

EXILE, FLIGHT AND LOSS
OF HOMELAND:
MARGARETE VON PUSIREWSKY –
A BALTIC GERMAN LIFE LOST
BETWEEN WAR AND RESETTLEMENT

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When the majority of Baltic Germans left Latvia in the fall of 1939, Margarete von Pusirewsky (1872–1948) stayed behind in her home town Riga. Together with her family – her mother Ludmilla Goegginger (Gēgingers) and her sister Marta Busz, as well as her two daughters and a son, they decided not to follow the mass exodus of Germans. In her life, Margarete von Pusirewsky had already experienced several episodes of self-imposed exile from her hometown and Baltic *Heimat*, firstly, as the wife of a military doctor posted to different places around the Russian Empire, and secondly, during the First World War, when she and her family had fled to Helsinki. After these longer periods spent in other parts of the Russian Empire, she always returned to Riga. Even when she left Riga for the last time in 1944 to flee the approaching Red Army, she hoped to be able to return soon. Based on primary sources, in particular the memoirs of Margarete von Pusirewsky, this paper discusses the connectedness with one's home town, the experience of exile, the longing for “being home” again during and after episodes of exile and in the context of flight, (forced) resettlement, and deportation.

Key words: Baltic Germans, exile, female experiences, homeland, resettlement, Riga, spatial belonging.

INTRODUCTION

Margarete von Pusirewsky was born in Riga in 1872 to Baltic German¹ parents, Heinrich Goegginger (1848–1888) — the name is sometimes spelt Gögginger in German, and Gēgingers in Latvian — and Ludmilla Goegginger (1848–1940), born Grassmann. Margarete von Pusirewsky's grandfather, Heinrich Goegginger sen., was a commercial gardener who had immigrated from Vienna in 1850 and established an agricultural nursery in Riga in 1851. Ludmilla Goegginger's family were Baltic Germans from Riga. Ludmilla Goegginger's husband Heinrich Goegginger continued the gardening and nursery business of his father but also started to experiment with the conservation of food and opened Riga's first canning factory in 1881.² After her husband's death in 1888, Ludmilla Goegginger took over the factory, expanded and modernised it, adding a steam boiler and a petroleum engine.³ According to the data from the All-Russian Imperial Census of 1897, Ludmilla Goegginger was one of 35 694 female entrepreneurs in the Russian Empire.⁴ While the numbers of female entrepreneurs might not have been very large considering the size of the empire, they still made a significant group, in particular considering that at the

¹ I am using the term “Baltic German” because it is the common expression in English. However, it needs to be pointed out that the German translation “Balten-Deutsche” is a Nazi term, which was not used before the 1930s and is directly connected to the attempt of the Nazis to put an emphasis on the German heritage, gather all ethnic Germans (Volksdeutsche) in Eastern Europe and resettle them in the Third Reich. The correct German term would be “German Balts” (Deutschbalten) or simply “Balts” (Balten) as this is how German speakers in the Baltic provinces referred to themselves since the mid-19th century. Cf. Ulrike Plath (2014). *Heimat: Rethinking Baltic German Spaces of Belonging*. *Kunstiteaduslikke Uurimusi/Studies on Art and Architecture/Studien Für Kunstwissenschaft* 3–4, pp. 55–78, here p. 59.

² *Lokales: Die Konserven der ersten Rigaer Konservenfabrik von H. Goegginger*. *Düna Zeitung*, 31.05.1897.

³ *Zeitung der Rigaschen Stadtpolizei*. 03.12.1897.

⁴ Ulianova 2009, 165.

time female entrepreneurship was very unusual in Western Europe. However, there was clearly a tradition of female entrepreneurship in all parts of the (former) Russian Empire, which continued in the interwar period. What made the case of L. W. Goegginger even more unusual was that she did not simply continue her husband's factory as a widow under his name but renamed it "First Riga Canning Factory L. W. Goegginger" – "L. W." standing for "Ludmilla, daughter of Wilhelm". The company was known for several products that it exported to other parts of the Russian Empire, to Western Europe, and even to the Americas. Especially popular were L. W. Goegginger's Riga sprats and caramel sweets. According to Ludmilla Goegginger's memoirs, the company exported sprats "to the entire world".⁵ In 1904, Ludmilla Goegginger restructured her canning factory and made her two daughters, Margarete von Pusirewsky and Marta Busz (1874–194?), partners, while her son-in-law, the Polish engineer Eduard (Edek) Busz, became the manager. Hence, the company still remained largely in female hands. By 1913, Ludmilla Goegginger's "First Riga Canning Factory" was the largest of its kind in Riga with 584 employees and an annual turnover of 1 000 000 roubles.⁶

Her only son Heinrich Goegginger jun. (1875–1943) took over the family's commercial gardening business and nursery, which was also very successful. In 1906, he bought an estate and manor house in Zarnikau (Carnikava) and joined the ranks of estate owning Baltic Germans, even though the family did not belong to the nobility.⁷ Heinrich Goegginger jun. also invested

⁵ Memoirs of Ludmilla Goegginger [in German]. Ludmilla Goegginger, *Von Wien nach Riga. Drei Heinrich Goegginger Generationen*, undated. Deutsch-Baltische Genealogische Gesellschaft Darmstadt, Family Folder Gögginger, unnumbered.

⁶ Inventory and volume of Riga's industries in 1913 collected by the Riga Society of Factory Owners [in German]. *Latvijas Nacionālais arhīvs — Latvijas Valsts vēstures arhīvs* (Riga, hereinafter: LNA-LVVA), 2765–1–4, p. 23.

⁷ Zarnikau. *Rigasche Rundschau* 29.05.1914.

in a fishery and built a modern smokery on his estate in Zarnikau.⁸ If not sold locally, the fish from Zarnikau was canned in the family's canning factory in Riga. Heinrich Goegginger also made plans to turn Zarnikau/Carnikava into a summer tourist resort, essentially a second Jūrmala, but these plans were thwarted by the outbreak of the First World War.

The Goegginger family and their fate during the two world wars provide us an insight into the experiences of exile, flight, expulsion, deportation – essentially various forms of losing one's homeland. In this article, the term “exile” will be interpreted in a broad way, not only focusing on experiences that contain “a strong element of compulsion”⁹ but also including episodes of “like in exile” experiences, marked by homesickness and the feeling of being displaced. An emphasis is placed on discussing perceptions of home and the Baltic *Heimat* (homeland), which Baltic Germans felt strongly connected to despite the fact that in the 20th century their German heritage made them the subject of the Nazi project of resettlement of ethnic Germans from Eastern Europe, based solely on their ethnicity and not on territorial or spatial belonging.¹⁰ The history of the Goegginger family therefore also provides an opportunity to discuss different ways of dealing with one's ethnic, cultural, and spatial identity during a time period when nationalistic tendencies and national projects of different nations clashed on the territory of Latvia, making the life of those who did not easily fit into one national group increasingly difficult. All three of Ludmilla Goegginger's children experienced forms of exile and were forced to spend time away from their home town, eventually having to flee from Riga, being resettled or deported. Margarete von Pusirewsky wrote her memoirs after the Second World War,

⁸ Pictures of the Zarnikau estate and smokery in Deutsch-Baltische Genealogische Gesellschaft Darmstadt, Family Folder Gögginger, unnumbered.

⁹ Surlis 2001, 203.

¹⁰ For the term “Heimat” see Plath 2014, 56.

which is why this article will be primarily focusing on her, using her memoirs as the main source.¹¹ This article aims to put a special focus on this autobiographical source, highlighting the experiences and feelings of one woman. Other sources have been collected as part of a research project titled “The Cosmopolitan City. Riga as a Global Port and International Capital of Trade (1861–1939).”¹²

Memoirs are a challenging type of source. While they provide us with lots of insights into the individual recollections of a person, they might be affected by a person’s re-evaluation of historical events. We cannot always be sure if the author remembers all facts correctly. Research on social memory has shown that often people misremember aspects of their life, for instance, because their memory might be affected by what others have told them about historical events.¹³ This is why it is necessary to juxtapose and compare those memories with secondary literature. Margarete von Pusirewsky wrote a diary throughout large parts of her adult life and her memoirs were based on that diary. She started writing her memoirs in her 70ies, after she had fled to West Germany in 1944, using her diary as a source. However, the home of her daughter’s in-laws in a village near Duisburg, Germany, where she had found refuge, was bombed by American forces in the spring of 1945, and parts of the diary and the already written memoirs were lost. She had to rewrite large sections of her work. We do not know how much of her memoirs are based on her original diary

¹¹ Pusirewsky 1984.

¹² The project was conducted at the University of Göttingen between 2018 and 2021 with the support of the Bundesbeauftragte für Kultur und Medien der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, BKM (Federal Commissioner for Culture and Media, Federal Republic of Germany). See digital research findings: Katja Wezel (2021). *The Cosmopolitan City. Riga as a Global Port and International Capital of Trade (1861–1939)*. Available at <https://www.uni-goettingen.de/en/624919.html> (viewed 29.08.2022.).

¹³ Welzer et al. 2008.

and which parts are recollections of the past, written decades after the original events. In addition, her daughter Elisabeth (Lilia) Ohlmann only published her mother's memoirs in 1984, 36 years after Margarete von Pusirewsky's death. It is unknown whether she had altered the text in any way. At the same time, Margarete von Pusirewsky's memoirs are a very individual account of a time period of war that led to expulsions, deportations, resettlement and forced people to flee. The reasons why some people fled or chose resettlement while others stayed behind can only be assessed individually.

Margarete von Pusirewsky's memoirs are a first-person narrative providing insights into her thoughts, feelings, and mentality. The value of autobiographic sources like this one have been re-evaluated in recent years, stressing their importance, especially by researchers of the history of mentality and cultural studies.¹⁴ What makes Margarete von Pusirewsky's recollections particularly interesting is that her life story stands out, differing from that of many other Baltic Germans: she stayed in Riga in 1939 and did not join the exodus of Baltic Germans. She also did not emigrate to Germany during the so called *Nachumsiedlung* (post-resettlement) in 1941.¹⁵ She appears to have had a special and very strong connection to her Baltic *Heimat* and her home town Riga, even though she had spent several years with her husband in various locations of the Russian Empire and also frequently had travelled to Imperial and Weimar Germany. Nevertheless, giving up her hometown Riga was so difficult for her that she waited until almost the very last moment, when Soviet forces were standing at the gates of Riga in July 1944 and her daughters told her that it was not safe for her to stay.

¹⁴ Saagpakk 2006, 2.

¹⁵ Liivik, Tark 2016, 407–427.

MARRIAGE, MOVING AROUND IN THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE, AND RETURN TO RIGA, 1890–1914

Margarete von Pusirewsky, born Goegginger, married Vladimir Pusirewsky (1853–1925), a Russian military doctor, 21 years her senior in 1890.¹⁶ Her husband moved around with the military, serving in several different places in the Russian Empire, which is why for the next 14 years, Margarete von Pusirewsky had to move around with him, again and again uprooting her family. The family grew during these years of wandering and in the end included two sons, Dimitry (called Mitja) born 1893 and Nikolai (called Kolja) born 1895, as well as two daughters, Rita born 1899 and Elisabeth (called Lilia) born 1901.

Her husband had an imperial biography. He was part of Russia's imperial elite thanks to his position as a military doctor. According to Malte Rolf, "biographies that can be described as imperial interact closely in many ways with the basic patterns of order of the empires in which they existed. The lives and careers of individuals were embedded in the translocal structures of the imperial fabric."¹⁷ While this was true for Vladimir von Pusirewsky, his wife Margarete did not share his career. Instead, her life circled around her family. She never really felt at home in her husband's translocal imperial structures and, for instance, interacted very little with the wives of officers at the places where her husband was stationed because she felt she had little in common with them. She had a very local feeling of belonging and remained very much connected to her hometown Riga, which she visited regularly and in crucial moments of her life – for instance for the birth of her children – even though the journey was long. She found it particularly hard to get used to the climate in the Caucasus:

¹⁶ Pusirewsky 1984, 45.

¹⁷ Rolf 2014, 9. Original quote in German. Translation by the author.

The humid, slackening heat, the excess of sun and bright colours, the absence of winter – how happy I was when it snowed once for half an hour – all these things required a great, if unconscious, expenditure of strength on my part to overcome and adjust to.¹⁸

The time spent in Batumi was a hard test for her, especially when her husband had to make shorter or longer inspection trips and left her alone in a house where she didn't understand the language of the neighbours (who neither spoke Russian nor German), and where she felt foreign. In her memoirs, she recollects her feelings when her husband had to attend to his patients, leaving her alone in the rented house in Batumi:

... when he was called to a sick person at night and I was left alone in the small house, under whose windows the plaintive howling of the jackals sounded, I often dared not to move for fear; I would then sit upright in bed for hours without mustering the courage to even lay my head on the pillow or turn out the light.¹⁹

She struggled with the position as the wife of a military doctor and also did not care very much for entertainments provided for the wives of officers. As an avid reader, she was shocked that Batumi had no library or book shop and that she was therefore unable to obtain any new books. She also had

¹⁸ German original: "Die feuchte, erschlaffende Hitze, das Übermaß an Sonne und grellen Farben, das Fehlen des Winters – wie glücklich war ich, als es einmal eine halbe Stunde lang schneite –, alle diese Dinge erforderten zu ihrer Überwindung und Anpassung einen großen, wenn auch unbewußten Kräfteaufwand von meiner Seite." Pusirewsky 1984, 55. All texts from the Pusirewsky's memoirs have been translated by the author.

¹⁹ German original: "... wenn er nachts zu einem Kranken gerufen wurde und ich allein in dem kleinen Haus zurückblieb, unter dessen Fenstern das klagende Geheul der Schakale ertönte, wagte ich mich vor Furcht oft nicht zu bewegen; ich saß dann stundenlang aufrecht im Bett, ohne den Mut aufzubringen, auch nur den Kopf auf das Kissen zu legen oder das Licht zu löschen." Ibid., 51–52.

to recover from the tragedies of losing her first two children, born in the Caucasus, who were either stillborn or died soon after birth. Her mother sent her a Latvian maid to help in the household and probably also to give her some feeling of homeyness. For the birth of her third child Mitja, who survived, she travelled to Riga. Despite being married to a doctor, Margarete von Pusirewsky thought she was safer and felt she could obtain better medical care and assistance in her hometown, so her son Mitja was born in Riga and not in Batumi. The only real friendship that she made during her 14 years of accompanying her husband to his different stations in the Russian Empire was with the wife of a German Lutheran pastor, whom she met in Batumi and who also had a Baltic German background.²⁰

She felt a little more at ease in her position as the wife of a military doctor after her husband was transferred to the Russian–German border town Krettingen (Kretinga), today in Lithuania. In 1898, the family – parents and two sons – moved to this garrison town on the Russian side of the border, 25 km away from the Prussian city of Memel (Klaipeda). There, she felt more at home and it also was much nearer to Riga, allowing for more frequent visits. Nevertheless, life in Krettingen was simple, there were only some cultural activities at the officers' club, but no housing was available that would provide any of the modern comforts such as plumbing or electricity. Therefore, Margarete von Pusirewsky also travelled to Riga to give birth to her daughter Rita in 1899. In 1901, her last child, named Elisabeth (Lilia) was born.

Margarete von Pusirewsky was very excited when her husband's application for early retirement was accepted and the family was able to move to her hometown Riga in 1904:

²⁰ Pusirewsky 1984, 73.

When we left Krettingen and arrived in Riga, I learned that my mother had transformed the canning factory, of which she was the sole owner, into a limited partnership company and had appointed me, my sister, and her husband as partners of this company, dividing the capital invested in the factory, which was by no means particularly large, into three parts and assigning one-third to me. My brother-in-law was the manager of the factory. If the following ten years, free of economic worries, were also rich in spiritual values and life-defining insights and relationships, I owe this to the generous care of my mother. We moved into an unusually comfortable apartment on 6 Gertrudes Street, the first in my life to have electric light instead of kerosene lamps.²¹

Returning to Riga meant not only a new, better standard of life economically, but also the return to a life where she could enjoy many cultural events, relationships with her peers, and simply the feeling of living in a place where she felt truly at home. Riga was one of the most advanced and industrialised cities in the Russian Empire at the time, and one of the three biggest port cities — in fact it became Russia's port with the highest sales volume in the decade before 1914.²² To this day, Riga's rich architecture, especially the many Art Nouveau buildings remind us of the city's industrial and building boom

²¹ German original: "Als wir Krettingen verließen und in Riga eintrafen, erfuhr ich, daß meine Mutter die ihr allein gehörende Konservenfabrik in eine Kommanditgesellschaft verwandelt und mich sowie meine Schwester und deren Mann zu Kommanditisten dieser Firma eingesetzt hatte, indem sie das in die Fabrik investierte, keineswegs besonders große Kapital in drei Teile geteilt und mir das eine Drittel desselben abgetreten hatte. Mein Schwager war der Leiter des Betriebs. Wenn die darauffolgenden zehn von wirtschaftlichen Sorgen freien Jahre reich waren auch an geistigen Werten und für das Leben ausschlaggebenden Erkenntnissen und Beziehungen, so verdanke ich das der großzügigen Fürsorge meiner Mutter. In der Gertrudstraße 6 bezogen wir nun eine für Krettinger Begriffe ungewöhnlich komfortable Wohnung, die erste in meinem Leben, die anstatt Petroleumlampen elektrisches Licht besaß [...]" Ibid., 105–106.

²² Wezel 2021, 398–401.

during that era. Many of the newly built apartment buildings in the city centre included comforts that were not yet available in other parts of the empire, even to people that were members of the imperial elite. As Margarete von Pusirewsky points out, their Riga apartment, which they moved into in 1904, had electric light, a novelty for her. It becomes clear from her memoirs that the decade spent in Riga between 1904 and 1914 was the happiest in her life. Her bilingual family spoke both German and Russian at home, and probably also some Latvian since she mentions a Latvian cook that the family employed. Margarete von Pusirewsky enjoyed cultural events provided both in German and Russian, and the family usually spent their summer vacation in the Thuringia Forest in Germany or in Switzerland. At the same time, they were deeply rooted in Riga and never considered to move permanently to Germany. Interestingly, the locals in the Thuringia Forest called the house, where the family spent their summer vacations, the “Russian villa”, indicating that the German locals did not consider this Riga family as Germans. The railroad trip home at the end of their vacations spent in Germany filled them with joy, especially once they had crossed the German–Russian border and reached the border town Wirballen (Virbalis), where they were able to enjoy the first cup of “real Russian tea”.²³ Margarete von Pusirewsky’s memoirs are filled with anecdotes like this one, which demonstrate how being a German speaker in the Russian Empire was not a conundrum for her. Being a German-speaking Russian subject from Riga was part of her identity. Yet, the outbreak of the First World War would transform this world permanently.

²³ Pusirewsky 1984, 128.

THE FIRST WORLD WAR, EXILE IN FINLAND
AND RETURN TO GERMAN-OCCUPIED RIGA,
1914–1918

The beginning of the First World War revived and intensified the anti-German sentiments in the Russian Empire, which had already circulated among Slavophiles since the mid-19th century.²⁴ Russian nationalist newspapers questioned the loyalty of Baltic Germans.²⁵ The situation became particularly difficult due to the advance of the German army, which occupied Courland in 1915. From 1915 to 1917, the front line ran south of Riga and the city on the Dvina (Daugava/Düna) became fiercely contested. Since the front line was so near, one could hear the noise of the war in central Riga. Russian military authorities ordered the evacuation of Riga's industries. This had serious repercussions for Riga's inhabitants, many of whom fled to the interior of the Russian Empire since Riga's factories could not provide jobs and income any longer. Riga's Baltic Germans suffered under the anti-German laws and regulations. The use of German in public, and all German-language publications and cultural events in German were forbidden.²⁶ One could be arrested and deported for speaking German on the streets of Riga. The Baltic German mayor of Riga, Wilhelm von Bulmerincq (1913–1915), was deported to Irkutsk.²⁷ The war also deprived the family of their economic livelihood since the L. W. Goegginger Canning Factory was evacuated to interior Russia just like other factories.

²⁴ See for instance Samarin 1889. The letters were originally composed in 1848, see Brüggemann 2012, 126–127.

²⁵ See for instance the attack against the Riga Exchange Committee (Latv. Biržās komiteja, Germ. Börsen-Comité) in *Novoe Vremia*. 25.09.1914 and the reply of the Riga Exchange Committee, To the Trade Department of the Ministry of Trade and Industry [in German], 04.10.1914. *LNA-LVVA*, 3143–1–11a, pp. 476–479, here p. 476.

²⁶ Hatlie 2014, 168–169.

²⁷ Bulmerincq 1952, 62.

The German troops approached Mitau [Jelgava], and a stream of refugees poured into the streets of Riga. [...] Riga was evacuated. All schools, all authorities, all factories – including ours – were moved to the interior of Russia, and it was shocking to observe how quickly the life and the physiognomy of a city can change [...]. My sister, who was afraid of the ever-approaching war noise, had fled with her family to Helsingfors [Helsinki] and also advised my mother and us to come there, where there was still peace, order, and normal living conditions.²⁸

To escape this dire situation in Riga, Margarete von Pusirewsky decided to flee with her family to Helsinki. Apparently, they felt that Helsinki, a city inside the Russian Empire yet also, like Riga, on its periphery, suited them best. Although Margarete von Pusirewsky does not mention this in her memoirs, they probably felt safer there as well since nobody would denounce them for speaking German on the streets of Helsinki. Their self-chosen exile lasted for three years (1915 to 1918). Their savings from the canning factory allowed them to live relatively comfortably in the Finnish capital. However, the war between Russia and Germany put Baltic Germans in a very difficult position both emotionally and mentally. As many other Baltic Germans, Margarete von Pusirewsky describes the atmosphere during the First World War as difficult and fateful.²⁹ While Helsinki reminded her of Western Europe, she also recollects feelings of homesickness and the struggling with her fate in her memoirs:

²⁸ German original: “Die deutschen Truppen näherten sich Mitau, und ein Strom von Flüchtlingen ergoß sich in die Straßen von Riga. [...] Riga wurde evakuiert. Alle Schulen, alle Behörden, alle Fabriken – auch unsere – wurden in das Innere Russlands verlegt, und wieder war es erschütternd zu beobachten, wie schnell sich das Leben und die Physiognomie einer Stadt wandeln können [...]. Meine Schwester, die Angst vor dem immer näher rückenden Kriegslärm hatte, war mit ihrer Familie nach Helsingfors geflüchtet und riet auch meiner Mutter und uns, dorthin zu kommen, wo es noch Ruhe, Ordnung und normale Lebensbedingungen gebe.” Pusirewsky 1984, 144.

²⁹ Saagpakk 2006, 7–8.

When we left the train station in Helsingfors [Helsinki] on a frosty October day, in order to move into the rooms we had ordered in the Hotel Fenia across the street, I almost believed I was in Munich, so Western European, so German did the Finnish capital seem to those coming from Petersburg [Petrograd]. [...] Physically and mentally, I was like a person without skin, for whom every contact with the outside world was painful and not beneficial. Pain-stricken [because of stomach problems] and homesick, I sat at my high window and looked out over the snow-covered roofs of the city, while I spooned my intensely cinnamon-tasting porridge. Large black and blue pigeons, which seemed to me like dark birds of fate, sat on the window ledge and probably envied me my filled food bowl.³⁰

The life of Margarete von Pusirewsky and her family in Finland was simple but safe. Helsinki experienced less food supply problems than other cities in the Russian Empire, at least until the revolution broke out in 1917. The two daughters, Rita and Lilia, were able to finish their school education visiting a Russian gymnasium in Helsinki. The older son Mitja continued his studies in medicine in Iur'ev (Est. Tartu, Germ. Dorpat) while the younger son Kolja joined the Russian army. Mitja visited the family in Helsinki in the fall of 1916 with his fiancé Ljuba Tauts, a girl from Estonia (and concluding from her name most likely with a partly Russian, partly Estonian heritage). The young couple got married in the family circle, his wife stayed with his family while he

³⁰ German original: "Als wir nun von Petersburg kommend an einem schon frostigen Oktobertage den Bahnhof von Helsingfors verließen, um in dem gegenüberliegenden Hotel Fenia die für uns bestellten Zimmer zu beziehen, glaubte ich fast, in München zu sein, so westeuropäisch, ja so deutsch mutete den aus Petersburg Kommenden die finnische Hauptstadt an. [...] Körperlich und seelisch war ich wie ein Mensch ohne Haut, dem jede Berührung mit der Außenwelt weh und keine wohlthat. Schmerzgekrümmt [wegen Magenschmerzen] und voller Heimweh saß ich an meinem hochgelegenen Fenster und blickte hinaus auf die verschneiten Dächer der Stadt, während ich meinen intensiv nach Zimt schmeckenden Haferbrei löffelte. Große schwarzblaue Tauben, die mir wie dunkle Schicksalsvögel vorkamen, saßen auf dem Fenstersims und beneideten mich wohl um meinen gefüllten Futternapf." Pusirewsky 1984, 149–150.

returned to Iur'ev, and in January 1917 Margarete von Pusirewsky's first grandchild Vladimir (called Wolja) was born in Helsinki. When the Bolshevik Revolution reached Helsinki in the fall of 1917, the Finnish capital was hit by fighting, supply problems, and famine. The family would have liked to return to Riga, which had been occupied by German forces in September 1917, but was trapped in Helsinki. No passenger trains were crossing the front-line and the Baltic Sea was deemed not safe because of mines. Only after the Baltic Sea Division of the German army led by Rüdiger von der Goltz had intervened in the Finnish Civil War, and both Tallinn and Helsinki were occupied by German forces, were they able to leave Helsinki. They returned to Riga by ship via Reval (Tallinn) in May 1918. Margarete von Pusirewsky recalls in her memoirs how, on her way home, she was wondering about her future and what life in her hometown Riga would be like:

We had experienced a lot in Finland. [...] What would it be like in my homeland? Was the city, whose systematic strangulation through the evacuation of schools, scientific institutions, authorities, and factories we had witnessed three years ago, at least now flourishing again under the rule of the Germans? [...] Perhaps our factory would now also be able to work again. That was necessary, because we returned home without money. The future was full of question marks.³¹

Interestingly, she did not regard Finland, although part of the Russian Empire, as her homeland. This once again shows that Margarete von Pusirewsky had no Russian imperial identity. Only Riga, and possibly the Baltic provinces, were *Heimat* to her. This demonstrates that she shared the perceptions of many

³¹ German original: "Wir hatten in Finnland viel erlebt. [...] Wie würde es in meiner Heimat sein? War die Stadt, deren systematische Abdrosselung durch die Evakuierung von Schulen, wissenschaftlichen Institutionen, Behörden und Fabriken wir vor drei Jahren miterlebt hatten, wenigstens jetzt unter der Herrschaft der Deutschen wieder im Aufblühen? [...] Unsere Fabrik würde vielleicht auch wieder arbeiten können. Das war notwendig, denn wir kamen ohne Geld in die Heimat zurück. Die Zukunft war voller Fragezeichen." Ibid., 183.

Baltic Germans of what belonged to their homeland: only the Baltic provinces of Estonia, Livonia, and Courland.³² Furthermore, she clearly did not perceive “the Germans”, or the German army, as part of her community – they were not Balts. Still, she hoped that life would be better “under the rule of the Germans”.

The war had deprived the family of its formerly comfortable income provided by the L. W. Goegginger Canning Factory. Like for many other industrialists and factory owners from Riga, the economic future of the family was very unclear. With all industries including heavy machinery evacuated to central Russia, it was completely uncertain whether Riga could rebuild its pre-war industrial setting.³³ While Margarete von Pusirewsky’s Baltic German background let her first have a rather positive attitude towards the German occupation of Riga, this impression was soon overruled by some of the decisions taken by the occupation forces:

I found the order and security maintained by the German troops to be beneficial and our allocated food, rationed by cards and fairly distributed, to be progress after the starvation in Finland. We were glad to be home again and to live far from privation and arbitrariness in regulated conditions, almost reminiscent of the years of peace. But none of us was so uncritical that we would have accepted indifferently the abuses that irritated our sense of tact and our sense of justice, which even this order-loving power was guilty of. I asked myself whether the picture I had formed of Germany had perhaps been too ideal.³⁴

³² Plath 2014, 64.

³³ Lenz 1954, 91.

³⁴ German original: “Die von den deutschen Truppen aufrechterhaltene Ordnung und Sicherheit empfand ich als wohltuend und unsere durch Lebensmittelkarten rationierte, gerecht verteilte Verpflegung nach dem Hungern und Darben in Finnland als einen Fortschritt. Wir waren froh, wieder zu Hause zu sein und fern von Entbehrungen und Willkür in geregelten, fast an die Jahre des Friedens erinnernden Verhältnissen zu leben. Doch niemand von uns war so kritiklos, daß er die unser Taktgefühl und unser Rechtsempfinden irritierenden Missgriffe, die auch diese ordnungsliebende Macht sich zuschulden kommen ließ, gleichgültig hingenommen hätte. Ich fragte mich selbst, ob das Bild, das ich mir von Deutschland gemacht hatte, vielleicht zu ideal gewesen war.” Pusirewsky 1984, 184.

This recollection of the events and impressions from 1918 shows that Baltic Germans did not necessarily feel an immediate and strong connection with their German occupiers based on the commonality of language and culture. Baltic Germans had to deal with the fact that they, too, were occupied, and not anymore in charge of the city and thus deprived of many of their former privileges and self-ruling powers, despite the fact that they shared the same native language with their occupiers. This was particularly true for former members of Riga's entrepreneurial class, who had lost their factories, assets and most of their financial resources and income during the First World War.

LIFE IN INDEPENDENT LATVIA AND THE EXODUS OF BALTIC GERMANS, 1918–1939

After Germany signed the armistice agreement on 11 November 1918 and part of the German occupation forces started to retreat from Riga, most Baltic Germans felt first and foremost threatened by a potential advance of the Bolsheviks. Having already experienced an episode of Civil War in Finland, Margarete von Pusirewsky wondered who could restore justice and order in Riga. When Latvians proclaimed their first national government on 18 November 1918, she welcomed this new development:

Popular unrest grew as rumours spread that Russia was massing its troops along the lines established by the peace treaty [of Brest-Litovsk]. The German units flooded back to their homeland. Who was now to maintain order and keep the country from civil war? But when we reached for the newspapers on the morning of 18 November, we learned that we had awakened in a new state, Latvia, and that it would henceforth protect us against every external and internal enemy. [...] I rejoiced at this eleventh-hour solution and found the biting and ironic remarks of

a German-Baltic newspaper unwise and unfair; had we not literally overnight from a sad no-man's land at the mercy of all arbitrariness become a state secured by duties and rights?³⁵

Her sense of connection to her Baltic *Heimat* caused her to accept this new Latvian national government as something positive – at least this government would fight for keeping her homeland safe and set up a state in which a return to law and order was possible. As co-owner of the still existing though defunct canning factory, Margarete von Pusirewsky also found comfort in the British support of Ulmanis' government. Great Britain, Riga's biggest trading partner before the war, would hopefully not let the city down. When British ships appeared in the port of Riga on 18 December 1918, she hoped that this would be “the saving hand that stops the chaos”.³⁶ Alas, the coming months brought more uncertainty, arbitrariness and hardship after Bolshevik forces occupied Riga on 3 January 1919. Large “bourgeois” apartments were affected by forced quartering. Several Red Army officers were quartered in the apartment of the Pusirewsky family. The Bolsheviks also arrested Eduard Busz, Margarete von Pusirewsky's brother-in-law and former manager of the L. W. Goegginger Canning Factory, as well as her sister-in-law Ellen Goegginger, the former land-

³⁵ German original: “Die Unruhe in der Bevölkerung wuchs, als sich das Gerücht verbreitete, Rußland ziehe entlang der durch den Friedensvertrag festgesetzten Grenze seine Truppen zusammen. Die deutschen Einheiten fluteten in ihre Heimat zurück; wer sollte nun die Ordnung aufrechterhalten und das Land vor dem Bürgerkrieg bewahren? Doch als wir am Morgen des 18. November nach den Zeitungen griffen, erfuhren wir, daß wir in einem neuen Staat, Lettland erwacht waren und daß dieser uns fortan gegen jeden äußeren und inneren Feind schützen werde. [...] Ich freute mich dieser in elfter Stunde sich ergebenden Lösung und fand die bissigen und ironischen Randbemerkungen einer deutschbaltischen Zeitung unklug und unfair; waren wir denn nicht buchstäblich über Nacht aus einem traurigen, jeder Willkür preisgegebenen Niemandland ein durch Pflichten und Rechte gesicherter Staat geworden?” Pusirewsky 1984, 185.

³⁶ German original: “War das die dem Chaos Halt gebietende, rettende Hand?” Ibid., p. 188.

lady of the Zarnikau manor house. Both were imprisoned in the central prison in Riga. Margarete von Pusirewsky's brother Heinrich Goegginger jun. had joined the Baltic Landeswehr, formed to re-conquer the Latvian territories occupied by the Bolsheviks.

All family members survived Bolshevik rule. After the Baltic Landeswehr and units of the Latvian army had freed Riga on 22 and 23 May 1919, the family was reunited. Ludmilla Goegginger, her three children, and their families now all lived in the five-storey apartment building on 12 Skolas Street, which Marta and Eduard Busz had built in 1910. The manor house Zarnikau had been used by Russian troops who burned it down when withdrawing on 30 August 1917.³⁷ Later, the estate was confiscated, first by the Bolsheviks in early 1919 and then once again during the Latvian Agrarian Reform of 1920.³⁸ The family tried to revive their canning factory but financial difficulties and the lack of machinery forced them to sell all company shares in 1921.³⁹ L. W. Goegginger continued to exist as a stock cooperation in interwar Latvia – albeit under a new leadership – and later, during Soviet rule, it became nationalised and continued its production under a new name, “Uzvara”.⁴⁰ Thus, the Goegginger family could not profit from the return of some machinery from Soviet Russia during the 1920s as other companies did. Margarete

³⁷ Memoirs of Ludmilla Goegginger [in German]. Ludmilla Goegginger, *Von Wien nach Riga. Drei Heinrich Goegginger Generationen*, undated. Deutsch-Baltische Genealogische Gesellschaft Darmstadt, Family Folder Gögginger, unnumbered.

³⁸ The Goegginger family was not able to keep a part of the estate, as was usually the case during the Agrarian Reform. The state of Latvia required the entire estate to compensate officers who had fought in the Latvian War of Independence.

³⁹ Pusirewsky 1984, 221, 227.

⁴⁰ The new company was called “L. W. Goegginger Akciju Biedrība”. L. W. Goeggingera Akziju Beedribas Statuti. *LNA-LVVA*, 2894–1–10964, p. 41. See also Die Aktien-Gesellschaft L. W. Goegginger. *Letlands Export-Industrie. Beilage der Rigaschen Nachrichten*, 03.02.1923., p. 1.

von Pusirewsky unluckily invested all proceeds from selling her shares of the factory in German bonds, which completely lost their value during the German hyperinflation of 1922–1923. With her husband already being retired and in his 70ies – he died in 1925 – she was forced to start her own business to secure the family’s survival. She divided her large apartment into a public and a private part, and opened a lunch restaurant in her dining and living room. In the coming years, her husband’s pension and the restaurant provided her family with a tolerable living. While life in independent Latvia was not always easy for the family – especially her two sons struggled to find their place and make a career in Latvia due to their lack of good Latvian language skills – Margarete von Pusirewsky never questioned that Riga was her home and that she was a citizen of Latvia.

The Hitler–Stalin Pact, officially called German–Soviet Non-Aggression Pact signed on 23 August 1939, and the beginning of the Second World War changed everything. The pact and in particular its secret protocol, in which Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union defined their spheres of interest in Eastern Europe, was an obvious imperialist action and a violation of international law.⁴¹ Margarete von Pusirewsky does not mention the pact in her memoirs. It is unclear if she was aware of it. She refers to the events of the resettlement of Baltic Germans, a direct consequence of the pact, only in the context of the outbreak of the Second World War – but she calls her sub-chapter about the beginning of war “the great migration” (die große Völkerwanderung). For her, there was an immediate connection between Hitler’s attack on Poland, which she describes as an aggression in her memoirs, and the resettlement of Baltic Germans to the newly occupied Polish territories.⁴²

According to historical research on the topic, Baltic Germans, unaware of the pact’s secret protocol, had at first found

⁴¹ Loeber 1972, (19). See also Weber 2019.

⁴² Pusirewsky 1984, 258.

comfort in the signing of the German–Soviet Non-Aggression Pact.⁴³ Yet, the start of the Second World War, the German attack on western Poland on 1 September 1939, and the subsequent Soviet occupation of eastern Poland on 17 September opened their eyes to the writing that was on the wall. In September, during secret consultations, the Baltic German SS officer Erhard Kroeger, a Riga native who had emigrated to Berlin and joined the NSDAP and the SS in 1938, as well as the German Envoy to Riga, Ulrich von Kotze, were made aware of the signing of the secret protocol, according to which Latvia would fall into the Soviet sphere of influence.⁴⁴ Both urged the Nazi leadership to save the Baltic Germans, especially when Latvia started to negotiate the Soviet–Latvian Mutual Assistance Treaty, whose confidential protocol allowed the Soviet Union to establish military bases and station Soviet troops in Latvia. Kotze asked the German Foreign Ministry in a telegram to find a solution “for the 60 000 ethnic Germans and 3000 Reich Germans” living in Latvia, who after the stationing of Soviet troops in Latvia would be “in imminent danger of death”.⁴⁵ As a result, the German government initiated negotiations for the resettlement of Baltic Germans with Latvia and Estonia.⁴⁶ This was accompanied with a propaganda campaign. On 7 October 1939, the *Rigasche Rundschau* reported about Adolf Hitler’s Reichstag speech from 6 October 1939, in which he had called it problematic that “the whole of eastern and southeastern Europe was filled with unsustainable fragments of German nationality” and asserted the need for a “new order of the ethnographical relations, i.e. a resettlement of nationalities”.⁴⁷

⁴³ Hiden 2004, 230.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 231.

⁴⁵ The German Envoy Kotze in Riga to the Foreign Ministry, 04.10.1939 [in German]. In: Loeber 1972, 57.

⁴⁶ Loeber 1972, (23).

⁴⁷ Adolf Hitler sprach zur Welt. *Rigasche Rundschau*, 07.10.1939., p. 3.

The speech shows that the resettlement was a result of Nazi Germany's policies centred around the German *Volk* (people). It clearly indicated Adolf Hitler's plans for the resettlement of ethnic Germans who lived scattered around Eastern Europe and was a prelude to the general policies of ethnic cleansing implemented during the Second World War and its aftermath.⁴⁸ One's ethnicity and not one's territorial or spatial feeling of belonging was to become the decisive aspect of identity in Eastern Europe and was going to decide about who was being uprooted.⁴⁹ While Hitler called ethnic Germans from different parts of Eastern Europe "home to the Reich" in order to use them for his economic and military policies, Stalin deported Volga Germans as well as other ethnic groups living near the front during the Second World War to Kazakhstan or Siberia, believing that they would fraternise with German troops and not be loyal to the Soviet state. After the war, ethnic cleansing continued with the expulsion of Germans from Poland and Czechoslovakia,⁵⁰ a policy of which those Baltic Germans resettled to occupied Poland also became victims.

Throughout October 1939, Latvia's German-language newspapers published calls for resettlement, which by early November were supported by almost all German minority institutions in Latvia. From the beginning, Margarete von Pusirewsky was very skeptical about these events. As she writes in her memoirs, her first reaction was to question the motives of the Nazi government: "Who would have such a desire [to move to Germany and naturalise as a German citizen] in the middle of a war? Did Germany have so many losses? Did they need soldiers?"⁵¹ She called

⁴⁸ For the term 'ethnic cleansing' see Naimark 2002.

⁴⁹ For the term 'uprooted' see Gregor Thum's monograph on the resettlement of Poles from Soviet-annexed Polish territories in Eastern Poland to the formerly German city of Breslau/Wrocław: Thum 2011.

⁵⁰ Cf. Naimark 2002, pp. 108–138.

⁵¹ German original: "Wer würde denn jetzt mitten im Kriege dergleichen Wünsche hegen? Hatte Deutschland größere Verluste gehabt? Brauchte es Soldaten?" Pusirewsky 1984, 259.

“the resettlement ordered by Hitler a frivolous game with the Balts’ love for their homeland.”⁵² Archival documents with internal communication of Nazi authorities show that she was right with this assessment since the Nazi leadership saw the mass migration of thousands of ethnic Germans fit for work and military service as an economic asset.⁵³ In Margarete von Pusirewsky’s voice, we can also detect the concern of a mother and grandmother, who was probably worried about her son, 44-year old Kolja, and her 22-year-old grandson Wolja (her other son Mitja, Wolja’s father, had died in 1934). Had the family followed the call for resettlement, Kolja and Wolja would have become citizens of Nazi Germany and most likely been conscripted into the German army. For men with a half Baltic German, half Russian heritage and upbringing, who had spent the last 20 years as citizens of the Republic of Latvia, this would have been a very difficult and uncomfortable situation.

On 30 October 1939, *Valdības Vēstnesis* published the “Treaty on the Resettlement of Latvian Citizens of German Ethnicity in the German Reich”.⁵⁴ The first ship with Baltic Germans left Riga on 7 November 1939. Between early November and mid December 1939, the majority of Latvia’s Baltic Germans, about 50 000 people, followed Hitler’s call for re-settlement to the Third Reich. The secret protocol of the German–Soviet Non-Aggression Pact was not made public. Hence, ordinary people did not know about the division of Eastern Europe into spheres of influence. Still, many Baltic Germans

⁵² German original: “...die von Hitler befohlene Umsiedlung ein frivoles Spiel mit der Heimatliebe der Balten gewesen war...” Ibid., 264.

⁵³ Cf. the discussion about the necessity to re-settle and integrate 30 million Germans from abroad to win additional manpower and strengthening the armed forces: Lecture by the Office Chief of the ‘Four-Year Plan’ at the Department of the Personal Staff of the Reichsführer SS [in German], January 1939. In: Loeber 1972, 4–7.

⁵⁴ Līgums par vācu tautības Latvijas pilsoņu pārvietošanu uz Vāciju. *Valdības Vēstnesis*, 30.10.1939., p. 4–5.

who followed the call for resettlement did so because they remembered the Bolshevik occupation of 1919 and were worried about a new Soviet attack – especially after the signing of the Soviet–Latvian Mutual Assistance Treaty became public. As Dietrich Loeber has argued, resettlement was not a real choice for those who left but rather a “dictated option”.⁵⁵ Many, who left, felt that circumstances dictated them what to do. Baltic Germans had to leave behind a territory that they considered their homeland and where many families had lived for generations. Moreover, those resettled in 1939 were not brought to the German mainland. Instead, the Nazi government used Baltic Germans for their project to Germanise the newly conquered territories in Poland. About one-sixth of Baltic Germans stayed behind in 1939 and chose not to give up their Latvian (or Estonian) passports.⁵⁶ Often they had very specific individual reasons, but in general, they were held back by their feeling of belonging to their Baltic homeland.

In the case of the Goegginger family, most family members decided to stay in Riga. The mother, Ludmilla Goegginger, was in her early 90ies and simply felt too old to leave her home town. Ludmilla’s two daughters Margarete and Marta as well as Margarete’s surviving children Kolja, Rita, and Lilia, and grandson Wolja also stayed in Riga. Only Ludmilla’s son, Heinrich Goegginger jun. and his family have the “typical” Baltic German story of leaving Riga in the fall of 1939 and settling in German-occupied Poland. Heinrich Goegginger jun. died in Leszno in 1943, aged 68. His former wife Ellen, whom he had divorced, and their children fled at the end of the war from the conquering Red Army, first to Germany and later emigrated to Canada.⁵⁷ Yet, keeping the Baltic community alive remained crucial for resettled Baltic Germans, even for those who emi-

⁵⁵ See title of his book *Diktierte Option*, Loeber 1972.

⁵⁶ Conrad 2018, 50.

⁵⁷ Ellen Goegginger, divorced wife of Heinrich Goegginger jun., died in Toronto in 1967 at the high age of 90.

grated to Canada after the Second World War. Their publication of *Blaue Briefe* (Blue Letters) is a testimony of the Baltic German community's endeavour to stay in touch and to exchange information.⁵⁸

Margarete von Pusirewsky describes the life in Riga, in December 1939, after the ships with friends and family had left, as deprived of an important part of its culture and identity:

When the last ships had left for Germany, it became lonely around us. It was a special loneliness associated with disenfranchisement. One missed the friends. We missed the newspaper. One missed the German language. What an important factor in our cultural life the German language had represented was now brought home to everyone in a vivid way.⁵⁹

The loss of the German language – no more German language publications, German theatre, or church services in German were allowed – appears to have been the biggest deprivation. Margarete von Pusirewsky recalls in her memoirs how she and her daughters Rita and Lilia were looking for ways to attend a secret church service in German. Once they found it, at the Gertrude Church, it became a moment of peace for her, which also showed the importance of the German language and the Lutheran faith for the Baltic German identity:

We approached the entrance to the sacristy, in front of which numerous people had already gathered, and tried to get inside

⁵⁸ *Blaue Briefe* (Blue Letters) are issued by the Canadian Baltic Immigrant Aid Society and have been published since 1948, originally in German, now in English.

⁵⁹ German original: "Als die letzten Schiffe nach Deutschland abgegangen waren, wurde es einsam um uns. Es war eine besondere, mit Entrechtung verbundene Einsamkeit. Man vermißte die Freunde. Man vermißte die Zeitung. Man vermißte die deutsche Sprache. Welch einen bedeutenden Faktor in unserem Kulturleben das Deutschtum repräsentiert hatte, wurde nun jedem auf eindringliche Weise ins Bewusstsein gerufen." Pusirewsky 1984, 264.

the small room. But it was impossible. Densely crowded people were sitting and standing there in semi-darkness, listening to a woman's voice. It was the most moving sermon I have ever heard. Whether it was because of the woman or because of the deeply troubled spiritual ground on which her words fell, I cannot say. Probably each of us felt that this woman had gone through the agonising effects of resettlement just as we had, and that she had sought and found the way of a powerful overcoming. The sermon was not ecclesiastical; it was Christian in the purest sense of the word.⁶⁰

DEPORTATION, FLIGHT, AND LOSS OF HOMELAND, 1941–1948

Just like Margarete von Pusirewsky, her sister, Marta Busz, had very individual reasons for not joining the exodus of Baltic Germans in 1939. She had been married to a Pole. Although her husband Eduard had already died in 1922, she felt strongly connected to Riga's Polish community. She did not want to be settled in German-occupied Poland as an occupier.⁶¹ Moreover, she also did not want to give up her home in Riga. This home would however make her a target for the Soviet authorities after Latvia was occupied by the Red Army on 17 June 1940. Marta Busz lived off the income from rents, as the sole owner of an apartment building with more than 70 rooms, making her the

⁶⁰ German original: "Wir näherten uns dem Eingang zur Sakristei, vor dem bereits zahlreiche Personen sich versammelt hatten, und versuchten, in das Innere des kleinen Raums zu gelangen. Doch es war unmöglich. Dicht gedrängt saßen und standen die Menschen dort im Halbdunkel und lauschten einer Frauenstimme. Es war die ergreifendste Predigt, die ich jemals gehört habe. Ob das an der Frau lag oder an dem zutiefst aufgewühlten seelischen Boden, auf den ihre Worte fielen, vermag ich nicht zu sagen. Wohl ein jeder von uns spürte, dass diese Frau die qualvolle Auswirkung der Umsiedlung ebenso durchgemacht hatte wie wir selbst und daß sie den Weg einer kraftvollen Überwindung gesucht und gefunden hatte. Die Predigt war nicht kirchlich; sie war christlich im reinsten Sinne des Wortes." Pusirewsky 1984, 265.

⁶¹ Pusirewsky 1984, 262.

typical bourgeois enemy in the eyes of the Soviets. Her house on 12 Skolas Street was therefore expropriated once Soviet authorities had taken over.⁶²

Her Polish surname and the fact that she housed several Poles in her five-storey-apartment building on 12 Skolas Street made her even more suspicious in the eyes of the NKVD. In addition, her son had fought and died in the Polish–Soviet war of 1919–1920. On 14 June 1941, she was arrested as an alleged “Polish agent”, supposedly also because of her connections to the British Embassy in Riga.⁶³ It is interesting that her arrest file first lists her as “German”, but then crosses it out, replacing it with “Polish”.⁶⁴ Thus, in the eyes of the Soviet occupation forces, her marriage to a Pole made her Polish, showing the misogynistic tendencies of the Soviet regime. While the NKVD could not prove any connection to a Polish–British espionage ring, her deportation file points out that she had never worked, a crime in the Soviet context.⁶⁵ On 8 August 1942, she was sentenced to three years of camp detention in the Komi ASSR.⁶⁶ She probably died shortly after that, although her exact date of death is unknown.

Margarete von Pusirewsky survived Riga’s first Soviet occupation without deportation. It might have helped her that she had lost most of her money after the sale of the L. W. Goegginger Canning Factory. Besides, she had led a rather withdrawn life, which is why she did not get under the radar of Soviet occupation forces in 1940–1941. She also stayed in Riga during the subsequent German occupation. Yet, when the Red Army stood

⁶² Pusirewsky 1984, 271.

⁶³ Decision to arrest [in Russian]. 07.06.1941. In Deportation file of Marta Busz [in Russian]. *LVA*, 1987–1–13346, p. 4.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Arrest questionnaire [in Russian]. Undated. In: *LVA*, 1987–1–13346, p. 6.

⁶⁶ In 1997, Latvian authorities researched the fate of deportation victims and received the answer that only her last place of arrest is known. Deportation file of Marta Busz [in Russian]. *LVA*, 1987–1–13346, p. 31.

once again at the gates of Riga, she finally made the decision to flee. In 1943, her daughter Lilia had married a German soldier, Heinz Ohlmann, stationed in Riga. His family offered Margarete von Pusirewsky and her daughters a place of refuge.⁶⁷ On 11 July 1944, at the age of 73 and with the Soviet army approaching Riga, she reluctantly packed her bags:

When packing, I took into account not only the limited capacity of our suitcases and arms, but also the possibility of returning soon, and left some things there that I later had to regret. [...] I would have liked to visit my mother's grave as well as that of my husband and my son; however, time and strength were no longer sufficient for this; I hoped to be able to return in a few weeks.⁶⁸

The recollections in her diary make it obvious that this was not a conscious decision to emigrate, rather she felt forced to leave at that moment. Yet, she thought that she would be able to return soon, once again underlining her reluctance of leaving her *Heimat* forever. She found refuge at her daughter Lilia's in-laws, who had a farmstead in Hasselhof at the Rhine near Duisburg. While she was safe there and had enough to eat, she was also homesick and missed her family and Baltic friends:

There was an agonizing restlessness in me that I could not communicate to anyone. No one here on the Rhine, who did not know the history of the Baltic States, would have understood.

⁶⁷ Her son Kolja, his wife and their infant daughter initially stayed behind in Riga. They fled to Berlin in October 1944. The fate of her grandson Wolja is unknown.

⁶⁸ German original: "Beim Packen nahm ich nicht nur auf die beschränkten Fassungsvermögen unserer Koffer und Arme Rücksicht, sondern auch auf die Möglichkeit einer baldigen Rückkehr, und ließ so manches dort, was ich später empfindlich bedauern mußte. [...] Ich hätte gern noch das Grab meiner Mutter sowie das meines Mannes und meines Sohnes aufgesucht; Zeit und Kraft reichten aber dazu nicht mehr aus; ich hoffte ja, in ein paar Wochen wieder zurückkehren zu können." Pusirewsky 1984, 283.

Lilia, however, who was with her husband in Lüdenscheid, had sensed it from my letters and came to Hasselhof for two days. After that, I became restless and lonely all over again, and the appearance of the letter carrier was the culmination of the day.⁶⁹

Like many who are forced to flee their homeland or spend an extended time far away from home in exile, Margarete von Pusirewsky felt a loneliness that could only temporarily be healed by having contact with those who shared her experiences. She continued to live in her Baltic world, which was held up by personal contacts and written communication. This last excerpt from her memoirs also shows that the connection to other Baltic Germans was stronger than any connection she might have had with Germans in the Rhineland. German language and culture alone was not enough commonality to make her feel at home. The Baltic lands and Riga were her home, she had a spatial sense of belonging as well as a sense of community that included other Baltic Germans but not all German people. She was more a “Balt” than a German. Her identity was not first and foremost that of an ethnic German, as Nazi Germany’s propaganda had tried to make all Baltic Germans believe. Margarete von Pusirewsky died in 1948 in her place of exile and refuge, a village near Duisburg. She was not able to return to Riga again to fulfil her greatest wish and visit her mother’s, her husband’s, and her son’s graves and say her good-byes.

⁶⁹ German original: “Eine quälende Unruhe war in mir, die ich niemanden mitteilen konnte und die hier am Rhein auch niemand, der die Geschichte des Baltikums nicht kannte, begriffen hätte. Lilia aber, die bei ihrem Mann in Lüdenscheid war, hatte sie aus meinen Briefen herausgeföhlt und kam für zwei Tage nach Hasselhof. Danach wurde es von neuem unruhig in mir und einsam, und das Erscheinen der Briefträgerin bildete den Kulminationspunkt des Tages.” Ibid., 288.

CONCLUSION

Margarete von Pusirewsky had several experiences in her life where external circumstances caused her to leave her *Heimat* and which can be interpreted as forms of exile. Several times, she deliberately chose to return to Riga, showing her deep connection with her hometown. Even in 1944, she believed that her exile to Germany would be short-lived. Although she had the privilege to find refuge with her daughter's in-laws at a farmstead near Duisburg, she only hesitantly moved there. She waited until Soviet troops were near Riga, and with the memory of her sister's deportation on 14 June 1941 on her mind, she knew that staying in Riga would not be safe. Thus, external circumstances made her leave her home town and move to Germany. Her memoirs and recollections about her Baltic homeland written in West Germany between 1944 and 1948 demonstrate that she was forcefully uprooted and fled Latvia only very reluctantly.

Taking into account the experiences of other family members, the Goegginger family maps Europe's history of population transfers in the 19th and 20th centuries almost in its entirety. It started with the grandfather Heinrich Goegginger senior, who freely moved from Vienna to Riga for economic reasons, believing – like many did at the time – that the Russian Empire was a land of opportunities.⁷⁰ The stories of other family members in the first half of the 20th century include exile, (forced) resettlement, deportation, flight and expulsion. Family histories like this one allow us to get a sense of what these experiences meant for individuals, how they coped with them and how they continued to feel connected to their homeland, even after they had been uprooted and forced to leave their home. After her flight and resettlement from Latvia to

⁷⁰ Dahlmann, Scheide 1998.

West Germany, Margarete von Pusirewsky yearned to get letters from her Baltic friends and to talk to the people who shared the loss of her Baltic homeland. Her network with other Baltic Germans, which she kept and cherished after moving to the Rhineland, demonstrated her strong connection to the Baltic lands. Meanwhile, her German ethnicity and the German language and culture she shared with the people in the Rhineland seemed less important.

Similarly, the Goegginger branch of the family, who emigrated to Canada after the Second World War, upheld long-lasting connections with other Baltic Germans. As the journal *Blaue Briefe* (Blue Letters) attests, the Goegginger family was very active in the Baltic German Canadian community. The journal included reports about Baltic Germans such as their Baltic German dialect as well as Baltic German recipes. More importantly, it allowed Baltic Germans in Canada to share their Baltic history with the next generation, even if they did not speak German anymore.⁷¹ This kept (and still keeps) the memory of the now historic Baltic German community alive.

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⁷¹ Sturm, Ellen (2015). Weihnachten vor 100 Jahren / Christmas 100 years ago. Schloss Zarnikau bei Riga / Zarnikau Castle near Riga. *Blaue Briefe*, 2, pp. 38–40.

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TRIMDA, BĒGŠANA UN DZIMTENES ZAUDĒŠANA:
MARGARETA FON PUŠIREVSKA — VĀCBALTĪETES DZĪVE
STARP KARU UN PĀRVIETOŠANU

Katja Vēcele

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Zinātniskās intereses: ekonomikas vēsture, telpas vēsture, digitālā vēsture, atmiņu politika, Baltijas vēsture.

Kad 1939. gada rudenī vairums vācbaltiešu pameta Latviju, Margareta fon Puširevska (1872–1948) palika savā dzimtajā pilsētā Rīgā. Ģimene, kurā bez Margaretas bija viņas māte Ludmila Gēgingere un māsa Marta Buša, kā arī Margaretas divas meitas un dēls, izlēma nepiedalīties vāciešu masveida izceļošanā. Savas dzīves laikā Margareta fon Puširevska jau bija vairākkārt brīvprātīgi devusies trimdā no dzimtās pilsētas Rīgas – vispirms kā kara ārsta, kurš tika norikots darbā dažādās Krievijas impērijas vietās, sieva, un pēc tam Pirmā pasaules kara laikā, kad viņa kopā ar ģimeni bija bēgusi uz Helsinkiem. Ikreiz pēc ilgstošas uzturēšanās citās Krievijas impērijas daļās viņa atgriezās Rīgā. Pat pametot Rīgu pēdējo reizi 1944. gadā, bēgot no tuvojošās Sarkanās armijas, viņa cerēja uz drīzu atgriešanos. Balstoties uz avotiem, galvenais no kuriem ir Margaretas fon Puširevskas memuāri, raksts

aplūko sasaisti ar dzimto pilsētu, trimdas pieredzi, ilgošanos “būt atkal mājās” trimdas laikā un pēc tās, kā arī bēgšanas, (piespiedu) pārvietošanas un izsūtīšanas kontekstā.

Atslēgas vārdi: vācbaltieši, trimda, sieviešu pieredze, dzimtene, pārvietošana, Rīga, telpiskā piederība.

Kopsavilkums

Izmantojot vācbaltietes Margaretas fon Puširevskas (dzim. Gēginere) atmiņas, rakstā tiek izvērtēta viņas trimdas un dzimtenes zaudējuma pieredze, kā arī telpiskās un etniskās piederības jautājumi. Dzīves laikā Margaretai fon Puširevscai nācās vairākas reizes pamest savu dzimto pilsētu Rīgu. Viņas un viņas ģimenes dzīvi dziļi ietekmēja abi pasaules kari, kā arī etniskā politika, kas līdz ar 1939. gadā noslēgto Hitlera–Staļina paktu noveda pie Austrumeiropas sadalīšanas Ādolfa Hitlera un Josifa Staļina interešu sfērās. Šī politika tiek interpretēta kā etniskās tīrīšanas forma un tiek aplūkota tās ietekme uz vācbaltiešu kopienу, balstoties personīgās atmiņās par attiecīgajiem notikumiem un apskatot iemeslus, kāpēc daži vācbaltieši neatsaucās aicinājumam pārcelties uz nacistisko Vāciju.

Rakstā tiek izsekots Margaretas fon Puširevskas dzīves gājumam atbilstoši tā atspoguļojumam viņas memuāros, tostarp viņas dzīvei krievu kara ārsta sievas statusā pirms Pirmā pasaules kara. Viņas Baltijas identitāte tiek pretnostatīta viņas vīra kā dažādās Krievijas impērijas daļās strādājoša kara ārsta impērijas mēroga biogrāfijai. Margareta fon Puširevska pirmām kārtām bija sieva un četru bērnu māte. Taču viņa bija arī uzņēmēja, jo mantoja trešo daļu no savai mātei piederošās “L. W. Goegginger” rūpnīcas, kas pirms Pirmā pasaules kara bija lielākā konservu rūpnīca Rīgā. Pateicoties tam, pirms Pirmā pasaules kara Margareta fon Puširevska piederēja pie Rīgas vācbaltiešu elites. Taču viņas dzīves gājumu izceļ, no vienas puses, laulība ar krievu kara virsnieku un, no otras, – spēcīgā piederības sajūta konkrētai vietai, kas viņu piesaistīja dzimtajai pilsētai Rīgai. Atšķirībā no vairuma vācbaltiešu, kuri 1939. gada rudenī sekoja nacistiskās valdības aicinājumam pārcelties uz vācu okupēto Poliju, Margareta fon Puširevska kopā ar māti, māsu un trim dzīvajos palikušajiem bērniem izvēlējās neatstāt Rīgu.

Rakstā aplūkotās Margaretas fon Puširevskas izjūtas, viņai atrodoties trimdā, kā arī iemesli, kāpēc viņa 1939. gadā izvēlējās palikt Rīgā, nevis sekot aicinājumam pārcelties. Viņas izteiktā telpiskās piederības sajūta un

personiskā sasaiste ar dzimto pilsētu Rīgu kļūst acīmredzama jau memuāru fragmentos, kuri apraksta viņas kā kara ārsta sievas dzīvi Kaukāzā (Batumi) un Krievijas–Vācijas pierobežā (Kretingenē/Kretingā). Margaretas fon Puširevskas ilgas pēc mājām ļoti skaidri atklājas arī viņas atmiņās par Pirmā pasaules kara laikā Helsinkos pavadītajiem trim trimdas gadiem. 1915. gadā tuvojoties Vācijas karaspēkam un frontes linijai pieņākot pašā Rīgas pievārtē, ģimene savās mājās vairs nejutās droši. Margaretas fon Puširevskas atmiņas par Rīgu vācu okupācijas varā, ko viņa uz īsu brīdi pieredzēja 1918. gadā, kā arī viņas skatījums uz Latvijas neatkarības pasludināšanu 1918. gada 18. novembrī sniedz interesantu personisku redzējumu, parādot, ka bija arī tādi vācbaltieši, kuri kritiski raudzījās uz vācu okupāciju un atbalstīja Latvijas neatkarību.

Īpaši vērtīgas ir Margaretas fon Puširevskas atmiņas par vācbaltiešu pārceļošanas posmu 1939. gadā, jo tās sniedz ieskatu personiskajās izjūtās un iemeslos, kāpēc viņa (kopā ar māti un māsu) izlēma noraidīt nacistiskās Vācijas valdības piedāvājumu pārcelties. Visas trīs sievietes juta spēcīgu sasaisti ar savu Baltijas *Heimat* (dzimteni). Viņu lēmums jāizvērtē arī Hitlera–Stalīna pakta, Otrā pasaules kara sākuma un Padomju Savienības–Latvijas savstarpējās palīdzības pakta kontekstā. Margaretas fon Puširevskas memuāros minēti arī vēl ļoti konkrēti personiski iemesli, kāpēc viņa, viņas māsa Marta Buša un māte Ludmila Gēgingere palika Rīgā. Ludmilai Gēgingerei jau bija pāri 90, un viņa jutās pārāk veca, lai pamestu mājas. Marta Buša bija precējusies ar poli, viņai bija ciešas saites ar Rīgas poļu kopienu, un viņa nevēlējās pārcelties uz vācu okupēto Poliju. Margaretai fon Puširevscai bija karadienestam derīgs dēls un mazdēls, kuri, visticamāk, tiktu iesaukti Vācijas armijā – vīriešiem, kuri izauga divvalodīgā kosmopolītiskā ģimenē un kuriem bija pa pusei vācbaltiešu, pa pusei krievu saknes, tas bija problemātiski. Margaretas fon Puširevskas ģimene īsti neatbilda tai rasu koncepcijai, ko nacistiskā Vācija izmantoja cilvēku, tostarp vācbaltiešu kopienas, identitātes definēšanai. Kā atkal un atkal rāda viņas memuāri, viņas identitāte nebija vāciska etniskajā ziņā. Tā vietā viņa juta spēcīgu sasaisti ar savu Baltijas dzimteni un citiem vācbaltiešu kopienas locekļiem, ar kuriem viņai bija kopīga pieredze un telpiskās piederības izjūta. Margareta fon Puširevska ne tikai neatsaucās aicinājumam pārcelties 1939. gada rudenī, bet nepārvācās uz Vāciju arī 1941. gadā, kad Latviju (un Igauniju) pameta vairums to vācbaltiešu, kuri 1939. gadā bija izvēlējušies palikt. Tas viņas dzīvēstāstu padara ļoti neparastu. Tikai 1944. gadā, kad padomju karaspēks stāvēja pie Rīgas vārtiem, Margareta fon Puširevska sekoja savu meitu

padomam un secināja, ka palikt nav droši. Tajā brīdī viņas lēmumu, visticamāk, ietekmēja māsas Martas Bušas pieredze – viņa bija kritusi par upuri pirmajai padomju masu deportācijai 1941. gada 17. jūnijā un mirusi cietumā Komi Republikā. Tāpēc 1944. gada jūlijā Margareta fon Puširevska negribīgi pameta dzimto pilsētu, joprojām cerēdama uz iespēju drīz tajā atgriezties. Viņa rada patvērumu znota vecāku lauku mājā ciematā netālu no Disburgas Vācijas rietumos. Taču viņai tā bija tikai kārtējā trimdas pieredze. Margareta fon Puširevska ilgojās pēc savām mājām un komfortabli jutās vienīgi tad, kad radās iespēja komunicēt ar citiem baltiešiem, kuri pazina viņas Baltijas dzimteni un Baltijas reģiona vēsturi.

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