

Annual Report of the Work of the Office for Resettlers within the Provincial Administration of Brandenburg (End of 1946)

Abstract

It was only after the start of 1946 that authorities in the Soviet occupation zone were able to receive, attend to, and redistribute refugees and resettlers from the former German territories in Eastern Europe in an orderly fashion. The standards for camps and the refugee administration were improved and regularly inspected. Separate offices for resettlers, working in tandem with newly established resettler committees, were to plan the permanent settlement of the resettlers in accordance with the intake capacity and labor needs of various cities and regions and to integrate them as quickly as possible into East German society.

Source

[...]

More than 80 camps with a reception capacity of 50–10,000 people were set up in the province. We established a cooperation with the administration of the Reich Railroad to receive the necessary transport trains, hired haulers to provide trucks, saw to the supply of foodstuffs, and hired doctors for the reception camps. The arriving resettlers were registered, and the same was done in the province with resettlers who had already found housing.

The main task of the province in the period from October 1945 to January 1946 was to provide for 200,000 resettlers at the reception locations and to direct them to the states and provinces. The sick had to be taken to medical facilities; those not fit to be transported, frail elderly women, and the large number of orphans had to be cared for. In the immediate and wider vicinity there was a lack of sufficient housing and medical facilities able to take people in.

Two hundred thousand people had to be provided for; for 200,000 people a total of 440,523 t of flour, 11,938 t of fat, 620,488 t of potatoes, and 33,170 t foodstuffs had to be brought in. About 450 transport trains were necessary to move the resettlers into our own province, to Mecklenburg, Thuringia, and Saxony.

With the beginning of the year 1946, the unregulated influx let up. More systematic work began after this point. [...] In district and country conferences, all administrative office personnel and all camp directors were trained and instructed in the work to be done. The office was continually sending experts into the districts to the camps and made improvements in the economic management and the equipment of the camps. Many camps were closed in order to better equip the remaining ones. The demands we place on the camps today are greater still, so that among the 29 camps currently in operation additional ones will be shut down. Great care is given to the utmost cleanliness and order in the camps so as to counter the threat of epidemics, especially during the winter months. The district doctors are obligated to inspect the camps every month. An economics commission examines the books and the inventory of goods. The head of the commandant's service of the SMA [Soviet Military Administration], as well as the doctor-major and the head of the office inspect several camps every week. On the basis of the inspection results, fines were imposed, immediate dismissals ordered, but commendations were also issued. About 400 camp inspections, etc. were carried out.

Uniform administrative work throughout the entire province is ensured through a circular with a supplement that deals with all resettlement questions. Work conferences were held to deepen the understanding of the great social work of providing care.

[...]

Special support for the work of the office comes from the resettler committees. In the past, the activity of the municipal and county resettler committees still showed certain deficiencies. Here, too, improvement is expected in short order through the provincial resettler committee that was set up some time ago. A work commission of the provincial committee creates the foundation for comprehensive work and planning by the administration. The results of the investigations in all communities will provide the relevant departments of the provincial administration with possibilities for all kinds of planning (housing construction, industry, provisioning, etc.) In addition, the municipal resettler committees will be trained to ensure, in their own communities, the legal equality and preferential provisioning of the resettlers, and the creation of possibilities of a livelihood in accordance with local conditions.

[...]

In the first months, the incorporation of the resettlers was done numerically. Today, the reception and provisioning of the resettlers in the camps recedes in the background as a matter of course. We are now concerned with guiding the incorporation in such a way that the need for workers in the various counties is met and the resettlers find an adequate livelihood and, not least, a home. Today we have at our disposal in the province of Brandenburg, for this purpose alone, two commuter trains, which only take the resettlers from the camps into the various counties of the province. A transport with about 1,200 resettlers is not infrequently distributed among 4–6 counties.

We know exactly that the place where the resettler finds work will become a home to him and his family. Knowing this, we try to make sure that each one is immediately given work. [...]

Source: Rolf Badstübner, *Friedenssicherung und deutsche Frage. Vom Untergang des „Reiches“ bis zur deutschen Zweistaatlichkeit 1943–1949*. Berlin: Dietz, 1990, pp. 204–06; also reprinted in Christoph Kleßmann and Georg Wagner, eds., *Das gespaltene Land. Leben in Deutschland 1945–1990*. Munich: C.H. Beck, 1993, pp. 107–08.

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