

Report by the Central Administration for German Resettlers in the Soviet Occupation Area (December 23, 1945)

Abstract

In the months immediately after the end of the war, it was not yet possible to establish a central infrastructure to deal with the flood of refugees from the former German territories of Eastern Europe. The ad-hoc reception camps and administrative offices that were set up for this purpose were not always up to the task, and they were unable to give proper attention to individuals who were traumatized and often ill. To make matters worse, the local German population was hostile toward these outsiders. The Central Administration for German Resettlers [*Umsiedler*] in the Soviet occupation zone openly denounced the situation and demanded that political parties show more commitment to resettlers.

Source

The Central Administration for German Resettlers [*Umsiedler*] in the Soviet Occupation Area

Berlin, December 23, 1945

The report we have been asked to write can only be incomplete overall, since the objective problems to date in establishing the central administration (the lack of phone and postal communications and so on, constant reporting since the beginning) have only made the work more difficult. Only in the last few weeks have we seen regular reporting from the states and provinces. Still, even today it must be said that some regions – parts of Mecklenburg and Brandenburg, for example – are impeded in their reporting by the breakdown of postal communication. On the other hand, because of the previous lack of oversight and the inadequate influence over the personnel policy of the states and provinces, the administrative apparatuses that have arisen are not up to the demands. It should be added that there was no existing expertise or experience when it came to resettlement, which made it inevitable that considerable mistakes would already be made in setting up the organization and deploying the personnel. Only now, after more than two months of experience in the area of resettlement, can we move on to evaluating the organization and the people running this organization, so that they meet the needs.

[...]

II. Work of the Departments of the Organization

(Settlement and distribution – statistics – transport)

a) Organization of the reception and exchange locations

Since the establishment of the central administration occurred very late, it had to adjust to the conditions that already existed at the border crossings and that arose from the needs. To this day, the reception of resettlers occurs without a plan and under extremely difficult circumstances. The reception occurred, especially in the East, at unplanned locations and in fits and starts, as a result of which critical situations sometimes developed. In addition to this, the resettlers were plundered and mistreated on their march through Polish territory or when crossing the border, and they crossed the border full of lice

or sick. The reception and reception stations established by local authorities were then expanded and standardized as the work of the central administration progressed. In principle, all resettlers who come across the border anywhere are registered at the closest reception camp, medically examined, and deloused. From there, they are transported onward to the areas destined to take them in. There they are placed under a fourteen-day quarantine under medical supervision, and are then moved into the communities where they are supposed to be housed and settled. The schematic of the reception and exchange locations is attached to the report.

b) Movement of the resettlers.

The number of resettlers registered in territory of the Soviet Occupation Zone is 4,525,144. The first statistical survey of resettlers in the zone was carried out on November 10, 1945. The number of East-resettlers rose by 353,504 in the period from November 10 to December 15 [1945]. Since the possibilities for counting the resettlers when they cross the border are limited, the number must be calculated by comparing the number of resettlers in the states and provinces on the two dates. The actual number of resettlers taken in is higher, since some of the resettlers avoid immediate registration.

[...]

e) Organization of the camps, their number and occupancy as of January 1, 1946

Since the camps were not set up and built according to a central plan, but were expanded or founded in accordance with local conditions, their running and organization were not uniform. The Central Administration has endeavored over the last few months to standardize the administration and economic management of the camps, for which purpose it has issued a number of decrees, memos, and forms that are to serve the administrations of the states and provinces as guides in standardizing the organization of the camps.

[...]

g) Oversight and auditing.

The systematic work of oversight and auditing was only recently begun in the Central Administration. These controls have revealed that the previous instructions and directives by the Central Administration on the organization of the camps, medical care, and the economic-provisioning of the resettlers were seriously neglected. Embezzlement, poor organization, incompetence, and a lack of oversight are the order of the day. Whenever embezzlement or incompetence is discovered, the situation is remedied in accordance with the state/provincial administration. The guilty are handed over to the courts, the incompetent are replaced.

[...]

III. Mood among the resettlers.

(Concrete facts about complaints as well as positive statements should be listed.)

It is understandable that the Central Administration receives only complaints from the resettlers. For the resettlers turn to the Central Administration only when local authorities or the provincial/state administration fail to respond or cannot address the resettlers' complaints. Most of the complaints concern problems and shortcomings with the transports (delays in the allocation of trains, a lack of locomotives and thus days of standing around at train stations and along tracks, overcrowding, poor provisioning with foodstuffs, cold temperatures, a lack of medical care, the misdirection of trains).

Complaints in Mecklenburg concern the housing shortage above all. A very particular kind of complaint is lodged by resettlers against the native population, above all in Mecklenburg; in small villages they are often at the mercy of the farmers and local authorities. Excessive rents, an asocial attitude by some farmers when it comes to providing work, poor provisioning with foodstuffs, usurious prices for food, poor medical care – these are the chief complaints that have been brought to us so far. In all cases where concrete facts are presented to the CA, we try to prevail upon the local authorities, through the provinces and states, to remedy the abuses. However, a real change in conditions can occur only if the resettlement problem, as a political problem, is taken on by the political parties on the broadest basis. Controls by the political parties, organized social help via the political parties, a strengthening of the work of the resettler committees, and the ruthless punishment of usurer and asocial elements are the precondition for creating a healthy atmosphere.

While complaints – though not numerous – have made their way to the Central Administration, so far we have not received any letters of thanks from the ranks of the resettlers.

[...]

The positive moments really manifest themselves only when the resettlers have found work and housing somewhere and have settled into their new workplace. In the future, we will place special emphasis on collecting these positive examples.

[...]

Source: BArch, DO 2/1164, copy (excerpts); reprinted in Udo Wengst, *Geschichte der Sozialpolitik in Deutschland*. Bd. 2/2: 1945–1949: *Die Zeit der Besatzungszonen. Sozialpolitik zwischen Kriegsende und der Gründung zweier deutscher Staaten. Dokumente*. Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2001, no. 41, pp. 113–15.

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