Latvia has a rich cultural heritage, including *dainas* or folk songs that date back well over one thousand years.

From the 13th to the 20th century Latvia was controlled at various times by German rulers, and by Poland, Sweden, and Russia. It became independent in 1918 after the collapse of the Russian Empire and end of the First World War, only to be occupied and annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940. Latvia re-established its independence in 1991.

The first Latvians came to Canada in the 1890s as refugees from Tsarist Russia and most settled in Manitoba and Alberta. 110,000 Latvians fled to Western Europe at the end of the Second World War to escape Soviet rule, with 15,000 eventually immigrating to Canada. Many were professionals and settled in Ontario.

Today, Toronto has the largest Latvian community in Canada.

LITHUANIA

Lithuania is a parliamentary democracy with a population of 2.9 million. It is a lowland country with many forests and lakes, and a long tradition of literature and music. Lithuania was the last nation in Europe to be Christianized and the only Baltic country that did not become Lutheran with the Protestant Reformation – it remained Catholic.

The state of Lithuania emerged in the 13th century when its tribes united under Mindaugas, who later became king. In the 14th century the Grand Duchy of Lithuania became one of Europe's most powerful states, forging a powerful alliance with Poland.

Lithuania came under Russian control in the late 18th century. It declared independence in 1918, but in 1940 was illegally annexed by the Soviet Union. Lithuania regained its independence in 1991.

In the 1800s the first Lithuanians to immigrate to Canada were soldiers, followed by labourers around 1900. After the Second World War large numbers of Lithuanians fled to Western Europe to escape Soviet occupation, with 20,000 eventually immigrating to Canada. Soviet delays in recognizing Lithuania's independence led to more immigration in 1990-91.

Today, most Lithuanian Canadians live in Toronto.

BALTIC GERMANS

Germans first came to Latvia and Estonia as merchants, missionaries and crusaders in the 1200s. As German crusaders Christianized and took control of the area, a social system emerged in which Germans were the upper class and the indigenous population the peasantry. The captured territory between Lithuania and northern Estonia was known as Old Livonia and became part of the Holy Roman Empire. Old Livonia was also integrated into the Hanseatic League, an organization of German merchant communities that dominated commercial activity in northern Europe from the 13th to the 15th century. Lithuania did not have German elite, though some of its cities had a small German trading class.

The economic and social dominance of the Germans persisted throughout shifts in political power in the region until the end of the 19th century. After Estonian and Latvian independence in 1918, however, they lost much of their land and corporate interests. Some left, but many stayed and adapted to a new role as an ethnic minority in a democratic state.

At the beginning of the Second World War the Baltic Germans were resettled to occupied Poland and Germany.

After the war, about 2,500 immigrated to Canada, which today has the largest Baltic German community outside of Germany. Baltic Germans have a unique German accent and have a distinct culture shaped by their 800 year history in the Baltic region. Their legacy in the Baltic region includes many buildings, institutions, and influences on language, literature and music.

Baltic Communities in Canada

Canada's Baltic communities are small but significant. Collectively they have made many contributions to Canada, particularly in the realms of academia, the arts, amateur sports, agriculture, architecture and the construction industry. Vibrant and well connected to their homelands, they continue to play an important role in Canada's cultural mosaic.

OUR NUMBERS

Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian Canadians live across Canada, with core populations and organizations located in the Toronto area.

According to Canada's 2011 Census:

- 6,610 people in Canada report Estonian as their mother tongue (2,400 live in Toronto)
- 6,450 people in Canada report Latvian as their mother tongue (1,940 live in Toronto)
- 7,600 people in Canada report Lithuanian as their mother tongue (2,065 live in Toronto).

WORKING TOGETHER

Postwar Baltic immigrants to Canada from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania had strong motivation to preserve their national heritage and to advocate for freedom in their occupied homelands. Each community founded various religious, cultural, youth, and professional organizations, most of which remain active today. They also established socio-political organizations that continue to work together and with the Baltic diaspora around the world in support of Baltic democracy, freedom and stability.

As the generation of postwar Baltic immigrants ages, Canada's Baltic communities have developed a focus on heritage preservation and promotion. With strong common threads that link them geographically, historically and culturally this is an opportunity to further enhance cooperation and partnership among Canada's Baltic communities.

Baltic Canadian Imprints is a collaborative of four organizations representing Canada's Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian and Baltic German communities. By working together we aim to foster deeper partnerships between our communities.

This exhibit draws out the common threads of the lived experiences of members of these communities who grew up in the Baltics, were forced to flee their homeland at the beginning of the Second World War, lived through the refugee experience, emigrated, and ultimately established new lives and identities in Canada.

ACCORDING TO CANADA'S 2006 CENSUS:

23,930

PEOPLE IN CANADA REPORT ESTONIAN HERITAGE.

27,870

PEOPLE IN CANADA REPORT LATVIAN HERITAGE.

46,690

PEOPLE IN CANADA REPORT LITHUANIAN HERITAGE.

• VEMU/Estonian Studies Centre

The Estonian Studies Centre archives materials that illustrate the life and activities of Estonians in Canada. It collects, catalogues and preserves printed material, documents and memoirs, photographs, audio-visual records, as well as artefacts (paintings, sculptures etc). VEMU is the emerging museum for Estonians abroad and a cultural hub as an associate member of the Bloor Street Culture Corridor.

• Latvian National Federation in Canada – Canadian Latvian Archive and Museum

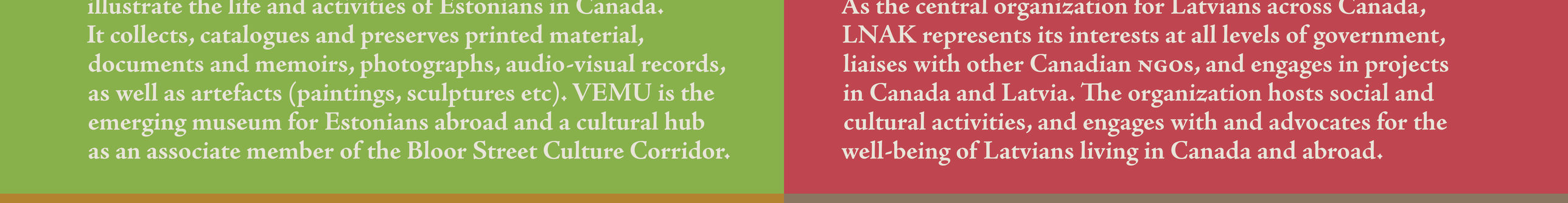
As the central organization for Latvians across Canada, LNAK represents its interests at all levels of government, liaises with other Canadian NGOs, and engages in projects in Canada and Latvia. The organization hosts social and cultural activities, and engages with and advocates for the well-being of Latvians living in Canada and abroad.

• Lithuanian Museum-Archives of Canada

LMAC collects and preserves historically significant archival materials and artefacts that document the activities and history of Lithuanians in Canada. LMAC's community engagement includes educational resource development, as well as preservation and accessibility to the collections irrespective of geographic location.

• Canadian Baltic Immigrant Aid Society

The CBIAS was founded in 1948 to encourage the emigration of German Balts to Canada and provide aid upon arrival. Today, it functions as a network of shared interests, hosts cultural activities and has a semi-annual publication to encourage the preservation of German Baltic customs and history. The CBIAS has regional branches in Toronto, Kitchener-Guelph, London, Montreal and Calgary.



Childhood Memories

Most of those interviewed for this project belong to the generation of Baltic refugees who have only childhood memories of the homeland or remember it based on stories their parents told them about free Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

At the beginning of the First World War, the Baltic provinces were part of Imperial Russia. The independent republics were born at the end of the war and the Russian Revolution.

Seen through the prism of refugee nostalgia, the heroism of the Wars of Independence and the following 20 years of work developing their nationhood acquire a special light and warmth.

The Baltic Germans, who lost their special status when the Russian Empire fell apart, found a new place in a transformed society.

Leida Sepp: «Taken by a German photographer visiting Kihnu in 1912, this photo was discovered online by Mark Soosaar and forwarded to me by my cousin Mihkel Türk. He recognized my mother, Maria (Sutt) Leas, standing in the back row. Perhaps the Leas' shed in the background caught the photographer's interest.» The Leas family, from left to right: Jaak Leas (1830-1915), Maria Leas (1900-1987), Nikolai Leas (1907-1970), Anna Leas née Kott (1875-1954), Elisabet Leas (1909-1996), Tiiu Leas (1904-1996), household helper (name unknown).

GISELA FLEICH [b. 1931]

"Oh, it was a gorgeous time, we lived in a house and we had a huge garden and were surrounded by many animals. We could play with the kids of our Estonian neighbours.

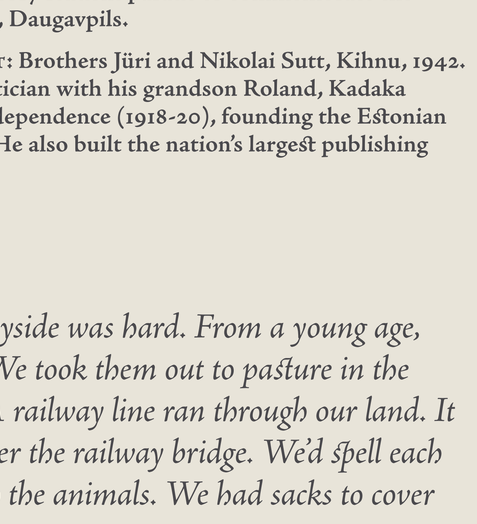
TOP LEFT: Valentīns Ivsiņs (with flag) marching in a compulsory student parade to commemorate the fourth anniversary of the 1934 Ulmanis' Coup d'état. May 5, 1938, Daugavpils.

TOP RIGHT: The family house and store, Kihnu, 1940. RIGHT: Brothers Jüri and Nikolai Sutt, Kihnu, 1942. LEFT: Aleksander Weiler (1887-1950?), journalist, publisher, politician with his grandson Roland, Kadaka farm, 1930s. Weiler played an instrumental role in the War of Independence (1918-20), founding the Estonian Republic with the passage of major land reform and other laws. He also built the nation's largest publishing company, including newspaper, *Vaba Maa* (Free Country).

MARIJA GUDELIENĖ [b. 1916]

I had two brothers and three sisters. Life in the countryside was hard. From a young age, as soon as we could walk, we tended to the animals. We took them out to pasture in the morning, and we brought them back in the evening. A railway line ran through our land. It was hard to herd the animals across the tracks and over the railway bridge. We'd spell each other off at mealtimes and then go back out to be with the animals. We had sacks to cover ourselves when it rained. It was all we had.

There was one bull that was big and mean. But he was a joker, to be honest. He loved me. I'd sit on his back holding onto his horns, and he'd spin me round and round. And then he'd set me down. He'd just lower his head so I could get off. I never hit him. He was special. It was very odd for an animal to do that. It's almost like he was teaching me how to hold him by the horns so he could spin around. Isn't that a funny thing? Usually, if the animals strayed, I'd use a whip on them. But I never whipped him because I saw that he loved me, and I loved him back. I used to hug him around the neck and caress him. It's a special memory.



Scene from a village by the Baltic Sea, late 19th century.

LEIDA SEPP [b. 1940]

I was on the tiny island in the Gulf of Rīga called Kihnu. Small population, 22 km circumference, so tiny, tiny. But people with big ideas and big plans. My father was one of them and I want to start out by saying, there's a song «New York, New York. If you can make it there, you can make it anywhere.» Well, I think it holds for Kihnu as well. If you can make it in Kihnu, you can make it anywhere.

Even though I was three when we left, I remember the departure, I remember my youth, which I think is enviable these days. I started walking at a pretty young age, so there was liberty; I was free as a butterfly, as a bird. If the weather was fine, I opened the door and went exploring on the island, whether it was birds' nests, whether it was little bugs, whether it was flowers, whether I went to visit my grandmother, or my aunts, my uncles, that's what I did. I didn't have a set schedule, my parents did not dictate what I was to do during the day, and of course, when you have this type of freedom, you talk to other people.

So, I learned to talk and chatter with people at a fairly early age. My mother, told me – I didn't remember doing this, but in the shop, the store downstairs, people would come, and the women always wore aprons. She said sometimes it was embarrassing because I would walk around and tell people which woman had the most beautiful apron that day!

And of course, there were warnings, too. I was told never to go near a well, and I was never to go near the water, if I went to the seashore, but that was pretty much it. And because it was a small island and my father had a general store, everyone knew who I was. They said, it helps when you know how to speak, so they would ask me if I was hungry, if I was thirsty, oh they were all very hospitable and … It was like a big family on that little island.

Maija Ķuze: «This is my home before I was born. My half brother is sitting in front, 1929.»

Village home, late 19th century.

VLADAS VYTAS [b. 1924]

Life was hard. We had to look for summer jobs. I had learned how to type which was a new thing at that time. The municipal government office hired me for the summer so I was able to earn some money.

MARIJA TAMULAITIENĖ [b. 1917]

I was a teacher at a vocational school in Kaunas and I taught home economics. My parents had a small farm. When growing up, the most important thing was to be honest and to be responsible – I had to do everything my parents asked me to do.

BALTIC GERMAN ESTONIAN LATVIAN LITHUANIAN

4. HOMELAND

Golden Times

The refugees remember their former lives in the long-lost homeland as a mythical golden age. Memories often take the form of pictures and are bound up with specific places.

As the interviewees include representatives of different social strata, there is a wide range of memories, depending on whether they are relatives of farmers, military men or educated city folk.

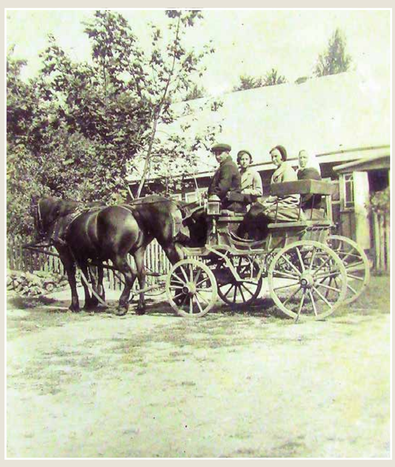
Significantly, there do not seem to be rigid boundaries between social groups, and there are close family ties between city dwellers and their relatives in the country.

ROMUALDAS OTTO [b. 1935]

"I remember my grandfather Felix Mackevičius very well. He was my mother's father. He was a gentle and religious man. He taught me to put straw under the tablecloth on the table set for the Christmas Eve Kūčios *meal so that there would be food for the animals. Once we finished the meal, he would take me out to feed the cow and the horse.*

Jānis Pirktiņš with Norma at the Lithuanian border, October 9, 1944. Alma Ivsiņš (née Pirktiņš) left Rucava with her family by horse and wagon. Their journey ended 1,000 km later in Schwerin, Germany where the horse was sold to the state.

Village life in the late 19th century. Marija Gudelienė's family on the farmstead.



SUIT OLVET [b. 1935]

My own great-grandfather was a German baron from Munich, whose estate was west of Otepää, near Rõngu (Germans called it Ringen). It wasn't the usual sort of baron and serf relationship; it was a love affair. It was this Estonian woman and I guess my great-grandmother, she had already five children with an Estonian husband and she had (by choice, I guess, a child with this guy.) But that boy, my grandfather, as he grew up didn't get full recognition of his status. He left the mõis *(manor) near Rõngu and walked to Alatskivi to the barons there. The Alatskivi castle … the Germans only lived there a short time, about 20 years, because they were afraid they were going to be murdered. And my great-grandfather lived there under the Baltic Germans and then when the Estonian Republic took over the mõis he worked there and when the first Russian occupation came, he still worked there and then he died and was buried in Alatskivi.*

EDA SEPP [b. 1935]

I lived for three years in free Estonia before the Russians occupied Estonia. We spent the summers in Karksi, in Ainja, where my father was living, and I have a picture, actually, of the house that my father designed in Karksi. And this is the house [showing photo] *I spent my summers at. This house was finished in 1937, I think, and, before that we had a very old house. It was at a crossroads in Estonia, because my grandfather was a country-smith and we lived close by, where everybody passed by, so this was a beautiful place and I have good, very good memories of it playing in the garden and looking after the animals there. Our last place was actually on Roosikrantsi Street, which is a very prestigious address in Tallinn. Before the Russians occupied Estonia, it was in a different place, I think, but quite close to Roosikrantsi Street. But the Russians took it over.*

DANUTĖ RAUTINS [b. 1923]

My father was a Commander in the Lithuanian army. I had a very interesting childhood. We were often transferred to new locations, so I always found new friends.

Suur Auhind (The Big Prize). *Suit Olvet:* «I learned to read with this book. At Easter in 1940 I saw the book in the window on Rüütli Street in Pärnu. As I looked at the title, I sounded out what I saw. My mother standing beside me asked me how I could read all of a sudden. She bought the book right away. The book was sent to me in Canada during the second occupation.»

ABOVE: «Grandmother on my mother's side, Leeni Karlson (later Kaarde).»
LEFT: «Great-grandfather on my mother's side, Karl Martinson, with his family at Alatskivi, 1896. In the front left is my grandmother Leeni Karlson (later Estonianized to Kaarde), who raised me until we fled the homeland on August 23, 1944.»

HANS-JÜRGEN KUMBERG [b. 1925]

I lived in a house adjoining the forest. From my balcony I could see the Baltic Sea one and a half miles away and hear the breaking of the waves. At night, you could see the lights of the fishing boats and in heavy seas, I often saw their distress signals.

You could start swimming in the Baltic in May, and after a storm I would collect amber along the beach. Although we had a big orchard, which included berry bushes and a vegetable garden, I spent many hours in the majestic forest collecting berries and in the fall brought home mushrooms and hazelnuts.

In November it would start to snow and I would put our dog Haike in front of the sleigh. He raced with me along the sidewalk, especially when he saw another dog in front of him. Winter was the time to go skiing and there were hills in the forest and even a man-made four meter high ski jump. I also enjoyed skating under the stars on a frozen pond.

Being fond of animals, I kept a young owl taken from the woods. A hunter had given me two young foxes, which I kept in an enclosure in our garden. There was also a fish pond with young wild ducks and a pigeon house on stilts with 20 pigeons.

Hans-Jürgen Kumberg with pet owl, Ventspils (Windau), Latvia, 1935.

Schloss-Blieden, ca 1906, belonging to Prince Lieven.

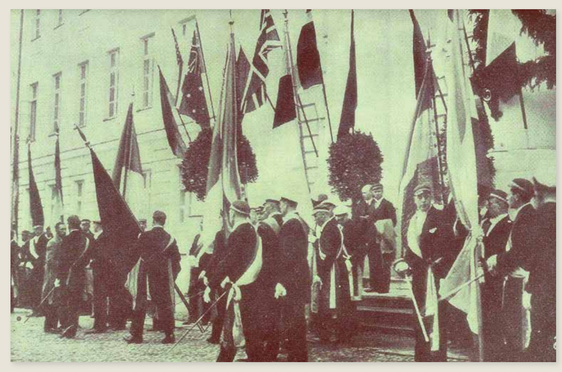
BALTIC GERMAN · ESTONIAN · LATVIAN · LITHUANIAN

School of Life

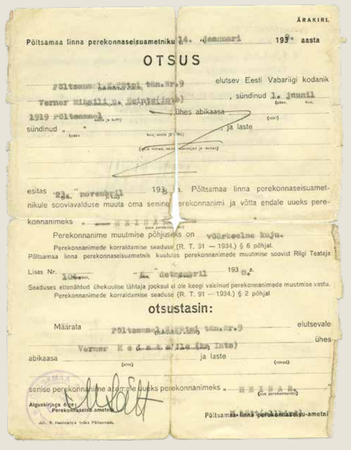
Education has always been important to Baltic people — especially for those for whom it was not readily available. Indeed, education offers the promise of a better life, and this is what parents always wish for their children.

However, a large number of our interviewees belong to a generation whose educational goals proved difficult due to the circumstances of the Second World War and the flight from the homeland. Children have always learned life wisdom outside of school, from the surrounding society, and particularly from their parents.

There is a rich variety of moving reminiscences on these topics in our interviews.



Celebrating 300 years, University of Tartu, 1932.



ABOVE: Some of Verner Heinar's University of Tartu documents and his confirmation certificate from Põltsamaa Church, Estonia, 1937.

Thomas Heinar about his father **VERNER HEINAR** [b. 1919]

"Well, he endeavoured to study law at the University of Tartu, after his grandparents, who raised him most of his young life, passed away when he was fourteen. He took over the family property and saved up money until he was old enough to go to Tartu. After finishing high school in Põltsamaa, he enrolled at the University of Tartu, was accepted into the Faculty of Law there. There were interruptions, of course, in his education and professional activities throughout his life.

MARIJA GUDELIENĖ [b. 1916]

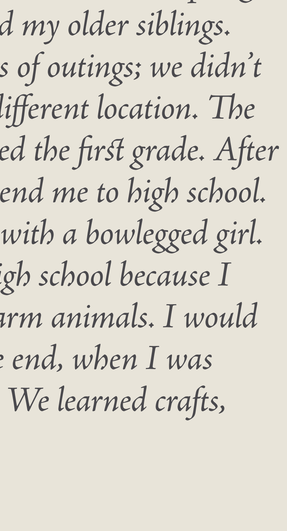
I was still too young to join them, but my brother and two sisters began attending school. I'd watch them doing their homework, and that's how I learned the alphabet. Then one spring, after Easter, I was sent to school. It was a beautiful spring and I joined my older siblings. I got to go to kindergarten for two months. In June, there were all sorts of outings; we didn't spend a lot of time in class. The following year the school moved to a different location. The new teachers put me in second grade even though I hadn't even finished the first grade. After the fourth grade, the teacher told my parents it would be a sin not to send me to high school. I had slightly bowed legs, though, and my brother said he wouldn't go with a bowlegged girl. He was high on his horse and, clearly, embarrassed. I couldn't go to high school because I didn't get along with my brother. And so I went back to tending the farm animals. I would cry because the others were going off to school, but I couldn't go. In the end, when I was fourteen, I went to the trade school for girls. I graduated in two years. We learned crafts, sewing, knitting, food preparation and beekeeping.

ALINA KŠIVICKIENĖ [b. 1917]

I was quite young when I started university – not quite 18 years old. I knew I wanted to be a doctor from 12 years of age. When I met John I was 19 and he wanted to get married but I wanted to finish my education first. Once I had my diploma in my hand, I agreed to marry.

AGOTA RATAVIČIENĖ [b. 1929]

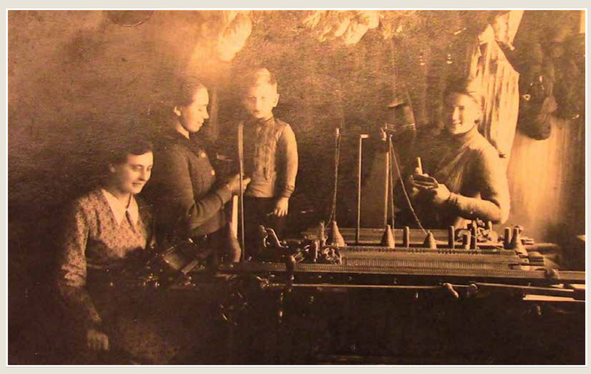
We lived on Church Street in Kudirkos Naumiestis. I had a great childhood. We lived right next to the church and we could hear the sounds of the mass from our home. The nuns had a kindergarten that we attended from age three. It was a great place for kids. There were Christmas recitals. We sang and danced. They had toys and dolls that we didn't have at home.



Annual Ivsiņš family photo-studio session with the four siblings in their school uniforms and head coverings. Broņislavs, 22, University of Latvia; Antoņina, 17, Malnava Agricultural School; Janīna, 15, High School; Valentīns, 12, Primary School. 1935, Daugavpils.

LEIDA SEPP [b. 1940]

I must have just turned three years old, it was Christmas Eve and the family – we had lots of snow – the family was going to go to church. It was a candlelight evening service. And for whatever reason I was very tired, and I wanted to sleep. Usually my parents didn't pressure me: if I was tired, I could sleep, but this evening my father said, No, you should not sleep, you have to come to church with us. So I said, But I'm too tired, you know, what am I going to do, sleep in church? And he said, No, you need to come. So, the sleigh was pulled by horses, and the aisakellad *(sleigh-bells) were jingling. We got to church, and my father – he had on his big coat and I was wrapped up in it on the sleigh so that I wouldn't be cold – we got to the church and it was all lit up magically with candles. It was the most beautiful thing! When I look back on it, I think I trusted my father's judgment from that time forward, because that Christmas Eve, I was so determined I wanted to sleep and he was so determined that I should go to church! So, I suppose things like that do stay with you.*



A businesswoman in the early 20th century, Agota Ratavičienė's mother owned a small knitting company which provided employment for local women. A children's Christmas play in which Agota participated.

BALTIC GERMAN ESTONIAN LATVIAN LITHUANIAN

Baltic Germans Leave Homes in Estonia and Latvia

The Baltic Germans were the first group to leave the Baltic States en masse. In 1939 and 1940 the German government organized the resettlement (Umsiedlung) of the Baltic Germans to Western Poland, where they were placed in homes and farms that had been seized when Nazi Germany invaded Poland. A second wave of resettlement (Nachumsiedlung) took place in 1941.

"All the News That's Fit to Print."

The New York Times.

LATE CITY EDITION
Partly cloudy and warm with scattered showers today and tomorrow. Temperatures Yesterday—Max., 88; Min., 70

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GERMANY AND RUSSIA SIGN 10-YEAR NON-AGGRESSION PACT; BIND EACH OTHER NOT TO AID OPPONENTS IN WAR ACTS; HITLER REBUFFS LONDON; BRITAIN AND FRANCE MOBILIZE

U.S. AND ARGENTINA PLAN TRADE PACT, WELLES DISCLOSES

Our Commerce Will Get Full Equality With That of All Foreigners, He Asserts

BEEF NOT TO BE INCLUDED

Long Preliminary Talks Ease Difficulties, With Offset Seen to Our Recent Losses

Special to The New York Times.

WASHINGTON, Aug. 23.—The United States intends to negotiate a reciprocal trade treaty with Argentina as a move to put American commerce with that republic on a footing of equality with that of European competitors, Sumner Welles, Acting Secretary of State, stated today. There have been more than four years of preliminary discussion.

The State Department, making public a list of products upon which this country would make tariff concessions, set Oct. 4 as the closing date for submission of briefs by interested Americans and Oct. 16 for the opening of public hearings.

It was emphasized that fresh, chilled or frozen Argentine meats, the entry of which into this country is banned by the Tariff Act of 1930, and fine wools would not be a subject of discussion in the negotiations. This was expected by officials to remove the most serious objections which might have been advanced to conclusion of a reciprocal agreement. Barring of the entry of Argentine fresh beef has long been a subject of

BRITAIN ACTS FAST

Air Force Is Ready for Hostilities—Warships Mass in Skagerrak

EXPORT EMBARGO IS FIXED

Parliament Meets Today in an Emergency Session—King to Convene Privy Council

By FERDINAND KUHN Jr.
Special Cable to The New York Times.

LONDON, Aug. 23.—The British Government prepared for action today with every indication that it was ready to go to war with Germany whenever a call for help from Poland should come.

Warning notices went out to reservists in all departments of the armed and civilian services; the King was returning to London to hold a meeting of the Privy Council tomorrow; Londoners were ordered to darken their windows until further notice; the air force was poised for instant action, and a concentration of an undisclosed number of British warships was reported in the Skagerrak, between the Norwegian and Danish coasts, as if to remind Germany of the blockade that she had to endure during the World War.

The emergency was underlined by a Board of Trade announcement placing an immediate embargo on unlicensed exports of essential war materials "in order to conserve the stocks in this country." The list included copper, nickel and rubber, which the Germans have been buying in large quantities in the past week or two, and also aluminum, lead, iron and steel scrap and raw cotton.

The Developments in Europe

The signing of the Russo-German non-aggression pact, which many world capitals feared might be Chancellor Hitler's "go-ahead signal," took place in Moscow early this morning, half a day after German Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop had arrived in the Russian capital. The pact, which runs for ten years, in addition to prohibiting attack by either party against the other, forbids either to join any association of powers aimed at the other. Moreover, it provides that if one party is an "object of warlike acts" the other will not support such acts. [Page 1; text of the treaty, also Page 1.]

Signature of the pact followed a day that seemed to lunge Europe closer to the brink. When the British Ambassador to Germany conveyed to Chancellor Hitler a warning that Britain would fight for Poland he was bluntly rebuffed. In Berlin word freely circulated that the German Army would march at 6 P. M. today (noon in New York). [Page 1.]

In the face of Herr Hitler's rebuff Britain went ahead with war preparations, including the sending of notices to reservists, poising of the air force and concentration of warships in the Skagerrak, north of Denmark. Parliament prepared to meet today to grant the government sweeping emergency powers. [Page 1.] Reinforcements were reported being sent to the Mediterranean, where the bases at Gibraltar and Malta were on the alert. [Page 3.] The dominions, led by Canada and Australia, were beginning to swing into line behind Britain. [Page 6.]

France, convinced that Germany intends to invade Poland within a few days, called up further classes of the Permanent Committee on National Defense. [Page 1.]

Poland remained outwardly calm, still doubting that Herr Hitler would risk precipitating a general war. [Page 2.]

In Turkey allegiance to the coalition powers was affirmed, although German Ambassador von Papen was flying to Angora from Germany, presumably to try to break that allegiance. [Page 1.] But in Rumania, another State guaranteed by France and Britain, informed circles said that country would strive to remain neutral [Page 7.]

Only in Rome were signs of war lacking. Although the press continued to attack Poland, no unusual defense preparations were evident. [Page 1.]

In an attempt to head off disaster King Leopold of the Belgians, speaking for the seven Oslo powers, appealed for peace. [With the text of the appeal, Page 5.]

President Roosevelt, disturbed by the outlook, was speeding back to Washington [Page 1], where officials were clearing the decks for action if it became necessary to safeguard United States neutrality and help Americans to escape from danger zones. [Page 3.] The State Department advised citizens not to go to Europe [Page 3] and those who were trying to return home found ships still running normally from foreign ports. [Page 3.]

In the Far East the army and navy leaders in Japan were understood to have shaped a policy to be followed in view of the new situation arising from the Russo-German treaty. [Page 4.] In China some observers believed the treaty would mean increased Soviet aid in resisting Japan.

QUICK ACTION SEEN

Berlin Talks of 6 P. M. Deadline for Move Against Poland

DICTATOR WARNS BRITISH

Henderson So Wrought Up on Leaving Parley With Hitler That He Is Speechless

By OTTO D. TOLISCHUS
Wireless to The New York Times.

BERLIN, Thursday, Aug. 24.—While Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop was in Moscow discussing, in the view of some German quarters, not so much a new non-aggression pact as "Poland's fourth and final partition," Chancellor Hitler yesterday received Sir Nevile Henderson, the British Ambassador, for a fifteen-minute conference.

According to reliable information, the conference ended on a rather blunt note that is interpreted in diplomatic quarters as possibly Herr Hitler's last word. The communiqué, issued last night, reads:

"Complying with the wish of the British Government, the Führer received Sir Nevile Henderson at the Berghof today. The Ambassador delivered a letter from the British Prime Minister addressed to the Führer, which was drawn up in the same sense as yesterday's British communication regarding the Cabinet session.

"The Führer left no doubt in the mind of the British Ambassador that the obligations assumed by the British Government could not induce Germany to renounce the defense of her vital national interest."

Text of the Berlin-Moscow Treaty

By The Associated Press.

MOSCOW, Thursday, Aug. 24.—The text of the German-Russian non-aggression pact announced here today follows:

The German Reich Government and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, moved by a desire to strengthen the state of peace between Germany and the U.S.S.R. and in the spirit of the provisions of the neutrality treaty of April, 1926, between Germany and the U.S.S.R., decided the following:

Article I

The two contracting parties obligate themselves to refrain from every act of force, every aggressive action and every attack against one another, including any single action or that taken in conjunction with other powers.

Article II

In case one of the parties of this treaty should become the object of warlike acts by a third power, the other party will in no way support this third power.

Article III

The governments of the two contracting parties in the future will constantly remain in consultation with one another in order to inform each other regarding questions of common interest.

Article IV

Neither of the high contracting parties will associate itself with any other grouping of powers which directly or indirectly is aimed at the other party.

Article V

In the event of a conflict between the contracting parties concerning any question, the two parties will adjust this difference or conflict exclusively by friendly exchange of opinions or, if necessary, by an arbitration commission.

Article VI

The present treaty will extend for a period of ten years with the condition that if neither of the contracting parties announces its abrogation within one year of expiration of this period, it will continue in force automatically for another period of five years.

Article VII

The present treaty shall be ratified within the shortest possible time. The exchange of ratification documents shall take place in Berlin. The treaty becomes effective immediately upon signature.

Drawn up in two languages, German and Russian.

MOSCOW, 23d *of August*, 1939.

For the German Government:
RIBBENTROP.

In the name of the Government of the U.S.S.R.:

BARS HOSTILE UNION

Treaty Forbids Either to Join Any Group Aimed at Other

ESCAPE CLAUSE OMITTED

Von Ribbentrop's Car, Flying Swastika, Passes Beneath Red Flag at Kremlin

By The Associated Press.

MOSCOW, Thursday, Aug. 24.—Germany and Soviet Russia early today signed a non-aggression pact binding each of them for ten years not to "associate itself with any other grouping of powers which directly or indirectly is aimed at the other party."

By the pact they also agreed to "constantly remain in consultation with one another" on their common interests and to adjust differences by arbitration.

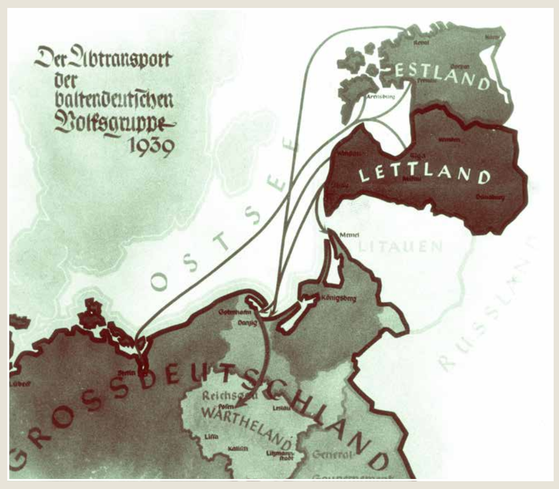
The non-aggression clauses bound each power to refrain from any act of force against the other and if either party is "the object of warlike acts by a third power" to refrain from supporting that third power.

The pact did not include the usual escape clause providing for its denunciation in case one of the contracting parties attacked a third power. This provision has been written into most non-aggression agreements signed in the past by Moscow.

Arrives by Plane

By G. E. R. GEDYE
Special Cable to The New York Times.

MOSCOW, Thursday, Aug. 24.—With the meticulous punctuality of



MOLOTOV-RIBBENTROP PACT AND THE BEGINNING OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

As the 1930s came to an end, the threat of war loomed in Europe. Germany and the Soviet Union pursued their strategic interests by signing the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, also known as the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact, on August 24, 1939. The agreement included a secret protocol that divided territories of the Baltic States, Finland, Poland and Romania into Soviet and German spheres of influence.

This cleared the way for Germany to invade Poland one week later, an act that marked the beginning of the Second World War. The Soviet invasion and occupation of Estonia, Latvia and much of Lithuania followed in 1940. These events triggered the mass repatriation of Baltic Germans into Germany and German-occupied territories, and multiple waves of emigration by Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian refugees.

CHRISTINA VON WAHL [b. 1934]

"I was five years old, and I understood that we were leaving our homeland to never come back and when we left in my father's little car, I was looking out the back window until I could no longer see the house, thinking I would never see it again.

Abandoned manor house, Araküla (Koeru), Estonia.

SUIT OLVET [b. 1935]

When we were living in Pärnu, we lived in a 300-year-old house and the owners were a very nice old couple, old when I was little … they were almost 50. Their name was Neumann and they had a little Scotty dog. Very polite people, very friendly, and they had a beautiful garden too. And then, of course, the war started and Hitler called the Germans home after 700 years. We didn't know exactly why – well, there was an agreement with Stalin to divide up Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland with the Germans, and so on. So there was this white ship in Pärnu harbour and we didn't know why but then it became clear. And I saw these nice wooden, very organized crates with stickies, yellow stickers with the number two on them. They were packing their belongings in these very orderly Germanic boxes to go home to Germany. And as we found out later, they never made it, they ended up in East Prussia and Poland and, basically, Russia. So they never really got home. And we were sorry to see them go but only later did we understand why.

Baltic Germans being evacuated from Tallinn, Estonia.

EVELYN IRSCHICK [b. 1931]

We left our homeland in 1941 on the last train that left Estonia. We wanted to leave with the other Baltic Germans in 1939, but my mother was of Estonian and Swedish origin and she didn't want to go. Also, my brother was born only two days after the Russians marched in on June 16, 1940. Eventually, they decided that they had to go. On the last night, my mother and father had a big party and destroyed all the windows and everything in the house, so as to not leave the house for the Russians in a good state. We only packed certain things, curtains, clothes and a few personal items – a few suitcases, that was all.

TOMAS EDEL [b. 1939]

I only know the story from my parents. It was either in 1939 you go to Siberia or you come to Germany – tough choice. So they came to Germany [occupied Poland] *by boat to Gotenhafen* [Gdynia]. *The Polish people were kicked out of their homes and we were put in … The family lived in the basement and we lived up in their house. It wasn't ideal for us either. It was tough. In Gotenhafen we lived and had a fairly good life. My father was the harbour manager and they didn't put him in the army, so you can imagine how important he must have been. We stayed until the end. We had everything and didn't really miss anything in a sense, so our life in Gotenhafen was really good but then in January 1945 we had to flee.*

GUNTER FAURE [b. 1934]

The harbour in Tallinn was jammed with Baltic families who were waiting to board the cruise ship Ozeana that was to take us to Germany. The grown-ups were worried because the Russians were rumoured to have placed mines across the entrance of the harbour and there was talk that Russian torpedo boats were going to sink our ship in the Baltic Sea. Perhaps for that reason, all lights were turned off when our ship left the harbour under cover of darkness.

JUTTA NEULAND [b. 1931]

I left my home country in 1939, most likely in October. I was told I couldn't take my doll furniture along so I gave them away to my doctor, a pediatrician, Dr. Rabinovich. We travelled by boat to Memel, which is on the northeast coast of Germany. And then by train to what is now called Posen and then we were in a camp. The camp was a school; we slept on the floor; there were boards around and that's where we slept.

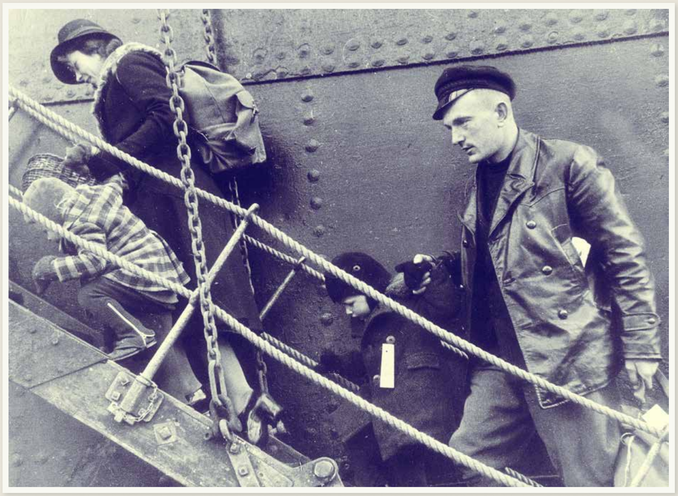
BALTIC GERMAN · ESTONIAN · LATVIAN · LITHUANIAN

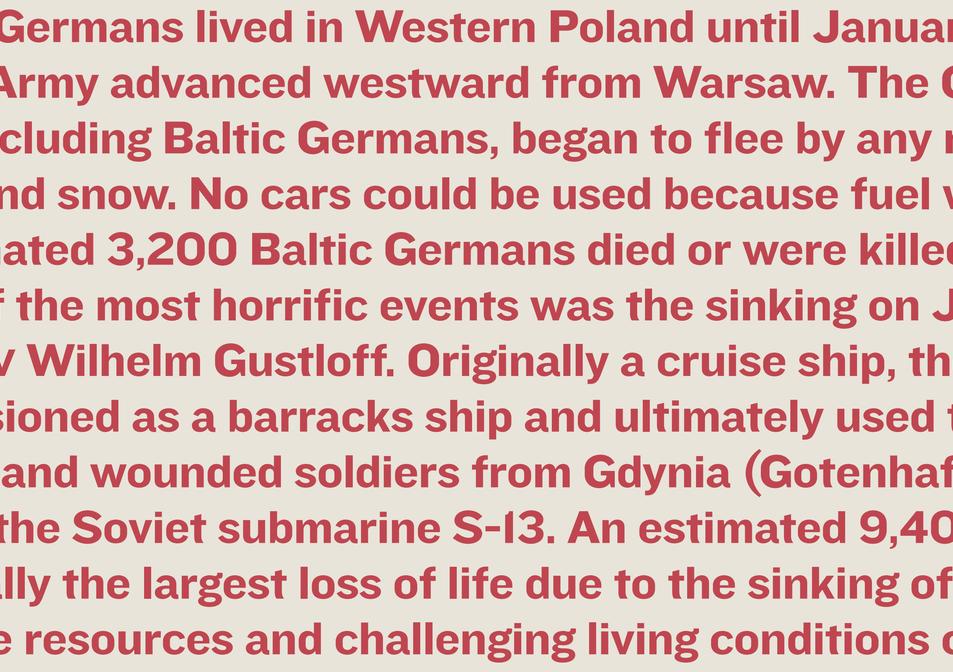
Baltic Germans Leave Homes in Poland

Baltic Germans lived in Western Poland until January 1945 when the Red Army advanced westward from Warsaw. The German population, including Baltic Germans, began to flee by any means possible in the ice and snow. No cars could be used because fuel was unavailable. An estimated 3,200 Baltic Germans died or were killed on this «trek.»

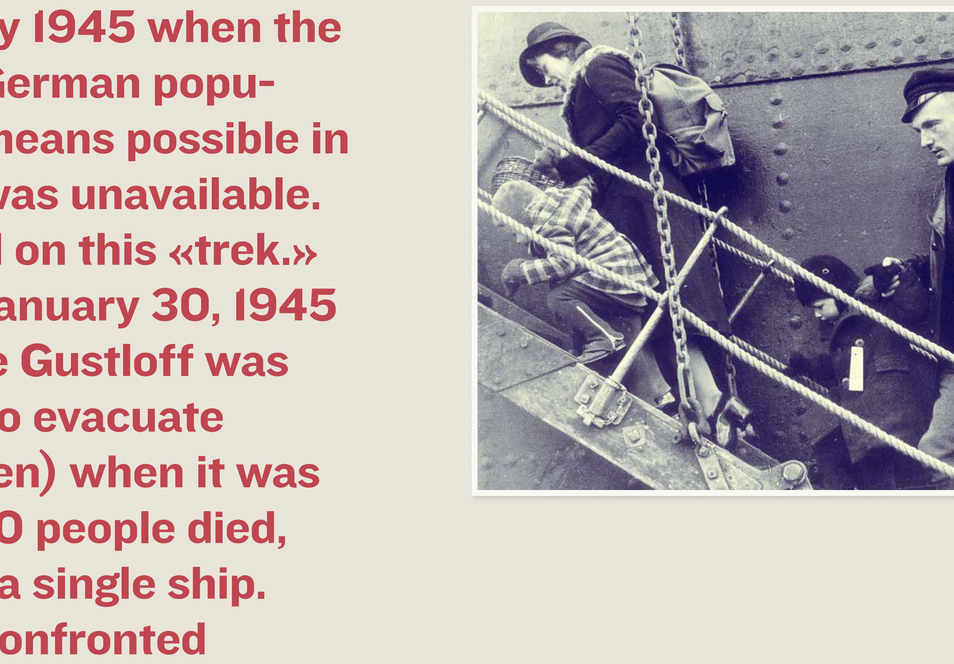
One of the most horrific events was the sinking on January 30, 1945 of the MV Wilhelm Gustloff. Originally a cruise ship, the Gustloff was commissioned as a barracks ship and ultimately used to evacuate civilians and wounded soldiers from Gdynia (Gotenhafen) when it was sunk by the Soviet submarine S-13. An estimated 9,400 people died, historically the largest loss of life due to the sinking of a single ship.

Scarce resources and challenging living conditions confronted refugees who arrived in war-torn Germany. They had to find accommodation where they could, often in the homes of local residents.





MV Wilhelm Gustloff


Refugees on the move

GISELA FLEICH [b. 1931]

"We moved through Eastern Europe in covered wagons drawn by horses, while being bombed and shot at by the planes. Bridges were blown up, and we had to move quickly to escape being taken over by the Russian army. Some of its members could be very cruel. For instance, parents would be shot in front of their children's eyes. They also deported people, even young kids to Siberia, and they had to stay there a long time before they could come back.

CHRISTINA VON WAHL [b. 1934]

When we left Poland, it was 20 below zero. My mother had to make sure that the studs on the horse's hooves were replaced often, because when they became worn down, the horses would slip and fall. We were lucky to get out before the Russians came. Others were overrun and had horrible things happen to them. We had wagons and horses, and a little car that we'd had in Estonia. It didn't have gasoline, so it was tied to the back of one of the wagons, and my brother and I took turns sitting in it. My grandmother rode in the back seat, and either my mom or another fellow were steering the car. At one point, the fellow who was steering at night fell asleep and the little car slid into the ditch. The others didn't notice right away, because we were the last wagon in our group. When they finally realized we weren't following them, they stopped and we caught up to them. We could have easily been separated, so that was really lucky.

TOMAS EDEL [b. 1939]

It was on the 30th of January 1945 when we were supposed to go to the Gustloff. But the night before my mother refused to go. My father said, Look, there is no way to get out – the Russians. My mother said, I am not going on it. But they did end up going. I remember walking to the harbour – there was a small boat and they packed us in there. So that's sort of what saved us, and we left.

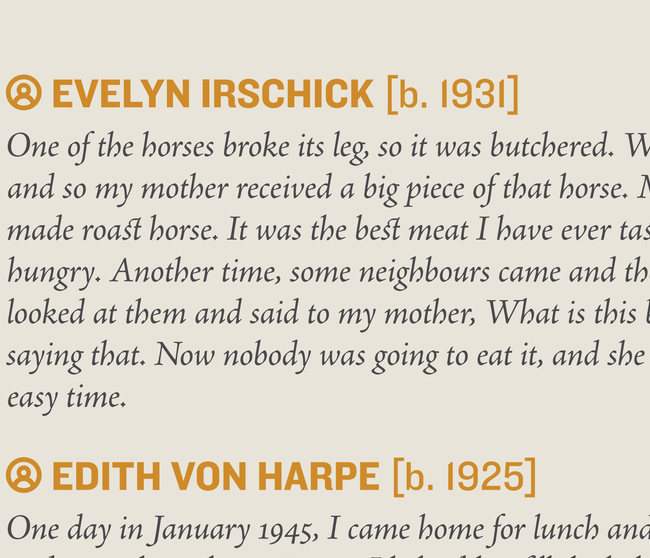
I remember Christmas 1945. We got a Christmas tree, even though everybody said the Russians wouldn't like it and we went to church. We were the only ones there when the minister came. The next day they took him and shot him. This is something I will never forget.

EVELYN IRSCHICK [b. 1931]

One of the horses broke its leg, so it was butchered. We were five children, nothing to eat and so my mother received a big piece of that horse. My father was a very good cook and made roast horse. It was the best meat I have ever tasted, because, my God, we were really hungry. Another time, some neighbours came and they gave us sauerkraut with worms. I looked at them and said to my mother, What is this black thing? She was so upset at me for saying that. Now nobody was going to eat it, and she didn't have anything else. It was not an easy time.

EDITH VON HARPE [b. 1925]

One day in January 1945, I came home for lunch and my aunt told me we had to pack up and go to the railway station. I helped her fill the baby carriage with food and pillows and other important things. At the station, there was the train with open freight cars full of people. They moved closer together to make room for us in a little corner for the baby buggy, the five children, my aunt and me. The train stopped during the night, so that the people could relieve themselves. The train continued west, stopping regularly at train stations where Red Cross ladies gave us soup and sandwiches.



While the German people of Western Poland (Warthegau) were fleeing to the west in January 1945 pursued by Soviet tanks, a mother is nursing her baby by the side of the road, because life must be preserved. Art by Ursula Janis, 1958.

BALTIC GERMAN ESTONIAN LATVIAN LITHUANIAN

Occupation, Deportations, the Second World War

The Second World War drastically ruptured life in the Baltic States. Soviet military bases were established in 1939. Soviet annexation and occupation followed in 1940. In a tense atmosphere, the resettlement (Umsiedlung) of the Baltic Germans in 1939-40 included small numbers of Estonians and Latvians who had papers to prove their Baltic German family ties. Larger numbers left with the 1941 second wave (Nachumsiedlung).

Soviet mass deportations to Siberia in June 1941 of 10,016 Estonians, 15,424 Latvians and 16,246 Lithuanians – totalling 41,686 souls – were a severe shock, explaining why Nazi German occupation was initially regarded with relief. Occupation of Lithuania began at the end of June 1941, in Estonia and Latvia in July 1941.

Leonardas Garbaliauskas: «I remember facing a Russian officer, a very large man with substantial epaulettes, and an interpreter. He asked me, Will I return to Lithuania? I answered, No, I do not want to return to Lithuania. He asked, Why won't you return? I said, I have nothing to return to. He says, But your family, your relatives. I said, My parents have already fled, they live in Germany. The same with my relatives – there is no one there for me. The interpreter wanted to continue the conversation, but the major said, Just leave him be. That is how I ended up staying in the camp.»

Russian officers arriving at Rebdorf DP camp, Germany, 1945 or 1946.

ABOVE: Kārlis Geide and Valentīns Ivsiņš in Mannheim, Germany, February 1947, where they were both attending the US 3rd Army Polish Driving and Auto-Mechanics School. Best friends throughout the war, they had joined the Baltic Guards Auxiliary Units to get out of the DP Camps. Known as the «Black Army» because they wore US Army uniforms dyed black, these units provided various services allowing Allied soldiers to return home.

ALINA KŠIVICKIENĖ [b. 1917]

I was in the streets of Kaunas when the Russians marched in. They looked terrible, some kind of Mongols. They didn't even have proper boots. They looked pathetic. My sister burst out crying. There were many Jewish girls carrying bouquets of flowers – they thought, better the Russians than the Germans, because, of course, Hitler persecuted the Jews. We truly thought this was the end for Lithuania. Like a Trojan horse.

We couldn't wait any longer. In 1941 many had been deported to Siberia, and my family was first on the list, because my father was a lawyer. He was the first to marry after university, and then some of his friends met my mother's sisters, and married them. And when Smetona, also a classmate, became president, he appointed these school friends to office – one became a high court judge, another was made deputy minister of justice. They were the first to be seized.

The night of June 14, 1941, there was a knock on the door, and they said get ready, we're taking you away. Just one soldier was decent, and told my aunt to take all the warm clothing and food she could. One of my uncles lasted a year, another a year and a half. One aunt died, and only one survived. I was marked, because of my bourgeois family.

ROMUALDAS OTTO [b. 1935]

I also remember when the Germans occupied Lithuania. In Higher (Augštieji) Šančiai, on land formerly owned by my grandmother's sister, a church was built. She gave the land so that a church would be built there. I used to serve Mass as an altar boy in that church, and I especially remember the scent of incense during the extra prayer service to Mary offered during the entire month of May.

A German in uniform attended the church. When he found out that mother had a German last name, he started talking to her. He spoke a bit of Lithuanian. His mother was Belgian and his father was German. His name was Hubert Walker. He became a sort of family friend. He would come by on his bicycle on Sundays and let me ride his bike.

I remember seeing crowds of Russian military taken as prisoners of war in Higher Šančiai – the fields were full of them. They were fenced in by barbed wire and lived in the open, without shelter. During the freezing cold winters, some did not survive the elements. We would hear them howling in the cold of the night. I remember this as our home was just on the other side of these fields.

The Germans killed many Russians. The Germans were experiencing food shortages and were going hungry themselves. The German transports passed by us regularly on their way to the Ninth Fort and their military base there. Tanks would go by. Grandma would say, Look … see how clean they are! They even smell nice and clean. Malachauskiene, grandma's aunt, gave up some of her fields and the Germans established their camp there. Once they left, everyone marvelled that the fields were left without a spot of garbage or a piece of paper. Everything was left perfectly clean.

My mother's youngest sister married. Her husband was a student at the Vytautas Magnus University. The students took up arms in order to get the Russians out of Lithuania – they attacked the retreating Russians. They were happy to see the Germans march into Lithuania. Under the Russians we had experienced mass deportations, so we were happy to see them leave. When the Russian prisoners were released from prisons, the students started shooting them. I did not see this personally, but I heard talk about it. As the Russians were retreating with their tanks across the Žaliasis Tiltas (Green Bridge), the students stormed them with hand grenades.

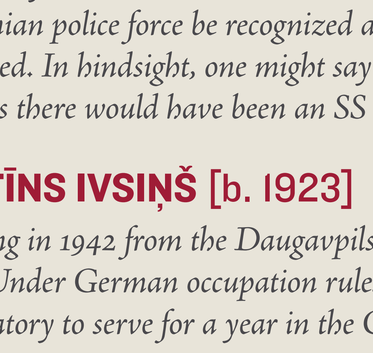
Father told us how he used to work overtime at the printing presses to make banners and leaflets encouraging people not to join the German SS legion or army. During this time the Lithuanians formed a provisional government so that Lithuania would be ruled by Lithuanians. They went to the German commanders to ask that this government and that a local Lithuanian police force be recognized and allowed to govern Lithuania. However, the Germans refused. In hindsight, one might say that the Germans made a mistake. Had they agreed, perhaps there would have been an SS legion in Lithuania.

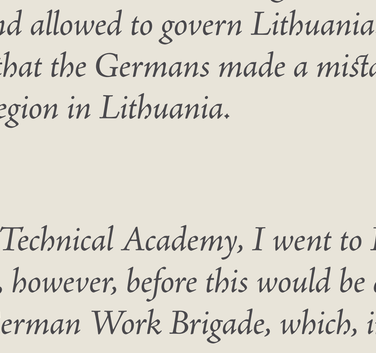
VALENTĪNS IVSIŅŠ [b. 1923]

After graduating in 1942 from the Daugavpils Technical Academy, I went to Rīga to enroll in university. Under German occupation rules, however, before this would be allowed, it would be obligatory to serve for a year in the German Work Brigade, which, in effect, is military training.

SUIT OLVET [b. 1935]

I had a wonderful childhood. People here, when they ask about occupations and wars and things like that, I would say, yes, kids get used to things and I really had a wonderful childhood. Well, I saw when the Russians brought their bases in before the first occupation. And I saw the first deportations with my own eyes, and I've taken my grandchildren over there to show where I was standing with my grandma when they were deporting the neighbours across the road, in broad daylight on the 14th of June. So I saw all that and I … we were so happy when the Germans came in July 1941.





Suit Olvet: «Me with mother's colleagues at Pärnu beach, 1939.» and «Me in grandmother's lap with my parents at Mereküla, 1937.»

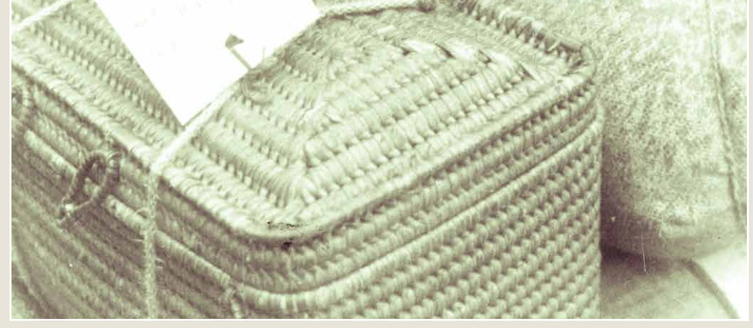
BALTIC GERMAN ESTONIAN LATVIAN LITHUANIAN

Children and War

The Second World War scattered families. Men were mobilized by the Soviet and the Nazi German armies, depending on their region and birth date: northern Estonians by the Soviets, southern Estonians by Nazi Germany. Estimates vary, but Estonians and Latvians were not all «forced conscripts.» Many volunteered for the Legions.

A third option for Estonians with resources and connections was to volunteer for the Finnish Army in fall 1943. In August 1944 the «Finnish boys» were repatriated, fighting for the Germans at the Emajõgi River and the Tannenberg line (Sinimäed). Many fled.

Women and children often stayed put in the countryside, fleeing the front, returning to ravaged homes.



ABOVE: Young Baltic German girl leaving Estonia, 1939.

LEFT: Dormitory life in a DP camp.

ABOVE: Örnsköldsvik refugee camp, Sweden, 1945.

EDA SEPP [b. 1935]

"Well, Tallinn was bombed very badly in March 1944. I was 8 years old at the time and it was really, you know, very much of it was destroyed. My mother's two sisters worked in an opera choir … I went very often to the stage rehearsals to see the operas and, during the night, when Tallinn was bombed, they were performing «Kratt,» a very well-known ballet in the Estonia theatre. The theatre got a direct hit and my two aunts were in the ballet, they didn't dance, but they were just part of the crowd on stage, so they had their costumes on and everything. And it was really quite grim, because they had to flee from the burning theatre, to our place – we lived quite close by and we were hiding in the apartment house basement. The whole city was burning, and after that my parents took me to Õismäe, to a friend's summer place.

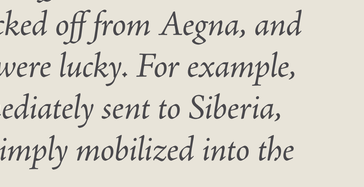
AIMI ZECHANOWITSCH [b. 1935]

I was born in Tallinn, but I lived the first four years of my life on the island of Aegna, which was an island for the naval defense of Estonia. My father was an officer there and we lived there till the Russian bases were taken. Then everybody was kicked off from Aegna, and my parents managed to find a little apartment in Tallinn. We were lucky. For example, my father's superior, Colonel Freimann, and his wife were immediately sent to Siberia, and he was shot. She came back 18 years later. My father was simply mobilized into the Russian army.

For a start, we lived in Väike-Maarja, where the Russians had a base, and there we were till '41, when the war started. Then my father was taken with the Russian army as they retreated. Mother and I went to a nearby village.

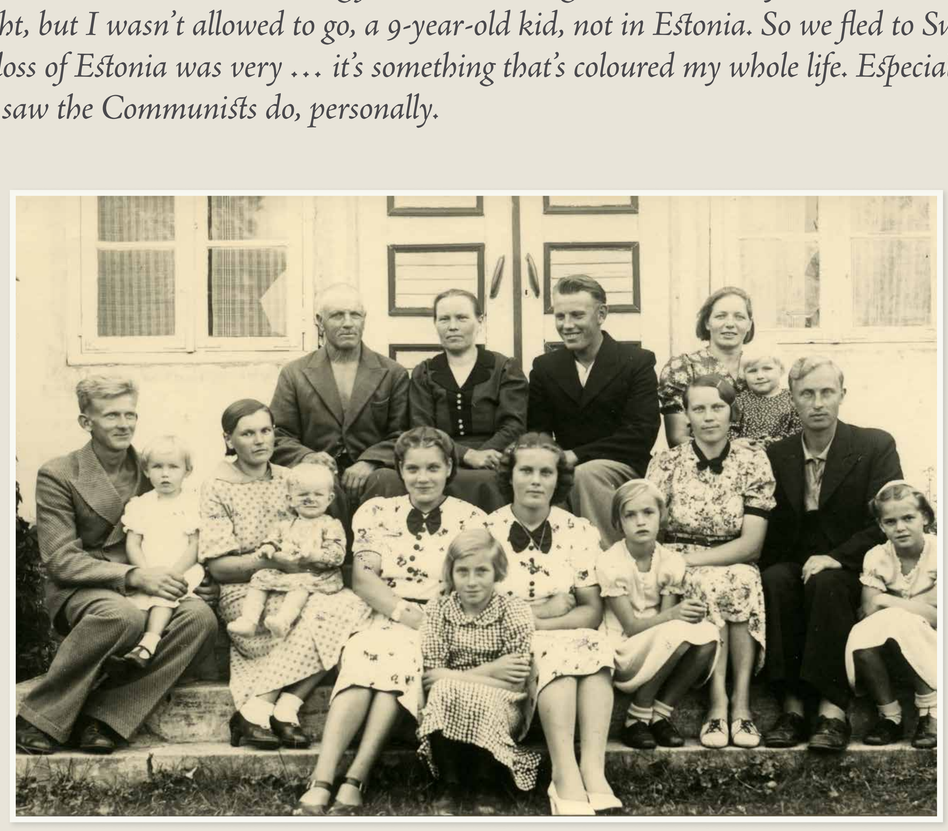
I don't really remember too much of the war, except that one day there was a lot of noise and a couple of nights later, I found myself under an apple tree, where Mother had carried me, because a whole lot of farms were torched. The Germans had come in, and those who were suspected of having collaborated with a Communist had their farms torched. So we didn't stay there long, either, and ended up back in Tallinn. Of course, we had no idea what had happened to father, but in the fall – that's '41 I'm talking about – in the fall, one day, he came back. He had been very lucky. He had had a chance to cross the lines from the Russian front to the German side, and after a very brief stay in a German prisoner-of-war camp, he was freed, came home, and then, shortly after that, was mobilized into the German army. So he was in the Estonian, Russian and German armies, all within not much more than a year.

One of the many organizations that DPs established was the Scouts. In spite of circumstances, they found time for hikes in the woods.



SUIT OLVET [b. 1935]

During the Sinimägede battle in July-August 1944, I was 190 km or so away, and my grandfather's windows were shaking from the bombing and the artillery. And I wanted to go and fight, but I wasn't allowed to go, a 9-year-old kid, not in Estonia. So we fled to Sweden. So the loss of Estonia was very … it's something that's coloured my whole life. Especially after what I saw the Communists do, personally.



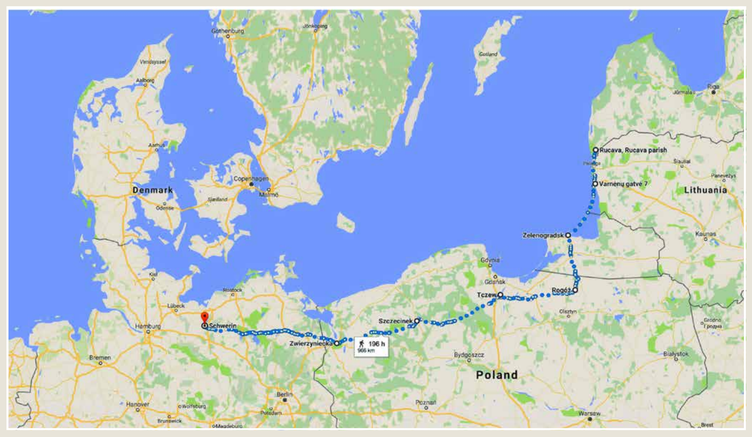
Suit Olvet's grandfather Jaan Jensen and his family at the Tahku-Madise (Tambu) farm, 1941.

BALTIC GERMAN ESTONIAN LATVIAN LITHUANIAN

Leaving Home

The recent memory of the 1940-41 Soviet occupation and the June 1941 deportations clinched the decisions of many families to flee the advance of Soviet troops in late summer 1944. Departure was sudden. Packing was hasty. And the things taken along reveal priorities and values, and the ability to foresee practical needs.

Most of our interviewees were children then, at the mercy of their parents' actions. But who suffered the most? Although many spoke of a child's ability to adapt and the sense of parental protection, surely the young experienced just as deep a loss as their elders did.



ONE FAMILY'S ESCAPE ROUTE: Alma Ivsiņa, 17, left Rucava, Latvia on October 9, 1944 with her parents and two younger siblings, travelling with horses and wagon for over two months to Schwerin, Germany.

AGOTA RATAVIČIENĖ [b. 1929]

"*We didn't leave our homeland, we were expelled. We put on whatever clothes we could. We took some food, and we left on foot.*

MARIJA GUDELIENĖ [b. 1916]

My parents stayed on the farm. I remember the last morning when I said goodbye to my mother. I kissed her and looked into her eyes, when I suddenly felt that this would be the last time I would see her. It was the last time – what a premonition!

ANASTĀSIJA BROKA née Krivmanis [b. 1930]

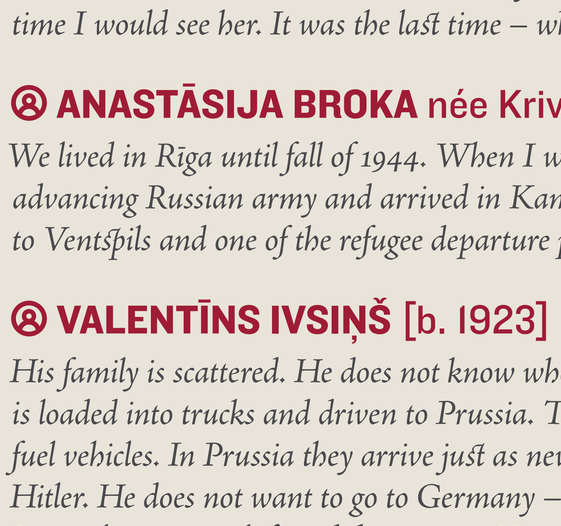
We lived in Rīga until fall of 1944. When I was 13 we left Rīga as refugees fleeing the advancing Russian army and arrived in Kandava, which is 94 km west of Rīga on the road to Ventspils and one of the refugee departure points.

VALENTĪNS IVSIŅŠ [b. 1923]

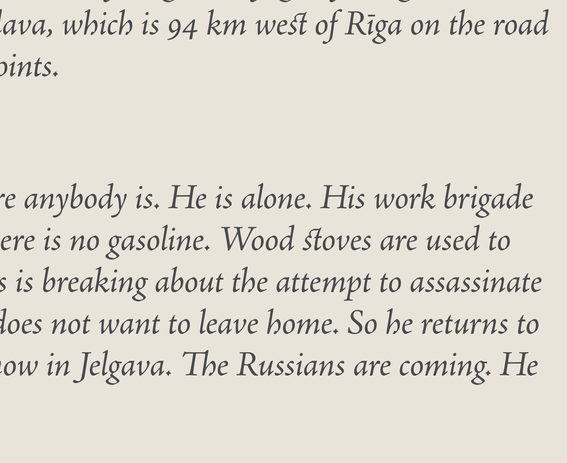
His family is scattered. He does not know where anybody is. He is alone. His work brigade is loaded into trucks and driven to Prussia. There is no gasoline. Wood stoves are used to fuel vehicles. In Prussia they arrive just as news is breaking about the attempt to assassinate Hitler. He does not want to go to Germany – does not want to leave home. So he returns to Latvia by train with forged documents. He is now in Jelgava. The Russians are coming. He walks to Rīga.

ROLAND WEILER [b. 1936]

Well, I was eight when I left and it's … Well, I don't know what an eight year old would feel about it. I suppose a child accepts more or less what the situation is, and I can't really complain about the situation because we, our family, were very fortunate in the sense that we left before the second time that the Russians came in. Actually, we were never really shot at or bombed or anything like that. And so, from that point of view, we have been very fortunate.



Merike Weiler: «In 1944, late on the eve of my brother Roland's eighth birthday, the phone rang in our Tallinn house. My mother recalled a sudden telephone call that a truck would be at the door in half an hour to take her and her three children to the seashore. If all went well, a small fishing boat would take us across the Baltic Sea to Finland before the Red Army invaded. My mother grabbed children's winter clothes, a handful of sterling silver cutlery, some jewellery, including a diamond platinum ring, which helped keep the family afloat when it was later sold.»



Valentīns Ivsiņš, front row left, returning to Germany after leave from the Reich Labour Service. Service was compulsory before University attendance and in Valentīns' case he was «drafted» into the Latvian Legion upon completion of his Labour Service obligation. June 1943, Rīga.

Previously used by the US military, this train brings DPs to port for their onward journey to a new life.

Leida Sepp, aboard the Manni, leaving Kihnu Island, Estonia for Sweden, 1944.

AIMI ZECHANOVITSCH [b. 1935]

Well, by that time we had managed to get a lot better apartment in Tallinn, but we didn't get much chance to stay in Tallinn, because Father was sent from one military post to another. So we ended up for some time in Kuressaare, some time in Paide, and just by luck, in the summer of '44, we were back in Tallinn.

And one day, completely by chance – that was in August – Mother and I were going home, and Father was again wherever the army had sent him – we ran into my father's younger brother, and he was with a group of people waiting for transportation for Germany.

Now, there had never been any talk that I can remember of leaving Estonia, anywhere. And after we met my uncle, my mother wrote to father in Kehra, where he was with the army, that she had met the family and what should we do, what should we think.

But father was very sort of unconcerned at that point. Even though he was practically on the front, he felt that things were still OK. And so another few weeks went by. Till the 20th of September. My mother could not contact my father, who actually by that time was on the Tartu front.

EDA SEPP [b. 1935]

In the summer of 1941, the summer the Estonians were deported, we were in Karksi with my mother just to be away from the city. My father had to stay in Tallinn because the Russians demanded that everybody return to where they worked otherwise they would be imprisoned, so he had to just be there and he was mobilized and put on board a ship to be taken to Leningrad. It was a tugboat actually, as we heard later on, and the mother ship was bombed, so all the soldiers from the tugboat jumped overboard and swam to Tallinn and my father among them and after that he was hiding in different places because he realized things were starting to get grim and he didn't want to be mobilized and taken to Russia. Well, yes when he was in this tugboat thing, everybody jumped out and my father, of course didn't know how to swim, but he had a life preserver – a round kind of inflatable little thing, very little, about that much [shows about a 1.5 feet distance with hands] *and that was the thing that saved him because that took him to the shore.*

And later on, when the Germans occupied Estonia, he started to work as a lawyer again in different places, and he found out that not only was he mobilized, but our family had been on the list to be deported to Siberia, because we were considered intellectuals. So, we had to flee in 1944. There was no other choice, either to go to Siberia or flee to Sweden.

II. REFUGEE EXPERIENCE

Great Exodus of 1944

As Soviet troops advanced, thousands of families began their journey as refugees in fear of another occupation.

300,000 Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians travelled to the West during the Second World War. About 75,000 Estonians, 140,000 Latvians and 65,000 Lithuanians fled their homelands in just the last 10 months of the war.

Many Estonians and Latvians took fishing boats to Sweden. Those who embarked for Finland found they had to travel onward to Sweden. Some Baltic people were evacuated with fleeing German troops via ships and trains. Many attempted to escape on their own by land or sea.

A large number of Lithuanians and Latvians made their way to Germany and countries that Germany had occupied.

The Great Exodus of 1944 remains one of the most traumatic experiences in recent Baltic history.

LEIDA SEPP [b. 1940]

“I was prone to seasickness and also I couldn’t take the smell anymore … So I told my father, I can’t stay here. And I went up on the deck, my father took me, and I said, I still remember saying, I think some of these people have to go off. There are too many people here, I think we’re all going to sink! This boat is going to sink! I knew about boats sinking. And my father said, You know what? We all have to leave, not just us. If we sink, we all sink. So that memory stayed with me, you know, my big suggestion to my father! [laughs] And I knew it was my father’s boat, and I think it was Manni that we were on … When I woke up, coils of ropes … in a boat you usually have big coils of ropes – he had stuck me like a bird in a nest into the coil of ropes.

AIMI ZECHANOWITSCH [b. 1935]

My aunt came by and said that she was leaving for Germany that very day because there were ships in the harbour in Tallinn and taking people to go. And, just like that, my mother said, We go. And so in a couple of hours, she packed, we were taken to the port and just by miracle, we met up with my aunt, who was in tears because she had hoped to get on that lovely big ship, which had a red cross on it, and hoped that even the Soviets would not bombard a Red Cross ship.

Well, we weren’t important enough, so we couldn’t get on that ship, but another one by the name of Lappland came by. We got on that ship and the next day, on September 21st, Lappland stayed at anchor, waiting for all the other ships, the hospital ship and a smaller ship to start out as a convoy … My aunt said, Look! These are Russian planes coming! And we started to go downstairs again. We didn’t make it downstairs to the cabins. There was an enormous jolt. The ship practically went on its side. And later, a friend of ours, Captain Veeber, who was also on Lappland, told us what had happened. The three planes, each carried an aerial torpedo. The torpedo for the hospital ship missed. The torpedo for the small ship missed. The torpedo for our ship missed us because our ship managed to make that sudden jolt out of the way, but it went right into the hospital ship from the aft. In four minutes, it sank. That was the ship that we had so badly wanted to get on. It was the Moero. And of course, nobody quite knows how many, you know, went down. Thousands, anyway. It was full of the wounded.

And so our ship stopped and rescued some people. I can remember one lady, who was brought into the cabin where we were. And my mother, out of her little bag, took one of her dresses to take to that lady so she would have something dry to wear. And then she turned to somebody and said, Can I have a cigarette? And somebody in the background said, Some people have lost everything. Some people can’t do without the cigarette. Well, my mother broke the cigarette and it took years before she smoked again.

EDA SEPP [b. 1935]

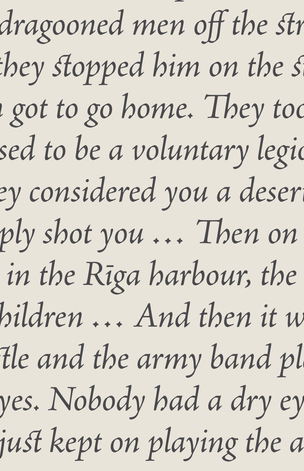
My father had acquired a motorboat. It was seven metres long and less than two metres wide and they had to reconstruct the motor. There were twelve of us in this little motorboat, and there was a really big storm when we left during the night. I remember, we were sitting on the trunks and the men were in a cabin steering and the motor broke down several times. My father was the only person who knew a little bit about motors, so they tried to fix it and there was a time when the boat in the storm was just going round and round, there was something wrong with the steering. The men were all fixing it with a bottle of cognac, I heard later on, because it was cold and rainy and the storm was big, and I remember the water came from both sides from above, the rain, and it also was spraying, like the storm, because we were under the open sky. Then, at one time there was a leakage of water, so we had to get the water out all the time, but water was coming from the waves. It was cold and the smell of gas was so intense that everything smelled of the gas. And the sandwiches that we had with us, were tasting like gasoline and from that time, I think I’m allergic to the smell of gasoline, I can’t stand it.

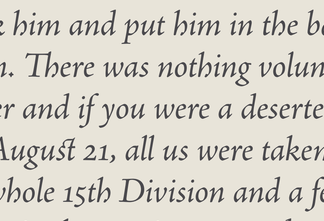
VALENTĪNS IVSIŅŠ [b. 1923]

We were put into some kind of barracks. They were recruiting for the 15th Division (the Latvian Legion), which had been almost completed decimated. They were pressing people for a new 15th Division. They dragooned men off the street, like my sister’s husband. He was coming home from work, they stopped him on the street, took him and he had to go into military service. He never even got to go home. They took him and put him in the barracks, in that legion. That was supposed to be a voluntary legion. There was nothing voluntary about it. You either went or they considered you a deserter and if you were a deserter … there were no courts. They simply shot you … Then on August 21, all us were taken from the barracks and put on a ship in the Rīga harbour, the whole 15th Division and a few others … a few families with children … And then it was in the evening, around seven, when the ship gave a long whistle and the army band played «God, bless Latvia.» Everyone on the ship had tears in their eyes. Nobody had a dry eye. That was the last time I saw the shores of Latvia and the band just kept on playing the anthem.

ALMA IVSIŅA [b. 1927]

We left home and rode to the Rucava parish centre which was seven kilometres from our home. The people who were leaving had already discussed who was going, who was staying … they met up at the centre … the men talked about where and how we should go to Lithuania … Then we rode all night, we rode and rode, until we came to a bridge. The bridge was on fire, it was burning. There was a small river underneath, not big, but it was in a large valley ... The men all got out of the carts and then one by one, as fast as they could, drove their horses and ran alongside as fast as they could, and happily, everyone got across. In the morning we saw that we were already in the German area.





Viivi Rass survived the bombing of the hospital ship Moero. From her photo album. Geislingen, Germany, 1948.

Refugee Becomes Displaced Person

Tens of thousands of refugees from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania were housed in displaced persons (DP) camps that became their temporary homes for a number of years.

Hundreds of these facilities were established in Germany and other countries to house people who found themselves outside the borders of their countries as a result of the chaos of the Second World War.

DP camps were overseen by international relief organizations, but daily life was largely self-managed through committees that organized activities, staffed schools and clinics, and published newsletters.

Conditions in DP camps were varied, sometimes harsh. However, even under trying conditions, Baltic DPs did their best to preserve a sense of order and dignity. They created a thriving cultural life in many camps, including the Baltic University in Exile.

In postwar Europe individual states were busy reconstructing their cities and meeting needs of their own citizens. Whether living in DP camps or in the community, accommodation was often basic or even substandard. Overcrowding was common and there were frequent food shortages.

ŽENIJA VITOLS [b. 1935]

"Our first refugee camp was in Dresden, in a converted theatre. The orchestra section held double bunk beds for 200 people, in groups of four, divided by blankets. In the basement there was a common kitchen and a bathroom. We stayed there until Dresden was destroyed in the bombing raid on the night of February 13, 1945. We were the last to get out of the shelter. Fortunately, our part of the building was not hit directly, so we were able to walk out. There were flames all around. My mother covered our heads with something to protect us from the inferno. When I peeked out, I saw a uniformed man lead a little girl in a white nightdress by the hand. That sight still haunts me.

Latvian Song Festival. Eichstätt, Germany, 1946.

VALENTĪNS IVSIŅŠ [b. 1923]

We spent some time in Camp Rebdorf … they had a song festival there a month after we go there in 1946. They had athletics there in Eichstätt and since I knew how to drive, I got a job driving a truck for UNRRA. I drove to the warehouse for food and brought it back to camp … every so often I would ask for an extra orange and they threw one in.

MARIJA TAMULAITIENĖ [b. 1917]

When we arrived in the camps, our education meant nothing. If you knew something practical, how to cook something or make something, you could manage. We stayed in army barracks. We didn't have our own food in the camps, we got rations. There were cows you could milk, if only you had something to put the milk into. We worked, tried to teach one another what we knew, to teach the children something, so they could manage, because everything was taken away from us. We had no rights. And we had to learn to live with that. We had been forced out of our homes, for no reason.

AGOTA RATAVIČIENĖ [b. 1929]

My mother went begging for bread and would get bread, a small vegetable,or another scrap of food. She did this because camp food was not enough. This is one of the reasons why I left for Canada as quickly as possible. Still, life in the camp was fun. There were a lot of young people, good choirs, music. During summer vacation from school, there were other activities e.g. first aid courses. We were only there for a few years.

ROMUALDAS OTTO [b. 1935]

Schools were established. I joined the Scouts. Folk dance groups were formed. We had a soloist who performed in his own concerts. Our camp had escaped bombardments, so it was in pretty good shape. We only had to avoid the runways as they were full of unexploded bombs. It was not clear if the Germans or someone else had left those bombs there. There were many jet planes there.

GISELA FLEICH [b. 1931]

When we reached Germany we tried to get to Western zones. Because of our heritage they would probably have considered us capitalists, therefore we moved to distant relatives. Of course, at that time lots of refugees swarmed the country, so sometimes people were not too welcoming because they had to share their homes with refugees. We were very lucky because our region was first occupied by Americans and then the British. Then, overnight that region was exchanged for the western sections of Berlin and suddenly the Russians were there. At first we did not have any problems. My father could speak Russian and had been working in Belorussia before, so the military used him as a translator because they had to communicate with the Germans.

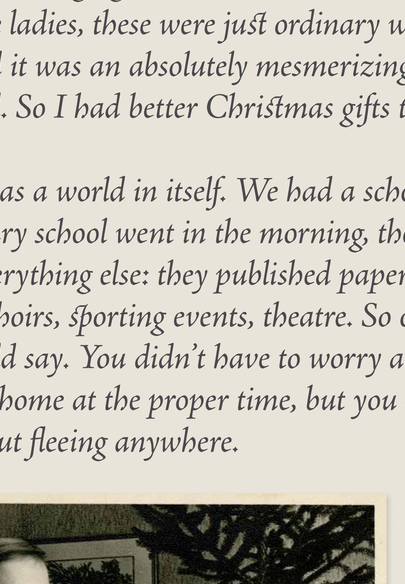
EDITH VON HARPE [b. 1925]

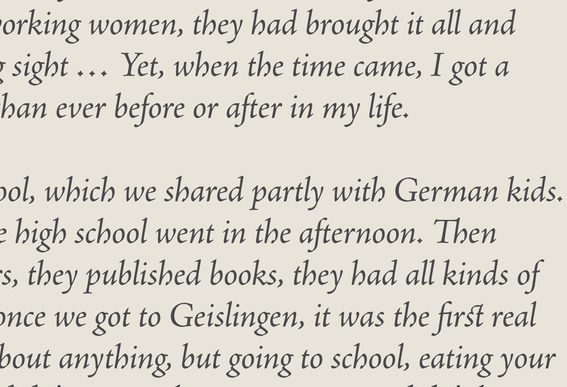
We were housed in the hall of a restaurant when I heard planes and then the bombs falling. My aunt grabbed her boys and ran to the house next door which had a bomb shelter. I grabbed the girls but did not have enough time to run next door. So I went down the stairs to the root cellar of the restaurant, which was full of people. My niece was frightened and cried «nicht tot sein» (let's not be dead). When the raid was over and we came up from the cellar, we saw that all the houses on the other side of the street had been destroyed.

AIMI ZECHANOWITSCH [b. 1935]

And Christmas of 1944, in a way of course, was the saddest of Christmases. In another way, it was the most memorable Christmas I've ever had, because mother's co-workers started to send gifts day in, day out before Christmas. And the day before Christmas Eve, I was sent down to Fräulein Enke, our landlady, and I wasn't allowed to go back till I was called. And when I was called, our room had become a fairyland. There were candles everywhere and there was the most gorgeous doll's house with all the furniture, even with a tiny Christmas tree. And the ladies, these were just ordinary working women, they had brought it all and put it up and it was an absolutely mesmerizing sight … Yet, when the time came, I got a beautiful doll. So I had better Christmas gifts than ever before or after in my life.

Geislingen was a world in itself. We had a school, which we shared partly with German kids. The elementary school went in the morning, the high school went in the afternoon. Then there was everything else: they published papers, they published books, they had all kinds of workshops, choirs, sporting events, theatre. So once we got to Geislingen, it was the first real peace, I would say. You didn't have to worry about anything, but going to school, eating your meals, being home at the proper time, but you didn't worry about enemies, you didn't have to worry about fleeing anywhere.





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Christmas in Geislingen, 1947. Eichstädt DP Camp, 1945. Estonian Elementary School, Geislingen, 1948. The Baltic University (1946-49) was created by the collaboration of three Baltic nations in the midst of chaos and under difficult conditions in the DP camps of a devastated Germany.

BALTIC GERMAN ESTONIAN LATVIAN LITHUANIAN

13. REFUGEE EXPERIENCE

Decision to Leave

There were an estimated 10 million DPs in Europe at the end of the Second World War. International relief organizations had the monumental task of repatriating or resettling them, and asked countries across the world to help.

By the early 1950s, most DPs were repatriated to their countries of origin or resettled in Western Europe, the US, Canada, Australia or South America.

Canada implemented a bulk-labour program and a close-relatives plan that allowed immigrants in Canada to sponsor family and friends. Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians ranked high on Canada's list of preferred immigrants and were among the first DPs to be resettled to Canada in the late 1940s, with more than 50,000 arriving by the early 1950s.

Vincent Massey, High Commissioner to London, reported that if Canada were to admit refugees from Europe «the Balts, especially the Latvians, might be the best of the lot.»

FROM TOP: En route to Australia aboard the USS General W. M. Black, 1948. The USS General Harry Taylor arriving at Pier 21, Halifax, 1950.

From memoirs of **JÜRGEN VON HAHN** [b. 1924]

"In July 1948, I moved to a camp near Hannover, where a group of young Baltic Germans were assembled. They were partly from Estonia, partly Livonians and Kurlanders, all roughly between 18 and 24 years old. We were questioned by the Canadian consul and examined by the RCMP with regard to security and our political inclinations. The main concern of the Canadian officials was to establish whether one was physically able and willing to work as a farm labourer. I had to perform countless knee bends, push ups and running exercises to demonstrate that I was not physically disabled. One of the other boys told the officials he had played hockey in Hamburg. When the Canadians heard that, they said he had the heart of an athlete and were satisfied.

HEIDI BUFFET [b. 1950]

In 1957 my parents decided to emigrate to Canada. At that time, we lived in the DDR (East Germany). We were five children, three of us in kindergarten. One day, my mother told us to come home early from school. When we asked why, she said, We are going to a birthday party and don't ask any more questions. Since we were not allowed to leave the DDR. for West Germany, my parents had to be careful not to say too much to us. So, our family walked two kilometres to the railway station, our youngest sister only one year old in a stroller. We traveled by train to West Berlin and ended up in a huge refugee camp. Finally, our parents told us the real truth. No birthday party, but eventually we would be going to Canada.

BRIGITTE VON ADERKAS [b. 1949]

Germany was devastated, food and housing shortages everywhere, refugees (mostly from Eastern Europe) were an unwanted invasion and this added up to «come to the land of plenty – Canada.»

INGRID VON ROSENBACH [b. 1927]

In 1950 my husband Christian planned to spend the holidays with his parents in Luleå – a coastal city in Swedish Lapland. He left for Stockholm by train on the morning of December 20th and was to continue his trip to Luleå later that evening with the Norrland Express. After putting his suitcase into a locker at the Stockholm station, he went to the Canadian legation. When he arrived, he saw a long line of people all hoping to obtain the coveted visa and start a new life. The visa offices were on the third floor. Gazing at the lineup in dismay, Christian realized that he didn't have a chance of speaking with a visa official that day. Just then, he saw an elevator with a sign: For Employees Only. He made a quick decision and walked determinedly towards it. Up he went to the top floor and directly into the visa office. By chance, he bumped into the chief immigration officer, who immediately asked, Who are you and how the heck did you get in here? Christian quickly stated his case. His application, among many others, had been received at the legation office weeks earlier. After finding his file and reviewing it, the officer smiled and told him, I like your initiative, attitude and spirit of enterprise. You are the kind of guy Canada needs. Thus, the final destination of the von Rosenbach family was decided, with daring, determination and some very good luck in the short space of time «between two trains.»

ERNIE VON BOETTICHER [b. 1939]

We had chosen Canada from among South Africa, South America or Australia because the land most resembled our old homeland.

ŽENIJA VITOLS [b. 1935]

My father, who was a member of Latvia's Olympic horseback riding team, learned how to drive a truck in Germany, but did not see a future there. He wanted to leave and get as far away from the Soviets as possible. Since he had been a first lieutenant in the Latvian army at the time of the occupation of Latvia, he was not welcomed in most countries. His two brothers, who had lived in the British zone and had not served in the army, had been able to immigrate to Canada a few years earlier. If we went to Canada, then the family would be together again. With their help our family was able to get a sponsor and in 1950 we sailed on the ss Nea Hellas via Genoa, Italy, to Canada.

VISVALDIS BRŪMELIS [b. 1922]

I didn't get to Canada because they only looked at chest x-rays. Since I had had this pleuritis, they only saw trouble. If you had some cancer or syphilis, that didn't count. My brother Andrejs went to Canada. I ended up in England and after a few years got English citizenship. I got married and Velta also got English citizenship. I was trying to get to Canada. I saw an ad in the local papers, they were looking for specialists for the Ontario Department of Highways. I asked myself, what's this? I went to the library, got some books to find out about all kinds of highways for the interview. I go there and he asks me what I know about bridges. I say no, no, I've only driven over them. Since I had a few years of university, I got to go to Canada.

Thomas Heinar about his father **VERNER HEINAR** [b. 1919]

Actually, the main worry at that time was to try to get into the United States or some other part of the world as soon as they could, so that they could start a new life somewhere else. Probably the mindset was that Estonia was lost, and it wouldn't be possible to go back there. There was a huge fear, so they really tried hard to get on lists, so that they could go to the United States. I guess the other options were parts of South America, Bolivia or Argentina, Brazil, Australia and Canada. So that was the main thrust of their worry, at that time, to get on lists and to try to get away from Europe.

Well, as I have documents showing that he did apply, while still in Germany, to a school of theology in the United States as a mechanism to leave and to be accepted into the States. And I think he was leaning toward theology because the mindset was to get something very clean and pure and reliable in his life, not this, not an atmosphere of fear and randomness and so it was a complete opposite to the mindset that existed during the war. The church offered a place of sanctuary and I think in his mindset that's what he was aspiring to, but at the same time it would have offered him a chance for him to go into the United States.

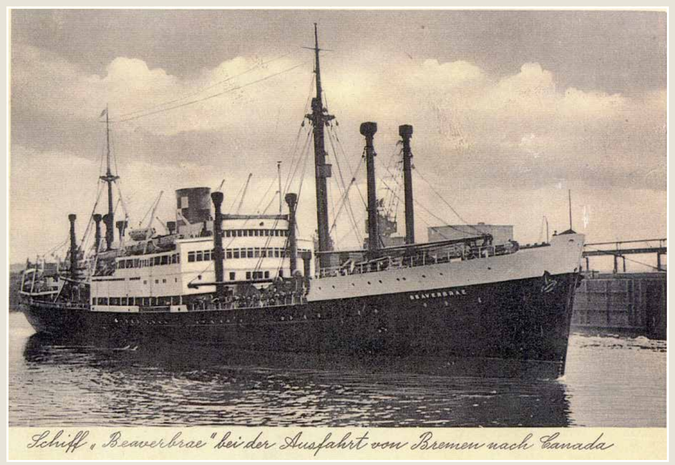
BALTIC GERMAN ESTONIAN LATVIAN LITHUANIAN

Voyage to the New World

The journey to Canada was taken by ship and the majority of Baltic DPs departed from the German port cities of Bremerhaven and Hamburg. The trip typically took 10 days, but could be longer depending on sea conditions.

Ships to transport migrants were in high demand, and a variety of vessels were used including passenger liners, as well as converted freighters and troop ships.

For many it was an exciting yet difficult journey, marked by cramped quarters, seasickness and the uncertainty of what was to come.



The ss Beaverbrae was the «Mayflower» of Baltic German immigrants to Canada. Her maiden voyage with 750 passengers was on February 7, 1948. From 1948-54 this ship completed 52 voyages and brought 33, 259 immigrants to Canada.

BERNARD VON SCHULMANN [b. 1965]

“ The first job my parents had in Canada was on the Beaverbrae as translators, so they were hard-working immigrants before they even got off of the ship at Québec City. They were both expected to do work on the ship to «pay» for their passage, this meant cleaning and cooking.

DAGI GAVEL [b. 1948]

My parents Sigi and Evi left Germany on June 9, 1951. They said goodbye to family and friends in Bremerhaven and boarded the Beaverbrae, a converted cargo ship, headed for a land of freedom from war and the promise of new beginnings. The journey across the Atlantic was daunting and difficult. The accommodations were poor and separated the men from their wives and children during the night. The barracks were crowded – three high bunks and narrow walkways. Dad volunteered in the kitchen to stay busy and received cigarettes and fruit for his young family. Mom cared for us at night and with dad's help during the day managed to keep her wits about her for the long journey. Two other Baltic friends were with them on that journey, which made the time more bearable.

WOLF THOMSON [b. 1928]

We boarded the ss Beaverbrae at Bremerhaven. She was no Queen Elizabeth by any stretch of the imagination, but to us, she was a golden ship to paradise. Before we set sail, the ship's master at arms gathered us together to see the captain. He told us that our group had been selected to function as the ship's police force during the crossing, which was to last nine days. We would be responsible for law and order on the ship and for our efforts we received special quarters, had our own mess, ate first class food and received two cartons of cigarettes each. It must have been a most orderly trip because the captain wanted to keep us on board for further crossings.

HANS-HENNING MÜNDEL [b. 1942]

En route, across the Atlantic Ocean, on March 22, 1951 we celebrated my sister Brita's first birthday. On a most stormy day, we heard an announcement over the ship's loudspeakers to alert us of a baby carriage rolling back and forth on an upper deck. It was Brita's baby carriage! Luckily, she was not inside. I also remember swings on very long ropes. The ship rolled forwards into the depths and arose from there again, and we swayed crosswise on these swings! Let's not forget Easter – and the egg-rolling we did. If my memory serves me right, we rolled eggs on top of one of the dining tables. Of course, there were many questions and glances of the non-Balts aboard. A number of their children, however, joined us with great gusto and joy.

EVELYN IRSCHICK [b. 1931]

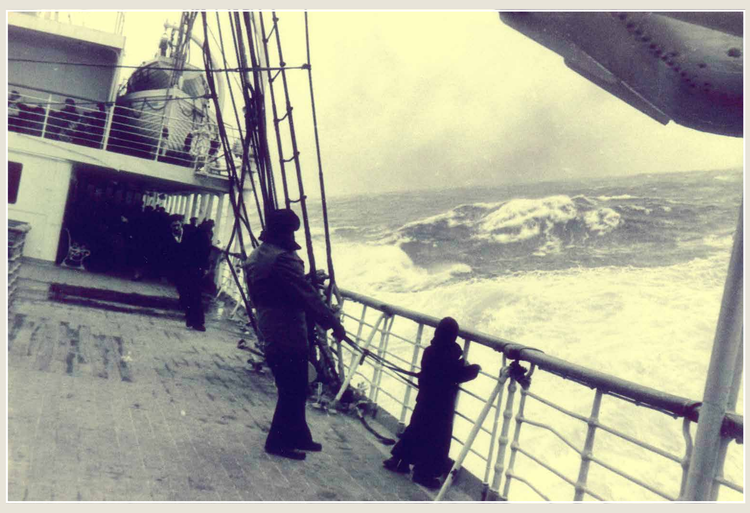
On the ss Scythia our quarters were on the lower level of the ship. We ate in the morning. You didn't get seasick if you had already something in your stomach. You had to eat the soup in sync with the waves. Dancing was fun. You would be dancing in one corner and then, all of a sudden, you were in the other corner because the ship went that way.

BIRUTĖ ČEPAITIENĖ [b. 1926]

I came to Canada by ship. It was the saddest journey – I was travelling alone, without my family. There was only one other Lithuanian on the ship. We left Hamburg during the winter but, thank goodness, I didn't get seasick like some of the others. We arrived in Halifax, where we were given $5 each and were transferred to a train to Toronto. I felt so much better arriving at Union Station because my brother was there to meet me.

ŽENIJA VITOLS [b. 1935]

We left Germany by train to Genoa, Italy. There we boarded the Greek Line ship ss Nea Hellas that sailed to Canada on November 6th, 1950. A moving moment was at Gibraltar: It was at sunrise, and my father and I stood on deck and said good-bye to Europe as we sailed past. The Nea Hellas was a private ship that accommodated a group of about 50 refugees. Our voyage was the last group of refugees whose passage was paid for by the IRO. We sailed in relative comfort in a separate tourist class cabin. We ate our meals with the private passengers and were free to roam the ship. I visited first class, but was soon escorted out. Every afternoon a man set up a coffee shop on deck and brewed real Turkish coffee served in tiny cups. Each cup cost $1. There were also dances. Having met a couple of handsome Greek boys, I went dancing with them. One dance was held soon after we entered the Atlantic Ocean and just after a storm. The ship listed and we listed with it from one side of the dance floor to the other.



Stormy weather: Aboard the ss Beaverbrae, crossing the Atlantic to the start of a new life.

BALTIC GERMAN ESTONIAN LATVIAN LITHUANIAN

Canada, Eventually

Sometimes, the way to Canada was not direct and passed through an intermediate country. In Sweden, after incidents of Baltic refugees being deported to the Soviet Union, many decided to leave.

They left on «Viking ships,» the most famous of which is the SS Walnut. Its voyage changed the views of Canadian immigration officials. As a result of the Walnut's arrival, a special immigration officer was sent to Sweden and the doors for legal immigration were opened.

Relocation to Canada was also made through Australia or South America.

On December 13, 1948 the SS Walnut carrying 347 Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian and other refugees arrived at Pier 21 in Halifax after a dangerous voyage across the Atlantic from Göteborg, Sweden via Sligo, Ireland. Approximately 88 percent of the passengers were Estonians. The passengers had bought the ship outright on a share basis.

ALINA ŽILVYTIENĖ [b. 1933]

We first went to England, but wanted to come to Canada. After two years we saved enough money for our passage to Canada, and in April 1950, after a voyage on the ship Samaria, we landed in Halifax. I had five British pounds in my pocket, my coat and my shoes and nothing else. We took a train to Toronto and our first impression of Canada was scary. We didn't know what we had gotten ourselves into.

MARIJA KALVAITIENĖ [b. 1931]

One sister had reached the US, one had reached Canada and one was in Venezuela. Each tried to get documents for the rest of the family to immigrate, but the Venezuelan documents came first. We sailed from Bremerhaven, stopped in New Orleans to let all of the Jewish passengers off, and then sailed for another three weeks to Caracas. After a few years we were able to fly to Montreal as Canadian immigrants.

LEONARDAS GARBALIAUSKAS [b. 1927]

I lived in Australia for nine years. When I graduated from university, I went to work, but it was fashionable after graduation to travel around the world. All my classmates left and said to me, go to England, go to Canada – see the world. So I decided to go and do the travel backwards – I'll go to Canada, will make some money, then I'll go to England and finally return to Australia. So I went to Canada and here I «got stuck.»

LEIDA SEPP [b. 1940]

It was taken just before boarding the boat from Halmstad, Sweden to Canada. Yes, then we went to Sweden and then we came to Canada on the Swedish ship Gripsholm from Göteborg. The photo was taken on board. What do I remember from the trip? The food was so delicious! I remember the first meal that was offered. Well, meat, that was typical. We hadn't ever eaten poorly, we always had pretty good food in Sweden, but the dessert was ice cream. And they had chocolate, strawberry and vanilla! The triple kind! My stomach began to turn, and turn, I had to run out of the cafeteria and I was seasick behind the cafeteria door. Eating anchovies on crispbread, that's what I was eating. That was all that would stay down, anchovies on a Swedish crispbread. That was the menu for me … Well, anyway I didn't die of seasickness.

SUIT OLVET [b. 1935]

So, in Pier 21 after the long trip, all of a sudden I wake up early, early in the morning and it's quiet. Nothing is moving, there's no noise, and I go up on deck and I can't see anything, it's fog. And then, I hear this squeak, squeak. Somebody was rowing into the fog. That was my first impression of Canada.

AIMI ZECHANOWITSCH [b. 1935]

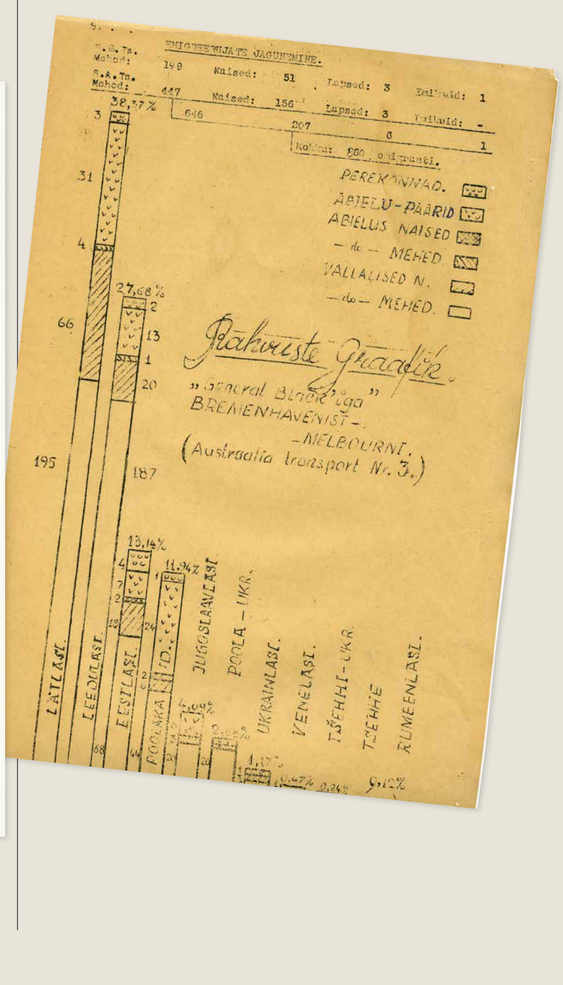
Young people in Australia went for what they called a working holiday. And it was easy to do because all you had to do was go to Commonwealth countries where you didn't need any special work permits. If you had papers from Australia you could get jobs in Canada, in England, or wherever. So I came in May of 1960. I started my trip and I landed in Los Angeles, but then I came to Canada.

Thomas Heinar about his father VERNER HEINAR [b. 1919]

They left Australia in 1956. I think the main reason for leaving was probably the climate, wasn't agreeable to a northern acclimatization, of being a changeable climate like here, or in Estonia where there are actual seasons. But that wasn't the real reason, many Estonians stayed in Australia, I mean, they were thriving there. Estonians are, and all displaced people from that time, were very adaptable to their new situations. I guess most of the reason was that they wanted to be with others of their own kind, where there was the most population. I think the attitude of Australians at that time was not the best for displaced people. I think there was a lot of discrimination probably happening. They had it really rough to try to assimilate in the '50s. It depends what they were doing and where they were going, but them learning English on top of it all was probably difficult to disguise their accent, their obvious position of being displaced among Australians.

ALMA IVSIŅA [b. 1927]

We disembarked in London, but then we were taken to a camp … Everyone there was a refugee. They were in need of workers there, whether they were farmers or factory people. The employers would go to the camps and say, we need so many people. I don't know how they decided … they took a certain number of people from the camps … to where workers were needed. We were taken to Bradford, where there were a lot of textile factories and all the women were put to work in the textile mills. When I went there for my first day, I was put into such work and, well, you had to learn. I had never done work like that, never, anywhere. I had worked hard in the fields, but this was something else, when you have a machine and you have to serve it. On that first day, I thought I was going to die. I thought I would simply collapse. I was so terribly exhausted, I was insensible. Somehow I did survive. We were put into houses … I had a small unheated attic room, it was so very cold.



FROM LEFT: Welcome aboard! First stop – Australia. A newsletter from the USS General W. M. Black showing the demographic make-up of the passenger list, all DPs. Though mostly Balts, there were also people from many Eastern European countries and Russia. A Baltic German man set to leave Bremerhaven, Germany.

BALTIC GERMAN · ESTONIAN · LATVIAN · LITHUANIAN

Arrival and First Impressions

As the Balts arrived, their recent experiences and emotional state must have affected their first impressions of Canada. For some, this was a grand adventure to a future full of opportunities. For others, it was a terrifying start to a new life they had not chosen.

Coming from Europe, Canada seemed vast, with unusual customs, and offered a large variety of fantastic food.

Cunard White Star's ss Samaria, arriving at Halifax, 1948.

FROM LEFT: DP workers arrive in Manitoba. Samaria passengers – not exactly first class. Vladas Vytas on board for his voyage to Canada.

Die Musterknaben

On August 18, 1948, the first post-WWII Baltic Germans arrived on board the freighter Beaverbrae in Québec City. Nicknamed «Die Musterknaben» (sample boys), these 10 young, healthy, strong men were to be «samples» of Baltic Germans, sent to Canadian farms for a one-year labour contract. They were expected to make a good impression and live up to their obligations, so that they could secure further sponsorships for family and fellow countrymen.

Die Musterknaben: Ernst Brockhausen, Gert Neuendorff, Berndt Kuehn, Edmund Hahn, Jürgen Hahn, Paul Adolf Hahn, Rolf von Heyking, Wolf Thompson, John Wetter-Rosenthal, Georg Vietinghoff.

From the memoirs of **DINA VON HAHN** [b. 1903]

I stood and watched the passing stream of immigrants for a long time. What a familiar sight! Here were large groups of Volksdeutsche *carrying bundles, boxes and baskets that spoke volumes of their innumerable wanderings, resettlements, treks, arriving from every corner of Europe. How close I felt to these faces from Galicia, Romania and the Volga. Never in all these years had I seen them so overjoyed, so radiant! They were all moving into a new future; most of them to join already settled relatives, others to work at contracted jobs. All these faces, so marked by suffering, especially those of the older women, now spoke of such joy and hope that I was deeply moved. After a long wait I caught a glimpse of the first «Musterknabe.» One after the other they all came into view. We were grateful and proud, even at first glance, in the knowledge that both inwardly and outwardly they would always be excellent representatives of their fellow countrymen.*

The Lutheran Church of Canada found placements for all with Lutheran farmers. The young people contracted their services for one year to these farmers, and repaid the Lutheran Church the money it advanced them for their passage within that first year. After that, they would be totally free to pursue a career or job of their own choice. Once they had steady employment and suitable housing they could apply to sponsor their families as new immigrants to Canada. The great moral commitment and responsibility they had taken on was brought home to the young people in a short talk by the pastor who welcomed them.

August 18, 1948 and the arrival of the first group will be an unforgettable day for us, a day of prayers answered, a new beginning for these young people who will be able to bring so many others after themselves. With great gratitude we also look at this country that is giving us, the homeless and stateless, the right to a home with all the chances and opportunities available in this country to anyone willing to work hard.

Unfortunately, our time together was very short. Most of them were kept busy the whole time as translators. I could barely catch hold of one or the other for a few minutes at a time. Our young men were irreplaceable. Passport and customs officials competed for their services. On board ship, they had all been enlisted in the ship's police. The captain thanked them in a short farewell speech; he had not had such reliable help, orderly behaviour, on any of his 6 immigrant voyages. Our boys had made friends and exchanged photos with the stewards, who coached them in some of the basics of North American life. My husband and I agreed that our young people would make a good impression here, adapt readily, and be met with good will.

WOLF THOMSON [b. 1928]

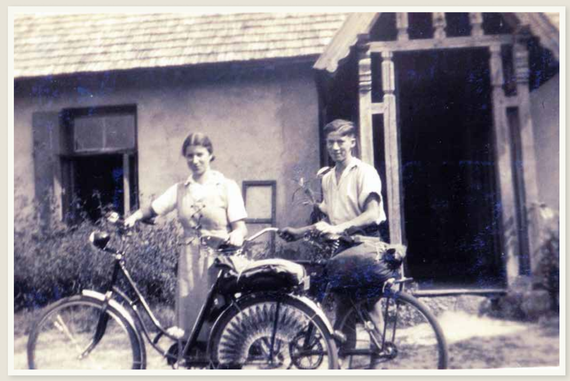
On August 20, 1948, four of us arrived at the train station in Stratford, Ontario. There, two pastors from the Lutheran Church received us and delivered us to our new foster families, for whom we were to serve our one-year work term. To fulfill our mission as probationary immigrants, we needed to remember three rules: behave, keep your mouth shut and work like hell. Gert and I were delivered to a large family farm where Gert was to stay, while I worked for their married son on a farm about a ¼ mile away. The whole family had gathered for the arrival of the two Germans from the «old country» … We were a curiosity, to say the least. The undisputed head of this clan was grandma. Tall, gaunt, hardworking and often very outspoken, she was a no nonsense kind of woman and nobody's fool. Gert was the first to be introduced. Being the Baltic gentleman that he was, he bowed and kissed her hand. Grandma was in total shock and for the first time in her life perhaps, she was speechless.

17. BUILDING A NEW LIFE

Westward Ho!

DAGI GAVEL [b. 1948]

“ They landed in Québec City, all of their belongings in two crates, including a bicycle as their only mode of transportation. They journeyed with their two small girls in tow by train to Linwood, Ontario, where they were assigned farm work to repay the $510 that Mark McKee, a local farmer, had so generously prepaid for their transport to their new country.



MATHIAS KUESTER [b. 1924]

Now we were moving up the St. Lawrence River, no longer in the open sea, and we got a good look at our new homeland on both sides of the river. All the immigrants stood at the deck railing and everyone seemed to have discovered something different. I remember the little houses on top of the banks, wooden and all different in colour, something you seldom see in Europe. But the landscape looked like Scandinavia – we could have just as well have been moving through a Norwegian fjord. We were all pleasantly surprised.

FRED VON HEYKING [b. 1923]

We marveled at the wonderful, vibrant colours of the autumn trees along the river. There were so many different coloured roofs, which we found interesting, coming from a land where all the roofs were red. We landed in Québec City. It was a marvel to me that here we stood, in a new country with a small baby and we had not even celebrated our first wedding anniversary! Moments after our arrival we were approached by a wealthy Canadian couple who wanted to adopt our daughter Marianne, saying that they could provide the child with a better start and a better life. We managed to smile and say no thank you, but inside we were astounded to think that anyone would believe we would give our child away. We were only in Québec City a few hours to get processed. While waiting, we were given some food, and it was here that I ate my first banana. From there it was on to a waiting train for the long trip to Galt, Ontario.

LYDIA HAAK [b. 1936]

From my window, I had a first glimpse of Canada with snow still on the ground and drifting ice in the St. Lawrence River. Our first impression of Toronto was mostly positive. Everything was so much bigger here, even the sparrows, squirrels and the mosquitoes. Not to mention the automobile! One thing that seemed strange was that there were few pedestrians on the streets. Everyone seemed to be driving, and this made it difficult to ask someone for directions.

ĀDOLFS AVENS [b. 1921]

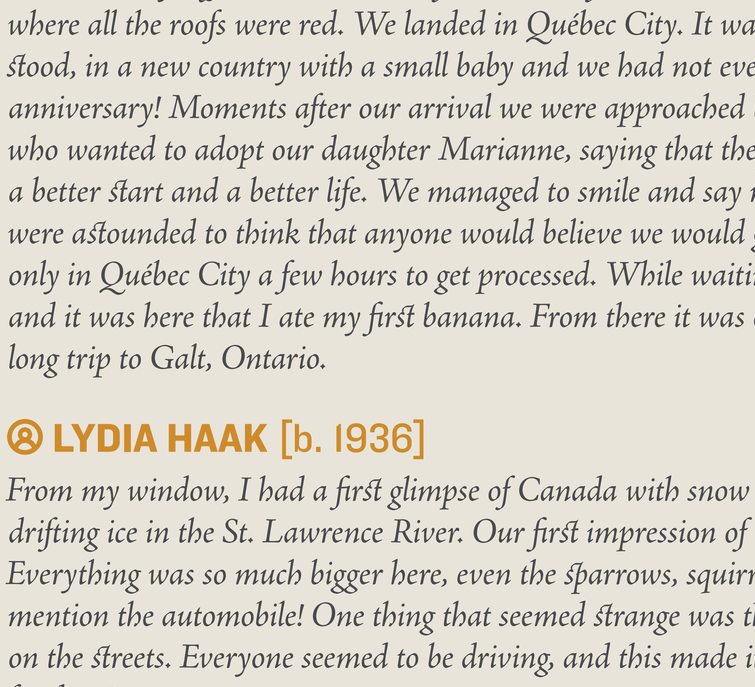
What we thought was Canada, turned out to be Anticosti Island. The air was bracingly clear and cool. We continued along the St. Lawrence River to Québec City, which had about 50,000 inhabitants at the time, most of them French. My first impression was not that pleasant. The telephone lines and other cables strung on crooked poles were an eyesore. We walked through the city, went to see the fortress and walked around it, but couldn't get in, since nobody had given us any pocket money. The next day, we set out for Noranda in sleeping cars. Not far from the city, the landscape changed. It began to look the way I imagined Siberia looked. A lot of burned out forests. Many uprooted, fallen trees, rocky cliffs. It was as if we were travelling along a ridge, which appeared to go through the Atlantic Ocean and emerge in Scandinavia. Here they call it the Canadian Shield. There is only a thin, half-metre thick layer of soil covering the Shield, which doesn't allow trees to grow to maturity. Marshes. The train tracks had settled unevenly in many places. Sleeping in the upper bunk, the swaying was worse than on the ship. There were smaller stops on the way, where you would only see a few small huts. In Noranda, though, it seemed like we were back in civilization. Or so it seemed at first …

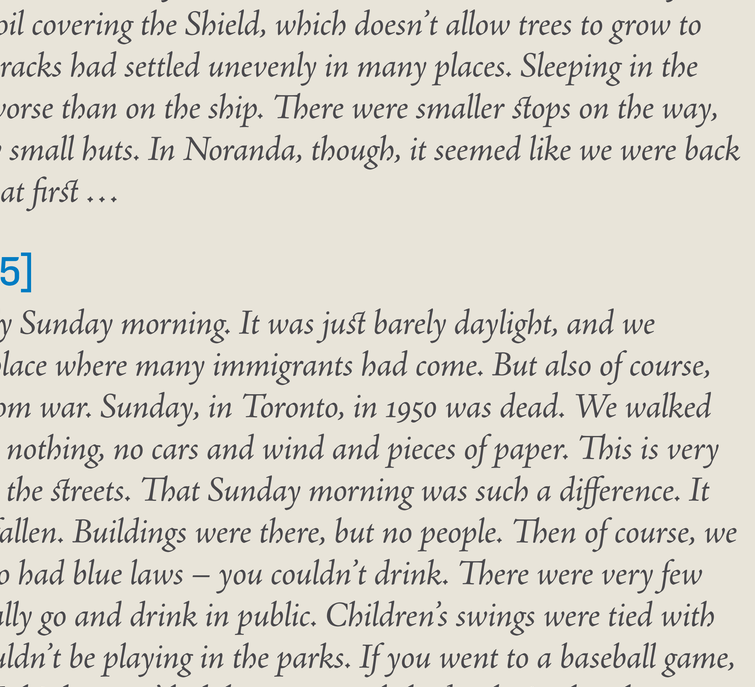
SUIT OLVET [b. 1935]

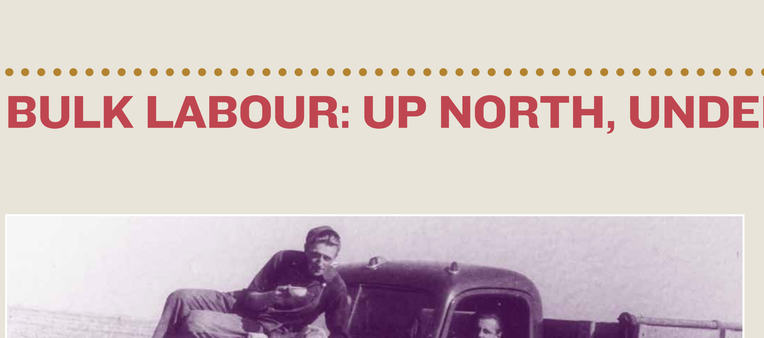
We came to Toronto on an early Sunday morning. It was just barely daylight, and we arrived at Union Station, the place where many immigrants had come. But also of course, Canadian soldiers returning from war. Sunday, in Toronto, in 1950 was dead. We walked out from the station, no people, nothing, no cars and wind and pieces of paper. This is very un-European, to see garbage in the streets. That Sunday morning was such a difference. It was as if a neutron bomb had fallen. Buildings were there, but no people. Then of course, we discovered on Sundays, Toronto had blue laws – you couldn't drink. There were very few places where people could actually go and drink in public. Children's swings were tied with chains on Sundays, so they wouldn't be playing in the parks. If you went to a baseball game, the game couldn't start before, I think, one o'clock because people had to be in church.

BULK LABOUR: UP NORTH, UNDERGROUND

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Lunch break on a sugar beet farm in Emerson, Manitoba. Lithuanian lumberjacks, Pont Anne, Québec, 1948. Building log cabins, 1949. Lithuanian miners, Malartic, Québec, 1948. Estonians working a Christmas tree farm, Northern Ontario.







BALTIC GERMAN · ESTONIAN · LATVIAN · LITHUANIAN

Taking Care of Basics

Common to everyone was the need to fulfill immediate concerns of employment, food, shelter, health care and connection to others from their homeland. First contacts were made with Canadian institutions and individuals.

TOMAS EDEL [b. 1939]

"My parents arrived with $80 in their pocket – that was it. It was pretty hard for them. My father got a job as a cleaner. He got $30 a week in those days. My mother went into the factory sewing dresses as she didn't have any other profession. She got 19 cents for a blouse and 50 cents for a cocktail dress. The sweatshops were right out here in Montreal in those days. Then we had the misfortune that my father got sick. There was no health care – we had to pay everything ourselves. That was tough.

ELLEN STURM [b. 1939]

We had immigrated in 1951, a family of five. My father, Dr. Wolf Goegginger, chose to come to Canada, although there was no employment waiting for him. A Latvian minister had found accommodation for us in advance on Centre Island in a non-winterized cottage, where we spent the harsh winter with no central heating and broken pipes. Every day my mother took the icebreaker to the mainland in order to clean houses. A back-breaking type of work that she was not accustomed to. With my mother's meagre income of six dollars a day we got by mostly on soup made from soup bones we received free of charge from the Island butcher. My father was the cook. The stove was a wood burning stove, and also our only source of heat.

In the spring, the walkways on the island flooded and my little sister barely made it to school in her rubber boots, all the while frightened by the large carp sharing the space. Nevertheless, these turned out to be a blessing in disguise as a much needed food source. We had moved to Hanlan's Point. My brother built a raft from planks of driftwood, from which he stabbed the carp, which ended up under the shower, to be made into soup, jellied carp, fried carp and fish cakes.

MANFRED VON HARPE [b. 1926]

When I arrived in North America, my English was really very rudimentary. But I guess the best way to learn is to jump in the pool and then you learn to swim, so it didn't take too long to pick up English and to gradually become fluent. I worked at a brewery and when it was time to be accepted into the Canadian union, I was given a notice to attend the union meeting. At the meeting, several members stood up and said that they didn't want a German to be a member of their union. So, there was quite a debate as to whether I would be accepted into the union or not. Finally, a good friend of mine who was a member of the union and who was an American, stood up and said some words for me and that clinched the issue and I became a member of the Canadian Brewery Union.

WOLF THOMSON [b. 1928]

Our apprenticeship to become new Canadians had begun. I thought I was well prepared, having had quite a bit of farm experience in my background. That is to say, I had «observed» such physical labour, but now had to become directly involved with it. It was not easy. Gert was not meant to be a tiller of the soil, either. The cows hated him. During the twice-daily chore of milking them, they would wait until his pail was almost full and then kick it over. His German curses had no effect on them at all. There was also no affection between him and the pigs, unless parts of the latter appeared well prepared on his dinner plate. The chickens just ignored him. Once, while cleaning out the pigsties, we both bemoaned the fact that we, descendants of the fine arts, clergy and nobility, were mired knee deep in pig sh… Why this injustice? At least we were together, and this was the start of our lifelong friendship.

ŽENIJA VITOLS [b. 1935]

I was 15 when we arrived in Toronto on the 20th of November 1950. Soon, with the help of the Anglican Women's Association, I got work as a mother's helper and did that until the end of the year. Then, in January of 1951, I enrolled in grade 11 at Jarvis Collegiate and saw my first report card.

ALINA KŠIVICKIENĖ [b. 1917]

We were registered as farm help but when we arrived in Halifax, the immigration officials could see we were not farmers. When my husband said he was a chemical engineer, the official said there was a shortage and said there was a good chance for him to get a job in Canada without any further qualification. In my case, I was told I would have to find an internship before practising as a doctor. We were released from our one-year contract obligation.

I went to work at a factory, ironing shirts, until I could learn English. Then I applied for an internship at two hospitals. The director at General Hospital said he could not promise anything because I was a woman and there were no overnight facilities suitable for a female intern, and also he would give priority to interns from Canada. Then I went to St. Joseph's Hospital where the director was a nun. She asked, Are you married?; What does your husband do?; Why do you want to be a doctor, your duty is to have children; Don't worry about a profession, worry about starting a family.

I didn't know what to do, so I decided to see if I could work in my secondary field of study – psychiatry/psychology. I received further accreditation at McMaster University and got a job at the Catholic Social Agency. I started working there as a psychologist at age 34 and stayed until 1984.

ALINA ŽILVYTIENĖ [b. 1933]

An immigrant Lithuanian who had come over years before the war got me a job as an interpreter. I was 17 years old. It was 1950. I earned $1,100 a year. We were quite poor.

I met my husband and we started a family. After my first child was born I started looking for a job and got three offers in one day: the Bank of Montreal, Bank of Commerce and the Bank of Nova Scotia. So why did I choose the Bank of Montreal? It was within walking distance and they had a free lunch! I knew if I had a big lunch, I wouldn't need a big supper. We were poor.

I was a bank teller for a few months – we had to have a gun along with our money drawer. Each morning we would take the gun out of the safe and put it in the drawer. I had no knowledge or training of how to shoot a gun. These two fellows, they were Polish, came into the bank. They were saying, if only we had a gun, we could take it and point it and she would give us all of the money that we are looking for. I took the gun and put it on top of the counter. You should have seen their faces!

LEIDA SEPP [b. 1940]

We did arrive in Canada and we ended up in Lawrencetown, Nova Scotia. We lived in a really nice house, a wood house. If you look, you see a flagpole, my father always had a flagpole with the Estonian flag, and he had put the Estonian flag on a flagpole, I remember this as well and the neighbours must have complained, You are not in Estonia, you are in Canada. If you want to put a flagpole, you put the Canadian flag up (which was a Union Jack then). So what they did, they gave him a gift of a Canadian flag, the Union Jack, and they said, You may put the Estonian flag up, but the Canadian flag has to be on top and the Estonian flag may be underneath it.

We didn't want to just pick berries and look for proper trees in the woods. My three oldest brothers, Nikolai, Jaan and Teodor, bought a panel truck in Nova Scotia and they came to Toronto before us. We stayed and worked in Nova Scotia for one year and moved on to Toronto. The three of them came to Toronto and they bought a house on Augusta Avenue. On three sides of us lived Jewish rabbis. There were two big synagogues at the time on Augusta Avenue. They were Orthodox and they were not allowed to turn light switches on or turn the heat on the stove. They knew that we were not Jewish. They had put on a windowsill 10 cents, lined up 10 cents, so for 10 cents I would go and switch on their lights and turn on their stove to warm up their chicken soup.

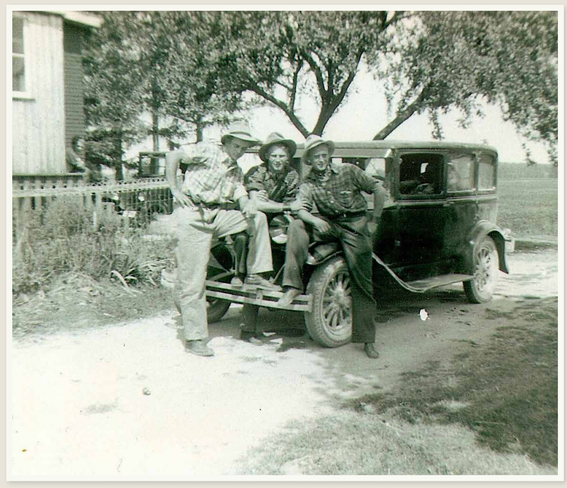
19. BUILDING A NEW LIFE

Becoming Good Citizens

Adjustment to new life was incremental. The first requirement was to learn the English language (French in Québec) and to acquire a financial footing. Once these goals were realized, opportunities blossomed.

In the beginning, interaction with Canadians was tentative and based on practical needs. Seeking comfort and community, the Balts built their own social and support networks.

Gradually though, the immigrants integrated into Canadian society.



WOLF THOMSON [b. 1928]

"The year soon passed and we reached the end of our work term. Having been relieved of our commitment, we were now free to do what we wanted and go where we wanted. Although the family we stayed with made us a part of their family, a bond which remains to this day, we decided to leave Ontario and head west. We had heard that on the prairie during harvest season we could easily find employment on those endless wheat farms. At this point one of us had already acquired his first car, a 1929 Plymouth touring car. It had wooden spokes, a wooden wheel and you could almost stand in it. Here we were, four Baltic refugees, and one of us had a car.

MANFRED VON HARPE [b. 1926]

Gradually, the needs of the newcomers changed. Some had saved a bit of money, and now wanted to buy their first car or house, but had no contact or credit rating at the bank. With his personality and credibility, my uncle Paul Behr managed to find a branch manager who was prepared to issue bank loans to Baltic applicants, provided they had been screened and recommended by him. This is how he later founded the Baltische Hilfskasse [Baltic Aid Fund].

JUTTA NEULAND [b. 1931]

There was a bed for me in a room with four people – I was number four. I didn't like it so I looked into the paper and I got myself a job in the bank. Just an ordinary clerk. And then I looked a little further and got myself a job for room and board. I had to wash dishes and be at home when they went out. I shared my room with the baby.

ELLEN STURM [b. 1939]

Our situation steadily improved. My father eventually founded – with many largely German Baltic immigrants – St. George's Lutheran Church, a German-speaking congregation in Toronto that still exists.

DAGI GAVEL [b. 1948]

Not farmers or land workers in their old country, it took Sigi and Evi a year of hard farm labour to work off the debt. They learned milk and swine production and field work.

SUIT OLVET [b. 1935]

The big problem of course was, initially, lack of money. Everybody had to hustle. And my parents couldn't get the kind of work they were used to in Europe, but this was not unexpected. Eventually, my father became a teacher in various parts of Ontario. A high-school teacher. And my mother was in a publishing firm, Doubleday, for many years, translating.

LEIDA SEPP [b. 1940]

My father was an entrepreneur. He also bought land in a Muskoka forest and what did he do? He cut down trees and Christmas trees, so he was selling Christmas trees to make money. He bought some saeveskid *(sawmills). He was also going to have some kind of a lumber company. Then for livelihood, he worked at the Royal Canadian Yacht Club.*

BIRUTĖ ČEPAITIENĖ [b. 1926]

My first job was as a seamstress. I had no training but my co-worker, a Ukrainian lady who had previously immigrated, helped me to learn to sew.

I didn't have a lot to do with Canadians. I lived with Lithuanians, went to Lithuanian church. Once you learn the language a little, you can communicate with everyone, so I didn't run into any problems with other people.

AGOTA RATAVIČIENĖ [b. 1929]

When we moved to Montreal, there were quite a few people who had come over earlier, in 1927 and 1928. They called us «dipukai» [for DP – displaced person]. *They saw us as different.*

There were some great people who did everything they could to help, but there were others who didn't understand why we came over because they thought we had good lives in Lithuania. But as the years passed we became equals. Canadians called us «Polacks.»

VLADAS VYTAS [b. 1924]

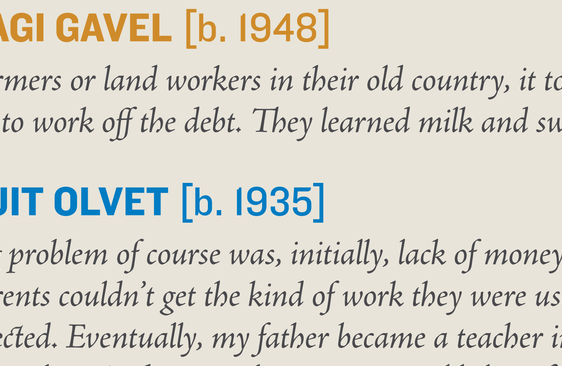
When we finished our contracts, we migrated to the cities. Since we didn't speak the language, we couldn't get good jobs. We took whatever work we could.

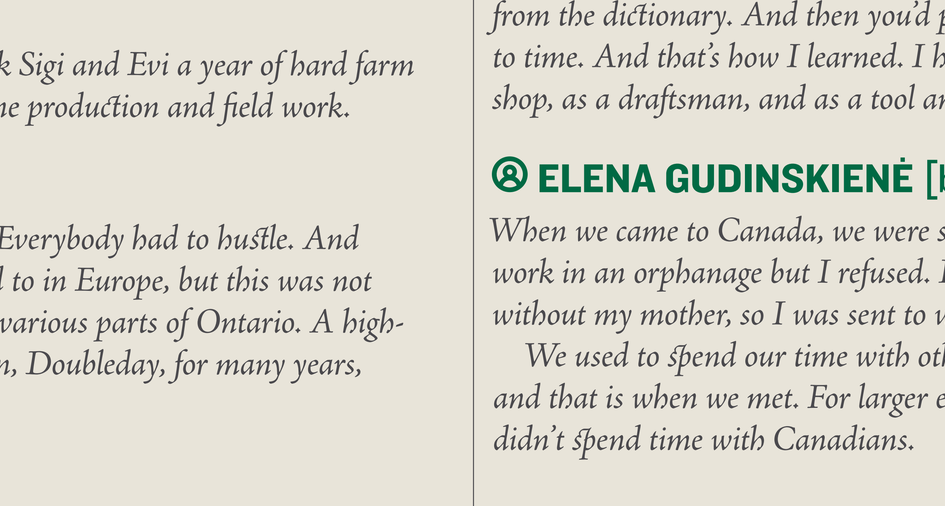
No one here taught us English. On the way to work, you'd put together a list of words from the dictionary. And then you'd post it up near your machine and glance at it from time to time. And that's how I learned. I had learned some engineering, so I worked in a machine shop, as a draftsman, and as a tool and die maker.

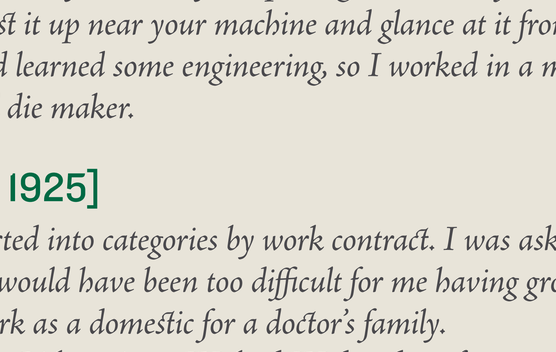
ELENA GUDINSKIENĖ [b. 1925]

When we came to Canada, we were sorted into categories by work contract. I was asked to work in an orphanage but I refused. It would have been too difficult for me having grown up without my mother, so I was sent to work as a domestic for a doctor's family.

We used to spend our time with other Lithuanians. We had Wednesday afternoons off and that is when we met. For larger events, the Estonians and Latvians would join us. We didn't spend time with Canadians.





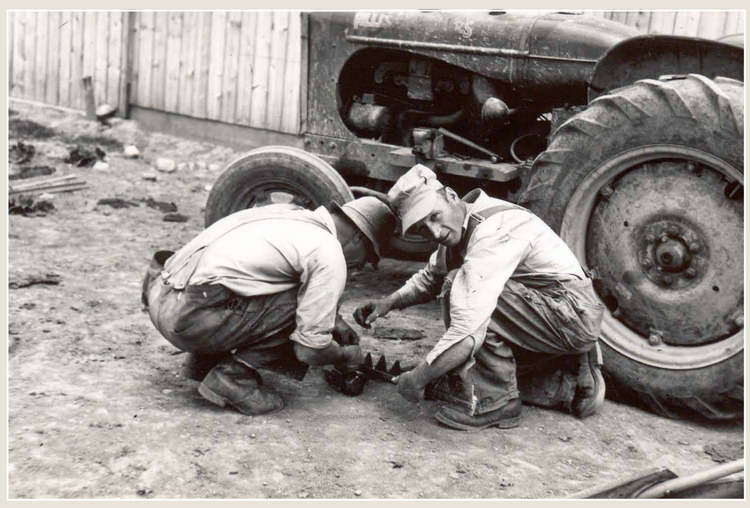


BALTIC GERMAN · ESTONIAN · LATVIAN · LITHUANIAN

Work, Work, Work

Refugees could immigrate to Canada by being sponsored by a family member who was already in Canada, or by signing a contract to work for a Canadian employer for at least one year. Male DPs could choose to work in forestry, mining, railroad or construction work. There were fewer options for women, who had to choose between working in sweat shops or as «domestics» in private homes or for medical institutions. In some cases, family groups could work on farms.

After fulfilling these work contracts, most Baltic immigrants moved on to other types of work that provided more opportunity. Their relatively high level of education enabled them to reach better positions quickly.



VLADAS VYTAS [b. 1924]

Since we didn't speak the language, we couldn't get good jobs. We took whatever work we could. I worked in the forests and then at Stelco in Hamilton for one year. I earned one dollar an hour. There wasn't much workplace discrimination if you were good and conscientious about your work. Later, I bought a farm near Tillsonburg. Canadian tobacco was the best in the world. We invested heavily into buildings, equipment and produced internationally recognized excellent-grade tobacco.

ROMUALDAS OTTO [b. 1935]

Every summer I had jobs – and I enjoyed my jobs. I worked with a chainsaw, chopping down lumber. This is how I spent three summers. I made a lot of money working overtime. In the summer of 1959, I earned $4,000. To celebrate, I bought myself my first suit – ready made. The rest of the money I gave to my father who used it as a down payment to buy a house.

DANUTĖ RAUTINS [b. 1923]

In Ottawa, I was a kitchen maid in the prime minister's residence. I was not sponsored, but came on contract. I went where the wind blew me and worked wherever I was sent. I had no money and was totally dependent on others.

AGOTA RATAVIČIENĖ [b. 1929]

Those first immigrants didn't know what welfare or unemployment benefits were, because there was no such thing. People worked – and they worked hard – they built Canada. People arriving today already know what benefits they'll be getting in order to live. Back then, we didn't even dream of such things. You only got what you earned.

ALMA IVSIŅA [b. 1927]

I got a job at the old Niagara hospital washing floors. They didn't have floor-washing machines like they do now. In those days, it was one big bucket and a big heavy mop. Yes, that was my first job. I simply don't remember how I got that job, whether I went there on my own or someone took me there. There were a few Latvian women working in the kitchen there … but, you see, most of the women washing the floors there were Italian. I just remember how terribly heavy the bucket was, and the mop was also so heavy. Then, you know, when they got a new person, all the workers who had a worse position immediately moved up to a better one, and gave the worst job to the new one. I was 23 years old, but I was so tired, I could hardly get myself home. I would often sit down by St. Patrick's church on the way home. I dragged myself home like an old lady.

ĀDOLFS AVENS [b. 1921]

We were taken to town the next day to shop for the «armour» all miners need. The mine owners paid for the purchases, which was later withdrawn from our wages. There were coveralls of coarse fabric, thermal underwear, winter socks, rubber boots, hard rubber lace-up boots for work, a sturdy leather belt, a fibreglass helmet, work gloves, safety glasses, a metal lunch box with a thermos and a large wristwatch. The first day at work, we rode down with clean faces in our clean, new coveralls. Everyone was given a large, heavy nickel battery, which was hung on our belts. A light was attached to the front of the helmet, which connected to the battery via a cable. We were taken to a large board, hung with hundreds of plastic buttons. Before descending, everyone took their number. Mine was 749. I have forgotten many numbers and dates, but this one remains, stuck in my brain. Upon returning from below, the button had to be hung back up. That is how they checked, whether everyone had returned.

SUIT OLVET [b. 1935]

Even though my degree was in chemical engineering, I worked in the aerospace industry doing research and getting money from NASA at the time when people were shooting themselves up into space. Then, I worked for a big company, Dupont Canada, for almost 39 years and retired the day after my 65th birthday.

ROLAND WEILER [b. 1936]

I worked for both the federal and provincial ministries of the government for the environment, from about '65 to '95. Mostly working on the water quality of the Great Lakes and Hamilton harbour. I started at the federal research facility called the Canada Centre for Inland Waters, then moved on to the provincial one in Toronto.

AIMI ZECHANOWITSCH [b. 1935]

I came to Canada in May 1960. I already spoke English, so that was not a problem. I ended up in Montreal and decided to do some teaching. I walked into the education department, said I wanted to teach, and I walked out half an hour later with a job. Later, I met my future husband and ended up in Ottawa because my husband was working for the federal government. For the next 37 years, I lived in Ottawa.

MANFRED VON HARPE [b. 1926]

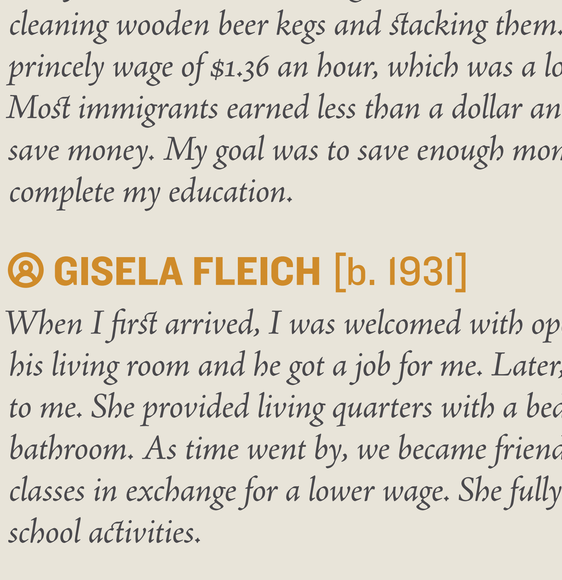
When I came to Canada, I had virtually no money, so it was important that I find a job. I was young, and of course ready to tackle almost anything. Most opportunities for young immigrants involved physical work, so the qualifications for employment were primarily that you had to have a strong back. I was lucky enough to get a job at the Labatt's brewery, cleaning wooden beer kegs and stacking them. I had to be pretty fit for this, but was paid the princely wage of $1.36 an hour, which was a lot of money in those days for unskilled labour. Most immigrants earned less than a dollar an hour, so I had a good job that enabled me to save money. My goal was to save enough money so that I could go back to university and complete my education.

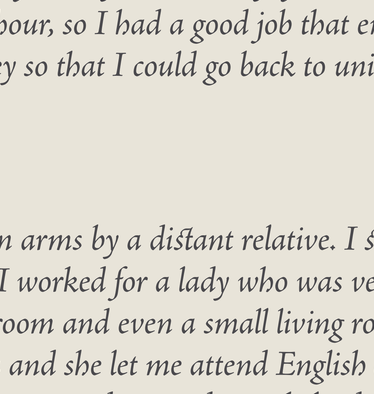
GISELA FLEICH [b. 1931]

When I first arrived, I was welcomed with open arms by a distant relative. I stayed in his living room and he got a job for me. Later, I worked for a lady who was very nice to me. She provided living quarters with a bedroom and even a small living room and bathroom. As time went by, we became friends and she let me attend English and French classes in exchange for a lower wage. She fully supported me and even helped me with my school activities.

EDITH VON HARPE [b. 1925]

My husband was hired by Volkswagen and was given daily English lessons. I attended English night classes for a year. Then my sister, who worked at a bank, encouraged me to apply for a job as a cashier with the Bank of Nova Scotia. I was hired immediately, but worried that I wouldn't understand the customers. I handled the money correctly, so everything went well.





BALTIC GERMAN ESTONIAN LATVIAN LITHUANIAN

21. LIFE IN CANADA

Friends and Family

Initially, Canadian immigration policies focused on accepting individuals rather than family units. As a result some Baltic families were forced to migrate to other countries such as Australia, which accepted complete families. Eventually, if refugees had relatives in Canada who could sponsor them, they made their way here and reunited with others who had come earlier.

Family and friends were essential for resettlement. They acted as immigration sponsors and offered company, comfort and material support. They provided a vital safety net for immigrants who did not have access to the government welfare and health care programs that are available today.

SUIT OLVET [b. 1935]

I had this little brother born in Sweden, and when I wasn't in school, I looked after this kid who was 12 years younger than me. He's still 12 years younger. So life normalized, and then I had various Estonian girlfriends, blonde and blue-eyed and bossy. And I eventually found this darker-haired, brown-eyed woman and we got married. She's of Scottish- and English Canadian background. Her mother is fifth-sixth generation Canadian, and on her father's side, they came to Canada before the First World War. So we have three daughters, one son, six granddaughters, three grandsons, and the women are all bossy. Escaping from Estonia didn't make a difference, I guess. I gravitate to bossy women. So life is good.

THOMAS HEINAR [b. 1955]

On our street, there were all kinds of nationalities … Irish, Italian, Scottish … people who were very community-based and friendly. Our neighbourhood was like a little community, actually, but my father still had this insecurity about being seen as somebody else, a displaced person, being discriminated against, taken advantage of because he was new in a country. So, he had that kind of anger, which kind of surfaced occasionally.

LEIDA SEPP [b. 1940]

And then, I also got friends. We had a lot of people living in that house, I'm telling you, it was like a beehive. Every room was rented out.

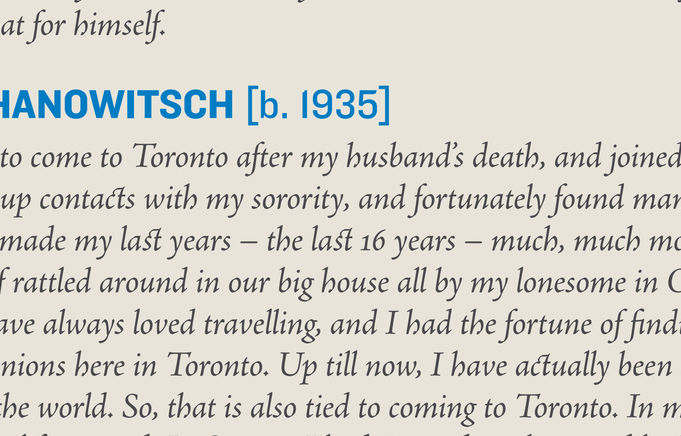
[Showing a photo] *And here father is with two of his brother-in-laws, they're called* Kolm Pipart *– the Three Peppers. They were all from sailing boat owners from way back in Kihnu, a family of boat builders. They were also great friends and they were married to three sisters. There was a great friendship between them and also, needless to say, their cousins, the children of these fathers and mothers, used to play together. We also had a cottage. You had to get away from the city and from work, so we built a cottage at Royal Beach. On weekends there would be lots of people, and he built a dance floor, so there was music and dancing and swings and teeter-totters for children and, of course, boats. There was always a boat to go out in, so he built a boat for himself.*

AIMI ZECHANOWITSCH [b. 1935]

Because I decided to come to Toronto after my husband's death, and joined things like the archives and kept up contacts with my sorority, and fortunately found many, many friends. This has probably made my last years – the last 16 years – much, much more meaningful. If I had just sort of rattled around in our big house all by my lonesome in Ottawa. Also, I must add that I have always loved travelling, and I had the fortune of finding a couple of good travel companions here in Toronto. Up till now, I have actually been to 110 different countries around the world. So, that is also tied to coming to Toronto. In many ways, that decision turned my life around. In Ottawa I had stopped working and had few contacts with the Estonians. Here things have been happening again.

MERIKE WEILER [b. 1942]

We had a family member in Alberta, so we ended up there. There were about twenty of us eventually, sort of a small Estonian contingent there. And so shortly after the first autumn that we got there, we lived on the edge of a little whistle-stop town, Barons, Alberta just south of Lethbridge and Calgary, not very far north of the American border, actually.



MANFRED VON HARPE [b. 1926]

My uncle Paul Behr lived in London, Ontario and, at first, I stayed with him. It was a wonderful time because my uncle was very active as the first president of the Canadian Baltic Immigrant Aid Society. He was very involved with helping new Baltic German immigrants coming to Canada to find accommodation and work and to help them understand the new culture in Canada.

DAGI GAVEL [b. 1948]

Our homestead was an open door of hospitality and we often had visitors from Germany, South America and the rest of Canada. More often than not, there were extras at our table and my mother did her best to make sure everyone had enough to eat. Our meals were not only homegrown, they fed our souls and reinforced our Baltic traditions, and for that we are grateful.

WOLF THOMSON [b. 1928]

As time went on, I got married and life was good. We all had our companions, our work, our homes, friends, great hunting trips and some real parties. My friend Gert and I spoke on the phone about twice a month and met whenever we could. We had long philosophical discussions about our past lives and experiences. We also talked about Estonia, the country of our roots. He was only a child when we all had to leave from there, but in his later years, long forgotten memories seemed to flood back to him.

ROMUALDAS OTTO [b. 1935]

When I arrived in Canada, we lived with Lithuanians on the second floor – we rented. A Scotsman lived on the first floor. One day he asked, You want to come with me Wednesday to meet others your own age? Those were the Scouts. He was the group leader. I joined Scouts Canada from then on.

ELENA GUDINSKIENĖ [b. 1925]

We spent most of our free time with other Lithuanians. Every Wednesday afternoon, I met my friends to socialize. If anything was organized on a larger scale, then the Estonians and Latvians would come. We did not spend much time with other Canadians.

ALMA IVSIŅA [b. 1927]

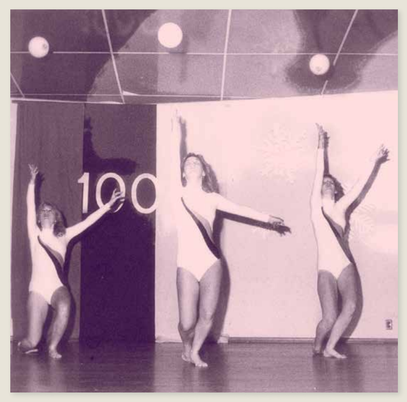
My friend was more outgoing and involved with the Latvian community and then, one fine day, I met this guy … he had come to a dance. There was a Latvian dance in Bradford. There were these single men, boys from all kinds of places. Well, you know, people do seek out others. You look for another Latvian person, regardless of who they are and where they are from. Another Latvian person was almost like a family member for you.

BALTIC GERMAN ESTONIAN LATVIAN LITHUANIAN

School and Education

Though small in size, Canada's Baltic communities are characterized by ambition, drive and scholarship. They have made significant contributions to Canada's social, cultural and economic development since the Second World War.

Estonian Canadians are recognized for their talents in architecture, design and sports, particularly gymnastics. Latvian Canadians have made meaningful contributions to the arts through their many composers, musicians, poets and dancers. Lithuanian Canadians are well represented in professional sports, particularly basketball. And Baltic-German Canadians have made their mark in agriculture, academia and the business world.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Suit Olvet at his U of T graduation ceremony. Kalev Estienne gymnasts performing at Estonian House for the 100th anniversary of the Estonian flag, 1984. Leo Rautins, future NBA star.

ALMA IVSIŅA [b. 1927]

"*We took our children to Latvian school and I taught there for a few years. You see, the thing with the children is this: It seems to me, as our children got older, maybe about the time when they started to go to school, I had a feeling that they were a little ashamed of us because we weren't Canadian. Our language wasn't … they could tell that we didn't know Canadian. It's true that we spoke English with an accent and still do, to this day.*

GISELA FLEICH [b. 1931]

My teachers were very supportive, especially my French teacher, whose parents had also been in the Baltic States. As a little boy he remembered our farm and he made me feel extremely special and invited me to his home and the theatre. When I graduated, he advised me to apply for a French-, German- and English scholarship. I was lucky enough to win the scholarship, and with a bursary I only paid $10 for university.

BERND VON CUBE [b. 1957]

We grew up wondering why we had to go to German school on Saturday mornings; why our elders were called onkel *and* tante*, even though we weren't related; why our lunch box had* leberpastete *with pickle on rye bread, instead of peanut butter and jam; and why do we have to get up this early to do* frühsport.

ELLEN STURM [b. 1939]

We attended public school on Centre Island in Toronto. Sometimes, fellow students called us «Nazi,» a term I resented at twelve years of age.

BARBARA HABIB [b. 1932]

While I was studying in Germany, I was a member of the World University Service, a student organization which aided foreign students. I was the treasurer of the German WUS in 1956, when the Canadian and the German WUS collaborated in a 2-week conference in Germany. The leader of the Canadian contingent was looking for a foreign student candidate for a scholarship to McMaster University. The scholarship would pay the tuition and residence for one year. I thought it would be great to spend one year in Canada to study and improve my English. So, I applied and won the scholarship. Within the month, I arrived in Canada.

EDA SEPP [b. 1935]

I went to Bloor Collegiate for four years. I was never discriminated against because we had several Estonians in the class. We had Latvians and a Jewish student, so it was really a very international place. The teaching, apparently, was in one of the best schools in Toronto.

I graduated from grade 13 the last year I was in Riverdale Collegiate. I had a lot of As actually. I was a very good student, but my parents thought that I had to work for a year before going to university, so my brother could go to university right away. That was the time it was patriarchal. And they thought that I would be getting married anyway. I didn't need to go to university, even though I wanted to.

THOMAS HEINAR [b. 1955]

For my mother it was easier because she was younger and more probably adaptable to language learning. My father did attend night schools and other educational advancement classes at that time. He was very adept to getting on with language abilities. But still, there was a pervasive accent which you can't shake. You know, it's part of his background really, for such a long time. These days, I would say, Well I'm proud of my heritage and my accent, if I have one. People say I have an accent when I speak English, and I probably do, and some people think it's a European accent. That's great, I go, Wow! I'm impressed. So, I think it's an attitudinal change. I tend to be proud of what people perceive as a certain ethnicity in Canada. But I think, postwar, they were a little more sensitive about it.

AIMI ZECHANOWITSCH [b. 1935]

I had not decided where I was going to settle, but I ended up in Montreal. By that time, it was almost the beginning of the school year. So I decided I might as well do some teaching. And again, times were much easier. I walked into the education department, said I want to teach, and I walked out half an hour later with a job. So that's how I stayed in Montreal for a year. My big idea was to go on to England. By that time, it was summer of 1961. I already had a ticket for the trip across the Atlantic. At that point, they started to build the Berlin Wall and mother in Australia thought that it was not the best time to go to Europe because, at the moment, nobody knew what that was going to lead to. So, I stayed another summer and things were still unsettled for a while. So I said, OK, I'll teach another year in Canada. Well, I taught another year in Canada and then I met my future husband. And then, to make a long story short, instead of England, instead of Australia, I ended up in Ottawa … That's where I settled …Well, again I was teaching. Then, I wanted to go on with university work. Eventually, I got my MA in history.

SUIT OLVET [b. 1935]

I was trained in chemical engineering and I graduated from University of Toronto in chemical engineering, and then after I worked for a while, I went back and I was Olev Träss's first graduate student.

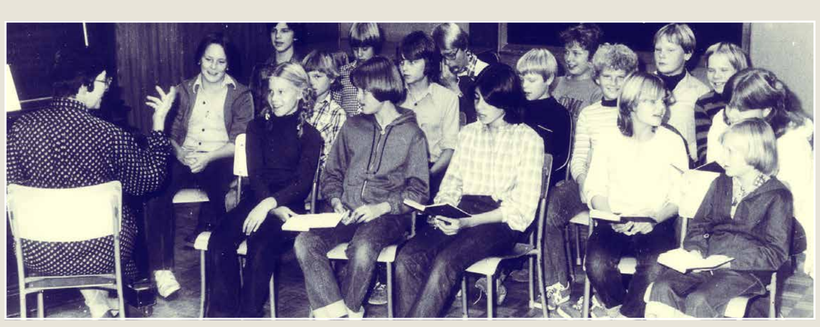
MERIKE WEILER [b. 1942]

In Alberta, to get to school, we had to walk across several wheat fields. And because education is so important for Estonians, even when there were blizzards and school buses were cancelled, we had to go. My mother bundled us up and we trudged across, and the snow would be so high, as high as me at that age. We'd make our way across the tundra as it were to get to school. We'd probably be the only ones there anyway.

Given everything she'd been through, I'm sure your immune system is totally shot at this stage. So it would be easy enough, I guess, or relatively easy to pick up something like TB. So then, my mother was put in a sanatorium here in Toronto, and then we got deportation papers. Canada didn't want anybody who's got TB. The fact that she picked it up here is neither here nor there. So, then it took a while to allow us to stay here. So life went on. Mother went and worked for some company. She was doing primarily like accounting, you know, sort of boring stuff like that. But the three of us, we all got scholarships, we all went through university. My brothers, Roland and Hendrik, they both have doctorates.

ROMUALDAS OTTO [b. 1935]

When I worked for CP [Canadian Pacific]*, I attended evening classes at university. Students received financial assistance if they passed their courses. Then someone suggested that I could take a leave of absence and attend school during the day. They would pay for everything and still save your job.*



FROM LEFT: Aimi Zechanowitsch receiving her Masters. Ottawa, 1973. Toronto Estonian Supplementary School, 1995.

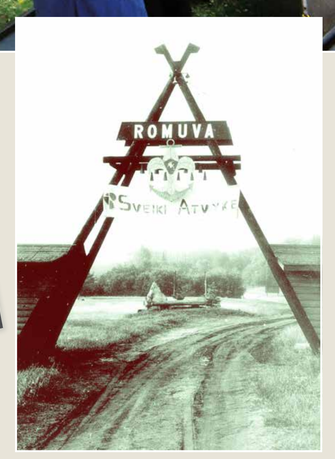
BALTIC GERMAN ESTONIAN LATVIAN LITHUANIAN

Community Organizations

Each of Canada's Baltic communities has established a network of groups and organizations that provides people with support and social life, helps to preserve heritage and cultural identity, and facilitates political and social action on important issues.

This community organizing began with the establishment of mutual-aid societies that helped new immigrants. As migration increased and the communities grew in size, more specialized and sophisticated groups were established including labour, professional, social, cultural, political and youth organizations.

Many remain active to this day.



ALGIMANTAS BANELIS [b. 1931]

"Lithuanian student activities were popular. We camped together, went on excursions and other activities. That is how I met my future wife, Nijole. I was active on the executives of various student organizations and of the Lithuanian community. It is important to keep the Lithuanian Canadian community alive for as long as possible.

ELENA GUDINSKIENĖ [b. 1925]

We attended and organized Lithuanian community events. My children went to camps, Lithuanian school, joined organizations and also the dance group «Gyvataras.» We only spoke Lithuanian at home and I can speak Lithuanian with my grandchildren. As long as I could, I worked with the Lithuanian Catholic Federation Ateitininkai *and I am very happy that we have a younger generation that continues to stay connected to their Lithuanian heritage.*

THOMAS HEINAR [b. 1955]

They all hung together. Even before my family got to Canada, there was the establishment of the men's choirs, all kinds of choirs, and musical entity organizations established in the early '50s, including all kinds of – or notably – children's camps that were, you know, originating or derived from farms that were being bought in Southern Ontario.

AIMI ZECHANOWITSCH [b. 1935]

I ended up in Ottawa because my husband was working for the federal government. And so, for the next 37 years, my contact with things Estonian was limited, not completely out of possibility, but limited because my husband didn't speak Estonian, and all my world was non-Estonian. Well, I didn't have a problem there, either, because I think one of the things was that I belonged to the Estonian sorority ENÜS. So, that made me part of the family. How often I was there, it didn't matter. But really, my life in the Estonian community started in 2000 when I moved from Ottawa to Toronto. Now, I'm very much part of the Estonian community because I'm doing the voluntary work at the archives and am still in contact with my sorority people. I have many, many Estonian friends now, go to the Estonian House when they have something special on, come to Tartu College when they have something special on. I am now very much into the Estonian community. I never forgot how to speak Estonian, so that was not a problem.

SUIT OLVET [b. 1935]

I'm volunteering in the Biblio Club and I'm on the board of Tartu College and I'm on some other boards outside, the pension benefits defenses, because a lot of companies are failing or their pensions are disappearing. And I'm also volunteering at the University of Toronto, so that's my life.

MERIKE WEILER [b. 1942]

My father was the kind of person who was a natural leader. Decades back in Estonia, he had established and put together, not a battalion, but a small group of soldiers for the Vabadussõda *(War of Independence). And so, he had started in Alberta saying to people that we have to set up one group, rather than having little bitsy groups, because that's the most efficient way for us to try to establish a life for ourselves and to make life worth living. So, he came to Toronto and I guess he was over-worked and he had a heart attack.*

ASTA LOKK [b. 1951]

I mean, I've made my world the Estonian community, so socially, my friends are mostly Estonian. I now come and work in the archives here, and I see that as a way of preserving Estonian culture here in Toronto. And I take part in the programs that are organized here in the Estonian Studies Centre/VEMU, the lectures, and so on. So I think that the preservation and nurturing of Estonian culture and language here is unique from the perspective of other communities of Estonians outside of Estonia, and I work with it.

MANFRED VON HARPE [b. 1926]

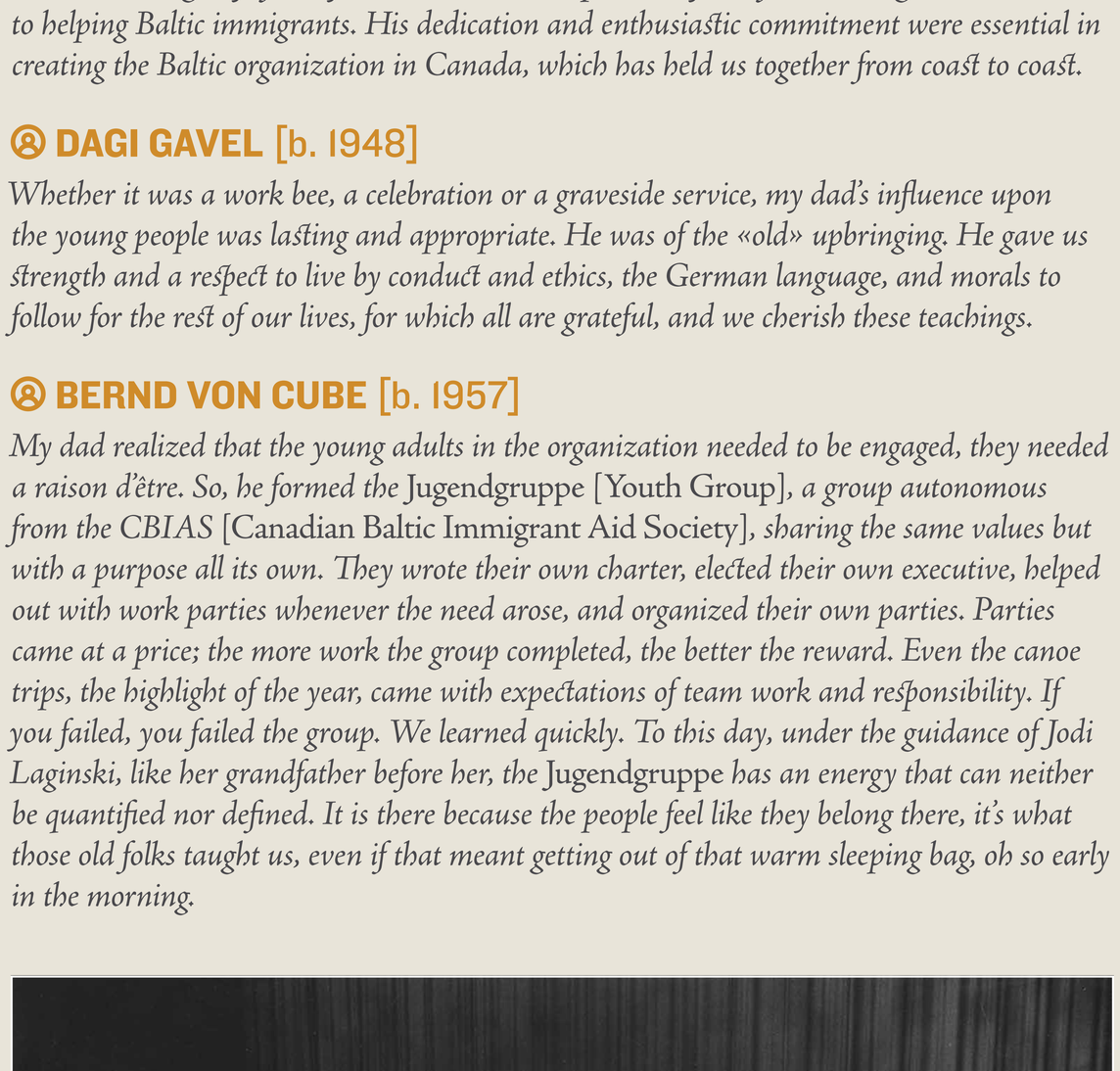
I was 24 years old and had much enthusiasm, but no knowledge of Canada, when I arrived in the spring of 1951. Since my uncle was so involved with helping the newly arriving Baltic immigrants, I learned first-hand how important the Immigrant Aid Society part of the evolving Baltic organization was in those years. The Behr residence became the nerve centre. There was so much to do and it all had to be done entirely on an after-work, volunteer basis. Those were long days for my uncle, who devoted practically all of his evenings and weekends to helping Baltic immigrants. His dedication and enthusiastic commitment were essential in creating the Baltic organization in Canada, which has held us together from coast to coast.

DAGI GAVEL [b. 1948]

Whether it was a work bee, a celebration or a graveside service, my dad's influence upon the young people was lasting and appropriate. He was of the «old» upbringing. He gave us strength and a respect to live by conduct and ethics, the German language, and morals to follow for the rest of our lives, for which all are grateful, and we cherish these teachings.

BERND VON CUBE [b. 1957]

My dad realized that the young adults in the organization needed to be engaged, they needed a raison d'être. So, he formed the Jugendgruppe [Youth Group], *a group autonomous from the CBIAS* [Canadian Baltic Immigrant Aid Society], *sharing the same values but with a purpose all its own. They wrote their own charter, elected their own executive, helped out with work parties whenever the need arose, and organized their own parties. Parties came at a price; the more work the group completed, the better the reward. Even the canoe trips, the highlight of the year, came with expectations of team work and responsibility. If you failed, you failed the group. We learned quickly. To this day, under the guidance of Jodi Laginski, like her grandfather before her, the* Jugendgruppe *has an energy that can neither be quantified nor defined. It is there because the people feel like they belong there, it's what those old folks taught us, even if that meant getting out of that warm sleeping bag, oh so early in the morning.*



ABOVE: Toronto Estonian Men's Choir.
RIGHT: Estonian Independence Day at Trinity Lutheran Church hall, London, Ontario, 1957.

BALTIC GERMAN ESTONIAN LATVIAN LITHUANIAN

Keeping Culture and Tradition Alive

Baltic immigrants found many ways to keep their culture alive in Canada. They congregated in their own places of worship, published native language newspapers, founded supplementary language schools, came together for traditional celebrations and holidays, practised familiar arts and crafts, and made favourite foods.

These activities connected the old country with the new, provided comfort and continuity, and passed language and cultural heritage on to new generations.

FROM TOP: Baltic Germans celebrate *Johanni*, summer solstice, with a giant bonfire. The famous *Zīle* women's choir at the Latvian Song Festival. Toronto, 1981.

ŽENIJA VITOLS [b. 1935]

"We needed to maintain our Latvian cultural heritage, our language, our songs, our literature. And to do that we taught our children to speak Latvian, to sing Latvian songs, and to dance Latvian dances. And Canada allowed and encouraged that. These young Latvians contributed much to regaining our independence in 1991. It served well those who returned to Latvia after it regained independence. They contributed much to its recovery after 50 years of occupation with their experience living in a free society.

MAIJA ĶUZE [b. 1931]

We celebrate Latvian holidays: Independence Day on 18th of November, summer solstice – Līgo vakars *and* Jāņi *– on 23rd of June are very important. We enjoy Latvian food, e.g.* pīrādziņi. *I enjoy Latvian music, groups such as «Čikāgas piecīši,» Latvian newspapers, e.g. «Latvija Amerikā.»*

ALMA IVSIŅA [b. 1927]

I don't think I really cook Latvian style. I don't really. I think I cook mixed. Some Latvian things and some Canadian things. You see, when we got here, a lot of the things they eat in Europe weren't available, but more and more immigrants started coming here …

ROMUALDAS OTTO [b. 1935]

I participate and contribute to all Lithuanian activities – as much as my health allows. I maintain Lithuanian traditions with my children. We celebrate Christmas Eve (Kučios). *During the commemoration of Lithuania's Independence Day, I very deliberately contemplate what that means.*

DAGI GAVEL [b. 1948]

Although they loved their new country, my parents wanted to make sure the youth never forgot their heritage and cultural roots. By founding the Youth Group in 1958, they were able to teach the next generation their traditions of Frühlingsfest *(Spring Ball),* Johannifeuer *(summer solstice),* Tombola *(fund raisers),* Maibaum *(Maypole), sports events and children's performances. Advent was always celebrated with St. Nikolaus, gifts, songs, performances and lots of camaraderie.*

GISELA FLEICH [b. 1931]

I have a Baltic German cookbook, and as far as cooking goes, I make a Baltic saffron-smelling kringel for the birthdays of my children. There are other recipes which they insist I repeat like pirogies and pasha, various dishes. We also celebrate our Christmas differently. We celebrate Christmas Eve instead of Christmas morning. We also celebrate summer solstice with big fires. During Easter we roll eggs.

ERNIE VON BOETTICHER [b. 1939]

There were many traditional events to-and-fro among the Baltic newcomers. We followed and continued to practise the old customs and traditions, such as tapping Birkenwasser *in the spring and whipping* Goggelmoggel *eggs and Mami baking* Kuemmelkuchen. *The men toasted with ice-cold vodka and* Speckkuchen/*pirogies for hearty* Sakuskas.

BARBARA HABIB [b. 1932]

My mother made pasha and Rossoll *(potato salad) for Easter as well as* Gelbbrot *(saffron-raisin bread) and* Speck-Piroggen. *I learned to make these dishes and introduced them to my husband. When we became members of the London chapter of the CBIAS, I enjoyed many other traditions. My daughter participated in the unique Baltic tradition of confirmation camp. Back home, rural Lutheran ministers used to accommodate up to 30 confirmation students, from the outlying farms and villages, at their estates for several weeks for intensive confirmation classes. Continuing traditions, like these, helps to bind the immigrants together and to impart some of the past to the younger generations.*

Thomas Heinar about his father VERNER HEINAR [b. 1919]

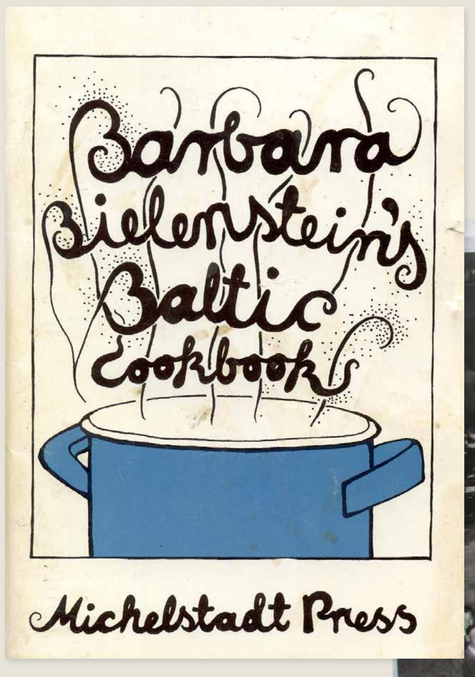
One of the standouts for my dad was the performance of the Toronto Estonian Men's Choir on their trip to Winnipeg … I think it was in the early '70s. There were quite a number of singers, probably 65 or more. That was monumental … not only his display of heritage and being very well received in Winnipeg, but also as musical expression. There were various other things that happened over the years, Estonian world festival participations and things like that.

MERIKE WEILER [b. 1942]

So, in Alberta, there was a small group of those early settlers who had come from Estonia, Finland etc. So, there was a saun, *a sauna. And so, that was what life was. You sort of make the best of it. My mother, for instance, she was never a whiner. You sort of make do, living in this primitive little house. And my mother was also a fabulous cook. At home they had had a cook, and so as a child, she had already hung out in the kitchen and learned how to make all kinds of wonderful things.*

LEIDA SEPP [b. 1940]

We always had peod, *parties. I don't know how my mother did it. She must have been a magician, but she always fed people. My father made, I think,* õlu *(beer), for the big holidays.*



LEFT TO RIGHT: *Speck-Piroggen*, anyone? A favourite Baltic German cookbook. The first Lithuanian Day in Canada, Hamilton, 1953. The Latvian women's vocal ansemble *Līga*.

BALTIC GERMAN · ESTONIAN · LATVIAN · LITHUANIAN

25. LIFE IN CANADA

Becoming Canadian

Baltic families in Canada worked hard to rebuild their lives. Children integrated into the school systems quickly. With their optimistic attitude and willingness to learn, life for many of the younger refugees improved easily. Nevertheless, acceptance in Canada was not automatic. Immigrants struggled to adapt. And Canadians, for the most part, welcomed the newcomers.

Postwar immigration was an essential part of Canada's evolution into a modern nation. With the influx of refugees from Europe, it was not uncommon to have many ethnicities represented in schools and the work place. This large-scale, rapid change sometimes tested the traditions, language and history of the establishment.

It is a process that continues to this day.

MANFRED VON HARPE [b. 1926]

"I felt very much at home and very excited to be in this exciting, new, young country of Canada, to explore, to understand it, to learn from it and to fit in with the Canadian ways. There were a lot of things that we had to learn and a lot of things which were quite different from what we had been accustomed to, but we were very enthusiastic and we were very happy. We soon considered ourselves new Canadians and we tried our best to fit in and make a contribution to our new country.

EVELYN IRSCHICK [b. 1931]

When my father bought a house, when we all bought our houses, everyone felt kind of settled. It gave us our own thing. I'd say it took about six years.

TOMAS EDEL [b. 1939]

It took us a few years; I couldn't tell you exactly. Most likely when I finished school and started working, that I felt Canada was my home, and I felt really comfortable here. That was in 1960, about seven years after our arrival. Then, after starting to work and getting to know more people I began to feel more at home here.

CHRISTINA VON WAHL [b. 1934]

I guess we felt established after 1955, more or less, when my parents arrived and my brother bought a house a couple of years later, and we lived in that house together, until I got married.

DANUTĖ RAUTINS [b. 1923]

Canadians couldn't have liked such a flood of refugees. They were afraid for their own jobs. Lithuanians stuck together. We did experience discrimination. Some Canadians were quite cruel, looked down on DPs. It took a long time before we felt we belonged here.

ROMUALDAS OTTO [b. 1935]

When we arrived, we had no idea what Canada was all about – we had to learn to understand, to live it and to establish ourselves. I became interested and did a lot of reading and thinking about Canada and about the French in Canada. I was intrigued by the actions of the Québec French in forestalling English occupation throughout Canada. I started reading American history of the 1812 time period and found that their most ardent foes in Canada were les Canadiens.

AGOTA RATAVIČIENĖ [b. 1929]

There was no other choice. We knew that returning to Lithuania was impossible. We had to improve our lot and feel like Lithuanians, but Lithuanians who lived in Canada. We joined parishes and other organizations – just as people do today.

ALMA IVSIŅA [b. 1927]

I never experienced any outright rejection. I didn't, but my husband was looked at the way immigrants are looked at today.

THOMAS HEINAR [b. 1955]

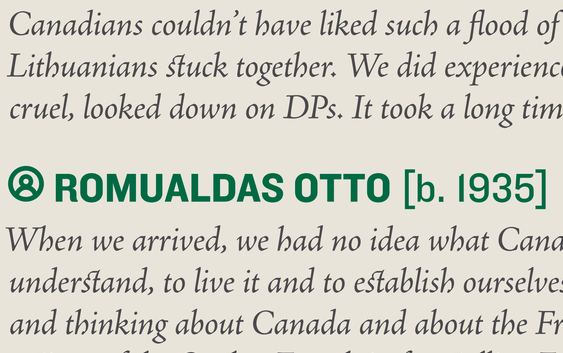
The real establishment in Canada came when my parents were getting involved with our school and our community in Canada, my sister's and my education process and things like that. So, I think, that really helped cement ours, and really, other Estonian families into Canada.

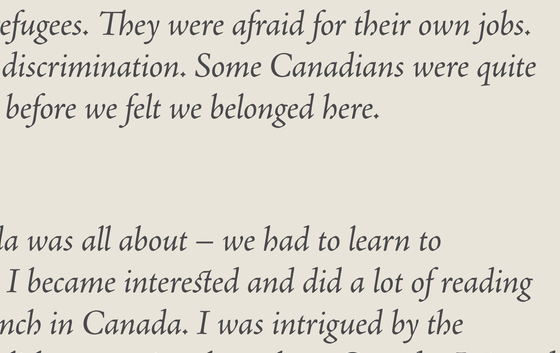
AIMI ZECHANOWITSCH [b. 1935]

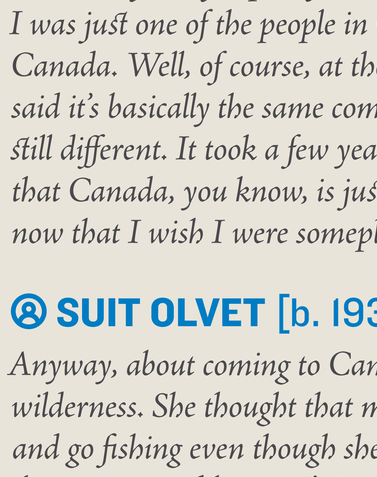
Well, I suppose I already felt pretty well established in Ottawa. Not the first year or two, because I had been to Australia before, then I had lived in Montreal before. A few years in Ottawa still was strange, but once we bought our own home, we started to sort of live a «normal life,» I felt pretty established. I didn't feel like an immigrant or anything like that. I was just one of the people in Canada. Not perhaps a Canadian, but one of the people in Canada. Well, of course, at the beginning it was a little bit strange. I mean, even though I said it's basically the same community as Australia, and an Anglo-Saxon community, it was still different. It took a few years, but now, really, as I said, I feel so comfortable in Toronto that Canada, you know, is just a good place for me to be. I have no complaints. I never think now that I wish I were someplace else.

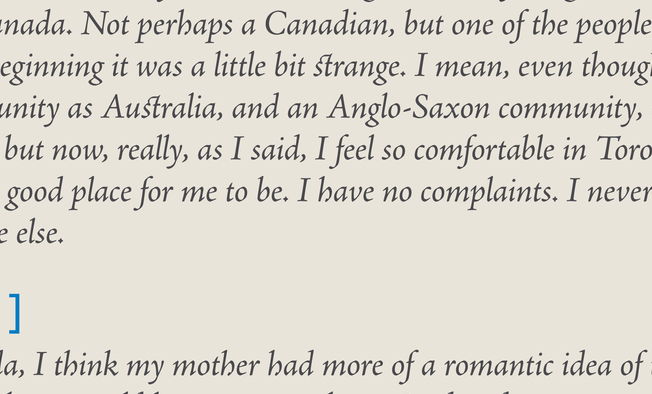
SUIT OLVET [b. 1935]

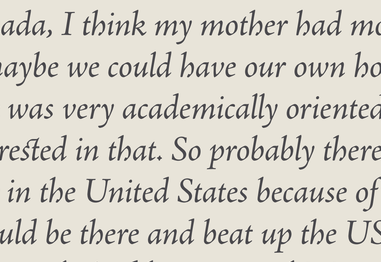
Anyway, about coming to Canada, I think my mother had more of a romantic idea of the wilderness. She thought that maybe we could have our own homestead and grow something and go fishing even though she was very academically oriented, and my father was from the country and he wasn't interested in that. So probably there were times when I thought it would have been better to be in the United States because of the greater career and other opportunities. And then we could be there and beat up the USSR, militarily. So, the life over here eventually became normal. And how normal is it now? Here we are sitting in a shrinking Estonian community.











LEFT TO RIGHT: Lithuanians protest Soviet rule, Toronto City Hall, 1950s. Achieving middle class – skating outfits and skii lessons, buying a house, exotic travel.

BALTIC GERMAN · ESTONIAN · LATVIAN · LITHUANIAN

First-Generation Canadians

Overall, the Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian and Baltic German immigrants who came to Canada have done well. They started with menial jobs, saved their money, and bought houses and property. Their children attended Canadian schools and universities, and are now represented in many professions.

ALINA KŠIVICKIENĖ [b. 1917]

"We came here not for a better life, but to save our lives, and our mission was not to worry about our own lives, but to work for Lithuania. When people asked him why he worked so hard for the community, Jonas always said he was paying his debt to Lithuania, even though no one had helped him. He never got any scholarships; he had no connections. We both loved Lithuania very much.

FROM LEFT: First prime minister of a newly independent Lithuania gets an award, Toronto, 1991. *Die Musterknaben* reunion, early 1990s.

ALGIMANTAS BANELIS [b. 1931]

I was born a Lithuanian, and will remain so. I think it is important. I call myself a Canadian Lithuanian. Lithuanian traditions are important to me. We celebrate all holidays according to Lithuanian tradition. We speak Lithuanian, listen to Lithuanian music, and read Lithuanian newspapers and magazines. It was important for us to pass on our Lithuanian identity to our children.

ROMUALDAS OTTO [b. 1935]

Canada's immigrants played a part in building this country. I am a Canadian, but I feel a duty towards Lithuania if it ever needed defending. I am too old to volunteer, but I carry a deep sympathy toward Lithuania. I enjoy being with Lithuanians, and I love speaking Lithuanian. I am now a Canadian with Lithuanian heritage – a Canadian Lithuanian.

LEONARDAS GARBALIAUSKAS [b. 1927]

As the saying goes: once born a Lithuanian, always a Lithuanian. I was never afraid of this – I am a Lithuanian in spite of everything. I am not a German, nor am I a Canadian – I am a Lithuanian. My children all speak Lithuanian. In my daughter's family they speak English – this is a sad, but inevitable situation.

BIRUTĖ ČEPAITIENĖ [b. 1926]

Regarding my Lithuanian identity: of course our lives centred around the Lithuanian community. My husband dreamt of going back to Lithuania. But I wouldn't want to live there; my family is here. Change occurs naturally with new generations. My grandchildren speak Lithuanian, but because they married non-Lithuanians, their children don't. I just hope that my children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren do not forget Lithuania.

AGOTA RATAVIČIENĖ [b. 1929]

Traditions are extremely important. The Baltic people have contributed their culture to Canada. Part of this is to have a broader outlook on life, a larger perspective, not just a focus on your immediate surroundings.

VLADAS VYTAS [b. 1924]

You are what you are. You can't change that. I'm Lithuanian, but at the same time I'm Canadian. For me being a Lithuanian is most important. I came to Canada because of the living standards. If Lithuania hadn't been occupied, I would have gone home. At first it was important that my children consider themselves as Lithuanians. Now, we are used to the fact that it doesn't really matter what you consider yourself. It's more important to do a good deed, be a good person.

EVELYN IRSCHICK [b. 1931]

I have no strings. I figure myself to be an international. Baltic Germans are all mixed anyway. My mother's side was from Sweden and my father's side was from Sweden and Denmark, I think. Some were from Holland.

GISELA FLEICH [b. 1931]

Because of the very warm and generous reception we received in Canada, I would consider myself a Canadian with a Baltic German heritage. I do not consciously pass my identity on. At first my children wanted to become more like everyone else. However, as time went on, they developed more of an interest and began to want to know about what life was like. I try to be a good example for them if I can.

In Treuen Fest, the Baltic German motto, translates as «strength through loyalty.»

MANFRED VON HARPE [b. 1926]

My heritage is a part of my life and I have managed to pass some of it on to my children. They're all born in Canada and they have very little practical idea about the German Baltic heritage, but I have tried very hard to teach them. Some years ago, I took all of my children and their spouses on a two-week trip to Estonia and Latvia, and visited places where my grandfather had land in Estonia. We saw some of the buildings and the cultural edifices that remain as reminders of the work that Baltic German people had done for many centuries in the Baltic lands.

JUTTA NEULAND [b. 1931]

I was raised German because my father was German; my mother was Latvian. The nationality was assigned by the father, but I never forgot my Latvian grandparents. My grandmother's brother immigrated to the United States and worked for Thomas Edison. I did my best to pass whatever Baltic I have on to my children because I had married a man who was Baltic German, as well. So, my kids were confirmed the way they were confirmed in Latvia – they attended confirmation camp on uncle Sigi von Cube's farm, then were confirmed at the St. John's Lutheran church in Hamilton.

BARBARA HABIB [b. 1932]

We had quite close connections with my relatives in Germany. We visited them often, and the children visited them individually when they were older. They got a good grasp of what the Baltic community was like. Then, being members of the Jugendgruppe *etc., they really are part of that background.*

ŽENIJA VITOLS [b. 1935]

Canada is a country of immigrants and every newcomer has enriched its cultural heritage throughout its history. We, who came to Canada after World War II, came as exiles – refugees who had been torn by the roots from their homeland. Canada gave us refuge. And we are thankful for that. To preserve our Latvian heritage we preserved our language by insisting on speaking Latvian at home. We sent our children to Latvian school. They joined Latvian youth organizations and spent summers at Latvian summer camps. And although born Canadian and spending most of their day with other Canadians, they never forgot that they were also Latvian. They had double identity, like their parents. When breezes of independence started blowing in our occupied countries, these young people responded. Many became involved in activities to demand restoration of independence in the early 1980s. And it happened. In 1991 the Baltic countries regained their independence. So, what is the lesson in that?

ANASTĀSIJA BROKA [b. 1930]

I consider myself Latvian Canadian. I don't consider myself a true Canadian because I don't even know what a true Canadian is. I know who I am and where I come from, so I am Latvian Canadian. And I would put Latvian in front. I think it is sad when the younger generation drops «Latvian» from their identity. This is disrespectful to our heritage. My father and mother are Latvians, so I would never say I was not Latvian.

MAIJA ĶUZE [b. 1931]

I am happy to be Canadian citizen, but I am Latvian. I always think as a Latvian. It has been very important to pass the Latvian identity to the next generation. It is very important that my children and grandchildren identify with their Latvian heritage and they are aware of what is going on in Latvia.

Thomas Heinar about his father VERNER HEINAR [b. 1919]

What did it mean for my father to be an Estonian? It was all important. I mean, this was his mandate as an Estonian to keep up with everything that he left behind or that he was forced to leave behind. That was his heart and soul, to maintain everything as much as possible, including communication with people in Estonia.

BALTIC GERMAN ESTONIAN LATVIAN LITHUANIAN

The Hyphenated Generation

The next generation of Baltic Canadians is part of a larger club. Second-generation Canadians (people with at least one parent born outside of Canada) made up 17% of Canada's total population in 2011.

These younger Baltic Canadians are well integrated into Canadian society. And, for the most part, they have maintained their Baltic roots, participating in today's Baltic Canadian communities.

DAGI GAVEL [b. 1948]

"We learned to teach by living the example. We learned to believe in other people and trust them before condemning or placing judgment. We learned to waste not, to recycle, to prepare for winter and welcome the spring. We learned that small steps are worth celebrating in a big way. We learned to be generous with our time, to be approachable and of an open heart. With these roots and wings, we can accomplish anything.

BERND VON CUBE [b. 1957]

If there was but one thing our parents could instill in the next generation, it was a sense of community, a feeling of belonging. Stick together and together we will figure it out, they thought. The CBIAS [Canadian Baltic Immigrant Aid Society] *was a means of staying together, staying in touch and helping each other adjust to this new country. They survived before and they will survive again.*

CHRISTINA VON WAHL [b. 1934]

Since all of my children and grandchildren are born in this country I don't expect them to consider themselves as Baltic. More or less they have an interest in it, but they are Canadians and should be, but they should remember their heritage.

ERNIE VON BOETTICHER [b. 1939]

I'd like to answer the one question that our parents were wont to ask many times over the years, aloud or in the quietness of their hearts, as we five kids grew up in Canada: Did we do the right thing by immigrating to Canada, or would it have been better to have stayed in Germany, or perhaps even gone back to Latvia? I, for one, have found only positiveness and a good amount of menschlichkeit *(humanity) in the Canadian people and unparalleled magnificence and beauty of land and nature from Atlantic to Pacific, so that I can proudly teach our kids to sing, O Canada, our home and native land – and say, Thank you, Omama and Opapa, for bringing us to Canada.*

DITTMAR MÜNDEL [b. 1943]

In my father's mind we could be thoroughly Baltic as well as committed Canadians. I think that's why, for him, the transmission of the German language and Baltic culture was so important. How does one transmit all the multi-layered emotional resonances in songs, poetry and religion? So, for me, there wasn't actually a split; I didn't feel that I had to assimilate to the dominant culture around me. The idea is that you can have multiple cultures living together and yet be a country just as it was in the Baltic states. Rīga was a modern industrial metropolis with an unbelievable mix of peoples. German Balts made up only 10% of the population of Rīga and only 2% of the population of Latvia. German Balts were a small bunch.

ALMA IVSIŅA [b. 1927]

There is a Latvian spirit here in my heart, but I don't think I would like to go live in Latvia for real. I don't know anyone there – nobody. I like the «Latvianness» that I see and hear here. In Latvia, it would be OK to see some theatre and go to some concerts, but I like Latvian nature very, very much – the forests and the meadows. The city is still the city, you know. For me, it's the Latvian countryside because I grew up on a farm, and as a child I walked in fields of flowers and picked flowers. I like nature, the nature of Latvia, that I truly like, but I feel safe here. I don't feel safe in Latvia. I am afraid. I am afraid of the Russians. You know, I am very concerned about that. I had a very good and long correspondence with my father's cousin. I said to him, It seems to me that one morning Putin will come here for breakfast again. I am afraid in Latvia. Maybe that's why I really don't want to return. Fear.

LIŪDA STUNGEVIČIENĖ [b. 1926]

Both of my children finished university and have established themselves in Canada. They are happy with their lives here. My oldest son must have felt a deeper connection to my stories about the homeland. As a university student he started a weekly Lithuanian language radio program. After a few years when he was unable to continue, I took over and the program has now been going for over 40 years.

MARIJA KALVAITIENĖ [b. 1931]

Right away I joined various Lithuanian organizations like the Catholic Women's Association, the choir, Scouts and a drama group, «Aukuras.» It was very important for my children to belong to Lithuanian organizations and attend Lithuanian school, as well. It's important to use your time wisely and feel that connection to your heritage.

ALINA ŽILVYTIENĖ [b. 1933]

There are 20 of us now in the family and I have five great-grandchildren. One of my grandchildren speaks Lithuanian, but they all have an instilled appreciation of their Lithuanian heritage. Two of my grandchildren even have tattoos of the Lithuanian flag!

AIMI ZECHANOWITSCH [b. 1935]

I can't say that I miss Estonia. I've been just too long away from Estonia. And I had equally warm feelings for Germany and equally warm feelings for Australia. And I'm afraid in my old age I've just become a Canadian, just an old Canadian. I don't want to go to live anywhere else. I think the refugee experience did that – I sort of lost my identity as an Estonian. I sort of lost my identity in connection with any other country. My identity is just me. I'm like, in a way, an outsider. Only now, finally, I feel quite happy to be Canadian. But this is only in the last few years that I just feel Canadian. Before that, as I said, I was just an outsider. No real identity at all. It was a funny way to live. Well, I am an Estonian, I know that, but I'm sort of an Estonian Canadian now. It's difficult for me to even know whether I'm more Estonian or more Canadian. I noticed this summer during the Olympics, watching the Olympics. Half the time I was cheering for the Estonians, the other half I was cheering for the Canadians. And there was almost, to me, no difference.

ASTA LOKK [b. 1951]

Well, I think I'm foremost Estonian actually, but I feel I'm totally a Canadian Estonian as well or Estonian Canadian. I don't consider myself not Canadian, but there's something more to it, so there's duality there. Well, being an Estonian is a big part of my identity. Probably due to my early beginnings, where we grew up in a sort of Estonian environment, I always have, the whole time and later on, chosen to belong to the Estonian community. My activities were, for the most part, associated with the Estonian community, especially after I moved to Toronto after university. I speak Estonian for the most part, and my children both speak Estonian and we've made a point of making it our home language. I think I'd like them to marry an Estonian, just to keep the continuity. I married an Estonian, my children are both involved in the Estonian community here in Toronto, they've both lived in Estonia for a little bit as well. I'd be happy to continue to speak Estonian with them and to continue our traditions.

The Lokk family. Three generations of Estonian Canadians.

BALTIC GERMAN ESTONIAN LATVIAN LITHUANIAN

Advice for the Young

Reflecting upon their extraordinary lives, our interviewees offer advice to future generations – from a general motto of humanity, values and heritage, to a final message: it is only through understanding what previous generations have experienced that we can appreciate what we have in Canada today.

MAIJA ĶUZE [b. 1931]

"My luckiest day in Toronto was February 29, 1959 when I met my husband Vilis Ķuze, also a Latvian. We were married the same year on November 28th, raised two daughters, Sandra and Dace, who are both fluent in Latvian and English.

ŽENIJA VITOLS [b. 1935]

Now, 70 years later, it is still important to teach our young people about their Latvian heritage. Perhaps not for the same reasons as before – it would be for their enrichment, to make them proud for being of Latvian descent, proud of Latvians' contribution to Canada and the world.

MERIKE WEILER [b. 1942]

I always admired that attitude where you don't complain about little things. And it's particularly exemplified by my mother, who was artistic and creative, and who had hoped to become either an artist or an engineer, but it never happened. When we left our home, she took a handful of sterling silver cutlery and some jewellery which later on we sold and which helped keep the family afloat for a while. She took two Japanese woodblock prints, which you could roll up tightly, and she took a very large blue silk Chinese embroidery, which became a wall hanging in our various homes in Finland, Sweden and finally Canada. Now, it's on the wall at my home. That whole thing of having a sense of beauty … You're escaping with your children from the Red Army and that you would think of taking things like that, which instill a sense of beauty and worth in your children. She really was, I think the heroine of our family. She saved our lives and she also gave us a spirit that is worth cherishing.

LEIDA SEPP [b. 1940]

The individuals on the island, in Kihnu, had to work physically very hard. They were hard-working, conscientious and I think that has carried on from generation to generation. You are not afraid of work. Work is not a dirty word. Work is something to be proud of, something that you can look upon as an achievement, not as something that has any negative connotation, whatsoever. I found the same in my life. I could have gone into the professions and looked for titles, but I didn't really. I looked more to the inside for something that would make me feel richer in a sense of achievement, of unearthing some secrets chemically, and I think that has given me much more gratification. I never really looked at money as a big reward.

ROLAND WEILER [b. 1936]

I think the children and the grandchildren who are born here in Canada should get an idea of what the previous generations went through during the Second World War and the end of the Estonian Republic. Just to make them aware of the fact that living in Canada is a very peaceful situation compared to what my parents and grandparents had to go through, and also what is happening to people in parts of Africa and the Middle East.

MARIJA TAMULAITIENĖ [b. 1917]

The most important thing in life is to be an honest person, perform all of your duties with honesty. Nothing in life comes easily – you have to keep working at it as long as you can.

AGOTA RATAVIČIENĖ [b. 1929]

It's important for young people, even my own children, to be involved in community life and to do more here where we live. Faith provides an entirely different view of life. After that, it's important for our ethnic traditions to survive. All of this is difficult because you have to give up something else if you want to live your life that way. It comes down to a person's own will.

MARIJA GUDELIENĖ [b. 1916]

Come what may, Lithuanians are here to stay. We were born Lithuanians and we will die Lithuanians. Every person has to strive to preserve Lithuanian identity. We're Lithuanians with all our hearts. Whatever happens, we won't forget our roots.

ROMUALDAS OTTO [b. 1935]

Lithuania, despite its small population, managed to withstand Russian attempts at annihilation. The most profound symbol of our resistance is found in the image of the mother sitting at her spinning wheel teaching the child beside her from a Lithuanian book. It is the Lithuanian women who kept our culture alive – very much in the same manner as the Church did in Québec. Even though we were a tiny nation, we managed to establish an independent country in 1918. The cost of living was good. Some mistakes were made regarding the military, but that's not the point. The point is that in 1918 they established a sovereign state in spite of Russian attempts to destroy Lithuanian culture, language, traditions. The Russians were on a continuous campaign of destruction and would be doing so to this day.

To our youth I would say: your ancestors came from an honourable and very energetic past. Be proud of them because, although they were small – they could beat giants. They were a determined and a stubborn people.

EVELYN IRSCHICK [b. 1931]

The younger generation should know about their heritage, but understand that they are not the only ones. They should not hold one-sided views. They should have many views and should not become completely controlled by one idea. And if you have a nation, you have to live someplace, but I mean you shouldn't become too patriotic. People are people. No one should be unhappy that they have no homeland. Our homeland is Canada and they should not dwell on it. Our children should be modern-world Canadians.

CHRISTINA VON WAHL [b. 1934]

One thing I learned as a child, that material things actually don't mean anything. It's, if you can keep your life, you're lucky. I also learned that you can experience real kindness from some people and also not. There were places where they didn't want us or people were not kind to us.

JUTTA NEULAND [b. 1931]

I am proud of my family, but they lived in difficult times. They lived in a time when it changed from the rule of emperors to democracy and to Communism, so they had a hard time. We Canadians, we all got a little more tolerant, but we are not ready for everything yet. We have not fully accepted Native people and we still have to learn that they are people just like we are.

BARBARA HABIB [b. 1932]

The way people cope with chaos and tragedy shows the validity of basic human values: strong family ties, support from communities and churches, and the willingness of strangers to help those in need. Traditions and culture are the elements which help people to rebuild their lives and find their equilibrium.

29. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our Interviewees

ESTONIANS


✦ Thomas Heinar


✦ Anne Merike Koger


✦ Elna Libe


✦ Asta Lokk


✦ Suit Olvet


✦ Eda Sepp


✦ Leida Sepp


✦ Vello Tou


✦ Merike Weiler


✦ Roland Weiler


✦ Aimi Zechnowitsch

LATVIANS


✦ Ādolfs Avens


✦ Visvaldis Brūmelis


✦ Alma Ivsiņša


✦ Vilis Ivsiņš


✦ Maija Ķuze


✦ Ženija Vītols

Photograph not available:
Emilija Bērziņš,
Anastāsija Broka

LITHUANIANS


✦ Algimantas Banelis


✦ Birutė Čepaitienė


✦ Leonas Garbaliauskas


✦ Marija Gudelienė


✦ Elena Gudinskienė


✦ Marija Kalvaitienė


✦ Alina Kšivickienė


✦ Romualdas Otto


✦ Agota Ratavičienė


✦ Danutė Rautins


✦ Liuda Stungevičienė

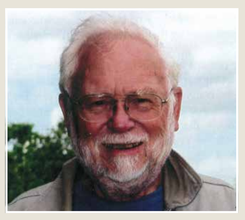

✦ Marija Tamulaitienė


✦ Vladas Vytas


✦ Alina Žilvytienė

BALTIC GERMANS


✦ Tomas Edel


✦ Gunter Faure


✦ Gisela Fleich


✦ Dagi Gavel


✦ Lydia Haak


✦ Barbara Habib


✦ Evelyn Irschick


✦ Mathias Kuester

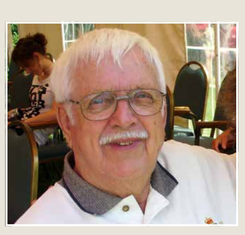

✦ Hans-Jürgen Kumberg

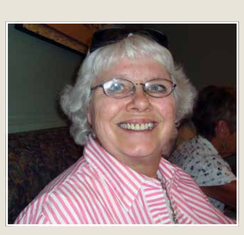

✦ Dittmar Mündel


✦ Hans-Henning Mündel


✦ Jutta Neuland


✦ Ellen Sturm


✦ Wolf Thomson

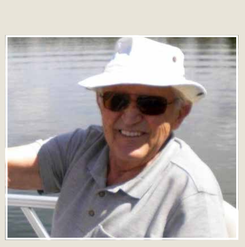

✦ Brigitte von Aderkas

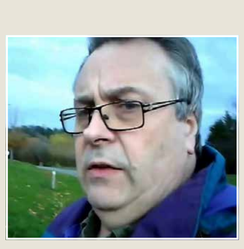

✦ Ernie von Boetticher

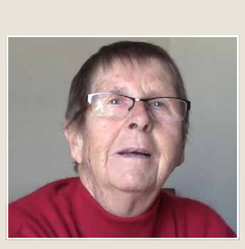

✦ Bernd von Cube


✦ Edith von Harpe


✦ Manfred von Harpe


✦ Fred von Heyking


✦ Bernard von Schulmann


✦ Christina von Wahl

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VEMU/Estonian Studies Centre
Piret Noorhani
Marika Mayfield

VOLUNTEERS
Laani Heinar, Katariina Jaenes, Jüri Kivimäe, Marcus Kolga, Linnea Mayfield, Talvi Parming, Marko Raat, Emilie Tamtik, Taavi Tamtik, Vincent Teetsov

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Latvian National Federation in Canada
Andris Kesteris

VOLUNTEERS
Elmārs Bērziņš, Daina Brūmelis, Jāņis Ivsiņš, Krišt̄ina Niedra, Dace Veinbergs, Anna Zvejniece

lnak.net

Canadian Latvian Archive and Museum
Ženija Vītols

Lithuanian Museum-Archives of Canada
Danguolė Juozapavičiūtė
Aleksandras Valavičius

VOLUNTEERS
Vytautas Banys, Ramūnė Jonaitis, Gabija Petrauskas, Darius Ross, Lina Samonis

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Susanne Burkhardt

VOLUNTEERS
Joseph Burkhardt, Kiah Davidson, Jae Dunphy, Barbara Habib, Jodi Laginski, Mitchell Loewen, Katarina Mason, Alma Mux-Wahl, Astrid Neuland, Christof Neuland, Vicki Pinkerton, Felix Sandford, Mathias Sandford, Bernd von Cube

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