

Displaced Persons from the Baltic States in Northern Germany: The case of Lübeck and Flensburg

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The history of displaced persons (DPs) in Germany has been studied extensively since the 1980s, with the focus on Jewish, Polish and Soviet DPs. However, the unique experiences in Germany of the Baltic DPs – Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians – have received little attention. This paper examines the history of Baltic DPs in Northern Germany, particularly in the cities of Lübeck and Flensburg, using local archival sources and Latvian DP camp newspapers.

Due to its location on the border between the British and Soviet occupation zones, Lübeck became a central hub for refugees. By the end of 1945, the city was home to approximately 11,580 Baltic DPs – a significant portion of the 53,800 Baltic DPs in the British occupation zone. Many Baltic DPs were initially put up in private housing, but were later moved to DP camps. In Flensburg, a smaller but notable Baltic DP population existed, with 1,254 Latvians, 928 Estonians and 784 Lithuanians registered in 1945.

The living conditions in the DP camps varied greatly. Some camps provided adequate shelter, while others were overcrowded and lacked basic sanitation. Over time, authorities attempted to segregate the camps by nationality. Many Baltic DPs engaged in cultural and educational activities, forming their own schools, newspapers and institutions.

Baltic DPs were generally viewed more favourably than other DP groups, such as the Polish or Soviet DPs, due to cultural similarities. However, tensions arose over housing shortages and the forced confiscation of German property for DP accommodations.

The Baltic DPs enjoyed a vibrant cultural scene in Lübeck, including theatre performances, choirs and sporting events. DP newspapers played a crucial role in maintaining national identity and communication.

With the handover of the DP camps to the German administration in 1950, the remaining displaced persons were reclassified as ‘homeless foreigners’. Children were required to attend German schools, and vocational training programmes were set up to facilitate employment. The last DP camp in Schleswig-Holstein closed in 1966, marking the end of an era.

Keywords: Displaced persons, Northern Germany, housing, culture, organisations, newspapers, Baltic-German relations.

Historians have been studying the history of displaced persons (DPs) for 40 years. This is therefore considered to be a well-researched topic. Wolfgang Jacobmeyer's ground-breaking study entitled 'Vom Zwangsarbeiter zum Heimatlosen Ausländer. Die Displaced Persons in Westdeutschland 1945–1951' was published as far back as 1985¹. Numerous other works on forced labourers and displaced persons in post-war Germany followed. In the 1990s and early 2000s, an increasing number of publications with a focus on local and regional history appeared in Germany, such as Stefan Schröder's paper on the camps in Greven and Münster, which were important for displaced persons from the Baltic States, or Hannes Harding's study on the DPs in Schleswig-Holstein².

However, in most German local history publications on the DP problem, as in Jacobmeyer's study, the Baltic States only play a marginal role, with considerably more focus on the history of Jewish, Polish or Soviet DPs. Since Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians only accounted for a small group of displaced persons in Allied-occupied Germany, this imbalance is understandable, but it does not do justice to the special situation of the Baltic DPs. The fact that the vast majority of Baltic DPs came to the Western occupation zones not as forced labourers, but as refugees, is often only briefly presented in German works with a local or regional historical perspective. Since local history works primarily analyse sources from the local German authorities or the Allied Military Government, this finding is not surprising. In the Allied and German sources at the local administrative level, displaced persons often appear as an undifferentiated problem group, and thus only as an object of administrative action. The Lithuanian exile Vincas Bartusevičius was one of the first historians in Germany to examine the situation of the Lithuanian DP, followed by Tilmann Tegeler's 2005 article on Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian DPs³. The first conference in Germany on the history of the Baltic DPs took place in 2006, and the results of the conference were published in 2007⁴.

In this article, I focus on displaced persons from Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, relying primarily on sources from the city of Lübeck, which is situated in the southeast of the federal state of Schleswig-Holstein, right on the border with the federal state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. In 1945, roughly half of the Baltic DPs in the British occupation zone

¹ Wolfgang Jacobmeyer, *Vom Zwangsarbeiter zum Heimatlosen Ausländer. Die Displaced Persons in Westdeutschland 1945–1951*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1985.

² Stefan Schröder, *Displaced Persons im Landkreis und in der Stadt Münster 1945–1951*, Münster: Aschendorff, 2005; Hannes Harding, *Displaced Persons (DPs) in Schleswig-Holstein 1945–1953*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1997.

³ Vincas Bartusevičius, *Die Litauer in Deutschland 1944–1950, Deutschland und Litauen. Bestandsaufnahmen und Aufgaben der historischen Forschung*, compiled by Norbert Angermann and Joachim Tauber, Lüneburg: Nordost-deutsches Kulturwerk, 1995, pp. 137–174; Vincas Bartusevičius, *Lietuviai DP stovyklose Vokietijoje 1945–1951*, Vilnius: Versus aureus, 2012; Tilmann Tegeler, *Esten, Letten und Litauer in der Britischen Besatzungszone Deutschlands. Aus Akten des Foreign Office, Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas. Neue Folge* 53 (2005), pp. 42–57.

⁴ *Displaced Persons. Flüchtlinge aus den baltischen Staaten in Deutschland*, compiled by Christian and Marianne Pletzing, München: Martin Meidenbauer, 2007.

lived in Schleswig-Holstein⁵. Lübeck was one of the centres for displaced persons from the Baltic States in Northern Germany. No other city in the British VIII Corps District had as many Baltic refugees. In addition, I consulted source material from the city of Flensburg, which is also located in the federal state of Schleswig-Holstein, but in the far north, near the border with Denmark. The local and regional perspective on the history of displaced persons in these Northern German cities is also characterised by the views of the Allied and German administrations and the sources they left behind. However, the source base has been expanded with select refugee camp newspapers and testimonies from the DPs themselves. This allows for at least a basic understanding of the potential that a multifaceted aggregation of local history may have in terms of DP research, seeing that it also takes into account the views of the displaced persons themselves.

Displaced Persons in Lübeck and Flensburg

Compared to other major German cities, Lübeck was left relatively intact in 1945. However, the city was located on the border between the British and Soviet occupation zones, which made it something of a crossroads for various refugee movements. After the war, Lübeck became the city in Northwest Germany that had to accept the largest number of refugees and exiles, as well as many DPs. As late as March 1950, the *Lübecker Nachrichten* wrote: 'Lübeck, the refugee city on the border, is also the city of displaced persons'⁶. Before World War II, Lübeck had a population of around 155,000; by 31 December 1945, this number had grown to 250,000. In addition to 136,000 local residents, there were 80,000 refugees and 34,000 'foreigners' who effected a population increase of 61% compared to the pre-war level⁷. There were approximately 10,000 Latvians, Estonians and Lithuanians in Lübeck in May 1945⁸. By December 1945, this number had increased to 11,580⁹. Comparing the Lübeck figures with the total number of Baltic DPs in the British occupation zone (34,700 in July 1945 and 53,800 in October of the same year¹⁰) reveals the relatively large number of Baltic DPs in the Hanseatic city. While the number of displaced persons from other countries declined as a result of repatriation, the number of DPs from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania rose continuously in 1945–1946. This increase was partly due to the fact that it took time for many displaced persons from the Baltic States to settle and be re-

⁵ Harding, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

⁶ *Lübecker Nachrichten* 8-Mar-1950. *Lübeckische Geschichte*, compiled by Antjekathrin Graßmann, Lübeck: Schmidt-Römhild, 1988, p. 737; Siegfried Schier, *Die Aufnahme und Eingliederung von Flüchtlingen und Vertriebenen in der Hansestadt Lübeck*, Lübeck: Schmidt-Römhild, 1982; Karen Meyer-Rebentisch, *In Lübeck angekommen. Erfahrungen von Flüchtlingen und Heimatvertriebenen*. Lübeck: Schmidt-Römhild, 2008.

⁷ *Lübecker Notzeit in Zahlen. 1945–1948*. Compiled by Statistisches Amt der Hansestadt Lübeck, Lübeck without date, p. 23.

⁸ *Lübeckische Geschichte*, *op. cit.*, p. 739.

⁹ Harding, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

¹⁰ Jacobmeyer, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

gistered in DP camps. Starting in the beginning of 1946, Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian members of the German military were released from captivity and declared displaced persons. However, in September 1946, there were still 2,200 Baltic members of the German armed forces being held at the Großenbrode prisoner-of-war camp near Fehmarn in Ostholstein. These prisoners-of-war were also deemed displaced persons¹¹.

A compilation of all the DP camps in Ostholstein from the end of September 1946 provides a closer look at the situation in Lübeck. At that time, there were 2,757 displaced persons from the Baltic States living in the Lübeck Artillery Barracks – markedly over the maximum capacity of 2,300 people. The Luther and Marienschule camps, the Riga DP camp in Kleiststraße, the camp in Herrenwyk, and the Am Stau DP camp in the suburbs of Lübeck were almost exclusively inhabited by Latvians. Meanwhile, the Arnimsruh Barracks housed 215 people, almost all of whom were Estonian, and there were 125 Lithuanians living in the Lithuanian old people's home in Moltkestraße. A significant proportion of the 2,246 people staying in the Meesen Barracks were also from the Baltic States. These figures indicate that there were between 5,600 and 7,800 Baltic DPs in Lübeck in the autumn of 1946¹². The total number of displaced persons in Lübeck at the end of 1946 was 12,138. Since nearly all of the other DP groups had already been repatriated by that time, the remaining DPs in Lübeck were almost exclusively Poles, Latvians, Estonians and Lithuanians¹³.

A later survey of the population at the Lübeck DP camps on 1 November 1949 shows that after three years, the process of concentrating displaced persons in several large camps was already well advanced. The Meesen Barracks housed 1,297 Baltic DPs (mainly Latvians), and the Churchill Barracks only housed Estonians (with just one exception). Another 1,261 people from Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia were put up in the Artillery Barracks. While other DP groups were predominately made up of men, most of whom were liberated forced labourers, the DPs from the Baltic States were typically women. Of the Baltic DPs in Lübeck in 1949, there were 1,287 women and 825 children under the age of 18, and just 999 men¹⁴.

In March 1950 – just a few months before the DP camps were handed over to the German administration – there were 5,000 DPs living in Lübeck, 3,250 of whom were from the Baltic States. In the period that followed, the number of DPs dropped dramatically. In

¹¹ Harding, *op. cit.*, p. 88; Schröder, *op. cit.*, p. 122; Archiv der Hansestadt Lübeck (hereinafter - AHL) Hauptamt 866. 626 Mil Gov Det to Hansestadt Lübeck, 25-Sep-1946: Amended list of Displaced Persons and P.W.X. Camps under the control of this Detachment.

¹² AHL Hauptamt 866. 626 Mil Gov Det to Hansestadt Lübeck, 25-Sep-1946.

¹³ AHL Wohnungsamt 3. Verwaltungsbericht des Quartieramtes und Amtes für Raumbewirtschaftung vom 1-Apr-1946 bis 31-Mar-1947.

¹⁴ AHL Hauptamt 871. Accomodation Table for Relief Detachment 626 Kreis Group Luebeck on 1 Nov 1949. For 1948, the Latvian camp newspaper *Informācijas Biļetens* gave the ratio of men to women as 100:120. See *Informācijas Biļetens* (Lübeck) 25/12-Aug-1948.

July 1951, the number of DPs in Lübeck was down to 1,664, including 583 Latvians, 178 Lithuanians and 125 Estonians. Nevertheless, in June 1966, there were still 308 people living in four Lübeck camps, all of whom at this point had already had the status of 'homeless foreigners' for several years¹⁵.

Like in Lübeck, the number of inhabitants in Flensburg, which is located close to the German-Danish border, increased dramatically over the course of 1945. In 1944, there were 67,468 people living in Flensburg; by 1945 there were approximately 110,000 people living there – an increase of 63%¹⁶. The large increase in the population was mainly due to the fact that Flensburg was even less affected by bombing raids and wartime destruction than Lübeck, and therefore had a relatively large amount of undamaged living space. In July 1945, there were 7,437 displaced persons from five nations in Flensburg: 3,811 Poles, 1,254 Latvians, 928 Estonians, 784 Lithuanians and 660 Russians. German statistics indicate that 16 months later, in November 1946, the number of DPs in Flensburg totalled 5,689, including 1,803 Latvians, 741 Estonians and 618 Lithuanians¹⁷.

Living conditions

In the first few months after World War II, many of the displaced persons in Lübeck lived in private housing. Some of these 'free living DPs' had been assigned to the 1,500 flats that had been confiscated by the Allies in Lübeck in 1945 and made available for displaced persons¹⁸. However, many Baltic DPs lived together with Germans in the same flat – one such person was former Latvian Army Colonel Aleksandrs Plensners, who lived in the old town of Lübeck with a total of 20 people, including his family¹⁹. It was not until the summer of 1946 that the British ordered the relocation of all 'free living DPs' from private housing to closed camps. Those who did not comply with the order risked losing their DP status²⁰. However, Lübeck locals liked renting their flats to DPs, as they were often able to pay more than German tenants. This led to the Military Government's 626th Relief Detachment, which was stationed in Lübeck, complaining in September 1946 that many DPs – from

¹⁵ AHL Hauptamt 871. Hansestadt Lübeck to Sozialministerium Schleswig-Holstein, 1-Mar-1950 (1950 data); Lübecker Nachrichten 28-Jul-1951 (1951 data); AHL Hauptamt 873. Minister für Arbeit, Soziales und Vertriebene Schleswig-Holstein an Bürgermeister der Hansestadt Lübeck, 15-Aug-1966 (1966 data).

¹⁶ *Flensburg. Geschichte einer Grenzstadt*. Compiled by Gesellschaft für Flensburger Stadtgeschichte. Flensburg: Gesellschaft für Flensburger Stadtgeschichte, 1966, p. 453.

¹⁷ Dieter Pust, *Flensburg am Kriegsende 1945. Aus dem Tagebuch von Wilhelm Clausen und zeitgenössischen Dokumenten*. Flensburg: Gesellschaft für Flensburger Stadtgeschichte, 1995, p. 77; Stephan Linck: *Displaced Persons und Kriminalitätsbekämpfung*, Mai 45. Kriegsende in Flensburg. Compiled by Gerhard Paul and Broder Schwensen. Flensburg: Gesellschaft für Flensburger Stadtgeschichte, 2015, pp. 139–140.

¹⁸ AHL Wohnungsamt 3. Verwaltungsbericht des Quartieramtes und Amtes für Raumbewirtschaftung von Mai 1945 bis 31-Mar-1946.

¹⁹ AHL Hauptamt 888, Privat-Tanz-Schule Stolze, 29-Oct-1945.

²⁰ AHL Hauptamt 889, Aktenvermerk vom 18-Jun-1946.

the Baltic States in particular – were only eating their main meals at the camps, but were otherwise still living in private flats. Since it was so difficult to control, Lübeck residents were prohibited from continuing to take in DPs as tenants or subtenants²¹.

On 19 May 1945, there were 27 camps for displaced persons in Lübeck. As in other German cities, the premises used for these camps ranged everywhere from former forced labour camps to barracks and abandoned inns or schools²². In the summer of 1945, living conditions in the 10 Flensburg DP camps varied greatly. According to a report by a doctor from the Berlin Charité hospital: 'The Trollsee camp, which comprises 1100 people of various nationalities, is a well-built barrack complex. The barracks are airy and dry.' In contrast, the conditions at the Timm-Kröger-Schule DP camp, where many Baltic DPs were put up, were simply catastrophic: the people 'lay crowded together on the floor in the individual classrooms, some on straw mattresses, others on scattered straw, some even on the bare floor. On each floor, where there are around 150 people, there is only one washbasin'²³. The camp population was initially mixed, but the British gradually began separating the DPs by nationality. In September 1946, most of the Lübeck DP camps were in good or acceptable condition. Only in the Luther and Marienschule camps, which housed Latvians, were the living conditions poor²⁴. When Latvian DPs were moved from private quarters to closed camps, the Riga DP camp newspaper wrote about the Am Stau DP camp, reporting that it consisted of 11 wooden barracks with eight rooms each, and seven or eight people living in each room. In each of the barracks, there were two smaller rooms reserved for the elderly and the sick. The camp had an event hall that doubled as a cinema, a kindergarten, classrooms, and a kitchen that was used for the UNRRA's 'multi-ethnic' culinary school. Sewing courses were also offered for women²⁵. At the Antwerp camp in Flensburg, where many Baltic displaced persons (mainly Latvians) lived from May 1945 to 1949, there were 22 barracks with up to 23 rooms. This camp had a total of 6,686 square metres of living space. However, in May 1946, each camp resident only had four square metres at their disposal. The open spaces between the barracks were used as allotment gardens for self-sufficiency²⁶.

Displaced persons living in private housing was particularly common in 1945–1946. This was the case for approximately 26% of the 7,400 DPs in Flensburg in September 1945. These

²¹ AHL Hauptamt 866, 626 Mil Gov Det to PWDP Branch HQ Mil Gov Schleswig-Holstein Region, 13-Sep-1946.

²² AHL Hauptamt 1354, Bericht über die am 19.5.45 stattgefundene Besichtigung der [...] Läger.

²³ Stadtarchiv Flensburg (hereinafter – StA FL) II C Bürgermeister, Stadtpräsident, Oberbürgermeister Flensburg to Military Government Germany Flensburg, 28-May-1945; *Dienos be tēvynēs: Flensburgo lietuvīų metraštis*, compiled by A. Vaitkus, Flensburg, 1946, p. 192.

²⁴ AHL Hauptamt 866, Amended list of Displaced Persons and P.W.X. Camps under the control of this Detachment, 25-Sep-1946.

²⁵ Nometnes „Rīga“ Ziņas. Latvian DP Camp „Riga“ Newssheet, Lübeck 38/15-Jul-1946.

²⁶ StA FL IX F 00874.

were mainly Baltic DPs, as the Polish and Soviet DPs in Flensburg all lived in camps²⁷. The co-existence of Germans and displaced persons from the Baltic States was not always without tension. The picture conveyed by archival sources is, of course, distorted by the fact that the administrative files mainly recorded conflicts rather than peaceful everyday life. Numerous sources suggest that for Germans, the DPs from Central and Eastern Europe served as a target for the nationalist and racist stereotypes that were particularly widespread during the National Socialist era. However, compared to other DP groups, such as the Poles or the Jews, the Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians were viewed in a more positive light by their German neighbours²⁸. The latent or even overt tension between the Germans and the DPs was by no means limited to the first months after the war. In Lübeck, the Lithuanian DPs living in the Artillery Barracks were still complaining about the Germans being hostile in 1947²⁹.

Conflicts between the Baltic DPs and the citizens of Lübeck in 1945–1946 were often a consequence of them living too closely together in a flat. For example, a woman from Lübeck filed a complaint in February 1946 against an Estonian DP named Aleksandar Raag. Through a lawyer, Mrs Budgenhagen informed the Lübeck City Housing Office that Mr Raag, whom she had taken into her flat in the summer of 1945, was overstaying his welcome – she had only offered him a room for a few weeks. According to Mrs Budgenhagen, the conflict with the tenant had escalated after the Estonian DP engaged in a few bouts of drinking. It even involved violence. In light of this, Mrs Budgenhagen asked the Lübeck City Housing Office to move Mr Raag to a DP camp³⁰.

There were also tensions over the confiscation of homes by the British military authorities. German homeowners in Flensburg were usually given one to two days to evacuate their homes, but in some cases they were only given a few hours³¹. In October 1945, the Lithuanian Committee in Lübeck was located in the rooms of Café Holstentor on the Untertrave. In addition to the committee, the three rooms also housed the Lithuanian Red Cross office, the Lithuanian Scouts staff, and the editorial office and administration of the Lithuanian newspaper. The German landlord did not want to extend the lease, but had to follow the instructions of the occupation authorities, as there were no other premises available for Lithuanian organisations³². In Flensburg, the kitchen of the Deutsches Haus event centre, which was only completed in 1930, became the UNRRA D. P. Kitchen³³. Back in June 1945, the

²⁷ StA FL II C, Meldung Dr. Randel, 26-Jul-1945, Meldung Bürgermeister Christiansen, 21-Aug-1945.

²⁸ Stefan Schröder, Nachbarschaft und Konflikt. Die DPs und die Deutschen, Pletzing/Pletzing, *op. cit.*, pp. 63–83.

²⁹ Ziņas. Latvian Newsheet in Artillery Barracks. Lübeck 17/6- Mar-1947.

³⁰ AHL Hauptamt 862, RA Dr. jur. Wolfgang Hollensteiner to Quartieramt der Hansestadt Lübeck im Auftrage der Frau Budgenhagen zu Lübeck, Moltkestr. 19 I, 19-Feb-1946.

³¹ StA FL II C Bürgermeister, Stadtpräsident, Owner of the house Stuhlsallee 35 to Oberbürgermeister Flensburg, 20-May-1945.

³² AHL Hauptamt 866, Lithuanian Committee Lübeck to 626 Mil. Gov. Det., 25-Oct-1945.

³³ StA FL VIII C 144, UNRRA D. P. Kitchen Flensburg to Stadtverwaltung Flensburg, Abt. Ausländerlager, 9-Apr-1946.



Fig. 1. The Board of the Lithuanian Committee and the Lithuanian Red Cross in Flensburg. Source: *Dienos be tėvynės: Flensburgo lietuvių metraštis*, compiled by A. Vaitkus, Flensburg, 1946, p. 208

British confiscated the 16th century building that was home to the prestigious Lübeck Schiffergesellschaft restaurant and turned it into the Lithuanian DP Restaurant. The German tenant of the Lübeck restaurant criticised the Lithuanians for hiring their own kitchen staff, leaving the German employees without a job. In addition, all proposals to have Germans run the restaurant and serve German refugees as well as Lithuanian DPs were rejected by the British on the grounds that 'Germans were not allowed to be together with Lithuanians'³⁴. In February 1946, the military administration confiscated even more rooms in the Schiffergesellschaft building so that all of the Lithuanian organisations in Lübeck could be in one place. When the tenant continued to complain, the British responded that the restaurant was 'maintained well by the Lithuanians'³⁵. Lithuanians used the Schiffergesellschaft until June 1946, when all DPs were moved from private premises in the city centre to a closed camp.

Crime

In 1945, crime in Lübeck began to increase dramatically. The number of offences rose to 8,700 in the second half of 1945 and then to a whopping 15,400 in 1946 before dropping to 11,500 in 1947 and 8,500 in 1948. The drastic increase in registered offences in the first months after the war was mainly due to theft. However, the number of murders from the

³⁴ AHL Hauptamt 889, Wirtschaftsgruppe Gaststätten- und Beherbergungsgewerbe, Geschäftsstelle Lübeck, Geschäftsführer Hasselbrink, 13-Sep-1945.

³⁵ AHL Hauptamt 889, Letter 626 Mil Gov Det, 16-Feb-1946.



Fig. 2. The Latvian newspaper *Informācijas Biļetens*, published in Lübeck, 7 July 1948. *Archive of the Latvian Centre Münster*

second half of 1945 to 1948 was also very high – 105, including 10 police officers who died while trying to catch criminal gangs stealing³⁶.

According to Lübeck residents, these criminal gangs were mainly recruited from displaced persons. According to one report from Lübeck in 1950: 'The blocks of flats where the DPs live in the Artillery Barracks, the Cambrai Barracks and the Lohmühlen Camp are real dens of criminals. The traces of almost all of the burglaries and cattle thefts in the neighbouring districts lead to these DP camps'³⁷. The Lord Mayor of Lübeck had also blamed the DPs for the numerous cases of serious crime in a statement as far back as 1948. Justified or not, the fear of criminal displaced persons was also heightened by the fact that the DPs lived in closed camps that were out of bounds for Germans, including the German police³⁸.

However, it was mainly Polish DPs who were accused, while Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians were rarely mentioned in press reports or in communications from the Lübeck authorities³⁹. The British press officer Arthur Geoffrey Dickens also made his opinion known in June 1945: 'Baltic nationals as a whole play little part in the prevalent disorders among the DPs'⁴⁰. The subjective assessments of citizens and government representatives are only partially confirmed by official crime statistics. In 1949, for example, 3.5% of the offenders identified in Lübeck were foreigners, which was an overrepresentation compared to their

³⁶ Lübecker Notzeit, *op. cit.*, p. 51; AHL Hauptamt 867, Bürgermeister der Hansestadt Lübeck to Ministerpräsident Lüdemann, 5-Jul-1948.

³⁷ AHL Hauptamt 871, Bürgermeister der Hansestadt Lübeck to Sozialministerium Schleswig-Holstein, 1-Mar-1950.

³⁸ *Ziņas*. Latvian Newsheet in Artillery Barracks, Lübeck Nr. 15/1-Mar-1947.

³⁹ AHL Hauptamt 867, Bürgermeister der Hansestadt Lübeck to Ministerpräsident Lüdemann, 5-Jul-1948.

⁴⁰ Arthur Geoffrey Dickens, *Lübeck Diary*, London: Victor Gollancz Ltd. 1947, p. 84.

share of the city's total population (2%). Of the 275 criminal offences committed by foreigners that year, 231 were committed by Poles, 28 by Latvians and three by Lithuanians. Estonians were not mentioned. According to statistics, criminals from the Baltic States mainly committed thefts. However, the Lübeck police confirmed in 1950 that displaced persons did not commit more offences than the German population⁴¹. The differences between the Polish and Baltic displaced persons are due on the one hand to the higher number of Polish DPs, and on the other hand to the different social profile of the two DP groups. The Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians were predominantly women, children, older people and fathers, while the Polish DPs had a high percentage of single young men, most of whom had been doing forced labour in Lübeck for several years before May 1945.

However, there were also voices in Lübeck that warned against demonising displaced persons. One 1948 issue of the *Lübecker Nachrichten*, which had previously reported extensively about criminality in the DP camps, wrote: 'A new injustice would be added to the injustice already committed if the displaced persons were spoken of as criminals'⁴². The Latvian camp newspaper *Informācijas Biļetens* then published a counter-statement on behalf of the Latvians in Lübeck⁴³. At the British military court, one Latvian prosecutor argued that it was in the interest of the Baltic nations themselves to combat these 'wretched phenomena' of criminality among the DPs. Due to their uncertain political situation, Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians were particularly dependent on maintaining a positive image in Western countries⁴⁴.

The fact that the Germans and the Baltic DPs were growing closer is also evidenced by the applications from the DPs for permission to move to Flensburg in late 1949, which included very personal reasons – one applicant's German wife lived there, others said that their daughter had married a German in Flensburg, and yet others said that they had found work there⁴⁵.

Institutions und culture

In 1985, Wolfgang Jacobmeyer painted a pessimistic picture of the people who were left in Germany after the repatriation was completed. According to Jacobmeyer, the inhabitants of the camps were a 'backward social group' whose fate was determined by others and who were dependent on welfare⁴⁶. However, it is at the very least questionable to what

⁴¹ AHL Hauptamt 871, Übersicht über die Lübecker DP-Lager, 25-Jan-1950 and Niederschrift über eine Besprechung zwischen Vertretern des Sozialministeriums, der Polizei Lübeck und der Hansestadt Lübeck, 10-Mar-1950.

⁴² *Lübecker Nachrichten* 8-Jul-1948.

⁴³ *Informācijas Biļetens*, 3/5-Jul-1948.

⁴⁴ Nometnes „Rīga“ Ziņas. 'Latvian DP Camp „Rīga“ Newssheet, Lübeck 60/4-Sep-1946.

⁴⁵ StA FL VIII F 1098 Antrag auf Zuzugsgenehmigung 1946–1950, Maintenance and aks for residential permit in Flensburg, 1949.

⁴⁶ Jacobmeyer, *op. cit.*, p. 247–251.

extent this assessment also applied to the DPs from the Baltic States.

In the case of the Baltic DPs in Lübeck, a high degree of self-organisation can be observed. While other DP groups, such as the Poles or the Belarusians, only had a committee in Lübeck in July 1945 to represent their interests vis-à-vis the British, the Latvians alone had a whole range of organisations – the Latvian Committee, the ‘Justice and Passport Department’, the Latvian Red Cross, as well as a food distribution centre, a dining and recreation room with a care centre, a hospital with a dining room, and accommodations for doctors. In February 1946, the Schiffergesellschaft building that had been confiscated for the Lithuanian DPs housed not only the Lithuanian DP Restaurant, the Lithuanian Committee, the Lithuanian Red Cross and the Lithuanian newspaper, but also the youth movement headquarters and a preschool for Lithuanian children who were not living in the camps⁴⁷.

Lübeck was of supra-regional importance for Latvian emigration immediately after the war, as this is where the Latvian National Committee was based. The National Committee was founded in Potsdam in February 1945 and its first chairman was Waffen-SS Lieutenant General Rūdolfis Bangerskis (1878–1958). The hopes that the National Committee could establish itself as the political representation of the Latvians vis-à-vis the Germans never materialised, as the German occupiers were not prepared to share their power even right before the end of the war. The Latvian National Committee therefore primarily carried out the function of a refugee organisation. In 1948, the Latvian representation in Lübeck was simply referred to as the ‘Latvian Representation in Schleswig-Holstein’⁴⁸. Lithuanians and Estonians also had ‘national committees’ in Lübeck, but these organisations appear to have been no more than local representations from the outset. The Estonian National Committee, which was still active in the Meesenkaserne DP camp in 1956, was described in a statement by the Lübeck Public Order Office as follows: ‘The actual purpose of the committee is to represent and pursue the economic interests of the Estonians now residing in Lübeck. Political aims are only pursued to the extent that the idea of national identity is cultivated and there are hopes and efforts to recover the homeland’⁴⁹.

The Baltic DP organisations also played an important role as intermediaries between the DPs and the British and German authorities. Their task was not only to take care of the DPs from their respective countries, but also to represent their interests. After the surrender of the Wehrmacht, the Lithuanian DPs in Flensburg needed to organise themselves, as the responsibilities of the British occupation authorities were initially unclear and the representatives of the British military and the German civil administration had no knowled-

⁴⁷ AHL Hauptamt 866. Kriegsschädenverwaltung Lübeck, 19-Jul-1945; AHL Hauptamt 889. A.J.R. Munro, Lt. Col., 820 Mil Gov Det to Oberbürgermeister der Hansestadt Lübeck, 7-Feb-1946.

⁴⁸ Ziņas. Latvian Newsheet in Artillery Barracks, Lübeck 145/1-Jan-1948.

⁴⁹ AHL Hauptamt 862, Schreiben Ordnungsamt to Zentralamt, 18-Feb-1956.

ge of their specific situation. The Lithuanian DPs therefore convened a general assembly on 19 May 1945 at the Flensborghus, the local Danish minority's cultural centre. During the assembly, the DPs elected the Lithuanian Committee and the board of the Lithuanian Red Cross⁵⁰. The fact that the committees were also seen by the British as representing the interests of the Baltic DPs was demonstrated in Lübeck in March 1947, when a one-day strike was being planned by the military administration and UNRRA employees. The British military authorities summoned the representatives of the Baltic committees, since many of their employees were Latvians, Estonians and Lithuanians. After being threatened by the British that they would be deprived of UNRRA supplies, the Baltic representatives agreed not to participate in the strike⁵¹.

The creation of their own school system was very important for the Baltic DPs. There were schools for Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians at several of the camps in Lübeck. As early as 1945, a Latvian grammar school was founded in Lübeck, where 21 pupils passed their Abitur in 1947. There is also evidence of a Lithuanian grammar school in Lübeck⁵². Secondary school graduates could apply to the Military Government to study at a German university.⁵³ However, many of the DPs in Lübeck attended the Baltic University, which opened in Hamburg in 1946 and was based in Pinneberg from 1947 to 1949⁵⁴.

The cities of Schleswig-Holstein also had vocational schools. In October 1946, the UNRRA established the DP Navigation and Sea-Engineering School – a maritime school exclusively for Baltic DPs – on the premises of the Flensburg Merchant Marine School. The initiative came from Stasys Kuzminskas, the chairman of the Lithuanian Committee; the head of the school was also Lithuanian. However, lessons were taught according to the Estonian curriculum. Soon, the school began admitting DPs from Poland and Ukraine as well. The first graduating class had 96 graduates, most of whom signed on to British or Greek ships. Almost a third of the graduates of the DP Navigation and Sea-Engineering School emigrated to Great Britain. Classes at the school ended in June 1949, when most of the Baltic DPs had already left Flensburg⁵⁵.

A special phenomenon in Lübeck was the Latvian Hospital, which existed independently of the central DP hospital in the Meesen Barracks. The Latvian Hospital in Lübeck originated from the military hospital of the Latvian Legion. On the initiative of Pauls

⁵⁰ Dienos, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

⁵¹ Ziņas. Latvian Newsheet in Artillery Barracks, Lübeck 19/12-Mar-1947.

⁵² Ziņas. Latvian Newsheet in Artillery Barracks, Lübeck 17/6-Mar-1947. At the Lithuanian grammar school in Lübeck, cf. the memoirs of: Pranas Jurkus, *Lemties Vingiuose. Lietuvių Gimnazija 1945–1948*, Liubekas (Lübeck) Vokietija. Elmhurst, United States, 2007.

⁵³ Schröder, *Displaced Persons*, pp. 277–290.

⁵⁴ Harding, *op. cit.*, p. 159–164; Angelika Eder, „Die Baltische Universität 1946 bis 1949“, *Baltica* 10 (1997), pp. 9–27; Arnolds Grāmatiņš, *Baltijas Universitāte 1946–1949*, Minstere/Münster, 1989.

⁵⁵ Bartusevičius, *op. cit.*, p. 165/166; Harding, *op. cit.*, pp. 168–170.

Reinhardts, a former press officer for the Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs who had been working in Lübeck since May 1945, the military hospital of the Waffen-SS Legion was moved from Schwerin to Lübeck on 20 June 1945 using British vehicles. The UNRRA set up the hospital, which had been renamed the Latvian Hospital, in the vocational school at Parade 2. The members of the hospital staff were granted DP status. In spring 1946, the Latvian Hospital moved to the Red Cross Hospital in Marlistraße, which had been confiscated by the British. There, it operated as the DP hospital for all of Northern Germany until 1949⁵⁶.

The camp newspapers were an important means of communication for the displaced persons. Today, these newspapers are a rich source of information about everyday life in the camp, but some of them are difficult to access and have therefore not yet received sufficient attention from researchers. In Lübeck, almost every larger camp had at least one Latvian camp newspaper.⁵⁷ The official Latvian-language publication of the DPACS (Displaced Persons Assembly Centre Staff) was *Informācijas Biļetens*. Estonian and Lithuanian newspapers were also published in Lübeck. The camp newspapers were printed on typewriters and then duplicated. They usually had four pages – the first page featured news from Lübeck, the second and third pages reported on international politics and its impact on the DPs, and the fourth page contained information about cultural life.

As noted by the British press officer Arthur Geoffrey Dickens, it was a problem for the military authorities that none of the officers in the British military administration in Lübeck spoke Latvian, Lithuanian or Estonian. Censorship of the camp newspapers was therefore practically impossible. The British were faced with a dilemma – the Baltic DPs needed to be familiarised with the orders of the Military Government, but they also needed newspapers in their native languages. However, the Military Government feared that these newspapers could be used for anti-Soviet propaganda⁵⁸.

Sporting events also featured prominently in the camp newspapers. Many DP camps organised their own sports festivals and athletics competitions. One of the sporting highlights of 1946 for the Latvian DPs was the football match between the Hamburg Sports Club and a Latvian national team at Hamburg's Rothenbaum Stadium, which drew in 10,000 spectators. The Latvian players had travelled from Lübeck, Mölln, Segeberg, Itzehoe, Geesthacht, Oldenburg and even Austria. However, just before the start of the match, three players from the Americas zone had to withdraw⁵⁹.

⁵⁶ See the recollections of: Arvēds Alksnis, *Latviešu karavīrs otra pasaules kara laikā*. Dokumentu un atmiņu krājums, Vol. VII, compiled by Vilis Hāznars and Alfrēds Jānis Bērziņš. Minstere/Münster, 1979, pp. 252–267.

⁵⁷ Cf. the overview of Latvian DP newspapers at Ingūna Daukste-Silasproģe, *Latviešu literārā dzīve un latviešu literatūra bēgļu gados Vācijā 1944–1950*, Rīga: Zinātne, 2002.

⁵⁸ Dickens, *op. cit.*, p. 59 f.

⁵⁹ *Ziņas*, Latvian Newsheet in Artillery Barracks, Lübeck 39/17-Jul-1946.



Fig. 3. Programme of the Latvian Song Festival in Lübeck, 1948. *Photo: Marianne Pletzing*

In the post-war period, culture was even more important than sports for DPs and Germans alike. The camp newspapers regularly reported on the numerous cultural events in Lübeck and the surrounding area. One of the cornerstones of Latvian cultural life was the Latvian theatre in Lübeck, which used the Meesen Barracks gymnasium for its performances. A DP variety theatre and various choirs also performed there. The Lübeck Ballet, which was made up of former Riga Opera dancers, was of particularly high quality. There was a DP cinema in the Meesen Barracks and another in the Lübeck city centre. Most of the films shown were German. Professors from the Baltic University in Pinneberg gave lectures at events in the camps⁶⁰. Latvian Culture Week was organised in Lübeck in 1947. The programme included theatre performances, symphony concerts, literary matinees, ballet evenings, performances by various choirs, and exhibitions of fine arts and handicrafts. The following year, Lübeck was the venue for the Latvian Song Festival, which was held to commemorate the first All-Latvian Song Festival 75 years earlier. The festival featured 10 choirs with 400 singers from DP camps in Northern Germany. It was opened with a concert in honour of the composer Jāzeps Vītols, who had died two months earlier in Lübeck.

⁶⁰ *Ziņas*, Latvian Newsheet in Artillery Barracks, Lübeck 162/10-Feb-1948.



Fig. 4. Lithuanian theatre performance in Flensburg. Source: *Dienos be tėvynės: Flensburgo lietuvių metraštis*, compiled by A. Vaitkus, Flensburg, 1946, p. 112.

However, Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian musicians from the Lübeck DP camps performed outside of Northern Germany as well. The Lübeck Latvian string quartet, for example, even played in Great Britain and Sweden in the summer of 1948⁶¹.

Cultural activities also opened up opportunities for meetings between the Baltic DPs and their German neighbours. The German press in Lübeck regularly reported on cultural events organised by the Baltic DPs. These events also took place outside the DP camps that were closed to Germans – for example, a Latvian art exhibition was held in Lübeck Town Hall in 1948. In return, German artists had the opportunity to perform at the cultural events organised by the DPs. For example, at the 2nd Lübeck Latvian Cultural Days in 1948, a German orchestra premièred a symphony composed by Jānis Kalnins⁶².

From Displaced Persons to Homeless Foreigners

On 1 July 1950, the DP camps were handed over to the German administration by the Allies. Displaced persons thus became ‘homeless foreigners’ in the terminology of the Ger-

⁶¹ *Lübecker Nachrichten* 11-Sep-1948.

⁶² *Ziņas*, Latvian newspaper at the Artillery Barracks, Lübeck 162/10-Feb-1948. Jūratė Vyliūtė, *Lietuvių muzikai Vokietijoje, 1944–1949*, Vilnius: Scena, 2005; Jūratė Vyliūtė, *Das Phänomen der „displaced persons“ im Spiegel amerikanischer und litauischer Archivbestände*, Musik-Sammlungen – Speicher interkultureller Prozesse, compiled by Erik Fischer, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2007, pp. 562–575; Ingo Hoddick, *Musiker als Displaced Persons. Vladas Jakubėnas und Jāzeps Vītols in Deutschland*, Pletzing/Pletzing, op. cit., pp. 139–148; Swietłana M. Czerwononaja, *Litewska emigracja i litewska kultura w Niemczech po II wojnie światowej: zmieniające się granice etnicznej*, Toruń: Wydawnictwo UMK, 2008.

man authorities. By this time, the majority of the Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians had already left the Western occupation zones of Germany as part of the 'resettlement' programme. Most of the Baltic DPs emigrated from Germany to the United States, Canada, Australia or Great Britain. Before emigrating, the DPs had to undergo extensive medical examinations at the 'processing centres' run by the International Refugee Organisation (IRO). They also had to answer questions about their cooperation with the Germans during the war. If the examinations revealed signs of tuberculosis or voluntary membership in the Waffen-SS, the IRO usually did not grant permission to emigrate. DPs who were unable or unwilling to emigrate were labelled the 'hard core' by the Allies.

The British authorities tried to assimilate the DPs left in Germany. Therefore, as British government representatives stated in a meeting with representatives of the city of Lübeck, it was necessary to teach the children at the DP camps better German. They were to attend German schools when the camps were transferred to German administration. The British thus did away with schooling in the DPs' mother tongue⁶³. The British representatives explicitly asked the Lübeck authorities to 'make efforts to ensure that the DPs were not kept in the diaspora as a separate section of the population, so to speak, but that these people were assimilated into the Lübeck population as soon as possible'⁶⁴.

1 July 1950 was a major turning point for the children of Baltic and other DPs. Suddenly, they had to attend school taught in a language they barely understood.⁶⁵ The new status of homeless foreigners had ramifications for the adults as well. The IRO's obligation to provide for them also ended in the summer of 1950, and the former DPs now had to feed and care for themselves. For this reason, shops and handicraft businesses were licenced in the camps. By September 1950, 12 businesses had already started operating at the Mesenkaserne camp in Lübeck⁶⁶.

After the camps were transferred to the German administration, the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) also stepped up its efforts to prepare former DPs who were willing and able to emigrate. English lessons were offered, and American students gave lectures on life in the United States⁶⁷. Medical and political examinations were held for potential emigrants at the Lübeck-Blankensee camp by 26 immigration commissions from the various host countries. The acceptance rate in 1951 was just 13%. The 'resettlement' programme in Lübeck was concluded with the closure of the IRO Blankensee transit camp

⁶³ AHL Hauptamt 871, Aktenvermerk zur Sitzung am 12-Apr-1950 betr. Übergabe der DPs in die Zivilverwaltung; Protokoll einer Besprechung über DP-Angelegenheiten, 11-Jul-1950.

⁶⁴ AHL Hauptamt 871, Aktenvermerk betr. Überführung der DP-Läger in die Zivilverwaltung, Besprechung am 22-Mar-1950.

⁶⁵ Irena Stower, *Von Riga nach Lübeck*, in Pletzing/Pletzing, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

⁶⁶ Harding, *op. cit.*, p. 183 f.; Lübecker Freie Presse, 27-Jun-1950.

⁶⁷ Lübecker Freie Presse, 17-Aug-1950.

at the end of 1951. By this time, 15,000 people had passed through the camp, the entrance gate of which bore the inscription 'Gateway to Freedom'⁶⁸.

The Lübeck authorities aimed to clear out the refugee camps quickly. Administrative offices in the city of Lübeck repeatedly reported a need for more space. Representatives of the German refugees and displaced persons repeatedly pointed out to the city that the living conditions in the camps for the homeless foreigners were much better than in the refugee camps for Germans⁶⁹. To mark the first anniversary of the takeover of the DP camps by the German administration, the Hanseatic City of Lübeck organised a tour for press representatives. The subsequent articles in the Lübeck press were consistently positive: 'The joint efforts of the municipal commissioner and the advisory board have succeeded in creating a real community here at the gates of our city. Foreigners and Germans do not live separately, but in the same houses. Their children attend the camp kindergarten, the primary school and the YMCA club rooms or the community events in the cinema together'⁷⁰.

The housing situation for homeless foreigners in Lübeck improved in the 1950s, when numerous new flats were built for the former DPs in the suburbs of the city. Many flats were built by the Neue Heimat housing construction company with funding from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The last kindergartens in the camps for homeless foreigners were closed between 1958 and 1960⁷¹. However, the process of clearing the camps dragged on, and only entered its final phase with World Refugee Year in 1960. In 1963, 29 households of homeless foreigners were still living in a block of the Meesen Barracks in Goebenstraße. The last of the residents left the former Meesenkaserne DP camp in the autumn of 1966, when they were handed the keys to 15 new flats for homeless foreigners⁷². With that, the last camp for former displaced persons in Schleswig-Holstein ceased to exist⁷³.

⁶⁸ *Lübecker Freie Presse*, 5-Dec-1951.

⁶⁹ AHL Hauptamt 894, Schreiben an Landesregierung Schleswig-Holstein, Koordinierungsreferat für Demontage- bzw. Entmilitarisierungsfragen, Kiel, 21-Feb-1950; Schreiben Landessozialminister Damm an den Senat der Hansestadt Lübeck, 10-Jul-1950.

⁷⁰ *Lübecker Freie Presse* am Wochenende, 28-Jul-1951.

⁷¹ *Verwaltungsbericht der Hansestadt Lübeck 1. April 1952 bis 31. März 1960*. Lübeck, 1960, pp. 67–68.

⁷² AHL Hauptamt 873.

⁷³ *Lübecker Nachrichten*, 19-Oct-1966.

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Christianas Pletzingas

Baltijos šalių perkeltieji asmenys Šiaurės Vokietijoje: Liubeko ir Flensburgo atvejais

Santrauka

Vokietijoje perkeltųjų asmenų – dipukų (DP) istorija plačiai tyrinėjama nuo XX a. 8-ojo dešimtmečio, daugiausia dėmesio skiriant žydų, lenkų ir sovietų perkeltiesiems asmenims. Tačiau unikaliai Baltijos šalių – estų, latvių ir lietuvių – patirčiai Vokietijoje skiriama nedaug dėmesio. Šiame straipsnyje, remiantis vietos archyviniais šaltiniais ir Latvijos perkeltųjų asmenų stovyklų laikraščiais, nagrinėjama Baltijos šalių perkeltųjų asmenų istorija Šiaurės Vokietijoje, ypač Liubeko ir Flensburgo miestuose.

Kadangi Liubekas buvo pasienyje tarp britų ir sovietų okupacinių zonų, jis tapo pagrindiniu pabėgėlių centru. Iki 1945 m. pabaigos mieste gyveno apie 11 tūkst. 580 Baltijos šalių pabėgėlių – didelė dalis iš 53 tūkst. 800 Baltijos šalių perkeltųjų asmenų britų okupacinėje zonoje. Daugelis Baltijos šalių DP iš pradžių buvo apgyvendinti privačiuose būstuose, bet vėliau perkelti į DP stovyklas. Flensburge gyveno kiek mažiau, bet gana gausiai Baltijos šalių perkeltųjų asmenų. Čia 1945 m. buvo užregistruoti 1 254 latviai, 928 estai ir 784 lietuviai.

Gyvenimo sąlygos DP stovyklose buvo labai įvairios. Kai kuriose stovyklose buvo tinkama gyvenamoji vieta, o kitos buvo perpildytos ir jose trūko elementarių sanitarinių sąlygų. Ilgainiui valdžios institucijos bandė stovyklas suskirstyti pagal tautybę. Daugelis Baltijos šalių DP įsitraukė į kultūrinę ir švietėjišką veiklą, kūrė savo mokyklas, laikraščius ir institucijas.

Baltijos šalių perkeltieji asmenys dėl kultūrinių panašumų apskritai buvo vertinami palankiau nei kitos DP grupės, pavyzdžiui, lenkų ar sovietų DP. Tačiau kilo įtampa dėl apgyvendinimo vietų trūkumo ir priverstinio vokiečių turto konfiskavimo perkeltųjų asmenų apgyvendinimui.

Baltijos šalių perkeltieji asmenys Liubeke dalyvavo aktyvioje kultūrinėje veikloje, įskaitant teatro spektaklius, chorus ir sporto renginius. DP laikraščiai atliko svarbų vaidmenį palaikant nacionalinį identitetą ir bendravimą.

1950 m. perkeltųjų asmenų stovyklas perdavus Vokietijos administracijai, likusieji perkeltieji asmenys buvo perkvalifikuoti į „benamius užsieniečius“. Vaikai privalėjo lankyti vokiškas mokyklas, o siekiant palengvinti įsidarbinimą buvo sukurtos profesinio mokymo programos. Paskutinė DP stovykla Šlėzvi-ge-Holšteine buvo uždaryta 1966 m., ir taip baigėsi viena epocha.

Raktiniai žodžiai: perkeltieji asmenys, Šiaurės Vokietija, apgyvendinimas, kultūra, organizacijos, laikraščiai, Baltijos šalių ir Vokietijos santykiai.