

Participation of German-Russians in the Anti-Fascist Movement in Occupied Territories of the Soviet Union (1941 - 1944)



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Notes regarding the English translation:

While most German-Russians in North America and elsewhere are descendants of Germans who emigrated from Russia in the late 1800s and early 1900s, many may also have relatives-some distant-among the Germans and their descendants who stayed behind in Russia and who would eventually suffer extensively from Soviet and even Nazi atrocities. This translated article is intended to make those German-Russians' stories available to North American readers who are not able to read German or Russian.

Abstract: *This well-researched historical article deals with an interesting, although possibly controversial topic. In contrast to Ron Vossler's research dealing with how some Germans in Nazi/Romanian-occupied Ukraine collaborated-by force or voluntarily-with the German occupiers' SS-Einsatzgruppen in hunting down Jews in the early 1940s [see Johannes' personal recollection on this topic in his endnote 4], this article, based on research into Russian archives and documents, describes examples of how German-Russians and other German nationals in the Soviet Union actually fought in the resistance movement against the occupiers, whom the Soviets usually simply called The Fascists. The author/historian, before describing in detail the actions of specific German people involved in partisan activities, refers to psychologists and other scientists to make an attempt to explain why people might behave the way they did in those strange circumstances.*

Even during the early days of the "Great Patriotic War," Soviet people began to become involved in the fight against the German occupiers. Partisans and an extensive underground movement spread out across the entire occupied territory; the fight truly became a fight by the entire people, included all ethnicities, and was one of the reasons for the designation of World War II as The Great Patriotic War (although a few historians and authors later call it The German-Soviet War).

Ethnic Germans in the Soviet Union also participated to a considerable degree in partisan actions against the occupying enemy, even though:

1. A large number of them, as a result of decisions issued by the highest organs of power within the USSR, had already been re-settled in [exiled to] eastern parts of the country;
2. Ethnic Germans serving in the regular troops of the Red Army had been transferred to areas behind the front or also banished to remote eastern parts of the country;
3. Under the German occupation the German-Russians enjoyed special status and certain advantages. For instance, in similar situations they received higher pay and special rations of food and consumer goods; they had the right to form special paramilitary self-protection groups and the right to set up their own educational establishments; they were

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granted better living conditions; and certain laws that had been passed for the indigenous people were not applied to them. M.I. Semirya writes that "from their midst came village elders, mayors, interpreters, police and Gestapo agents,"¹ although it should be said that the final part of this statement has never been confirmed in wartime documents.

Despite all of this, not a few German-Russians still chose the path of fighting against the occupiers, sometimes where they lived, and often in the rear flanks of the enemy.

The literature on this topic rather frequently cites an excerpt from K. Simonov's book *Die Lebenden und die Toten* [*The Living and the Dead*] in which the Staff Commander Serpilin of the 111th Division writes as follows about a certain Hoffmann, a German and the chief military scout of that division: "Give me seven thousand Germans like him, and I will make a division of them and lead it into the fight against the Fascists. And I believe I shall not regret it."²

For whatever reasons, specific authors maintain that this citation has traditionally not been used to "depict truthfully the general situation in the Second World War, but for the purpose of rehabilitating the Soviet Germans in order to lift their morale" and "to underscore their double contribution to the Great Patriotic War, on the one hand to cite those Germans who fought in the Red Army, and on the other hand to emphasize their contributions in the rear flanks."³

But why is "truthful depiction of the general situation" lacking here? It turns out that Serpilin was writing about Hoffmann in this manner because he had received an order to remove Hoffmann from the front lines simply because of his ethnicity! From our viewpoint his is not so much an attempt at "whitewashing" the Germans as it is a way to demonstrate the character of a wartime people in general, among them even Germans, who did not remain merely

in the background. Certainly not all of them joined in the fight, particularly those directly in the occupied area, but the same is true for other nationalities. Here one could agree with the researchers I.A. Schachraychuk and H.A. Slobodyanyuk of Dniepropetrovsk, who maintain that a number of the populace welcomed the Fascist troops with joy and with certain hopes, another part was rather hostile, while the majority of the population, from the very outset of the war, maintained a fairly passive wait-and-see attitude toward the occupiers. This ambivalence can be explained by the fact that a significant portion of the population had been subjected to various repressive and suppressive tactics by the Soviet powers or simply did not approve of the nature of the Soviet state and thus, with the takeover and occupation by the Germans these people were merely hoping for change for the better.⁴ Moreover, one should keep in mind that the war forced certain behavior traits on people in the occupied territory, where one lives not just among one's own, but also among enemies, and where one may not necessarily be able to count on people for their support in very difficult times.

Still, we are faced with this important question: why did ethnic Germans enter the fight, a fight against members of their own tribe, even when these might have acted benevolently toward them? This is certainly not a simple question. It is tied up with the very puzzle of human nature and of trying to explain why humans act the way they do. As Larry A. Hyell and Daniel J. Siegler⁵ state: "Of all problems with which men have wrestled throughout history, the most complicated is the puzzle of human nature itself. Research has taken us in so many directions, a multiplicity of concepts have been brought forth, and still, a clear and precise answer continues to escape us."⁶

One of the problems in this context is the question about whether humans live in a highly personal, subjective, experimental world and this world exerts decisive influence on their behavior, or whether their behavior is influenced primarily, if not exclusively, by other, objective factors. One faction of scholars believes that the most

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important significance must be ascribed to the system of subjective norms of a person, and if this system is not taken into account, his/her behavior will always remain incomprehensible. The American psychologist Karl Rogers, for example, thus maintains: "The inner world of the individual apparently exerts a far more significant influence on his behavior than external impetus from the environment."

At the same time, other scholars, namely, the majority of psychologists, assume that the behavior of humans is to a great degree the result of influences stemming from external, objective factors. They assume further that at the same time we, given our freedom of choice, "as anyone else, all integral parts of society, are not capable of forcing the scale of our decisions toward one or the other side. Moreover, by no means do we wish to avoid the influence of those persons who are wise and just and who work toward our benefit."⁷ David Mayers⁸ expands on this thought: "We are all children of our culture and of the reality that surrounds us."⁹ Furthermore, while "individualistic Western cultures" inculcate "an independent, separate I [ego]," the "collectivistic Asiatic cultures" teach "a fickle, dependent [and] socially bound feeling of the I [ego]."¹⁰

One must keep in mind that by the onset of the war the Germans had already been living in a very unusual environment, one that could not remain without influence on their thinking and of how they would view the world around them. At the time of the war's outbreak, there already were Germans whom one could not really designate "German-Russians," but more accurately "Soviet Germans." They were born, grew up, and were educated during the years of Soviet rule, and the schools and societal organizations had thus exercised a certain degree of influence on them. These people tended to identify themselves not only by their ethnicity, but also by citizenship in their state, that is, they considered themselves citizens of the Soviet Union.

Characteristic of such cases is the following excerpt from a documentary description of the Soviet military scout N.A. Geft (likely the original spelling was "Heft"). While meeting with V. Bursi (also a German), who had been dispatched to Odessa as a contact person, Geft had the following conversation with him:

"Tell me, Valeriy, is there a powerful force on its way? You have seen everything with your own eyes!"

"A mighty power indeed! I had never suspected the existence of such reserves and such technology! You understand, Nikolay, you observe all this **and it really fills you with pride to be a Russian!**" [Emphasis is the author's.]

"Here, on the shore of the blue sea we two Germans are sitting on a wood beam and are bragging about our Russian pride!" commented Nikolay, with some humor.

"Well? It's only logical!" replied Valeriy.¹¹

It must be added that, during the time leading up to the onset of war, and despite repressions and difficulties of pre-war times, among representatives of all nationalities and social groupings "a certain impulse had been preserved, one that had originated in and carried over from the October Revolution,"¹² and still enjoying some popularity were such ideals as equality, internationalism, and social justice—all of these being basic socialist ideas.

Still, why did the occupiers not always succeed in altering the world view of the German population? The reason is that they tried—as some say—"to achieve everything, and immediately." However, people who are convinced of something will, in the face of an attack thereof that is not strong enough to evoke a certain reaction, actually be strengthened in their present opinion. Charles Kiesler explains this as follows: "When you attack a person who is convinced of something, but the strength of the attack

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is not adequate, you will provoke an even stronger stance, one that is oriented toward defending the existing opinion. In a certain sense, what happens is an escalation of one's conviction, since the number of actions that agree with one's opinion continue.”¹³

Nevertheless, participation of Soviet Germans in the anti-Fascist movement in the rear flanks of the enemy were indeed shown in very concrete ways. As first examples, we cite the case of two German participants in the anti-Fascist fight who were actually granted the title of “Hero of the Soviet Union,” a very high honor. They were A.V. German and R.A. Klein. [In the following documentation, each German partisan’s name is intentionally highlighted by this translator.]

Alexander Viktorovich German¹⁴

[pronounced with a hard g] was one of the leaders of the partisan movement in the area of Leningrad, Kalinin, and Pskov. He was born in Petrograd in 1915, to the family of a white-collar employee. He finished the seven-year elementary school, after which he worked as a metalworker, then completing technical studies in motor vehicle manufacture. In 1933 he began his service in the Red Army, and in 1937 he completed tank training in Oryol (Orel), serving subsequently in a motorized brigade.

At the onset of the Great Patriotic War, German was in his second year of studies at the Frunze Military Academy in Moscow. From June of 1941 he served in an information unit of the Red Army staff at the northwestern front. During the very first month of action at the front he was awarded the “Order of the Red Banner,” an award that was not frequently given during the early part of the war. In August of 1941 he was promoted to deputy commander of the Second Partisan Special Brigade for Information [a code word for reconnaissance], a unit that was comprised expressly of career soldiers from the Red Army.

By April of 1942, after completing its designated tasks, the brigade was placed

under direct Soviet army command. By June of 1942 German became commander of the Third Leningrad Partisan Brigade, the backbone components of which stemmed from the Second Special Brigade. This brigade operated within the *rayons* [governmental districts] of the Leningrad, Kalinin and Pskov regions. Between June of 1942 and September of 1943 the brigade managed to kill 9,652 enemy soldiers, caused 44 derailments of trains containing enemy personnel and material, detonated 31 railroad bridges, completely disabled 17 enemy garrisons, and destroyed 70 district administrative offices. For his skillful command of these actions, his selfless acts in building the strength of partisan units, and for personal bravery, A.V. German was decorated with the Order of the Patriotic War, First Class. Wherever the brigade was in action, a popular song was often sung, with the following text:

Now, and as he has done in the past,
fighting in our native Pskov
against the Fascist thief,
German is leading us into the struggle.

By now the occupiers had placed a reward valued at 400,000 marks on the head of A.V. German, and for his live capture they additionally promised landed property, two cows, and a horse.

On September 6, 1943 Alexander Viktorovich German was killed during an attempt to break out of an encirclement near the village of Zhitnitsa in the *rayon* of Novorshevsk of the Pskov region. On April 22, 1944 he was posthumously named Hero of the Soviet Union.

Robert Alexandrovich Klein¹⁵ was a participant in the partisan movement in Ukraine. He was born to a farming family in 1913 in the village of Miller in the rural district of Kamyshin in the Saratov province. From 1926 on he resided in Pokrovsk (Engels) in the Saratov region. By 1931 he completed technical training as a mechanic, after which he worked as an auto mechanic in the Machine and Tractor Station (MTS) in Balzer [one of the largest German villages in the Volga region]. By 1932 he began to

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serve in the Red Army. Following two years of military service in the Far East he received orders to attend tank school in Ulyanovsk and completed it in 1937.

On September 12, 1941 he was wounded in fighting near the city of Oster and lay unconscious on the field of battle. Local residents nursed him back to health until the spring of 1942, after which he found work in the former MTS of Pereyaslav, and after a short time, the Nazis, aware that R.A. Klein was German, promoted him to manage the garage of the regional commissariat in Pereyaslav. There he gathered together reliable men and established an underground group. In June, 1943 this unit destroyed the garage, made off with the entire fleet of motor vehicles and transferred them to the partisan cause.

R.A. Klein then was named commander of a reconnaissance company and deputy commander of the First Ukrainian Partisan Division operating in the Sumy and Cherkassk regions. This division provided significant assistance to the Red Army during the crossing of the Dnieper River in the Cherkassy rayon. On January 4, 1944 Captain R.A. Klein, for bravery and heroism, was decorated with the title of Hero of the Soviet Union. He continued to serve in partisan units until the end of the war.

In May 1945 he became a reservist. He resided in Oryol and held management positions in the electric power utility system. Since 1974 he has been receiving a full personal pension from the national government. R.A. Klein also possesses the Order of Lenin; the Bogdan-Chmelynitskiy Order, Third Class; the Order of the Patriotic War, First Class; the Order of the Red Army Banner; plus a variety of medals.

Along with Nikolay Geft [who was mentioned in the conversation above], Eduard E. Erdmann was also reputedly to have been among the Heroes of the Soviet Union.¹⁶ However, we were unable to find actual confirmation that Erdmann was indeed a Hero of the Soviet Union. He is simply not mentioned even in the most complete publication, the two-volume

edition *Heroes of the Soviet Union*.¹⁷

On the other hand, **Nikolay Arturovich Geft** did make that list. He made a not inconsiderable contribution to the fight against the occupiers. He operated from a base in Odessa at the behest of the Soviet Army command. He was born in Odessa and grew up there, attended school and, except for a brief interruption, also worked in Odessa. In September of 1941 he and his family were deported to the Aul settlement of the Semipalatinsk region in the Kazakh SSR. On January 20, 1942, he was inducted into the so-called Trud-Army [forced heavy-labor units for exiles] there and worked in the construction of a metal manufacturing plant in Chelyabinsk. From the same locale he was being recruited by the Fourth NKVD Administration of the USSR (Ukr. SSR). He really did not like being in the hinterlands, as he explained in a letter to his brother, "I cannot possibly imagine how I could show my face to my friends after the war. I'll be asked where I might have hung around, and I'll be forced to reply that I was [stuck] in the hinterlands. And I'll be very much embarrassed not to have been taking part in the Soviet Army's destruction of the Hitler bandits, having saved my life at the expense of others."¹⁸

For this reason he agreed immediately when it was suggested that he become a military scout, and on June 23, 1942 he signed the corresponding papers as follows: "I, Geft Nikolay Arturovich, fully aware of my duty to fight German Fascism, freely agree to work on behalf of Soviet reconnaissance within my home territory occupied by the Fascists and within territories of Capitalist enemy states of the Soviet Union. Furthermore, while engaged in activities on behalf of Soviet reconnaissance, I pledge with all my strength and, if necessary, at the cost of my life, honestly and conscientiously to fulfill my assigned responsibilities, and to maintain the strictest secrecy about my work. I am fully aware that for conscious neglect of my responsibilities, for treason, or for betraying my connections with Soviet reconnaissance activities I may be branded an Enemy of the Soviet People and that I

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will suffer the appropriate consequences. Signed, Nikolay Geft."¹⁹

A short time later he was ordered to report to reconnaissance training in the city of Engels, where he attended a course using the pseudonym "Solotnikov." N.A. Geft applied himself to this training very seriously, so that he might be able to participate as soon as possible in the fight against the enemy. We find confirmation of these facts in notes and evaluations of his instructors at the reconnaissance school. One of them wrote the following journal entry regarding the operational training of "Solotnikov." Further, "in the instructional process, my opinion of his strong potential for reconnaissance work and his corresponding aptitude was confirmed. His grasp of the topics is excellent, his work ethic is conscientious to the utmost degree, and he is very earnest. This produces trust in his capacity for achievement, and it demonstrates his desire to acquire the kinds of knowledge and skills for successful activity in the occupied territory."²⁰

On June 13, 1943 N.A. Geft was smuggled into the rear flanks of the enemy and reputedly became one of 89 secret agents²¹ [of the Soviet espionage service, as Johannes Herzog explains]. On this particular matter, there is still a dispute in the research as to whether N.A. Geft was actually smuggled in as a secret agent or simply as a contact man. One of the problems N.A. Geft had to deal with was that the people with whom he was to establish contact had either left Odessa or refused to take part in underground activities. For that reason he was forced to revamp his plan completely. However, his work soon began to show concrete results. The most persuasive confirmation of his work is contained in a report of July 26, 1945 by the director of the Fourth NKGB Administration of the USSR (NKGB stands for "The People's Commissariat for State Security") which describes armed fighting and the activities of secret agents and other operatives: "So that he may direct reconnaissance and sabotage activities in

the city of Odessa, the Fourth Administration of the NKGB of the USSR in June 1943 dropped the agent 'Solotnikov' by parachute into his arena of activity."

Thanks to his extensive contacts with German colonists and to his ethnic origin (but also with the help of his father, V.K.) "Solotnikov" succeeded in a very short time to attain legitimacy in Odessa, to get work as a construction supervisor in the German navy, and later to become chief engineer in the A. Marti shipyard.

"Solotnikov" then expanded his agency by using local specialists and workers, and he successfully conducted sabotage and reconnaissance work.

Between October of 1943 and April of 1944 his group performed a series of sabotage and diversion activities in which four German coastal ships for coastal protection, D-6, D-8, D-9, and D-10, as well as the tug *Wagrain* and the fast destroyer *R-204* were taken out of commission, making it impossible for the German command to deploy them during the evacuation of its troops from Sevastopol, or for operations in the Odessa and Sevastopol regions along the coast of the Black Sea. All in all, the agency initiated damaging raids on 15 enemy warships.

In addition, "Solotnikov," taking advantage of his ["civilian"] position, stopped the export of valuable factory equipment and averted the detonation of the two most important factory structures. Through personal intervention, he saved 30 engineers and roughly 200 workers from forced evacuation.

In addition to working on sabotage projects, "Solotnikov," via his agency contacts, gathered extensive reconnaissance information on the regime and on activities of the Romanian-German occupiers of Odessa, information on personnel numbers, data on the armaments and losses of the German protective flotillas stationed in Black Sea harbors, plus valuable documentation regarding traitors and the agencies of the Siguranza [the Romanian equivalent of the Gestapo] and of the Gestapo.²²

N.A. Geft's group included **Artur Gustavovich Berndt, Valerian Erichovich**

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Bursi, and other German activists from Odessa.

As a reward for his actions in the rear guard, N.A. Geft was nominated for the decoration of the Order of the Patriotic War, First Class.

Following the liberation of Odessa [this time by the Red Army], for just the five days between April 10 and April 14, 1944, he assumed the duties of director of the shipyard A.Marti. Then, following a routine investigation, he was appointed to lead the sabotage unit, "Avantgarde, which was active in the rear guard of the enemy in West Ukraine, Czechoslovakia, and Poland. On August 25, 1944, N.A. Geft and three other partisans were killed while providing cover for the retreat of the unit. Posthumously N.A. Geft was awarded the Partisan of the Patriotic War Medal, First Class, and in 1965 the Order of the Patriotic War, First Class.

In the Dnepropetrovsk region, too, there were Germans who participated in the fight against the occupiers. As in other occupied areas, the anti-Fascist struggle here also expanded quickly and strongly. Operating inside the region were the illegal Regional Committee of the Party, seven illegal city committees, 29 rayon committees, 32 partisan units, 16 illegal Komsomol [Communist youth] groups, and 67 anti-Fascist partisan and sabotage units.²³ [Here the word "illegal" is used in the sense that the occupiers declared it so. The word "underground" might therefore serve the purpose, too.]

A participant in the establishment of one of the fighting units was **Klara Adolfovna Tabler-Novikova**. She was born in the city of Pavlovgrad and resided there. By December 1941 she became part of the anti-Fascist organization in Pavlovgrad and emerged as "one of the most notable and most active members of the anti-fascist underground organization."²⁴ At the behest of the commander of the illegal fighting units, Major P.A. Kravchenko, and working as an interpreter, she joined the 134th Battalion of the Ukrainian urban traffic

gendarmerie stationed in Pavlovgrad, and soon she became the director of this group.

K.A. Tabler-Novikova took advantage of her position to warn members of the underground of impending dangers, to supply them with a variety of documents (among which were permits for owning and carrying firearms), to acquire and maintain apartments for conspiratorial purposes and for hiding weapons, to produce widespread anti-Fascist propaganda among the city and rural populations, to steal a German official seal at the behest of her commander by means of which documents could be falsified. In December of 1942 she succeeded in locating a case of printing equipment that could be used for the same purpose of falsifying documents.

Bit by bit, K.A. Tabler-Novikova replaced the entire personnel of the urban traffic gendarmerie under her supervision with persons of trust who had been sent to her by the leadership of the underground organization, and she supplied them with weapons and ammunition. In February of 1943 an anti-Fascist uprising took place in Pavlovgrad, and subsequent to that uprising and a push by the Red Army, the city was rid of its Fascist troops for just a few days. The unit that had been put together by K.A. Tabler-Novikova took an active part in the uprising.

Following the recapture of the city by the previously ousted occupiers, K.A. Tabler-Novikova left the city, and between March of 1943 and January 19, 1944 she found herself the subject of a special investigation, then returned to Pavlovgrad, where she assumed the directorship of a kindergarten. For her strong participation in the activities of the anti-Fascist organization she was decorated in 1944 with the Partisan of the Patriotic War Medal, Second Class.²⁵ In 1965 she was nominated for the decoration of a war medal of merit (and the city's Party Committee nominated her for the Order of the Red Banner).²⁶ Klara Adolfovna Tabler-Novikova would become the prototype for Marta Karlovna Trausch, one of the central heroines of the novel *Straßen des Zorns* [Streets of Anger], which depicted the wartime events in Pavlovgrad.²⁷

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In November of 1962 a report was issued accounting for the activities of an anti-Fascist group that had been active in Krivoy Rog under the command of Domna Samsonovna Konyeva. As early as February, 1944 the same report²⁸ had been presented to the appropriate organs for review, but only in 1962 was a decision for approval of the report issued from the Municipal Committee of Krivoy Rog of the Communist Party Ukraine, and subsequently from the Regional Committee Dnepropetrovsk of the CPU.²⁹ The unit had assisted wounded soldiers of the Soviet Army who had been caught in an encirclement by hiding them, providing them with identity papers, food and medicines, and also had given assistance to the city's populace. The unit had also performed propaganda work among the population against the occupiers.³⁰

This particular group consisted of 30 persons. One of them was **Emilia Alexandrovna Nevgomonnaya**, a German resident of Krivoy Rog. In her own apartment she hid Soviet soldiers freed from German POW camps, and she prepared typewritten documents for the group. For a time she also harbored a certain Hanlar Babandy, who had been sent to her and was posing as a German officer. Also hiding in her apartment in October 1943, was the wounded Soviet Lieutenant V.I. Dronov, who had used his tank to break into the city through enemy lines.³¹ Following are his recollections, recorded in February of 1944, of the time when he was being hidden by Nevgomonnaya: "The apartment of the Nevgomonnaya family was in reality a center of conspiracy, where activists gathered, where they read Soviet leaflets and issues of the newspaper *Pravda* that had somehow reached the place, and where they listened to Soviet radio transmissions and studied war reports."³² After the war, as she had done earlier, Emilia Alexandrovna Nevgemonnaya again resided in Krivoy Rog.

In March of 1990 **Lyudmila Adolfovna Schmidt-Friebus** was honored³³ as a participant in the underground organization

of the *Komsomol* of Dnieprodzherzhinsk. She had been a member of this organization, which had been established by L. Ye. Lukyanova, who had remained in the city on orders of the municipal committee of the *Komsomol*. This organization performed important work within the occupied city. It assisted wounded soldiers and commanders of the Red Army still in the occupied area, providing medications, clothing, and meals, while also helping them to reach the left banks of the Dnieper and thus to cross beyond the front line. During the winter of 1941-1942 the underground group distributed clothing that had actually been collected for the benefit of the German Army [See Johannes Herzog's endnote 1], distributed leaflets, and agitated among the population against the forced transport of youths to Germany.

The underground organization also acquired a radio receiver, a typewriter, and passport blanks to be filled in for use by wounded members of the Soviet military. The group performed extensive work in putting together and distributing various kinds of leaflets. Between August 1941 and March 1943 the organization issued and distributed 4,500 copies of Soviet leaflets and 2,000 printed caricatures [posters] and slogans. All in all, it saved the lives of 47 prisoners of war and 200 wounded soldiers and commanders, and assisted them in crossing the front lines. Additionally, these underground fighters performed a series of activities against the occupiers, including thwarting the use of various industrial projects, destroying railways, and the like.³⁴

L.A. Schmidt had also been ordered by the municipal committee of the *Komsomol* to remain in the city and to perform underground activities there. She became involved in fighting against the conquerors as early as the first days of occupation. She personally provided assistance to wounded Soviet military members, acquired medications, bandages, and food for them, and helped in the distribution of leaflets. With some other women who were participating in underground activities, she

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established a home for orphaned children, and these women were later able to secure food for the home. As ordered by the underground leadership, she assumed a civilian job in a German hospital, established contacts with prisoners of war who were also employed there and, with the aid of other illegals, she organized their escape in February of 1943.³⁵

Among the ones she had assisted in escaping was the poet Michail Vladimirovich Michalkov, a brother of the even better-known poet S.V. Michalkov. He writes as follows about these events in his documentary piece, *Alone*: "Milita, a young girl was working on my floor as a civilian nurse. This pretty girl behaved fearlessly and helped me and the other prisoners as much as she possibly could. Only after the war did I learn that Lyudmila Adolfovna Friebus, alias Schmidt, was an active participant in the underground *Komsomol* movement in Dnieprodzherzhinsk, and that she contributed to preparations for our escape ... on direct orders of the leader of this movement, Lida Lukyanova ... Only after the war did I discover that Dmitriy Zvintarniy (another prisoner of war who had escaped with M. Michalkov) had been hiding in the apartment of the nurse Milita Schmidt in the days immediately following the escape, and that her mother, Sinaida Nikolayevna Savina—also at the request of Lida Lukyanova—was hiding five escapees of our group in the attic of the orphanage where she was working as a cook."³⁶

In 1990, M.V. Michalkov wrote to the regional party committee in Dniepropetrovsk: "If you need special personal confirmation from me concerning events and facts related to the war, the most significant confirmation is contained in my documentary book *Alone*. I hereby attest that Lyudmila Schmidt was working as a civilian nurse in a hospital at that time. A person of honor and a sense of responsibility, she had been left behind in Dnieprodzherzhinsk to perform underground activities. I personally witnessed how, to the utmost of her abilities and strength, she came to the aid of the prisoners who were

working under strict supervision in that hospital. About her underground activities per se I learned from Lukyanova, but only after the war. According to her report to the *Komsomol*, the matter of L. Schmidt is currently under review. An excerpt from my notes has been approved by the Committee for State Security (KGB)."³⁷

This correspondence came about because in the time immediately following the war L. Schmidt was not being acknowledged to have been a participant in the underground, even though she was named several times in the report by the underground leader, albeit under the name Sinyakova (or Sinykova), the name of her husband, who had been killed in the war.³⁸ The underground leader, L. Ye. Lukyanova did not shed light on this until 1990, when she finally stated: "I, ..., attest that L.A. Schmidt was an active participant in the illegal *Komsomol* organization in Dnieprodzherzhinsk during the years 1941–1943, the time of the Great Patriotic War. Her name was contained in the list of illegals, and during the review of the activities of our group during the years of the Great Patriotic War, at a session of the Office of the Regional Committee of the Leninist Communist Komsomol Association of Ukraine (LKSMU), the instructor of the Regional Committee of the LKSMU, Comrade Lyudmila Safronova was ordered to coordinate the documentation of this session, to review it, and to assure its accuracy. For this reason she contacted the NKVD and learned that the name Schmidt had been struck. When we asked for the reason, we were told that she was German."³⁹

The end to L.A. Schmidt's activities came on May 31, 1944, when she was arrested and, during a special session of the NKVD of the USSR on December 16, 1944 was accused of submitting voluntarily to being registered by the German authorities as an ethnic German. For this she was sentenced to five years in a special prison camp of the Ministry for State Security (MVD) in Chernogorsk. After completion of her sentence she was further ordered not to return for at least seven years to her former

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place of residence.⁴⁰ Only in 1989 was L.A. Schmidt rehabilitated, and a year later she succeeded in being acknowledged as an active member of the underground organization.

Among participants in anti-Fascist fighting in the Dniepropetrovsk region one must not forget **Grigoriy Fyodorovich Braur**, commander of munition supplies for the partisan group led by I.I. Demchenko. This group agitated in the Kotorsk rayon. In 1943 Braur was captured by a German patrol and shot to death.⁴¹

A certification report on the nationalities of underground fighters in the region of Dniepropetrovsk was issued immediately following the war, but it includes just one German name,⁴² most likely it was K.A. Tabler-Novikova. But in a search of the archives, further names have emerged. However, there were a great number of "illegals," which means that their nationalities could not be determined or are at least in doubt (Yu. Klein, Yu. K. Reusche, M.S. Wachaus, N.V. Elert, the Gluck family, V. Ya. Gems, A. Kress, S.P. Gerhart, V.S. Miller, P. Miller et al). An important reason for this situation is the fact that many documents that examined the activities of partisan groups and other underground organizations are simply not accessible. One can only hope that this situation will improve and that the list of German participants in the anti-Fascist struggle will be extended.

There are of course some things that can be said as well about the mostly passive resistance of Soviet Germans against the occupiers. For example, we came upon a so-called "filtration" dossier [see Johannes Herzog's endnote 2] concerning a **Pyotr Pavlovich Eisfeld**,⁴³ who was born in the village of Josefstal in the region of Dniepropetrovsk. From 1929 on he served in the Red Army, and at the beginning of the war he held the position of deputy staff commander of the 445th Rifle Regiment of the 140th Rifle Division of the 6th Army. He was wounded and on July 9, 1941 became a prisoner of war. Using his "transfer

document" [see Johannes Herzog's endnote 3], we can piece together an entire map of German POW camps (Shepetovka, Luzk, Rovno, Cholm, Pervomaysk, Belopolye, Warsaw, Kovel, Frankfort/Oder, Teplitz, Berlin, and Munich).⁴⁴ [see Johannes Herzog's endnote 4]

During his time in POW camps he used his real name. The occupiers were well aware of his actual nationality, so that as early as August of 1941 they suggested that he become part of the German *Wehrmacht*. But he decidedly did not wish to join the enemy. Even under the worst conditions in POW camps he attempted acts of resistance. For example, in March 1943, in the Kovel camp, he grabbed the pistol of one of the guards and threw it over the camp fence. For this he was handed over to a penal commando. Unfortunately, his further fate is unknown.

In summary, it can be said that [certain] Soviet Germans did not simply remain on the sidelines of the fight against a common enemy. This fight was conducted on various fronts, including the rear of the enemy's front lines. They fought not so much against their own ethnic brethren as against the common peril of Fascism. And in this context they provided significant contributions.

Alex Herzog was born in Lichtenfeld, a German village in Kutschurgan/Ukraine. He began his formal education in a gymnasium in Germany and eventually earned an MA in the U.S. After a long career with IBM, Alex retired in 1993. He now works as a freelance volunteer translator, primarily from German to English.

Endnotes from Johannes Herzog:

1. Among the Ukrainian population there was actually a great deal of sympathy for the so-called "Reichs-Germans," and had the Nazis not been so dumb and treated Ukrainians and Russians as second-class humans and as "racially inferior," they might have been able to form large fighting units with them!

2. All Soviet citizens who returned to the Soviet Union following WW II [e.g., former POWs] were subjected to repeated interviews by the NKVD regarding their activities during the time of occupation. In so many words, their actions were "filtered" and the information was officially recorded. These records were called "filtration dossiers," which the NKVD would use

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in making further decisions regarding the returnees (exile, forced labor, etc.).

3. In the German POW camps, the Nazis kept personnel records on all POWs, and these documents were passed along from camp to camp whenever a POW was transferred between camps, hence the term "transfer document."

4. Johannes Herzog was attending the Pedagogical Institute in Selz/Kutschurgan in the German-occupied area when he was inducted into the German military. Here is a general comment regarding the SS-Einsatzgruppen from his personal recollection: "By 1942 young ethnic Germans were inducted into the German armed forces. However, because they were not German citizens, they could not serve in the Wehrmacht itself, and instead all of them were willy nilly pressed into becoming part of the so-called "Fighting SS" [not to be confused with the "Elite SS"], and many of their units ended up fighting side by side with regular German army units. Of course, no one ever asked these young men whether they wished to fight for 'Greater Germany.' Still, there were also those young ethnic Germans who actually volunteered to fight against the partisans. Small wonder, considering the 'good deeds' our people experienced at the hands of the Soviets. In those partisan actions both sides committed untold atrocities, and there was unbridled hatred."

Author Viktor Klotz's endnotes:

¹Semiryaga, M.I., *Das Gefängnis des Nazismus und sein Zusammenbruch*. [The Nazi Prison and its Collapse] Moscow, 1991, pp. 98-99.

²Simonov, K.M. *Die Lebenden und die Toten: Roman in drei Büchern*. [The Living and the Dead: A Novel in Three Parts]. Buch 2: *Als Soldat wird man nicht geboren* [Part 2: Nobody is Born a Soldier]. M. 1989, p. 499.

³Buchsweiler, M. *Volksdeutsche in der Ukraine am Vorabend und Beginn des Zweiten Weltkrieges - ein Fall doppelter Loyalität* [The Ethnic Germans in Ukraine Prior to and at the Onset of World War II - a Case of Dual Loyalties]. Gerlingen, 1984, p. 360.

⁴Cf. Slobodyanyuk, M.A. Schachnatyachuck, I.A.. *Die Widerstandsbewegung in der Dnieperregion in den Jahren des Großen Vaterländischen Krieges (1941 - 1945)* [The Resistance Movement in the Dnieper Region during the Years of the Great Patriotic War (1941 - 1945)]. Dnepropetrovsk, 1998, p. 10.

⁵Larry Hyell, Lecturer in Psychology at the State University of New York, and a member of the American Psychological Association. Daniel Siegler, Professor of Psychology and Dean of Villanova University, Pennsylvania.

⁶Hyell, L., Siegler, D. *Persönlichkeitstheorien (Grundlagen, Forschungen und Anwendung)* [Personality Theories (Basic Concepts, Research and Applications)]. St. Peterburg (Spb), 1999, p. 19.

⁷ Simbardo, F., Leippe, M. *Der soziale Einfluss* [Social Influence]. Spb., 2000, p. 14 (from the Series, Masters of Psychology)

⁸David Mayers, Professor of Psychology at Hope

College, Michigan, US.

⁹Mayers, D. *Sozialpsychology* [Social Psychology]. Spb, 1999, p. 29 (from the Series, Masters of Psychology)

¹⁰Ibid., p. 80.

¹¹Michaylov, V.S. *Die Geschichte vom Tschekisten* [History of the Chekist]. M., 1965, p. 313.

¹²Yasykov, Je.F., *Die Geschichte der Länder Europas und Amerikas in der neuesten Zeit (1918 - 1945)* [History of the European Countries and America in Recent Times (1918 - 1945)]. A Series of Lectures. Moscow, 1998, p. 232.

¹³Cf. Mayers, p. 349.

¹⁴For more about him see: Burov, A.V., *Deine Helden* [Your Heroes], Leningrad, 2nd Expanded Ed., L., 1970, pp 570, 16; Kiselyov, V., *Der Kommandeur der Partisanenbrigade* [The Commander of the Partisan Brigade] // *Die Helden der flammenden Jahre: (Studien über Moskauer Helden der Sovjetunion)* [Heroes of the Years in Flames - Studies on the Moscow Heroes of the Soviet Union] // Redaktionskollegium [Group-edited]: A.M. Sinizyn (Chief Ed.), et al., M., 1984; Klotz, V.K., German, A.V. 77 *Die Deutschen Russlands: Enzyklopädie* [The Germans in Russia: Encyclopedia] // Red.-koll. [Group-edited]: V. Karev et al., M., 1999. vol. I: A-I, p. 529; Mosolov, N., *Legendenumwoven*. // *Legendengestalten* [Subject of Legends // Legendary Figures] Zusammenstellung [Anthology Volume]: PV. Pavlov, N. Poltorakov, I. Selishchev, M., 1965, Ed. 1, pp. 256 - 279.

¹⁵For more about him see. Nayden, S.P., *Als die Heimat rief* (Über die Partisanenhelden) [When the Homeland Called (On the Partisan Heroes)] // *Die Helden-Befreier der Region Tscherkassy* [The Hero-Liberators of the Cherkassy Region] / Zusammenstellung [Anthology Volume]: A.A. Beresovskiy, A.N. Sodina. Dnepropetrovsk, 1975; Evenetov, A., *Robert Klein - Ein Sohn Russlands* [Robert Klein, a Son of Russia] // *Legendengestalten* [Legendary Figures], pp. 518 - 528 .

¹⁶Cf. *Die Deutschen Russlands: Enzyklopädie* [The Germans of Russia: Encyclopedia], vol. 1, p. 341.

¹⁷Cf. *Helden der Sovjetunion: Kurzes biographisches Lexikon in 2 Bänden* [Heroes of the Soviet Union: A Compact Biographical Encyclopedia in Two Volumes] // Eds.: I.N. Schkadov (Chair) et al., M., 1987 - 1988.

¹⁸Citation from: Kava, V., Popik, V., *Ein Held, dem der Goldene Stern entzogen wurde* [A Hero Whose Golden Star has been Taken Away] // Aus den Archiven der Geheimpolizei [From the Archives of the Secret Police] (VUTCHK-GPU-NKVD-KGB): Wissenschaftlich-publizistische Zeitschrift [Scientific-Publicist Journal]. 1994, No. 1, p. 25.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 23.

²⁰Ibid., p. 23.

²¹Comprehensive Report on the Fighting and Operational Activities of the 4th Administration of the NKGB of the USSR (Secret Police of Ukraine - Tr.) Between the Years 1941 and 1945 // Aus den Archiven der Geheimpolizei: wissenschaftl.-publizist. Zeitschrift [From the Archives of the Secret Police: Scientific-Publicist Journal]. 1995 No. x, p. 20

²²Ibid., pp. 22 - 23.

²³Studien zur Geschichte der Parteiorganisation des

Gebietes Dniepropetrovsk. [Studies on the History of the Party Organization of the Dniepropetrovsk Region], I.V. Vasilyev, Chief Ed. Dniepropetrovsk, 1979. p. 391; *Studien zur Geschichte der Komsomolorg. des Gebietes Dniepropetrovsk [Studies on the History of the Komsomol Org. of the Dniepropetrovsk Region]*, Authors: K.I. Posnyakov (Director) et al. K, 1987, p. 117.

²⁴State Archive of the Dniepropetrovsk Region (henceforth: GADO) Fond. Section 19. Index 8, Document 43, p. 104.

²⁵Ibid., Document 1, p. 40; 3, p.104; 4, p. 23; 38, p. 13; 43, p.104; 379, p. 184.

²⁶Ibid., Document 373, p. 35; 379, p.24; 380, p. 127.

²⁷ Bylinov, A.I., *Straßen des Zorns [Streets of Anger]*, a novel and [collection of] tales. M., 1986.

²⁸GADO, Vol. 19, Section 8, Document 238, pp.1-5.

²⁹Ibid., pp. 177 - 178.

³⁰Ibid., pp. 33-36, Document. 307, p. 94.

³¹Ibid., Document 238, pp. 5, 34, 178, 233.

³²Ibid., pp. 1 - 143.

³³ Ibid., Document 438, p. 1

³⁴Ibid., Document 94, pp. 1 - 2; *Studien zur Geschichte des Komsomol im Gebiet Dniepropetrovsk [Studies on the History of the Komsomol in Dniepropetrovsk]*, pp. 119 - 120.

³⁵GADO, Vol. 19, Section 8, Document 94, pp. 6, 19, 20, 21; Document 438, pp. 1 - 39.

³⁶ Andronov [Michalkov], M., *Allein: Auszüge aus der Dokumentarerzählung [Alone: Excerpts from Documentary Depictions]*. Moscow, 1977, No. 9, pp. 141, 146 - 147.

³⁷GADO, Vol. 19, Section 8, Document 438, p. 13.

³⁸Ibid., Document 94, pp. 6, 19, 21.

³⁹Ibid., Document 438, p. 4.

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 21 - 22.

⁴¹Ibid., Document 277, p. 14; Document 279, p. 23; Document 306, p. 13.

⁴² Ibid., Document 7, p. 94.

⁴³Ibid., Vol. 6478, Section 1, Document 110084.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 3.