

NORKA (/)

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Deportation 1941

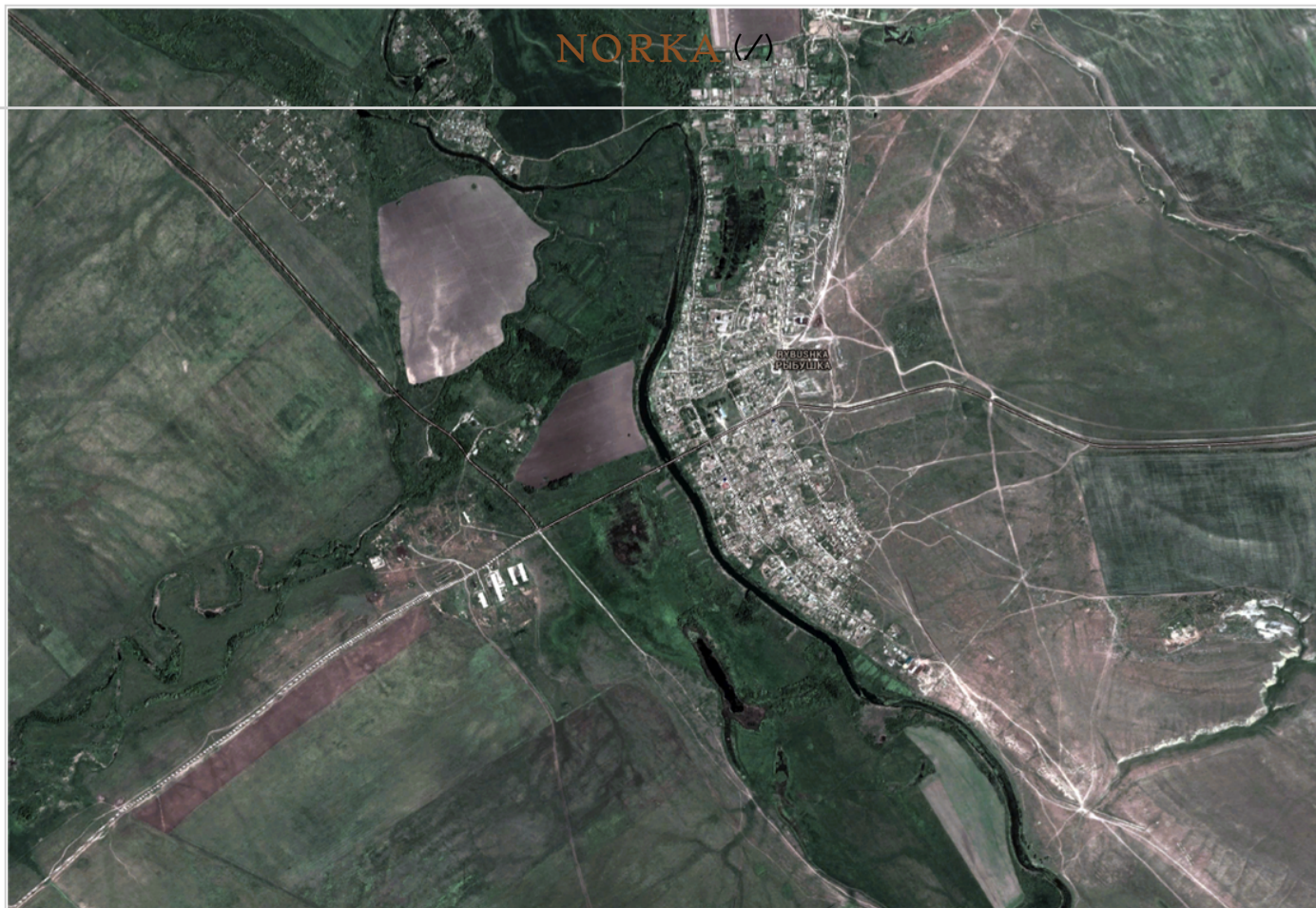
On August 28, 1941, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet issued a *Ukaz* (decree) attempting to provide a legal basis for the decision to deport the ethnic Germans of the [Volga German ASSR \(Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic\) \(/soviet-rule-1918-1941.html\)](#), the Saratov *Oblast* (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oblast>) (Province), and the Stalingrad Oblast. The decision had already been made by the Council of People's Commissars and Central Committee of the Communist Party two days earlier. This forced expulsion brought an end to Norka and all the Volga German settlements that [began over 175 years earlier \(/founding-of-norka-1767.html\)](#) under Catherine the Great's [Manifesto \(/catherines-manifesto-1763.html\)](#).

Tensions between the ethnic Germans living in Russia and their Russian counterparts had a long history. Generally, the Germans living in Norka lived peacefully with their Russian neighbors, but stories told by Norka native [Conrad Brill \(/memories-of-norka.html\)](#), who served in the Russian army before immigrating to the United States, illustrate some of tension that existed between the ethnic groups. In describing Norka, Brill writes:

"The Karamysh River ran north and south between Beideck and Norka, but up north it veered or turned westward, so it bordered what was considered two sides of the Norka ground, the eastern edge and also the northern edge. Across the river on northern shore, was a Russian village named Rybushka that we traveled through when going toward Saratov.... To the west we bordered with Russian villages on the Medveditsa River. Along the Karamysh River, across from Rybushka, the land lying along the river was owned by four parties (including a Miller and Sinner family)... this we used for our potato ground. These four parcels of land far exceeded the amount of land farmed by all of the Russian villagers of the village of Rybushka, and created anxiety with the Russian villages near and far."

Brill continues with a related story in his memoirs:

"A man named *Soujac* Krieger was the man who did the whipping when someone was sentenced to public punishment. Disgruntled Russians he had whipped gave the name to him. He had a horse shot out from under him in a skirmish with Russians from Rybushka during a dispute over the former ground used for the potato crop of Norka folk that was awarded to Rybushka villagers about the time of WWI and the Revolution."



(/uploads/3/7/7/9/37792067/3836941_orig.png)

Satellite image of the Russian village of Rybushka and the former Norka lands on the opposite side of the Karamysh River. Source: Google Maps.

While these stories are isolated incidents, it helps explain the sometimes-bitter feelings that Russians felt towards their German neighbors, who they viewed as separate and privileged.

Prejudice against the German colonists, however, began to grow among segments of Russia's population during the second half of the 19th century. The German agricultural settlements were often more prosperous than their Russian and Ukrainian neighbors. This economic success combined with special privileges such as exemption from the draft created envy and resentment among some Slavs.

The rise of Russian nationalism in the late 19th century intensified these anti-German sentiments. During this time the [Slavophile](http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/slavophile) (<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/slavophile>) movement in Russia cast all ethnic Germans as their mortal enemy and the Volga Germans as a serious threat to the security of the empire. The Slavophile press consistently scapegoated the Volga Germans and other German communities in the Russian Empire. The consistent demonization of the Germans by the Slavophile press

influenced even the highest levels of the Russian government.

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During the 1870s, Tsar Alexander II

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_II_of_Russia) began to revoke the rights of the German communities in the Russian Empire. In 1871 they lost the right of self-government (</privileges-lost-1871-1874.html>). Three years later, Tsar Alexander II rescinded the immunity from military conscription granted to ethnic Germans by Catherine II (Catherine the Great). The loss of these rights inspired many ethnic Germans to emigrate from the Russian Empire to the [United States \(/to-the-united-states.html\)](/to-the-united-states.html), [Canada \(/to-canada.html\)](/to-canada.html), and [South America \(/to-south-america.html\)](/to-south-america.html) during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Large German communities, however, still remained in the Volga, Ukraine, Black Sea region, Crimea, Caucasus, and other areas of the Russian Empire.

The [First World War \(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I) exacerbated Russia's anti-German and pro-Russian tendencies. During this time, Russian Foreign Minister [Sergey Sazonov \(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sergey_Sazonov\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sergey_Sazonov) called for a "final solution" to the ethnic German problem in Russia, noting that the time had come ". . . to deal with this long over-due problem, for the current war has created the conditions to make it possible to solve this problem once and for all."

The Germans living in [Volhynia \(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Volhynia\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Volhynia) (in the north-western part of Ukraine) were the first to suffer deportation in 1915, but the [Bolsheviks \(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bolsheviks\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bolsheviks), who had begun to take power in Russia, rescinded a decree the following year that was aimed at expelling the Volga Germans.

Anti-German feelings increased dramatically with Adolf Hitler's betrayal of Josef Stalin in June of 1941. Hitler ignored the [non-aggression pact \(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Molotov%E2%80%93Ribbentrop_Pact\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Molotov%E2%80%93Ribbentrop_Pact) he had agreed to with Stalin in 1939 and invaded the Soviet Union in what was called [Operation Barbarossa \(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Barbarossa\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Barbarossa).



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Cartoon of Stalin and Hitler agreeing to divide Poland. Source unknown.

As Hitler's tanks rolled eastward, Stalin's [Soviet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_Union) (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_Union) government saw the Nazi invasion as an opportunity to solve the longstanding "German problem." Plans were hastily made to deport all ethnic Germans in the Volga region, and other parts of Russia, to [Siberia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siberia) (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siberia>), and [Kazakhstan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kazakhstan) (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kazakhstan>) (then part of the Soviet Union) simply because of their German heritage.

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(/uploads/3/7/7/9/37792067/1125507_orig.png)

German tank units, as they prepare for an attack, on July 21, 1941, somewhere along the Russian warfront, during the German invasion of the Soviet Union. Source: AP Photo.



(/uploads/3/7/7/9/37792067/8003748_orig.jpg)

USSR State Defense Committee in 1941 led by Joseph Stalin (top center). Source unknown.

On August 26, 1941, the People's Commissars of the USSR and the Central Committee of the CPSU adopted a secret resolution on the "resettlement of all Germans from the Autonomous Republic of the Volga Germans, Stalingrad and Saratov regions to other territories and regions."

NORKA (✓)

ожит возврату в течение 24 часов (Пост. ПБ ЦК от 5.V.27 г., пр. № 100, п. 5)
2-ю часть Особого Сектора ЦК

СТРОГО СЕКРЕТНО
(из О. П.)

союзная Коммунистическая Партия (большевиков). ЦЕНТРАЛЬНЫЙ КОМИТЕТ

№ П35/1

6- августа 1941 г.

Членам и кандидатам Политбюро ЦК ВКП(б):
т.т. Андрееву, Берия, Вознесенскому, Ворошилову,
Жданову, Кагановичу, Калинин, Маленкову,
Микояну, Молотову, Сталину, Хрущеву,
Швернику, Щербакову, *Тадальсу*.

Выписка из протокола № 35 заседания Политбюро ЦК от 194 г.

Решение от 26.VIII.41г.

- 1.- О переселении немцев из республики Немцев Поволжья, Саратовской и Сталинградской областей.
(Постановление СНК СССР и ЦК ВКП(б)).

Совет Народных Комиссаров Союза ССР и ЦК ВКП(б)
постановляют:

1. Переселить всех немцев из республики Немцев Поволжья и из Саратовской и Сталинградской области общей численностью 479.841 человек в следующие края и области:

| | | | |
|-----------------------|---|---------|------|
| Красноярский край | - | 75.000 | чел. |
| Алтайский край | - | 95.000 | " |
| Омская область | - | 85.000 | " |
| Новосибирская область | - | 100.000 | " |
| Казахская ССР | - | 125.000 | " |

в том числе:

| | | | |
|----------------------------|---|--------|---|
| Семипалатинская область | - | 18.000 | " |
| Акмолинская область | - | 25.000 | " |
| Северо-Казахстанск. обл. | - | 25.000 | " |
| Кустанайская область | - | 20.000 | " |
| Павлодарская область | - | 20.000 | " |
| Восточно-Казахстанск. обл. | - | 17.000 | " |

Переселению подлежат все без исключения немцы, как жители городов, так и сельских местностей, в том числе члены ВКП(б) и ВЛКСМ.

2. Руководство переселением возложить на НКВД СССР. Предоставить НКВД СССР право привлекать к работе по переселению Наркомзем, Наркомсовхозов и Переселенческое Управление при СНК СССР в центре и их органы на местах

(см. 2 стр.)

быть не было, если нет на то специальной оговорки ЦК.
Копировать указанные документы и деловые выписки на них категорически воспрещается.
Отсюда и дата окончания делается на каждом документе д. по г. и по г. и за его личной подписью.
Ос. «лиц» Постановление Президиума ЦК РКП(б) от 1938-39 г.

(/uploads/3/7/7/9/37792067/438418_orig.jpg)

Volga German Deportation decree dated August 26, 1941. The document was signed on August 28th.

The formal decree (Ukaz no. 21-160) (<http://jpohl.blogspot.com/2006/08/ukaz-no-21-160.html>) was signed by the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, Mikhail Kalinin (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mikhail_Kalinin),

and Secretary of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, A. Gorkin, on August 28, 1941 abolishing the Volga German ASSR which had been established in 1918. Exactly 174 years after its [founding in August 1767 \(/founding-of-norka-1767.html\)](#), it was the end the German colony of Norka and all other German colonies in the Volga region.



(/uploads/3/7/7/9/37792067/887648_orig.png)

Mikhail Kalinin signed the decree banishing the Volga Germans to Siberia and Kazakhstan. Source: Wikimedia

The official Soviet explanation for the mass expulsion of the ethnic Germans of the Volga and elsewhere in the USSR to special settlements is that they represented a potential [fifth column \(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fifth_column\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fifth_column) of spies and saboteurs waiting to assist the invading Nazi forces. The Stalin regime justified the deportation of nearly half a million ethnic Germans from the Volga region by claiming that they actively harbored tens of thousands of spies and saboteurs loyal to the [Third Reich \(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nazi_Germany\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nazi_Germany).

Louis de Jong, a Dutch historian who extensively studied the claims of German "fifth columns", concluded that the German intelligence agencies did not rely on the assistance of the ethnic German minority living in the Soviet Union because they lived in such remote areas of Russia that establishing contact with them was impossible. He further states that there is no evidence in the German

archives of a conspiracy between the ethnic Germans in Russia and the Third Reich.

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It is important to note that only about 25 percent of the Volga Germans had immigrated to United States (</to-the-united-states.html>), Canada (</to-canada.html>), and South America (</to-south-america.html>) between 1875 and the early 1920s. After the early 1920s, the Communists (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communist_Party_of_the_Soviet_Union) shut down any possibility of leaving the Soviet Union through the so called "Iron Curtain." (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iron_Curtain)

In drawing a national connection between its own ethnic Germans and the foreign invaders of Nazi Germany, the deportation decree was published on August 30th in the German language newspaper *Nachrichten* and the Russian language newspaper *Bolshevik*. Below is the important text from his decree:

"According to reliable facts, which were obtained by the military authorities, among the German population residing in the districts in the Volga Region, there are thousands and tens of thousands of saboteurs and spies, who, at a signal given from Germany, must commit sabotage in the districts, which are populated by the Germans in the Volga Region.

In order to avoid such undesirable occurrences and for the prevention of serious bloodshed, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR deems it necessary to resettle the entire German population residing in the districts in the Volga Region and other districts, and that the re-settlers be allotted land and receive state assistance in the new districts.

For this purpose, the abundance of arable land in the districts of Novosibirsk, the Omsk Region, the Altai Region, Kazakhstan, and other neighboring regions is to be distributed to the re-settlers.

In connection with this, the State Committee of Defense is instructed to execute urgently the removal of all Germans in the Volga."

PROLETARIAT ALLER LÄNDER, VEREINIGT EUCH! 24. Jahrgang

Nachrichten

Organ des Gebietskomitees der KPdSU(US) und des Obersten Sowjets der ASSRdWD, des Stadtkomitees der KPdSU(US) und des Stadtsowjets der Deputierten der Werktätigen von Engels

Nr. 204 Sonnabend, den 30. August 1941 Preis 15 Kop.

ERLASS

DES PRÄSIDIUMS DES OBERSTEN SOWJETS DER UNION DER SSR

Über die Übersiedlung der Deutschen, die in den Wolgarayons wohnen

Lauf genauen Angaben, die die Militärbehörden erhalten haben, befinden sich unter der in den Wolgarayons wohnenden deutschen Bevölkerung Tausende und aber Tausende Diverstanten und Spione, die nach dem aus Deutschland gegebenen Signal Explosionen in den von den Wolgardenischen Reichslichen Rayons hervorzuheben sollen. Über das Vorhandensein einer solch großen Anzahl von Diverstanten und Spionen unter den Wolgardenischen hat keiner der Deutschen, die in den Wolgarayons wohnen, die Sowjetbehörden in Kenntnis gesetzt, folglich verheimlicht die deutsche Bevölkerung der Wolgarayons die Anwesenheit in ihrer Mitte der Feinde des Sowjetvolkes und der Sowjetmacht.

Falls aber auf Anweisung aus Deutschland die deutschen Diverstanten und Spione in der Republik der Wolgardenischen oder in den angrenzenden Rayons Diverstantenakte ausführen werden und Blut vergossen wird, wird die Sowjetregierung laut den Gesetzen der Kriegszeit vor die Notwendigkeit gestellt, Strafmaßnahmen gegenüber der gesamten deutschen Wolgardenbevölkerung zu ergreifen.

Zwecks Vorbeugung dieser unerwünschten Erschütterungen und um kein ernstes Blutvergießen zuzulassen, hat das Präsidium des Obersten Sowjets der UdSSR es für notwendig gefunden, die gesamte deutsche in den Wolgarayons wohnende Bevölkerung in andere Rayons zu übersiedeln, wobei den Übersiedelnden Land zuzuteilen und eine staatliche Hilfe für die Einrichtung in den neuen Rayons zu erwirken ist. Zwecks Ansiedlung sind die an Ackerland reichen Rayons des Nowosibirsker und Omsker Gebiets, des Altajgais, Kasachistans und andere Nachbarortschaften bestimmt.

In Übereinstimmung mit diesem wurde dem Staatlichen Komitee für Landesverteidigung vorgeschlagen, die Übersiedlung der gesamten Wolgardenischen unverzüglich auszuführen und die überzusiedelnden Wolgardenischen mit Land und Nutzland in den neuen Rayons sicherzustellen.

Vorsitzender des Präsidiums des Obersten Sowjets der UdSSR M. KALININ,
Sekretär des Präsidiums des Obersten Sowjets der UdSSR A. GORKIN.

Moskau, Krem. 28. August 1941.

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The deportation decree published in "Nachrichten," a German language newspaper, on August 30, 1941.



(/uploads/3/7/7/9/37792067/8681811_orig.jpg)

The deportation decree published in "Bolshevik," a Russian language newspaper, on August 30, 1941.

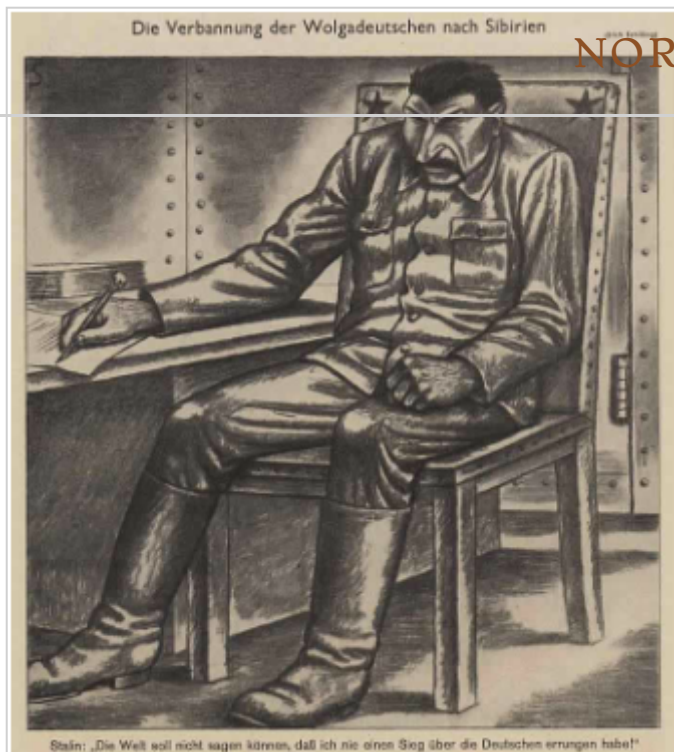
Stalin's regime had no evidence to support the charge that there were thousands of potential spies and saboteurs among the Volga Germans. In the months previous to the deportations, the [NKVD \(Soviet secret police\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/NKVD) had unearthed very few people suspected of political disloyalty among the Volga Germans. After the Nazi invasion of the USSR, the NKVD greatly increased its surveillance of the ethnic German population of the USSR. This was especially true in the Volga German ASSR and Saratov *Oblast* where more than 400,000 Volga Germans lived. Between June 22nd and August 10th of 1941, the NKVD only arrested 145 Germans in the Volga German republic for reasons related to state security. Out of these 145 political arrests, the NKVD accused only two of them of being German spies.

On July 13, 1941 the Volga German ASSR formed a militia of over 11,000 men in preparation war. The same day, the Chairman of the Supreme Council of Volga German ASSR, K. Hoffman, and the Chairman of the People's Commissars of the ASSR, A. Heckman, spoke directly to the German people on the Soviet broadcasting system. In their address they asked the German people not to shed the blood of the Soviet people and to turn their guns against Hitler and "fascist cannibals."

Tens of thousands of ethnic Germans living in Russia soon joined the fight against the Nazis during June, July, and August of 1941. From the outbreak of the war until mid July 1941, over 2,500 Volga Germans voluntarily enlisted in the Red Army (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red_Army) and another 8,000 joined militia units. A story in *Pravda* (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pravda>) on July 15, 1941, praised the heroic contributions of thousands of ethnic Germans to the Soviet war effort. Germans in the Red Army played an important role in the defense of Brest (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_for_Brest) and other key battles in first months after the Nazi assault upon the USSR.

Another story noting the role of ethnic Germans in the defense of the USSR appeared on August 24, 1941 in *Komsomolskaya Pravda* (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Komsomolskaya_Pravda) (a prominent Soviet newspaper). This article highlighted the loyalty and bravery of German soldiers in the Red Army. The focus of the article was a *Komsomol* (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Komsomol>) member named Heinrich Hoffmann who died under extreme torture rather than provide information to his Nazi captors. It was only after the Soviet government promulgated the order to deport the Volga Germans on August 28th that the Soviet press ceased to note the positive contributions of ethnic Germans to the anti-Nazi resistance in the USSR.

The evidence does not support Stalin regime's claims of treasonous acts among the Soviet Union's German minorities. Instead the only real connections between the ethnic Germans of the USSR and Nazi Germany was their shared language and culture.



NORKA (/)

(/uploads/3/7/7/9/37792067/7539580_orig.jpg)

Political cartoon by Erich Schilling depicting Stalin signing the order to banish the Volga Germans to Siberia in 1941. Stalin is quoted as saying: "The world cannot say that I have not won a victory over the Germans!" Source unknown.

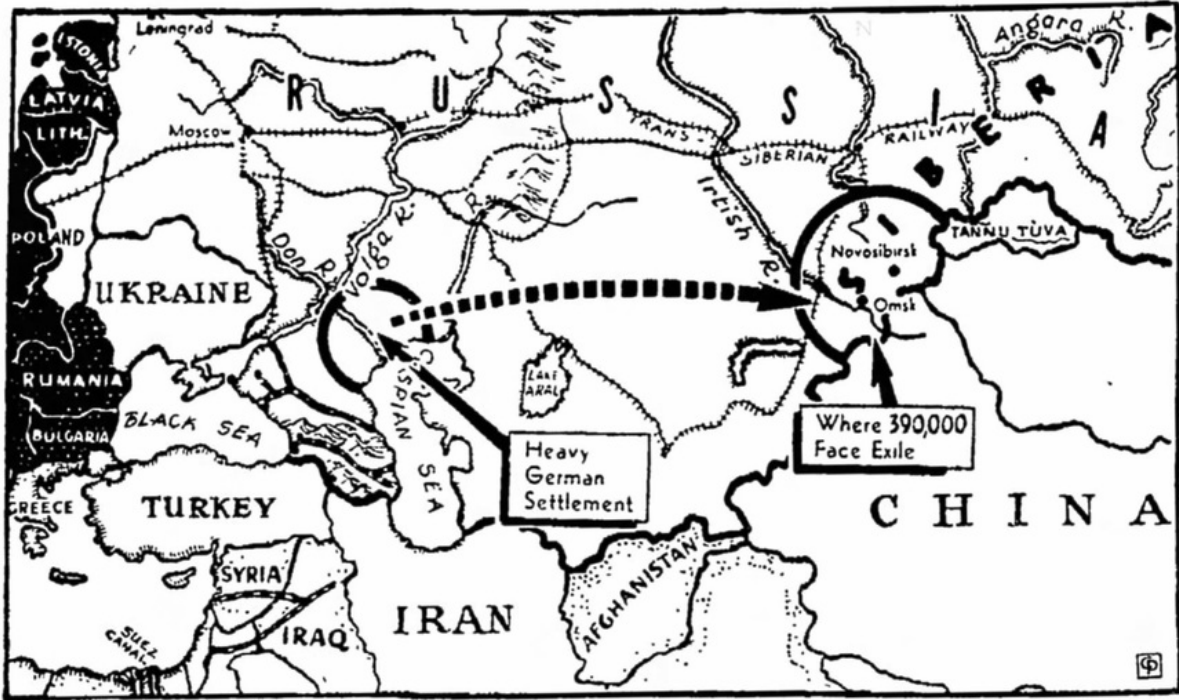
The deportation of the Volga Germans was not done in secret. The story was reported in many newspapers and magazines across the United States, including the *New York Times* and the widely read German-Russian newspaper, *Die Welt-Post*, on September 11, 1941.

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The News-Journal - Mansfield, Ohio

10 Sept 1941

Where Soviets Plan to Exile 390,000 Colonists



Approximately 390,000 members of the 180-year-old German colony in Russia Volga river basin will be exiled to Siberia (see map), according to the Soviets, who accuse the colonists of harboring saboteurs and engaging in fifth column activities.

(/uploads/3/7/7/9/37792067/4174055_orig.jpg)

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Die Welt-Post ist das Organ der Wolgadeutschen in Amerika an deren Verehrer überall in der Welt.
 Preis pro Jahr \$4.00 das Jahr \$2.00 für zwei Jahre bei Vorausbezahlung

Die Welt-Post

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31. Jahrgang Omaha-Lincoln, Neb. Donnerstag, den 11. September 1941

Joseph Stalin entschlossen, die Wolgadeutschen zu liquidieren und in alle Winde zu zerstreuen.

Kurze Geschichte der Wolgadeutschen; wohin sie jetzt überführt werden sollen und die wirklichen Hintergründe des grausamen Vorgehens der Sowjet-Regierung.

Wolkau — Eine Massenumsiedelung der starken deutschstämmigen Bevölkerung des Wolgaregions wurde angeordnet, weil dieselbe angeblich bereit sein soll, auf ein Zeichen von Deutschland die russischen Kriegsbemühungen zu sabotieren.

In dem von den Deutschen im 18. Jahrhundert unter der Herrschaft Katharina der Großen besiedelten Gebiet beiderseits der Wolga, befinden sich, sagt das amtliche Wolkau, unter der deutschen Bevölkerung zehntausende kaukasischer und deutscher Spione. Die Sowjet-Regierung zur Umsiedelung der Deutschstämmigen beschließt vor, daß diese so rasch wie nur möglich durch den nationalen Verteidigungsrat mit Premier Stalin als Vorgesetzter durchgeführt wird. Die Wolga-Deutschen sollen in den Tomowbirij und Kasch Gebieten im weiträumigen Sibirien, dem Altai-Gebiet der Kasakstan Republik und Kaschgebieten angesiedelt werden. Die Familien erhalten Land und Staatsbürgerschaft, was ein neues Leben in neuer, tausende Meilen von der alten entfernten Umgebung zu beginnen.

Die neu angewiesenen Gebiete
 Das Deutsche Wolgaregion bildet eine autonome Sowjetrepublik nördlich des Kaspiischen Meeres. Von seiner Bevölkerung von 571,089 im Jahre 1926 waren ungefähr 67 Prozent deutscher Abstammung.

Tomowbirij ist die Hauptstadt des westsibirischen Gouvernements am rechten Ufer gelegen, zählt 121,000 Einwohner und ist der größte Handels- und Warenumschlagplatz Westsibirien.

Kasch, westsibirische Stadt von 116,000 Einwohnern, ist ein großer Getreide- und Viehplatz. Im Steppegebiet sind über 80,000 deutsche Bauern (Weinmoniten) angesiedelt.

Das Altai-Gebiet bezeichnet man die nähere und weitere Umgebung von Barnaul, Hauptstadt des sibirischen Gouvernements, mit 82,000 Einwohnern am Ufer und an der 1917 erbauten Bahn Tomow-Nikolajewsk-Barnaul-Tscheljabinsk gelegen. Sitz der Berg- und Hüttenverwaltung des Altai-Gebietes. Barnaul ist seit Erbauung der Sibirischen Bahn wichtiger Stapelplatz für Getreide, Futter, Fleisch, Häute und Felle.

Kasakstan liegt östlich des jetzigen Gebietes der Wolgadeutschen, an das es eine kurze Strecke angrenzt, im Südwesten Russisch-Asien. Im Weiten Steppenland, Hügel- und Tafellandschaft, im Osten Hochgebirge, Südalpen, Kerkas (Weizen und Hirse) und Viehwirtschaft (Schafe, Rinder, Pferde). Die Hälfte der Bevölkerung ist moschambanisch, meist nomadisierende Staat-Nomaden, sowie Russen und Ukrainer.

Die Wolgadeutschen

Das Deutsche Wolgaregion bildet eine autonome Sowjetrepublik nördlich des Kaspiischen Meeres. Von seiner Bevölkerung von 571,089 im Jahre 1926 waren ungefähr 67 Prozent deutscher Abstammung. Sie sind Nachkommen der etwa 25,000 unter Katharina die Große 1773 bis 1786 in den russischen Gouvernements Saratow und Samara angesiedelten Pflücker, Hesse und Wietkenbauer. 1914 zählten sie 600,000 bis 700,000. Nach schweren Anfangsjahren brachten die Jahre 1794—1815 die Wüste der Kolonien, besonders die Herrenscher Kolonie Saratow. Die Ueberbevölkerung führte 1846 zur Gründung neuer Kolonien in der östlichen Steppe. Die Sowjet-Herrschaft und in ihrem Gefolge Hunger und Seuchen haben einen großen Teil hingerafft, viele andere zur Auswanderung gezwungen. 1921 wurde den Wolgadeutschen innerhalb eines als „Deutsche Arbeitskommission“ angeordneten Verwaltungsbereiches mit dem Hauptort Kurgan eine beschränkte, kulturelle Autonomie von der Sowjetregierung zugesprochen.

Das neue sibirische Exil

Unter obiger Überschrift schreibt die „St. Louis Post-Dispatch“ in einem Leitartikel vom 8. Sept. u. a.: „Aufwärts von einer halben Million Bürger deutscher Abstammung der autonomen Wolgarepublik wurden nach Sibirien verbannt. Obwohl diese Leute Russen waren, weil Katharina die Große deren Vorfahren einlud, diese Gegend zu kultivieren, haben sie — mit behördlicher Zustimmung — ihre eigene Sprache und Gebräuche beibehalten, und es wird jetzt behauptet, daß sie mit nationalsozialistischen Spionen und Saboteuren durchdrungen seien.“

„Dies ist entweder ein Anzeichen von der Grundlosigkeit, mit der Hitler seine „Fünfte Kolonne“ Technik entwickelt hat, oder es bedeutet, daß

im Kreml Furcht — ja Panik herrscht. Vielleicht stellt es etwas von beidem dar.“

„Auf alle Fälle ist dies ein gewaltiges Unternehmen. Tausende Meilen Eisenbahnen und Landstraßen befördert werden, die bereits durch Flüchtlinge und Truppentransporte überfüllt sind. Und es wird durch die angeordnete Absicht, diese Leute auf gutem Land wieder anzusiedeln, was sie wenigstens eine bessere als durchschnittliche Gelegenheit, das Leben erneut zu beginnen haben, nicht leichter gemacht. Da die Schafe mit den Wägen umgeladen werden, verlangt einfache Gerechtigkeit dieselbe, statt die Schaffung eines weiteren Super-Konzentrationslagers. Aber es ist eine Frage, ob unter dem Kriegsdruk der Name Sibirien keines alten Schreckens entleidet werden kann.“

Gegner des Kommunismus

Der „Lincoln Star“ behandelt die Wolgadeutsche Frage in einem langen Leitartikel unter der Überschrift „Kriegerische Leute des Wolgaregions“. Er schildert die Vorgeschichte, wie Katharina die Große deutsche Farmer einlud, ihnen Land an der Wolga schenkte, in der auch erfüllt die Erwartung, daß sie die Ukraine zu einem blühenden Land umgestalten würden und schrieb dann: „Diese Russen deutscher Abkunft, tüchtige Farmer, fleißig und ihrem Vordere zugewandt, bilden nach Ansicht Stalins und seines Armeekorpskommandos jetzt eine große Gefahr für die Sicherheit Russlands. Wolkau begründet seine Entscheidung damit, daß es erschaffen sei, Sabotage und unsterbliche Betätigungen zu verhindern, welche die russischen Verteidigungsmächte gefährden würden.“

„Aber die russische Einklinkung enthält nicht alle Tatsachen“, erklärt der Artikel, der fortführt:

„Diese Farmer in der Ukraine haben von Anfang an der Sowjet-Herrschaft opponiert, haben zeitweilig sehr hart opponiert und sehen sich häufig heftigen Unterdrückungsmaßnahmen gegenüber, Gefährdung durch Hinrichtungs-Kommandos und Gefängnis und Deportation nach Sibirien.“

„Jetzt sollen sie in alle Winde zerstreut, aus ihren Heimen und deren Land herausgerissen und nach den bitter kalten sibirischen Wäldern und andere Teile Russlands umgesiedelt werden.“

Die Meldung von der Liquidierung der Wolgadeutschen hat unter ihren Landsleuten in Amerika eine niederstimmernde Wirkung verursacht: es ist eine hexenreißende Meldung. Ein Unioersitätsprofessor stellte uns die Frage: „Wird sich das christliche Gewissen Amerikas regen?“

The Welt Post for September 11, 1941.

The deportation order impacted all ethnic Germans including officers in the Russian military and high ranking Communist party officials, including all of the members of the [Autonomous Volga German Republic \(/soviet-rule-1918-1941.html\)](http://soviet-rule-1918-1941.html), who were arrested and accused of counter-revolutionary activity and supporting a secret uprising against the Soviet powers on behalf of Nazi Germany.

Only a few German women married to non-German men were spared the deportation order. [Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aleksandr_Solzhenitsyn)

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aleksandr_Solzhenitsyn) wrote in his book, *The Gulag Archipelago* (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Gulag_Archipelago):

"Then there was the wave of Germans – Germans living on the Volga, colonists in the Ukraine and North Caucasus, and all Germans in general who lived anywhere in the Soviet Union. The determining factor here was blood, and even heroes of the Civil War [the Russian Revolution] and old members of the Party who were German were sent off to exile."

Clearly the deportation had nothing to do with potential “spies and saboteurs” but was aimed at the German ethnic group and other ethnic groups the Soviets viewed as troublesome. These groups included the [Crimean Tatars](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crimean_Tatars) (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crimean_Tatars), [Meskhetian Turks](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meskhetian_Turks) (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meskhetian_Turks), [Koreans](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deportation_of_Koreans_in_the_Soviet_Union) (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deportation_of_Koreans_in_the_Soviet_Union), Greeks, and Kurds who were also deported from their homelands. Of all these groups, the ethnic Germans were by far the largest.

The deportation order was carried out by [Lavrentiy Beria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lavrentiy_Beria) (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lavrentiy_Beria), Chief of the NKVD who was responsible for the deaths of millions during [Stalin’s Great Purge](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Purge) (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Purge).



NORKA (/)

(/uploads/3/7/7/9/37792067/2947147_orig.png)

Lavrentiy Beria, chief of the notorious NKVD (the Soviet secret police). Source: Wikimedia Commons.

Beria charged his deputy, [Ivan Alexandrovich Serov](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ivan_Serov) (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ivan_Serov), with carrying out the operational details of the deportation which he reported starting on August 29th. Serov also was responsible for mass deportation of the [Crimean Tatars](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crimean_Tatars) (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crimean_Tatars), the [Chechens](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Lentil_(Caucasus)) ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Lentil_\(Caucasus\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Lentil_(Caucasus))), and people from the Baltic states. He was also responsible for the [Katyn massacre](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Katyn_massacre) (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Katyn_massacre) in 1940.

NORKA (/)



(/uploads/3/7/7/9/37792067/ivan-

serov_orig.jpg)

Ivan Alexandrovich Serov. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

According to numerous first hand reports, including one from Norka resident [Alexander Konrad Schreiber \(/the-fate-of-a-schreiber-family.html\)](/the-fate-of-a-schreiber-family.html), thousands of Russian soldiers and militia arrived in the Volga villages a few hours after the order and the people were given as little as four hours to prepare for the evacuation. They were told that anyone resisting or attempting to hide would be summarily shot, and a few were.

They were also falsely told that the relocation was temporary and they would be able to return home at the end of the war.



(/uploads/3/7/7/9/37792067/9943735_orig.png)

Soviets execute those who offered resistance. Source unknown.

The Soviet's sent task forces into each colony, collective farm and city to record each family subject to deportation on index cards.

Each person, regardless of age, was allowed one suitcase or bundle (a maximum of 30 kilograms or about 66 pounds per person) with personal items and small household goods. They were promised that hot meals and bread would be provided on the trains. A promise that the Soviets were completely unprepared to fulfill.

Many knew that they would be sent to Siberia and took all the food, clothing and bedding they could carry. In the long run those with the extra clothing and bedding had the best chance of surviving the cold in the north where little or no preparation had been made for their arrival.

Ironically, the Germans were given receipts for their left behind possessions, which most people knew would never be honored.

This was a massive effort on the part of the Soviet government during the midst of World War II when resources were already stretched thin. Some 20,000 NKVD troops and the huge quantities of rolling stock and other resources were diverted from the war effort in order to shift this vast number of old people, women and children to distant lands quite unprepared to receive them. The Germans were to be resettled in the Altai, Omsk and Novosibirsk regions of Western Siberia and Kazakhstan. The deportation was to be completed by September 20, 1941. Over 3.5 million rubles were allocated to the deportation of the ethnic Germans.

The deportation of Norka began shortly after the deportation decree on August 28th. It is estimated that there were about 8,000 people living in Norka when the decree was issued. The last reliable number recorded was 7,700 in 1931 ([/population.html](#)). If you are a descendant from Norka, there were almost certainly family members who experienced this horror.

The people of Norka, like all the ethnic Germans living in the Volga region, were forced to leave their homes, furniture, most personal items and all of their livestock. Most would never see their homes again.

The entire population was forced to load their belongings on to wagons and trucks belonging to the local collective farms. Once loaded, they were transported to the nearest rail station at Saratov or Uvek (a suburb station of Saratov) under the armed supervision of the NKVD and the Red Army who assured that no one deserted. It can be imagined that many of those not in good health, and that many of the old and very young, did not make it to the station.

The road to the train stations took the people from Norka through the neighboring Russian village of Rybushka. Despite historical tensions, the Russians surely must have had mixed emotions when they saw their long-time German neighbors being marched away, unlikely to ever be seen again.



(/uploads/3/7/7/9/37792067/6744287_orig.jpg)

The German residents of Norka were marched down this street during the forced deportation to Siberia and Central Asia in 1941. Most would never return again. Photograph courtesy of Nina Donath.

One of only [two Germans who remained in Norka \(/the-last-germans-in-norka.html\)](#) was Elvira Zaharina, whose mother Natalija Zaharina (née Burbach) had married a Russian man. Elvira recalls the following about the day of deportation:

"We remained the only Germans in the village. The soldiers have taken all the people away. At night, mum and I nestled to each other and cried. Cows lowed, dogs barked, cats mewed...all of the village was without people..."



(/uploads/3/7/7/9/37792067/3272164_orig.png)

Natalija Zaharina (née Burbach), second from the left, was one of the only Germans who remained in Norka after the deportation in 1941. Source: Alexander Schreiber.

By September 5th, the deportees were arriving at the Saratov station where they were loaded into freight and cattle cars with 50 or 60 people in each car. Some of the cars had open vents and some had no vents at all.

Lists were made of deported families as they arrived at the railheads. The lists show the date and point of departure.

NORKA (1)
ЗАПОЛНЯЕТСЯ НА ГЛАВУ СЕМЬИ

7

1. Фамилия Шрейбер Алф. _____
 2. Имя, отчество Александр Викентий Область _____
 3. Год рождения 1899 4. Место рождения село
Норка АССР Н. П. Район _____
 5. Национальность Немец Село _____
 6. Место жительства (точное) с. Норка
Балбучевского района
АССР Н. П. Дата прибытия _____
 7. Род занятия Слушатель Карточку составил Викент
 Основание Указ Президиума
Верховного Совета СССР
от 28/111-41 (подпись) L-X 1941 г.

Члены семьи

| Фамилия, имя и отчество | Год рождения | Степень родства |
|----------------------------------|--------------|--------------------|
| <u>Шрейбер Лидия Кондр</u> | <u>1900</u> | <u>жена</u> |
| <u>Шрейбер Эдуард Александр</u> | <u>1932</u> | <u>сын</u> |
| <u>Шрейбер Волгана Александр</u> | <u>1934</u> | <u>сын</u> |
| <u>Шрейбер Эльвира Александр</u> | <u>1938</u> | <u>дочь</u> |
| <u>Мельник Лидия Александр</u> | <u>1904</u> | <u>жена работ.</u> |
| <u>Кох Артур Георгиев</u> | <u>1923</u> | <u>сын 9. п. 5</u> |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

Особые отметки: Ду. и 844 г. 1941
с. Балбучи

(/uploads/3/7/7/9/37792067/5513029_orig.png)

The deportation card for the family of Alexander Schreiber from Norka. Their train departed for Siberia in September 1941. Courtesy of Alexander Schreiber.

There were 188 train convoys (echelons) departing from 31 stations transporting 451,986 people from their homes. By comparison, the U.S. government wrongly

interned about 110,000 Japanese during World War II.

NORKA (/)



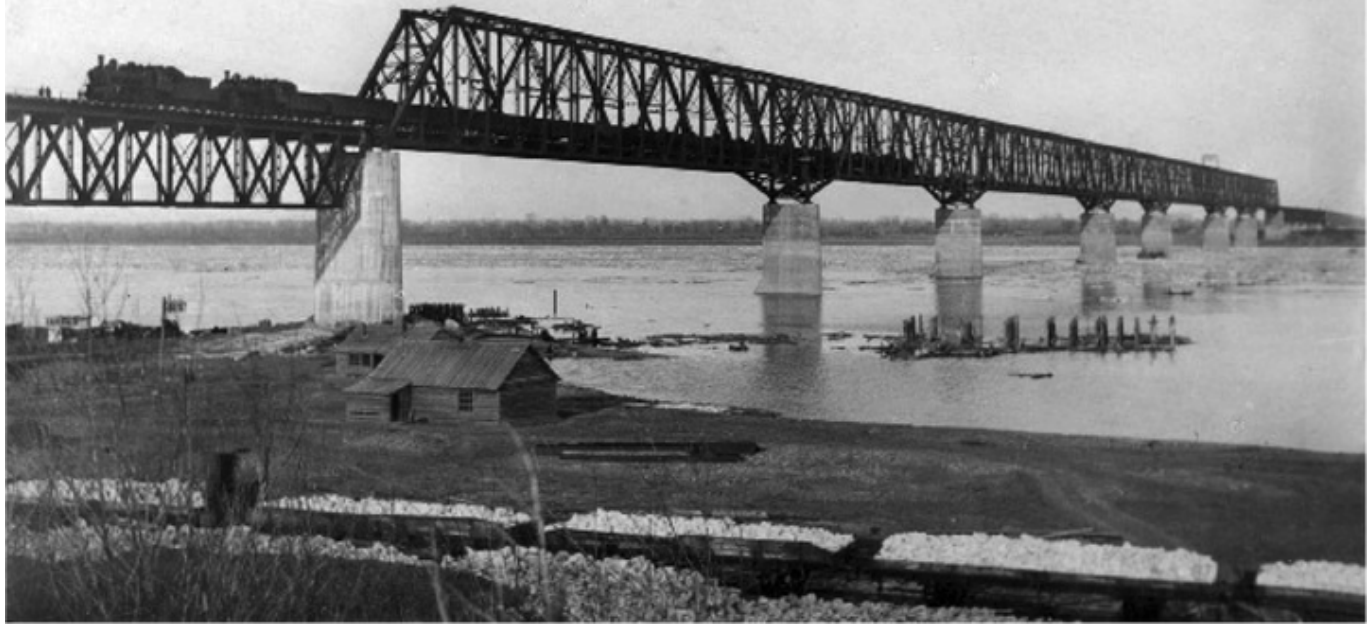
(/uploads/3/7/7/9/37792067/deportation_of_germans_in_gomel_region_of_ussr.jpg)

The arrest and deportation of Soviet Germans living in the Gomel region in 1941. Source:

<http://nashkraj.info/aresty-i-deportatsii-nemetskogo-nasele/>

The long and difficult journey to Kazakhstan and Siberia started as the trains crossed the railroad bridge over the Volga River at Uvek. Ironically, the bridge had been built only a few years prior.

NORKA (/)



(/uploads/3/7/7/9/37792067/3969617_orig.png)

Railroad bridge at Uvek. Source: Structurae website (May 2017) <https://structurae.net/structures/saratov-railroad-bridge>.

After crossing the Volga at Uvek, the trains proceeded east. Some of the deportation trains took a northern route from Uralsk to Omsk and then further into Siberia. Most of the people from Norka took a route that dipped deep into Kazakhstan and then turned north into the [Altai region](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Altai_Krai) (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Altai_Krai) of Siberia. This was a much longer route.



(/uploads/3/7/7/9/37792067/8188326_orig.png)

Soviet railroad map dated 1943. Source: Steven Schreiber.

The journey through desert lands of Kazakhstan must have been very difficult with virtually no protection from the hot sun during the day and cold nights.

According to Alexander Konrad Schreiber from Norka, his transport train, which held close to 2,500 people, was in route for one month. The trains with the deportees were often forced to wait on rail sidings to make way for military transports traveling west to the front lines.

The deportees had to primarily rely on the food they brought with them and they were only given water when the train stopped every three or four days. When food was provided, it was generally salted herring, which only made the prisoners' thirst that much greater.

Unsanitary conditions in the rail cars were compounded by the poor quality of available water. These conditions led to outbreaks of infectious diseases such as dysentery. Many died and the victims were primarily children and the elderly.

The consequences for the Volga Germans were devastating. Tens of thousands are believed to have died during the journey to Siberia, which lasted up to two

months. In some cases, bodies were left in the overcrowded cattle wagons for weeks on end. In others, they were thrown out beside the tracks.

NORKA



(/uploads/3/7/7/9/37792067/8675817_orig.png)

Deportation route taken by the people living in Norka in 1941. Alexander Schreiber (son of Alexander Konrad Schreiber) provided the details of this route.

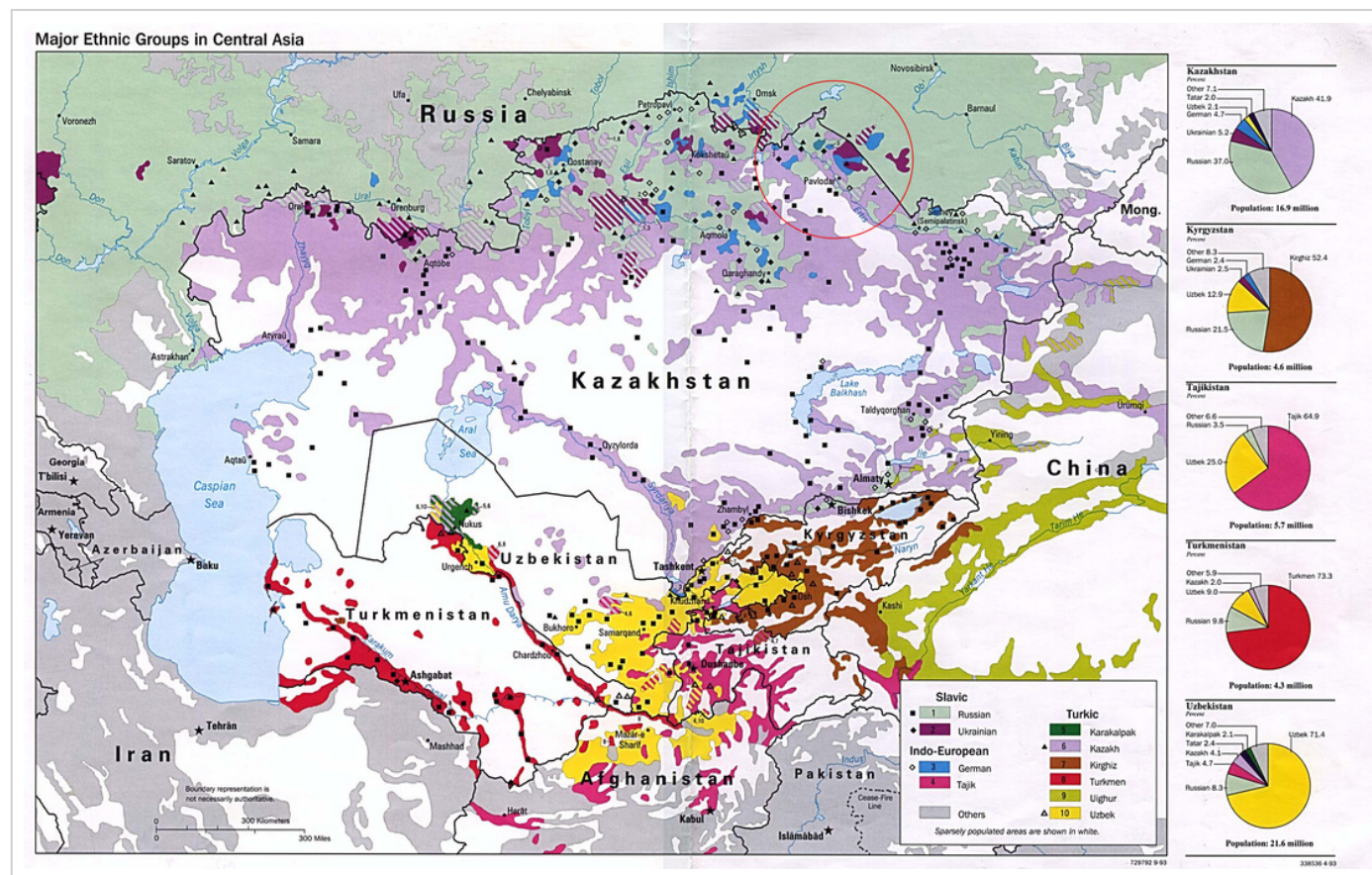
After nearly a month on the train, the people from Norka were primarily unloaded at the train station in Kulunda, which is located in the Altai region of Siberia. From there, trucks took them to Russian villages of Gilevka, Gonokhovo, and Zavyalovo. Generally the German deportees were not allowed to live in cities, only in small rural villages.

It was then October and winter was already creeping over the landscape where temperatures can drop to minus 45 degrees Fahrenheit. While some of the Russians living in this area were kind to the German deportees, many called their new neighbors “fascists” and worse. The Soviet government did nothing to explain that the Volga Germans were not responsible for the actions of the Nazis. This lack of information increased the hostility from the those already living in the resettlement areas.

The Soviet authorities had little time to prepare for the arrival of such large numbers of people and there was great confusion and lack of organization.

In the Novosibirsk region, approximately 45 percent of those deported were listed as children and about 6 percent were classified as elderly.

Although still Soviet citizens, the ethnic Germans were stripped of their civil rights and permanently restricted to living in “special settlements.” They remained in this status until 1955 when they were finally allowed to seek permission to relocate to other parts of Siberia and Kazakhstan.



(/uploads/3/7/7/9/37792067/3346898_orig.jpg)

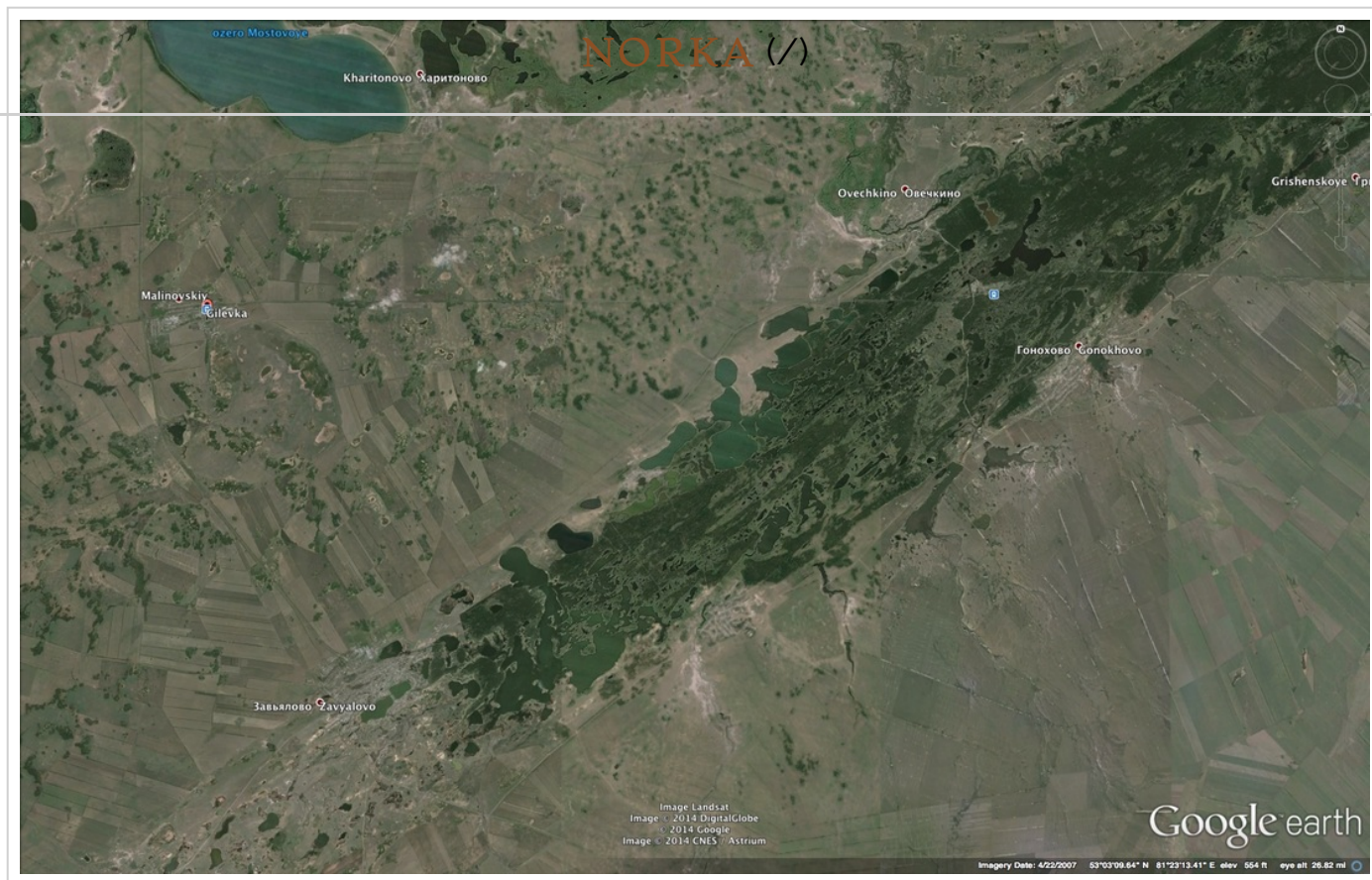
1993 map of ethnic groups in Siberia, Kazakhstan and Central Asia. German settlements are shown in blue.

The area where many people from Norka were deported to in 1941 is circled in red. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

The lack of proper housing proved to be a major problem for the deportees. By January 1942, German exiles had already exhausted the local housing. In the Altai region, for instance, the local NKVD authorities reported in October 1941 that they could house 100,000 German special settlers. By January 1942, however, over 110,000 German exiles had already arrived. The buildings that did exist often had no roofs or windows. Frequently the exiles had to construct crude shelters out of earth and straw for protection from the elements. In Altai, as late as 1950, 46 percent of the German special settlers still lived in these primitive huts. The extremely harsh material conditions of the special settlements contributed to a massive increase in mortality among the Russian Germans during the 1940s.



(/uploads/3/7/7/9/37792067/2925498_orig.png)
Drawing of typical living conditions for the deportees. Source unknown.



(/uploads/3/7/7/9/37792067/4726328_orig.jpg)

In 1941, many people deported from Norka were placed in the Russian villages of Gilevka, Gonokhovo, and Zavyalovo shown on this Google earth image. This portion of Siberia is known as Altai Krai. Many descendants of Norka remain in this area today. Click to see a larger view.

Within the first year, most of the men who were deported were separated from their families and sent to **Gulags** (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gulag>) or labor camps where they worked in primitive conditions and severe weather. The deportees were systematically faced with **repression** (</repression-1941-1956.html>) in many forms.

On July 2, 1942, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the **Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic** (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Soviet_Federative_Socialist_Republic) re named the village of Norka and the surrounding district to Nekrasovo.

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