

# Introduction

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## The Authors

Siegfried von Vegesack (1888–1974) and Werner Bergengruen (1892–1964) were literary figures of European importance who wrote across the mid-twentieth century. Both were ethnic Germans born in the Baltic provinces of the Russian Empire before moving, at relatively young ages, to the German heartland where they lived most of their lives. Sharing personal histories of origin and displacement, the authors produced literature that investigated common themes around homeland, identity and multicultural society. There were also distinct differences between them, with von Vegesack's literature (on balance) being more autobiographical and realistic, while Bergengruen's was more mystical and complex. Although, at times, both authors won considerable recognition within their adopted German homeland, they have never really found English-language readerships. Plausibly, this has had something to do with their responses to the worst period of Germany's history. Bergengruen complained that, after 1945, authors who had left Hitler's Germany received much greater attention than those who had remained within the country.<sup>1</sup> He had in mind especially Thomas Mann, who had emigrated early in the Third Reich and, during the Second World War, broadcast to Germany via the BBC. Bergengruen felt that authors who had not followed Mann's path were deemed deficient in ways that invalidated their work. Neither Bergengruen nor von Vegesack had emigrated – or, better, emigrated completely – during the Third Reich.

Following Germany's military defeat, Thomas Mann made critical comments about authors who had not followed him into exile.<sup>2</sup> The Nobel Laureate's position was lent substance by the fact that other clearly important literary figures, such as Bertolt Brecht, had also exiled themselves. On

the face of it, the binary judgement that émigrés had produced good literature, while those who had lived under Nazism had not, was attractive. It corresponded to the assumption that Hitler's totalitarian state must have left artistic figures so little space for independent creative expression that they could never have achieved anything significant. Yet once we start to look at the work of von Vegesack and Bergengruen, we will see that artistic lives were more complex than that.

Siegfried von Vegesack and Werner Bergengruen had extensive literary careers. Both were successful before 1933, and produced mature, reflective work after 1945. The Third Reich marked only one phase in their long creative lives, albeit a tremendously important one. Typical of the Baltic German community from which they came, they were proud of their German cultural identities; they were, however, neither modern political nationalists nor, ultimately, supporters of Hitler's regime. Von Vegesack had various disputes with the Nazi Party and pursued strategies, including inner emigration and sojourns outside the country, to put space between himself and the Third Reich.<sup>3</sup> More problematic was his decision, taken during the Second World War, to serve as a translator for the *Wehrmacht*.<sup>4</sup> Bergengruen admitted being a political conservative and, in personal writings, considered that Nazism reflected both bad and good motivations.<sup>5</sup> In the end, however, he could only be an opponent of a state that defined his wife, Charlotte, as a Jew. Bergengruen was once identified as the favourite author of Hans Scholl, the leader of the White Rose Group,<sup>6</sup> and was recognised posthumously as a significant Catholic author.<sup>7</sup>

Both authors, in different ways, retreated routinely from Nazified daily life into personal creative space, yet their choice to remain within Hitler's Germany can still seem odd. Why settle for coexistence with evil? The question raises once again the idea that artists who remained within Hitler's state had something wrong with them. Their relationships with the Third Reich will be addressed at length as this study proceeds; at this early point we need only observe that the choices of von Vegesack and Bergengruen to remain within Germany and Austria actually make them all the more deserving of study. This is because, historically, enforced coexistence with disagreeable authorities has been more relevant to most people's lives than experiences of privileged emigration and high-profile resistance. Most people who have encountered even serious state-based injustices have had little practical alternative than to get on with their lives, while ameliorating unpleasant consequences by whatever means might be available. Viewed from this perspective, the lives and work of people such as von Vegesack and Bergengruen are important topics for examination. If their lives, in some ways, strike us as imperfect, so have been the lives of most other people – and that remains the case today.

## Insiders and Outsiders

Siegfried von Vegesack and Werner Bergengruen were concurrently ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ by virtue of living in the Third Reich without supporting it, but they were ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ in another sense too: they were German, but not of Germany. They had grown up in a part of the German cultural sphere located within the Russian Empire, namely the Baltic provinces. They started their lives as linguistic Germans and Russian citizens. Theirs was an ambiguous position that at least raised the possibility that they were somehow incomplete members of the community found inside the German heartland who would not understand its issues properly. The evidence of their writing, however, proves something else entirely. Their hybrid status gave them access to the subtleties of German community life while enabling them to retain alternative insights and critical objectivity. This added to their work’s ‘edge’.

Implicit here is that, in the early twentieth century, Baltic German identity was, in some ways, different from ‘heartland-German’ identity. Moreover, the authors’ identities developed over time in line with life experiences ranging from migration to ageing, as well as from imprisonment to religious conversion. Here, we have authors who grew up *outside* Germany but went on to produce work *inside* the country; who were *German* but at the same time *not German*; and who had mobile lives packed with rich experiences. When they wrote, they used literary ingredients found within Germany, imported from their original Baltic home, and derived from distinctive personal knowledge. The richness of their background enabled them to write geographically diverse, multiculturally aware stories that reflected everything from movement and adventure to rupture, change, uncertainty and mystery. The identity-based complexity of their work means that it still resonates today.<sup>8</sup>

## Liquid Life and Its Limits

The observation recalls Zygmunt Bauman’s description of our contemporary world as liquid. This means little is fixed; everything can flow and transform.<sup>9</sup> While relatively young, both von Vegesack and Bergengruen had lives that flowed from one European empire to another. Subsequently, both experienced extensive further movements as von Vegesack travelled around Latin America and, during the Nazi period, Bergengruen sought somewhere safe for his family to live. From one point of view, the liquidity that they experienced led both to become not just peculiarly cosmopolitan Germans, but citizens of Europe, if not the world.

Their lives were not, however, liquid without limits. Movement and change were counterpointed by aspects of life that remained fixed. To inquire after processes of change and lack of change as they affect migrants is as relevant today as ever, given the ever-increasing extent of population mobility around the world. Under the circumstances, it makes sense to pay attention to thoughtful people who lived comparable lives to see what we can learn from them.

Biographically-based study of migration will provide a supplement not only to Bauman's expansive theorising about liquid life, but also to that of authors, such as J. W. Berry, who have focused more tightly on migrant experience and psychology.<sup>10</sup> In line with Bauman's work, Berry has acknowledged that migration can precipitate substantial change in people; but, in line with what we will see in von Vegesack and Bergengruen, he also found that movement could be met with continuity and retrenchment.

Berry identified four options available to members of a minority culture newly located in a different milieu. In line with 'liquid' expectations, they might become assimilated. Less radically, but still expressing partial liquidity, they might decide to integrate. By this, Berry meant that some minority members would engage in the day-to-day life of the majority, while nonetheless managing to maintain significant elements of their existing culture in a private sphere. Berry also realised that migrants could choose quite different options. At odds with liquid thinking, they might choose separation, in which they retreated from majority society as much as possible to maintain their original distinctiveness. A fourth possibility was marginalisation, in which prior cultural and social forms collapsed without anything replacing them.<sup>11</sup>

Despite its optionality, Berry's work underlined the frequency of cultural continuity and resistance among migrant groups. He even posited that the experience of movement might revitalise the interest of minorities in their distinctive cultures and identities. The question then follows as to why people might decide to move to a new home, only to seek to insulate themselves from, or to reject, concomitant cultural change. What forces sustain resistance to integration? Further questions follow from the refusal of members of a minority culture to change and are related to Berry's observation that intercultural impact is not a one-way street. If a minority will not change, what happens to the hosting majority? In other words, just as a majority culture can have a greater or lesser impact on a minority, so the reverse can happen. Through all kinds of interactions, the minority can change the majority culture as well.<sup>12</sup>

In the end, Berry's work highlights the contingency of migration experience. Fundamental cultural change is possible for those who migrate, but it is not inevitable. What happens depends, to a greater or lesser extent, on

the variables in play for given groups and individuals. Furthermore, interaction of minority and majority can have transformative consequences not just for the former, but for the latter too.

To talk about migration and the changes it brings is therefore to address a system of individuals, groups and relationships all interacting dynamically and rooted in empirical situations. The work of Bauman predicts outcomes that are likely to express liquid change; the work of Berry admits the likelihood of cultural retrenchment, or even resistance. The introduction of distinctive, visible and intellectual migrants such as von Vegesack and Bergengruen from the Russian Empire into Germany provides a case study of a process that admitted of both transformation and resilience. It was a story of how Germany impacted them, and how they impacted their host society too.

## Diaspora Perspectives

To introduce the word ‘diaspora’ to this study opens the way to a rich genre of literature that highlights the considerable extent of population movement in Europe and beyond during the twentieth century.<sup>13</sup> Undeniably, the lives of von Vegesack and Bergengruen exemplify many of the concerns found among recent diaspora scholars. Discussing refugees, Peter Gatrell has called for analysis of the meanings migrants attach to their departures, journeys and arrivals; he has underlined the need to see even forced migrants as being autonomous and anything other than anonymous; he has urged careful definition of the term ‘refugee’; he has stressed the importance of history to diaspora communities; he has highlighted that migration decisions reflect the histories of specific groups; and he has commented that, too often, refugees are given the opportunity to make themselves heard only under specific circumstances.<sup>14</sup> Elsewhere, Stéphane Dufoix has urged academics to move beyond simple classifications of population movement into ‘voluntary’ or ‘forced’.<sup>15</sup>

The experiences of Bergengruen and von Vegesack correspond to the themes identified here, for instance by bursting simple classifications. Their migration might have started out with elements of voluntarism (although Bergengruen was still at school when he moved to northern Germany), but in time return became politically impossible. Hence, both began as reluctant migrants, and with time became refugees of a kind. Their trajectory followed community ties to the German heartland and, at least in the case of von Vegesack, was facilitated by family contacts. Continually, both authors expressed their personal agency by building artistic lives that examined experiences of migration and rehoming from multiple standpoints.

The skill with which they crafted their tales and verses helped ensure that their voices found significant audiences. Often, they turned to history as a vehicle for their tales. If we accept that the twentieth century was a period of movement, then consideration of the lives and work of such people should be central to its analysis.<sup>16</sup>

Siegfried von Vegesack and Werner Bergengruen began life as members of an historic German diaspora community. Famous other groups included Romania's Siebenbürger Sachsen and Ukraine's Volga Germans. The two authors at issue here, however, hailed from the German-dominated, yet considerably multicultural, Baltic provinces of the Tsarist Empire. Many Baltic Germans constituted a privileged imperial caste and, appropriately, Bergengruen was born into a well-to-do professional family in Riga in 1892. More privileged still, von Vegesack was the ninth child of an aristocratic family that owned the Blumberghof estate in Livonia, where he was born in 1888. His mother's family, von Campenhausen, had a particularly distinguished past.

While young, both authors enjoyed substantially happy lives, with plenty of time to explore the extensive natural Baltic world. At relatively early points, however, their comfort was disrupted. Dismayed by, first, growing attempts to Russify life in the Baltic provinces and, second, the disorders of 1905, by stages the Bergengruen family relocated to Germany. Von Vegesack remained in the Baltic a bit longer, migrating westwards early in the First World War. Although both personalities moved from one part of the German cultural and linguistic sphere to another, their experience of migration remained significant because, on the one hand, they moved between empires and, on the other hand, the Baltic German community was highly aware of its distinctive characteristics born of a long history and its location at the interface of West and East. Both von Vegesack and Bergengruen knew very well that they were Germans, but not of Germany. The realisation would run through their literature like the word 'Blackpool' through a proverbial 'stick of rock'. Here we hit upon the tension alluded to already: while both men experienced 'liquid flow' from the Baltic provinces to Germany, they also exemplified resilient identities based on a much-loved, deeply internalised homeland and membership of a distinctive and significant community.

Although both migrated to Germany, their ties to their places of origin endured, and both returned to the Baltic at various times during their lives. This was especially the case for von Vegesack since, for years after he left the Baltic, family members remained resident in the family manor house that he visited from time to time. It followed that the fate of both the Baltic territories (in which they were born) and the Baltic German community (of which they were members) remained important to both authors long after their relocation.

In time, von Vegesack and Bergengruen would wrestle with several of life's big themes, not least involving history, nature, religion, justice and the cycle of life. They did so in ways that were both general and specific, in the process drawing from all available literary forms, including autobiographical tales, the historical novel, short stories, verse, multivolume novels and avant-garde experiments. Many of their texts expressed the indelibility of upbringing. Both authors spent time at university gaining an education (not least in history) and, in different ways, were committed to spiritual values. The latter, in the form of Lutheranism, were important to the Baltic German community in general. The astonishing international political backdrop against which these two lives took place contributed much to their work. Mid-twentieth-century Europe, especially its eastern and central parts, was a cauldron of war and revolution, as well as a test centre for grand political experiments. It provided a remarkable location for experiencing and subsequently depicting themes including different kinds of displacement, transnational exchange, transcultural exchange and the problem of understanding life in the midst of flux.

## Approach

In the work of von Vegesack and Bergengruen, readers encounter subjects and themes including, but not limited to: being German, but not of Germany; being German, but also a member of something larger, whether a transnational community, a European community or a world community; the place of displacement and disruption in life; the interactions between a minority and wider society; literature anchored in personal experience that also reflected general historical developments; the problem of living with dictatorship without enthusiasm; and ageing outside your *Heimat*. Methodologically, this study adopts a biographical approach directed towards the history of ideas. Hence, creative fiction is addressed not so much in terms of aesthetics and the detailed use of language, but in terms of the ideas contained therein and how they developed in response to the authors' changing life circumstances.

In terms of structure, the chapters are 'flexibly chronological'. As much as possible, the text follows the authors' lives chronologically, while trying to express time-appropriate themes. Sometimes, however, for the sake of coherence, the chronological rule is broken. So, the chapter following the introduction deploys some important themes from across the authors' lives in the hope that doing so will provide context for subsequent chapters. Occasionally, a series of chapters follows the life of one author for an extended period before returning to the other author. This reflects

the challenge of dealing with the lives of two people in the same study and in extended fashion. One chapter especially is out of order chronologically, namely the discussion of von Vegesack's visit to Latin America in the mid-1930s. In terms of book structure, it is placed after the chapters dealing with the experiences of both authors inside the Third Reich. Von Vegesack's visit to Latin America requires extensive consideration but has few helpful links to his prior life in the Bavarian Forest or subsequent work about post-war justice. Likewise, it finds few points of strong comparison to Bergengruen's life. Hence, the chapter must stand somewhat alone.

Within this framework, the study addresses the lives of two Baltic German men who belonged to the same generation, who had life trajectories that (although not identical) bore some comparison, who corresponded and who took inspiration from each other.<sup>17</sup> Before we can get to grips with the individuals and the themes within their lives, we must, however, do some groundwork. A Baltic background was fundamental to both von Vegesack and Bergengruen. It shaped the authors and the literature they produced, as well as many of those who read and promoted their work. This was not least because the end of the Second World War saw a massed flight of Baltic Germans from eastern Europe to western Germany where, along with other German groups from eastern Europe, they gained considerable influence. After 1945, the work of these two authors was tailor-made to the needs of a migrant community as it adjusted to life in a new homeland. Since one of the most important things that bound the authors to the wider Baltic German community was a deep appreciation of their shared past, it follows that we must provide at least a brief outline of Baltic German history.

## **The Long View and Traditional Identity**

The commencement of German influence in the Baltic lands generally is dated to the period between the twelfth and fourteen centuries.<sup>18</sup> Before this, Danish influence along the southern Baltic coast was significant, and the Baltic lands were inhabited mainly by indigenous peoples. In the eleventh century, Danish interests extended through Holstein and Mecklenburg to Pomerania. Danish naval expeditions attacked Estonian land twice in the 1190s, and in 1206 King Waldemar II and Archbishop of Lund, Anders Sunesen, led a mission to the island of Ösel (today the Estonian island of Saaremaa) to pacify the inhabitants and spread Christianity. In 1219, Waldemar II embarked on a further crusade against the Estonians, in the process founding the city today called Tallinn, a name meaning 'city of Danes' in Estonian. Danes, Swedes and Germans, however, called the city Rävala, and for a long time it was generally called Reval – a fact that this

study will reflect, since both von Vegesack and Bergengruen used the name Reval, not Tallinn.<sup>19</sup> Danish power was so successful at this point that, for a few years, it even extended to Riga.

Attempts to spread Christianity in Livonia began earlier, namely in the 1180s, when the German Augustinian priest Meinhard began preaching there. Before 1200, under military protection, a church was founded at Üxküll.<sup>20</sup> It was, however, the Bishop of Bremen, Albert von Buxhoevden, who sailed to Livonia, where he began to build a more fully organised church. Part of this project led to the construction of Riga by merchants and pilgrims in 1201. In due course, Albert became the city's bishop. To further promote the religious mission in Livonia, he created the Order of the Brothers of the Sword, the members of which conquered the territory from the Livs and were granted lands there as a reward.<sup>21</sup> The order enjoyed some independence until it was defeated by the Lithuanians in 1236, after which it was incorporated into Prussia's German Orders.<sup>22</sup> Thereafter, the German Orders' control extended gradually, with Ösel (Saaremaa) being subdued in 1261 and Denmark selling its stake in Estonia in 1343.<sup>23</sup> The landowners built up systems of chivalrous organisations called *Ritterschaften*, while the laws of Lübeck were introduced to Reval (Tallinn) and those of Hamburg to Riga.<sup>24</sup>

The settlement of the lands today known as Estonia and Latvia by people from the territories to their west began, therefore, in distinctive fashion. It involved the introduction of Christianity, the establishment of landed estates, an interest in trade and the construction of German social order. In line with these characteristics, as ethnic Germans came to the region over the years, they tended to adopt roles more typical of social élites than 'ordinary' folk. Mundane social roles, such as those of peasant or labourer, tended to be left to the indigenous peoples, not least Latvians and Estonians.<sup>25</sup> German presence was enhanced from the fourteenth century on by the Hanseatic movement, which strengthened trading links between Riga and Reval (Tallinn) and German centres including Lübeck and Hamburg.<sup>26</sup>

German influence in the Baltic lands proved remarkably durable even though other external powers consistently had designs on the space. In the mid-sixteenth century, the southern Baltic lands were incorporated into the Polish–Lithuanian Union, while northern, Estonian lands were absorbed by the Swedish Empire. In 1629, Livonia also passed to Sweden.<sup>27</sup> Swedish hegemony became associated with one formative addition to the Baltic region above all others, the creation of the University of Dorpat (today Tartu). This was founded as an academy in 1632 during the reign of Gustavus Adolphus.<sup>28</sup> Centuries later, it remains a flourishing centre of academic excellence.

The region was transformed in the eighteenth century. By the Treaty of Nystad (1721), Estonia and Livonia were transferred to Russia, where Peter the Great allowed them extensive autonomous rights.<sup>29</sup> The Third Partition of Poland (1795) saw Courland also shift into the Russian sphere of influence. With this, Estonia, Livonia and Courland became united within the Russian Empire, a situation that lasted essentially as long as the empire did. Through it all, the Baltic provinces were led by German social élites who practised autonomous administration through government assemblies, most notably the semi-feudal *Landtag*. In exchange, they were loyal to the empire and provided St Petersburg with many able administrators and military leaders.<sup>30</sup> The community also organised economic guilds. Ethnic German businesspeople profited immensely as the area's ports, most notably Riga, became thriving transport hubs that served trade routes leading from Europe to the Russian heartland. Wealthy and influential Baltic German families developed contacts around the empire, not least with ethnic German settlements in, for instance, the Volga and Caucasus. Cultural connection promoted trade within the Russian Empire as well as with business interests in western Europe.

Economic and cultural ties bound the Baltic provinces and the German heartland. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, German intellectuals (called *Literaten*) migrated to the Baltic. J. G. Herder taught at the cathedral school in Riga; Richard Wagner spent time in the city. Addressing movement in the opposite direction, it became usual for the children of well-to-do Baltic German families to spend time at university in Germany.

It followed that the Baltic German community looked east and west. It looked east to its imperial political sponsor and for the sources of raw materials to be traded; it looked west for business connections and much cultural inspiration. Located at an interface between Occident and Orient, where it enjoyed considerable wealth and privilege, the community developed a distinctive identity. In the early nineteenth century, this identity included maintenance of a chivalric culture and patriotism towards the Russian Empire balanced by German idealism and Lutheran Christianity.<sup>31</sup> An important element of the values developed by the community was expressed by Baltic aristocrat Hamilkar von Fölkersahm (1811–56):

The value of a man is not determined by the rights which he exercises, but by the duties which he assumes.<sup>32</sup>

The same author characterised acceptance into a student fraternity at Dorpat University in comparable terms:

Acceptance is not a recognition of your worth, rather a confirmation that now something is expected of you.<sup>33</sup>

Baltic German identity was, therefore, a mixture. It reflected awareness of living on the frontier between East and West, defined itself in terms of service to the community, and expressed moral conviction, independent-mindedness and a certain imperial élitism. This ethos informed Baltic government, whether in the regional *Landtag*, urban councils or guilds.<sup>34</sup> Arguably, it embraced some ideas extended to the subordinate Baltic nationalities, which, in the context of the times, could be considered enlightened.<sup>35</sup> Serfdom was abolished early in the Baltic provinces, that is to say, in Estonia in 1816, Courland in 1817 and Livonia in 1819.<sup>36</sup> Further agrarian reforms followed during the 1840s and 1860s.<sup>37</sup>

## Storm Clouds

As the nineteenth century developed, the domination of the Baltic German social strata faced increasing challenges. National self-awareness grew among the Baltic peoples as, first, some clerics promoted Estonian and Latvian folk art, and later, from the 1850s on, indigenous national movements began to take hold.<sup>38</sup> As the nineteenth century closed and the twentieth century opened, the increasing power of Estonian and Latvian populations was making itself felt in the region's big cities. Industrialisation gave rise to factories that needed workers, hence the percentages of Baltic peoples in the main urban areas increased. Between 1867 and 1897, the percentage of Latvians in Riga rose from 23.5% to 41.64%; in Reval, the growth in percentage of Estonians was from 51.8% to 88.7%. (Baltic Germans accounted for roughly 10% of the entire population in the Baltic provinces and often were concentrated in important urban areas.)<sup>39</sup> Further changes followed, as newspapers in local languages began to circulate and the Latvian and Estonian communities produced their own political leaders, such as Konstantin Päts and Jaan Tõnisson.<sup>40</sup>

If the increasing assertiveness of the Baltic peoples constituted a pressure on German control of the Baltic 'from below', then there were also pressures 'from above'. The gradual rise of Slav political assertiveness was reflected in policies emanating from St Petersburg that began to encroach on long-standing Baltic German autonomy. Initiatives to increase cultural conformity around the Russian Empire, in effect to Russify it, became apparent in the 1860s. Dorpat historian and newspaper editor Carl Schirren provided the most famous response to this in 1869, when he provided a 'Livonian Answer' to Juri Samarin's critique of the Baltic provinces' cultural independence.<sup>41</sup> Schirren's advice was for the German community to persevere and survive. Ironically, this was not advice he was able to take himself, since he was sacked from Dorpat University in the same year.

Thereafter he moved to Germany where, eventually, he became Professor of Medieval and Modern History at the University of Kiel. The drive for Russification increased from the 1880s on, during which time German-language education came under increasing pressure, Dorpat University was renamed the University of Yuryev and steps were taken to Russify the police administration.

Siegfried von Vegesack and Werner Bergengruen were born in this later phase of what has been called the 'long nineteenth century'. If, at this time, many in the Baltic German community were still expressing traditional values that today we might identify as hegemonic and colonial, their efforts were increasingly unrealistic.<sup>42</sup>

## **Revolution and War**

If the rise of the Baltic nationalities and the attempted implementation of Russification policies were rain clouds gathering over the Baltic German community, then the storm broke in 1905.<sup>43</sup> Popular uprisings in especially the rural areas of the Baltic provinces saw 184 German-owned manor houses burned down and 82 Baltic Germans killed.<sup>44</sup> The frequency with which Protestant clergy were targeted for assault hinted at a background of pro-Orthodox, pro-Russian agitation. Order was only restored by the deployment of Cossack troops by central imperial authorities. Thereafter, emergency courts presided over the execution of 908 local people. Hundreds more were imprisoned; thousands were deported to Siberia.<sup>45</sup> 1905 deepened the divide between Baltic Germans and local nationalities. It added urgency to those who were already thinking about moving from the Baltic to the German Empire. In 1903, as a response to the Russification of the education system, the Bergengruen family had already sent Werner to Lübeck for a grammar school education. In 1908, the whole family decided to migrate.<sup>46</sup>

The outbreak of the First World War was a terrible event for the Baltic Germans. It pitted the Russian Empire, in which they remained an élite of sorts and to which they still owed some loyalty, against their cultural homeland. The conflict split families. Werner Bergengruen fought for Germany, while, during the early phase of the war, Siegfried von Vegesack moved to Germany and took up a role in the German Foreign Office.<sup>47</sup> The position of the Baltic Germans who remained in their homeland deteriorated steadily. The more the war threatened the Baltic lands, the more its ethnic German inhabitants were regarded by Russian authorities as potentially disloyal and likely spies. Their situation became critical as the Russian war effort fell apart and the state was again gripped by revolution. In February 1918, Latvian and Estonian workers' and soldiers' councils received reports

of secret contacts between Baltic German organisations and the German High Command. Reval's councils responded by declaring Baltic Germans outlaws, with the result that more than 500 Baltic Germans were arrested and deported to central Asia.<sup>48</sup>

Wartime events could fill a multivolume study, and the place of the Baltic German community in its regional proceedings also deserves a fuller examination. In 1915, German troops penetrated Baltic space, occupying Latvian territory that May, and Estonia in September 1917. From February 1918, the whole of the area that would later become the Baltic states was occupied by the German army.<sup>49</sup> On balance, the Baltic German community cooperated with the occupation, and when Dorpat University was re-opened, it served German ends rather than those of the local Baltic peoples. Estonian politicians, such as Konstantin Päts, who had declared Estonia independent in January 1918, then faced persecution.

Relations between the Baltic territories and the new Soviet power were hardly less problematic. In the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk and its supplementary agreements, Soviet Russia renounced its claims to Estonia and Livonia. The renunciation was, however, itself repudiated following the ceasefire of 9 November 1918, which was supposed to herald the departure of German troops from the Baltic arena. Later the same month, Soviet forces advanced into Estonia, quickly taking Narva and Dorpat before Christmas. A Soviet Republic of Estonia was declared. Bolshevik forces, with a significant ethnic Latvian contingent, advanced into Latvian territory, declared a communist regime and took Riga on 3 January.

1919 saw struggles for independence in both Estonia and Latvia, with the Baltic German communities providing local defence forces that now fought alongside the Baltic peoples. Success was quick in Estonia, and Soviet forces were ousted by the end of February.<sup>50</sup> The situation in Latvia was more involved. The strength of communist forces there led Germany to send troops under General Rüdiger von der Goltz from East Prussia to the region. The complexity of events on the ground was symbolised by the career of Hans von Manteuffel, a Baltic German officer in the Baltic *Landeswehr* (territorial defence force). In April he was active in carrying out a putsch against the Latvian government based in Liepāja, which was led by Kārlis Ulmanis. Thereafter a short-lived puppet government was installed under Andrievs Niedra, which received support from elements of the Baltic German community. Meanwhile, Ulmanis and most of his government sought refuge on a British destroyer that was in the area. The next month, on 22 May, von Manteuffel led his troops in an assault on Riga. This liberated the city from Bolshevik occupation, although von Manteuffel himself was killed in the process, as were thirty-two hostages (many of whom were pastors and Baltic Germans) held in the central prison in Riga by the communists.<sup>51</sup>

## Independence

When the dust settled, the former Baltic provinces of the Russian Empire were left not as Soviet republics, not as part of a German Empire and not even as conservative states run by Baltic German élites. In line with Allied war aims, they became independent democracies. By this time, resentment on the part of the Baltic peoples towards Baltic Germans was multilayered. It reflected injustices experienced under both the Russian Empire and wartime German occupation. Unsurprisingly, the once-privileged Baltic Germans experienced the full force of initiatives promoting the building of new states. Given that the percentages of Baltic Germans within the populations of Estonia and Latvia were smaller than ever by this point, their ability to influence a mass democracy was always going to be limited.<sup>52</sup> Land reform and the abolition of guilds expropriated them with minimal compensation. In response, the Baltic Germans took advantage of provisions in the Latvian and Estonian constitutions, which allowed them some rights for autonomous organisation. In Latvia, they organised their own schooling system, and in Estonia they went further, instituting a system of cultural autonomy.<sup>53</sup> With the confidence of former imperial élites, several Baltic German activists such as Ewald Ammende and Paul Schiemann attempted to pursue an international campaign to promote the welfare of national minorities in Europe. They sought to exploit the League of Nations' mission to protect these groups, establishing the European Congress of Nationalities as a lobbying tool. Some Baltic German landowners complained directly to the League about their treatment.<sup>54</sup> Together, these efforts were important steps in the development of international law as it applied to national minorities, but they could never restore lost privileges.<sup>55</sup>

The rise of authoritarianism in Latvia and Estonia during the interwar period made the situation of the remaining Baltic Germans more difficult still, as did the rise of Nazism. From an early point, Nazism had a Baltic German admixture. Max Erwin Scheubner-Richter, an early associate of Hitler, was born in Riga; Alfred Rosenberg, the movement's chief ideologist, was born in Reval (Tallinn).<sup>56</sup> The relationship between Nazism and German communities abroad was, in fact, complex. While it met with no small amount of fellow feeling, there was also significant opposition, for example on the part of Paul Schiemann in Latvia. Hence Hitler's movement created stresses within these communities. Liaison between Hitler's movement and German communities abroad also aroused suspicion among foreign governments. The flow of money from Berlin to German minorities' organisations only discredited them in international eyes.<sup>57</sup>

## Nazi Resettlement and Life Outside the Baltic Region

The death knell for the Baltic German community in its traditional homeland was, however, sounded by the Hitler–Stalin Pact of August 1939. Its secret protocols, agreed the next month, allocated the Baltic region to Stalin’s sphere of influence and foresaw the ‘return home to the Reich’ of the remaining Baltic Germans. This ‘return’, which began in October 1939, became known as the *Umsiedlung* (resettlement). Some community leaders assisted Nazi authorities in organising the migration, which saw about 80,000 people leave Latvian and Estonian territory.<sup>58</sup> On the whole, the community did not oppose the project, and only about 12,000 individuals remained.<sup>59</sup> A large part of the community was relocated to Warthegau, where it maintained a sense of cohesion and participated in the Reich University of Posen, which was founded under Nazi occupation.<sup>60</sup> Of course, a number of Baltic Germans also served in the war effort, including in the military, the security police and the occupation authorities, and with Vlasov’s irregular troops.<sup>61</sup> (Siegfried von Vege sack became a translator for the *Wehrmacht* in the East.) When the Red Army advanced rapidly at the end of 1944, the community fled Warthegau and moved further westwards. Several of its members ended up in territories that would become East Germany, with very bad outcomes for some.<sup>62</sup> Others fled overseas, for example to the Americas. Many of its members, however, came to rest in the northern German centres of Lübeck, Hamburg and Lüneburg, where their historical presence can still be traced today. For example, the latter city is home to the Carl Schirren Society and the Nordost-Institut, both of which were established by Baltic German interests.

After 1945, Baltic Germans integrated themselves into the life of the Federal Republic of Germany. The community set up a Baltic *Landsmannschaft* and revitalised its system of chivalrous orders in exile (the *Ritterschaften*). Local Baltic German communities organised social events, and community newspapers began to circulate. Able individuals entered politics and gained seats in the Bundestag, Baron von Manteuffel for the CDU and Axel de Vries for the Liberals. The latter played a role in writing the Charter of Expellees, which included demands for a right to homeland. Another Baltic German, Hellmuth Weiss, helped establish the Herder Institute in Marburg. Community members were influential in creating and staffing the Baltic Historical Commission. Some family firms that had been relocated westward began to function again, while members of the Lutheran Church found new homes in Germany’s Protestant churches.<sup>63</sup>

This is a rough social and historical framework to help us interpret the lives of Siegfried von Vege sack and Werner Bergengruen. It is true that in the first instance they experienced the First World War, the Weimar

Republic and the Third Reich as inhabitants of Germany, rather than from the vantage point of the Baltic lands. Nevertheless, both authors retained significant links to the Baltic and always acknowledged readily that they had been influenced formatively by their connections to their distinctive, once-élite national group. This book examines how their experiences and self-understanding were expressed in different kinds of literature.

## Creative Friendship

Given the tumultuous history of the Baltic region between the mid-nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries, it is unsurprising that no small number of Baltic German authors relocated to Germany, including Eduard Graf von Keyserling (1855–1918) and Frank Thiess (1890–1977).<sup>64</sup> Even though von Vegesack and Bergengruen were only two among a wider number of migrant authors, still it makes sense to treat them together because (despite their different personalities) they were friends of a kind: Bergengruen stayed with von Vegesack at his expansive home in the Bavarian Forest one summer, while von Vegesack made reciprocal visits to Bergengruen's home on several occasions.<sup>65</sup>

The pair corresponded over a long period. Siegfried von Vegesack thought they did so for half of their lives. Certainly, they were in contact by letter as early as September 1924, although, at that time, von Vegesack's language was respectful and formal.<sup>66</sup> Later in life, they would send each other verses on birthdays and share some of life's difficulties. Examples of their correspondence are available in the Bavarian State Library, Munich.<sup>67</sup> When Bergengruen died in 1964, von Vegesack wrote a letter of condolence to the former's wife, Charlotte.<sup>68</sup> He also published a eulogy in which he recalled being moved especially by Bergengruen's sense of humour.<sup>69</sup>

Seen from one standpoint, it is no great surprise that they were close, since migrants and refugees often value networks of relationships associated with a former homeland. Shared memories of place, along with common experiences of disrupted lives, provide a rich raw material for bonds of understanding.<sup>70</sup> A couple of sentences by Nietzsche explains further the situation faced by two characters who were always set apart from the German mainstream:

What I always needed most to cure and restore myself ... was the belief that I was *not* the only one to be this, to *see* thus – I needed the enchanting intuition of kinship and equality in the eye and in desire, repose in a trusted friendship.<sup>71</sup>

Both gained from the friendship. Acknowledging as much, von Vegesack dedicated some of his finest work to Bergengruen, including a novel

certainly inspired by the latter. As we will see, both were ‘guilty’ of creative ‘theft’ from the other. These acts of ‘stealing’ were the highest form of compliment, and underline that the relationship between the two authors was an important part of their lives. They helped bring out the best in each other.

Seen from another viewpoint, however, this friendship was surprising. Neither were short of partners for correspondence. For instance, von Vegesack also corresponded with the political commentator Paul Rohrbach, while Bergengruen did so with the Christian poet Reinhold Schneider.<sup>72</sup> Hence, they made time for each other. More importantly, von Vegesack’s responses to Nazism included elements that were impossible for Bergengruen. The former’s support for the *Anschluss* and decision to become a *Wehrmacht* translator during the Second World War just did not fit either with the latter’s worldview or with his personality. Von Vegesack acknowledged that Bergengruen never understood why he made the latter choice.<sup>73</sup> Yet despite such significant differences, the connection between them endured.

## How Well Has Baltic German Literature Aged?

Historically and sociologically, there is a strong case for renewing interest in Baltic German literature, but did Siegfried von Vegesack and Werner Bergengruen produce work that would be enjoyed by audiences in the twenty-first century? For this reader, their literature is engaging and has depth and relevance. Works from von Vegesack, such as *The Baltic Tragedy*, *The House that Devours*, *The World Court of Pisa* and *The Crossing*, all raise themes germane to public and private life (including consequences of migration, Russo-European relations, international justice and ageing); titles from Bergengruen, such as *The Great Tyrant and the Court*, *In Heaven as on Earth* and *The Last Cavalry Officer*, do the same (addressing characteristics of non-democratic government and, again, ageing). Bergengruen’s more elaborate style and clearer interest in spirituality, arguably, have dated his work more significantly than that of von Vegesack. Nonetheless, Bergengruen’s anti-Nazi poetry collection, *Dies Irae*, remains remarkable. Perhaps Michael Garleff had this collection in mind when he commented that Baltic German literature requires a fuller appraisal as a source of intellectual opposition to Nazism.<sup>74</sup>

Baltic German literature is also interesting as an example of diaspora literature. Gero von Wilpert has pointed out, for example, that Baltic German authors often used language that was free of jargon and relatively simple. The contention is true for von Vegesack (but not Bergengruen), and von

Wilpert explains that this reflects the community's need to communicate with other national groups for whom German was a second or third language. Simple language was the best way to do this, and the habit was incorporated into literature. Von Wilpert is clear, however, that simplicity of expression should not be confused with simplicity of ideas.<sup>75</sup> Reet Bender has supplemented this view with her study of historical attempts to develop a dictionary of Baltic German language. In other words, despite being relatively simple, Baltic German language had its idiosyncrasies.<sup>76</sup>

However, von Wilpert has also delivered an astute and strong criticism of Baltic German literature, for instance:

Baltic literature is, so far as I can see, the only modern Western literature written by an upper class, for an upper class.<sup>77</sup>

This is not supposed to be a compliment. For von Wilpert, it was a literature focused too much on aesthetics and festivity, too little on existential and political progress. Symptomatically, if Baltic literature ever looked for utopia, it searched in the community's past. Von Wilpert felt this flight into history was a collective condition:

Baltic literature is oriented towards the past. Baltic people are oriented towards the past. In no other nation is your own achievement ranked so far behind your heritage. No one asks, what does he do? Instead, they ask, from which house is he descended? Individuality is subsumed by the list of ancestors.<sup>78</sup>

The community and its cultural products too often became sterile as a result of eschewing the future.

The fit between von Wilpert's arguments and the two authors who are the subject of this study is not perfect, since both von Vegesack and Bergengruen left the Baltic when they were young. Nonetheless, both certainly displayed orientations towards the past. They were politically conservative, and von Vegesack was aware of his aristocratic forebears; both valued history and exploited the genre of creative historical literature. Von Vegesack's *The Baltic Tragedy* was a creative attempt to document the end of an historical era; Bergengruen's *A German Journey*, written as Hitler came to power, sought to identify an historically constructed Germany. The past was something alive and a point of orientation for both.

Von Wilpert also built an argument that defined Baltic German literature as institutionally racist. Take the following:

The Baltic Germans practised apartheid before the word had been invented. Baltic German literature was a closed society, more often accessible to the guest from abroad than to the neighbour.<sup>79</sup>

This was literature more easily accessed by an educated reader from Berlin than, say, an average Latvian or Estonian. It was literature expressing social

position, since, for centuries, upward social mobility in the Baltic provinces had involved adopting the German language. (For intermediate classes there was some half-German literature.)<sup>80</sup> It is quite right that von Vegesack and Bergengruen were products of a particular social group existing at a particular time and under particular conditions. It is also true that imperial conditions could exacerbate differences between people, whether cultural, ethnic or racial.<sup>81</sup> Both authors began life experiencing imperial privilege in a society where nationality mattered, and this did leave an imprint on their work that endured beyond their relocation to Germany.

If we want to discuss intentional racism, however, this is very hard to spot in Bergengruen's work. Admittedly, as a child he did some unfortunate things. On one occasion, for example, he and his brother stranded a girl on a sandbank in a lake and rowed off in a boat.<sup>82</sup> Since the girl was from a poor Baltic German family, presumably the motive had more to do with class than race. When Bergengruen wrote directly about visiting the home of a family servant who was Latvian, it was hard to identify personal racism in it. Much rather, the story emphasised the enchantment of a youngster with an unfamiliar environment.<sup>83</sup> Although national difference clearly was a factor in this story, once again it was class that provided a more significant source of difference, in this case specifically between employer and employee.

The treatment of national or racial difference is more important, complex and problematic in von Vegesack's work. For example, *The Baltic Tragedy* depicts multiple tensions between Baltic Germans and other national groups;<sup>84</sup> during the Third Reich, von Vegesack prepared talks elaborating the national characteristics of Latvians and Estonians;<sup>85</sup> and *The Crossing* includes an elderly character travelling to Latin America who is outraged that 'black' customs officers might search her belongings.<sup>86</sup> Inevitably, the treatment of national or ethnic difference, and the tensions that went along with it, makes it easy for modern readers to accuse von Vegesack of racism.

Yet it's also easy to find nuance in von Vegesack's work. Just as he described tension between different nationalities, so he depicted attraction too. In *The Baltic Tragedy*, the Baltic German character, Aurel, has a love-hate relationship with the Russian, Sonjetschka;<sup>87</sup> von Vegesack's Latin American literature features positive relationships between German characters and indigenous people;<sup>88</sup> and 'Jaschke and Janne' (published after the Second World War) is a love story between a Baltic German and an Estonian.<sup>89</sup> Von Vegesack recognised national difference, but, across his career, was flexible in the significance he attached to it.

Von Vegesack's work, in fact, raised fundamental questions about the nature of national identity. In *The Baltic Tragedy* he made plain that it could be so expansive that members of the same group became almost contradictory. He was also clear that the presentation of national identity could vary

by situation. So, in *The Baltic Tragedy*, he developed a character whose sense of self fluctuates almost from one page to the next,<sup>90</sup> and *The Pastor in the Rainforest* raises questions about the ultimate usefulness of thinking in terms of nationality at all.<sup>91</sup>

The author lived in a place and time in which nationality mattered because it conveyed a distinctive language, culture and, sometimes, social position. Many people felt their national cultural identity deeply. So, when von Vegesack attempted to represent national or ethnic difference, he was documenting something significant about the society that he inhabited. He returned to the topic time and again because he recognised its importance and was trying to understand it. In a sense, he was learning as he wrote, and to examine this learning process is itself valuable.

In some ways, the literature on which this study is based has clearly aged. On occasion the ageing process has counted against it. It remains true, however, that the passage of time has given us new perspectives from which to view the works discussed here. As a literature of migration, it attempts to grapple with the significance of movement for people, the nature of multicultural society and the self-understanding found therein. As such, this literature presents us with thoughtful, honest authors who, in a different time and place, addressed issues that still exercise us today.

## Conclusion

Writing in 2005, Gero von Wilpert maintained that Baltic German literature was ready for a re-evaluation.<sup>92</sup> The comment remains true. This re-evaluation, however, will not take place out of the blue; there needs to be a stimulus to make it happen. Part of the stimulus must involve authors such as Siegfried von Vegesack and Werner Bergengruen finding new, international audiences.<sup>93</sup> There should be more than enough in their pages to grab contemporary attention. Their work is valuable in its own right, but also provides distinctive perspectives on migration and a fresh portrayal of central and eastern Europe in the early to mid-twentieth century.

## Notes

1. F.-L. Kroll, N. L. Hackelsberger and S. Taschka (eds), *Werner Bergengruen. Schriftstellerexistenz in der Diktatur. Aufzeichnungen und Reflexionen zu Politik, Geschichte und Kultur 1940–1963* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2005), 174–76.

2. Kroll, Hackelsberger and Taschka, *Werner Bergengruen*, 174–76.

3. For a recent relevant study of inner emigration, see John Klapper, *Nonconformist Writing in Nazi Germany. The Literature of Inner Emigration*. Rochester, New York: Camden

House, 2015. See also O. Durrani and J. Preece (eds), *Travellers in Time and Space: The German Historical Novel* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001); and R. Grimm and J. Hermand (eds), *Exil und Innere Emigration. Third Wisconsin Workshop* (Frankfurt am Main: Athenaeum, 1972).

4. In this light, the temptation to characterise von Vegesack as a resister to Nazism requires some nuance; see Arved Freiherr von Taube, Erik Thomson and Michael Garleff, 'Die Deutschbalten – Schicksal und Erbe einer eigenständigen Gemeinschaft', in W. Schlau (ed.), *Die Deutschbalten* (Munich: Langen-Müller, 1995), 92.

5. Kroll, Hackelsberger and Taschka, *Werner Bergengruen*, 80.

6. See the letter from Hans Scholl to Rose Nägele, 5 January 1943, in I. Jens (ed.), *Hans Scholl und Sophie Scholl. Briefe und Aufzeichnungen* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1994), 240.

7. See for example Wolfdietrich Kopelke, *Werner Bergengruen. Arbeitshilfe* 16 (1992); Hans Bänziger, *Werner Bergengruen. Weg und Werk* (Switzerland: Pflugverlag Thal SG, 1950), 108; and Gero von Wilpert, *Deutschbaltische Literaturgeschichte* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2005), 243.

8. The question of how to interpret 'identity' will be addressed in the final chapter. Discussion of identity, migration and postcolonial society can be found in Stuart Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora', in J. Rutherford (ed.), *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), 222–37. Also see Akram Al Deek, *Writing Displacement: Home and Identity in Contemporary Post-Colonial English Fiction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

9. Z. Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000).

10. J. W. Berry, 'A Psychology of Immigration', *Journal of Social Issues* 57(3) (2001), 615–31; 'Globalisation and Acculturation', *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 32(4) (July 2008), 328–36.

11. Berry, 'Globalisation and Acculturation'.

12. Berry, 'A Psychology of Immigration' and 'Globalisation and Acculturation'.

13. For a study of the German diaspora, see Krista O'Donnell, Renate Bridenthal and Nancy Reagin (eds), *The Heimat Abroad: The Boundaries of Germanness* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2005).

14. Peter Gatrell, *The Making of the Modern Refugee* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), especially the introduction and conclusion.

15. Stéphane Dufoix, *Diaspora* (Berkeley, California: University of California, 2008), 48.

16. Quotation by John Berger in Gatrell, *The Making of the Modern Refugee*, 1.

17. For studies of Baltic German women, see Anja Wilhelmi, *Lebenswelten von Frauen der deutschen Oberschicht im Baltikum (1800–1939). Eine Untersuchung anhand von Autobiografien* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag/Nordost Institut, 2008).

18. U. March, *Die deutsche Ostbesiedlung* (Bonn: Bund der Vertriebenen, 1998), 5. For an overview of early Baltic history, see Chapters 1 and 2 of A. Plakans, *A Concise History of the Baltic States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). Also still valuable is Schlau (ed.), *Die Deutschbalten*, particularly A. von Taube, E. Thomson and M. Garleff, 'Die Deutschbalten – Schicksal und Erbe einer eigenständigen Gemeinschaft'. For a nicely written study of the Baltic that includes lots of insight, see M. Egremont, *The Glass Wall: Lives on the Baltic Frontier* (London: Picador, 2021).

19. M. North, *Geschichte der Ostsee. Handel und Kulturen* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2011), 47–48.

20. H. von zur Mühlen, *Die baltischen Lande. Von der Aufsegelung bis zu der Umsiedlung* (Bonn: Bund der Vertriebenen, 1997), 2.

21. North, *Geschichte der Ostsee*, 48.

22. For a brief synopsis of early history, see March, *Die deutsche Ostbesiedlung*.

23. North, *Geschichte der Ostsee*, 49.

24. Von zur Mühlen, *Die baltischen Lande*, 5.

25. An irony of historiography is that, traditionally, ‘Baltic history’ did not have so much to say about the Baltic peoples themselves. The situation has been changing with increasing speed since the end of the Cold War and the re-establishment of independent Baltic states.

26. North, *Geschichte der Ostsee*, 71.

27. North, *Geschichte der Ostsee*, 139.

28. Peeter Järvälaid, ‘Die Gründung der Universität zu Dorpat (Academia Gustaviana) im 17. Jahrhundert im europäischen Kontext’ (22 September 1997), *forum historiae iuris*, <https://forhistiur.net1997-09-jarvelaid>. (Consulted 7 February 2024.)

29. Von Taube, Thomson and Garleff, ‘Die Deutschbalten – Schicksal und Erbe einer eigenständigen Gemeinschaft’, 69.

30. Von Taube, Thomson and Garleff, ‘Die Deutschbalten’, 69–71.

31. Von Taube, Thomson and Garleff, ‘Die Deutschbalten’, 73.

32. Von Taube, Thomson and Garleff, ‘Die Deutschbalten’, 72.

33. Quoted in Reet Bender, ‘Das studentische Dorpat in deutschbaltischen Lebenserinnerungen’, *Deutsch-Baltisches Jahrbuch* 62 (2014), 44.

34. Von Taube, Thomson and Garleff, ‘Die Deutschbalten’, 72. For a history of the different kinds of organisations found in the Baltic region, see Jörg Hackmann, *Geselligkeit in Nordosteuropa. Studien zur Vereinskultur, Zivilgesellschaft und Nationalisierungsprozessen in einer polykulturellen Region (1770–1950)* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2020); and J. Hackmann (ed.), *Vereinskultur und Zivilgesellschaft in Nordosteuropa* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2012).

35. ‘Arguably’ because the extent of the progressive nature of the reform process is a topic for debate; see for example David Feest, ‘Vorbild oder abschreckendes Beispiel? Der “baltische Weg” in der Agrarpolitik des Russlandischen Imperiums’, *Forschungen zur baltischen Geschichte* 9 (2014), 134–51.

36. Georg von Rauch, *The Baltic States: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania: The Years of Independence 1917–1940* (London: Hurst, 1974), 7.

37. For a discussion of agricultural reform in the Baltic, see David Feest, ‘Vorbild oder abschreckendes Beispiel?’

38. Von Rauch, *The Baltic States*, 7.

39. Von Rauch, Thomson and Garleff, ‘Die Deutschbalten’, 80. No doubt complex social processes were underway behind these raw population data.

40. Von Rauch, *The Baltic States*, 10.

41. Deutsche Biographie. <https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118886533.html>. (Consulted 2 February 2022.)

42. For a discussion of the endurance of colonial values in the Baltic German community during the long nineteenth century, see Kristina Jöekalda, ‘Die authentischsten Deutschen? Deutschbaltische Debatten über Kolonialismus und Architekturerbe bis in die 1920er Jahre, oder: Georg Dehios Leistung für das “Baltenland”’, in Cristian Cercel, James Koranyi and Stefan Berger (eds), *Entgrenzte Deutsche. Deutsche Identitätskonstruktionen in transnationalen Kontexten* (in press). Also, Kristina Jöekalda, *German Monuments in the Baltic Heimat? A Historiography of Heritage in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Tallinn: Estonian Academy of Arts, 2020).

43. For Baltic German interest in reform during the later nineteenth century, see Gert von Pistohlkors, *Ritterschaftliche Reformpolitik zwischen Russifizierung und Revolution* (Frankfurt: Musterschmidt, 1978).

44. Von Rauch, *The Baltic States*, 14. For a detailed treatment of 1905, see von Pistohlkors, *Ritterschaftliche Reformpolitik*.

45. Von Rauch, *The Baltic States*, 15.

46. Werner Bergengruen, *Von Riga nach anderswo. Oder Stationen eines Lebens. Bücher, Reisen, Begegnungen* (Zurich: Arche, 1992), 16.

47. Von Vegesack could not serve in the military because he had lost an eye during a duel at Dorpat University.

48. Von Rauch, *The Baltic States*, 45; Taube, Thomson and Garleff, 'Die Deutschbalten', 82.

49. Von Rauch, *The Baltic States*, 39.

50. Von Rauch, *The Baltic States*, 54.

51. Von Rauch, *The Baltic States*, 62.

52. Von Rauch, *The Baltic States*, 83. There were 18,319 Germans in Estonia in 1922 (1.7% of the total population), and 70,964 (3.6% of the population) in 1925.

53. M. Housden, *On Their Own Behalf. Ewald Ammende, Europe's National Minorities and the Campaign for Cultural Autonomy, 1920–1936* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2014), Chapter 4; J. Hiden, *Defender of Minorities: Paul Schiemann, 1876–1944* (London: Hurst, 2004), 55–56; J. Hiden and D. Smith, *Ethnic Diversity and the Nation State: National Cultural Autonomy Revisited* (Basingstoke: Routledge, 2015).

54. Sabine Bamberger-Stemmann, *Der Europäische Nationalitätenkongress 1925 bis 1938. Nationale Minderheiten zwischen Lobbizentrum und Großmachtinteressen* (Marburg: Verlag Herder-Institut, 2000); also, M. Housden, 'International Affairs and Latvia's Baltic Germans', in Diana Potjomkina, Andris Spruds and Valters Scerbinskis (eds), *The Centenary of Latvia's Foreign Affairs: Ideas and Personalities* (Riga: Latvian Institute of International Affairs, 2016), 75–77. See also M. Scheuermann, *Minderheitenschutz contra Konfliktverhütung?* (Marburg-Lahn: Herder Institute, 2000).

55. Minority activists, especially Paul Schiemann, had avant-garde ideas such as the creation of 'a-national states', which prefigured later African ideas about the construction of multinational states. See the ideas of Mamadou Dia in Frederick Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and French Africa 1945–60* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014), Introduction. For Schiemann, see Hiden, *Defender of Minorities: Paul Schiemann*.

56. For studies of Rosenberg and Scheubner-Richter, see Frank-Lothar Kroll, 'Alfred Rosenberg. Der Ideologue als Politiker', 147–66; Christine Pajouh, 'Die Ostpolitik Alfred Rosenbergs 1941–1944', 167–96; and Karsten Brüggemann, 'Max Erwin von Scheubner-Richter (1884–1923) – "der Führer des Führers"?' 119–46. All are included in M. Garleff (ed.), *Deutschbalten, Weimarer Republik und Drittes Reich. Band 1* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2001).

57. For a discussion in Baltic context of some of the issues raised in this paragraph, see Matthias Schröder, 'Die deutschbaltische nationalsozialistische "Bewegung" in Lettland unter Erhard Kroeger', in M. Garleff (ed.), *Deutschbalten, Weimarer Republik und Drittes Reich. Band 2* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2008), 121–50.

58. D. Loeber, *Diktierte Option. Die Umsiedlung der Deutsch-Balten aus Estland und Lettland* (Neumünster: Wachholz Verlag, 1972) and Jürgen von Hehn, *Die Umsiedlung der baltischen Deutschen – das letzte Kapitel baltischdeutscher Geschichte* (Marburg-Lahn: Herder Institute, 1982). Also, *Der Auszug aus der alten Heimat. Die Umsiedlung der Baltendeutschen, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Deutsche Nachkriegsgeschichte* (Tübingen: Verlag der deutschen Hochschullehrer-Zeitung, 1967) and Lars Bosse, 'Vom Baltikum in den Reichsgau Wartheland', in Garleff (ed.), *Deutschbalten, Weimarer Republik und Drittes Reich. Band 1*, 297–388.

59. Bosse, 'Vom Baltikum in den Reichsgau Wartheland', in Garleff (ed.), *Deutschbalten, Weimarer Republik und Drittes Reich. Band 1*, 303.

60. For the engagement of Baltic Germans in the Reich University, see Blazej Bialkowski, 'Reinhard Wittram an der "Reichsuniversität Posen". Die Illusion einer baltischen Variante des Nationalsozialismus', in Garleff (ed.), *Deutschbalten, Weimarer Republik und Drittes Reich. Band 1*, 353–84. Also, in the same volume, Roland Gehrke, 'Deutschbalten an der Reichsuniversität Posen', 389–426.

61. See, for instance, the articles by Lenz, Schlau, Schröder and Kangeris in M. Garleff (ed.), *Deutschbalten, Weimarer Republik und Drittes Reich. Band 2* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2008). See also Valdis Lumans, *Latvia in World War II* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006).

62. Victor von zur Mühlen, for example, died in Bautzen concentration camp in East Germany.

63. M. Housden, 'Cosmopolitan Entrepreneurs: Culture, Mobility and Survival among Baltic German Family Businesses in the Twentieth Century' in *Nordost Archiv* 28 (2019).

64. For a general study of Baltic German literature, see von Wilpert, *Deutschbaltische Literaturgeschichte*.

65. 'Dank an Bergengruen. Nachruf von Siegfried von Vegesack', in B. von Schnurbein, *Der Turm und die Türmer. Bewohner, Besucher, Berichte und Besonderheiten* (Viechtach: lichtung verlag, 2023), 174.

66. B. von Schnurbein, *Der Turm und die Türmer*, 174. The letter from 26 September 1924 was shown to me by Barbara von Schnurbein.

67. Letters between von Vegesack and Bergengruen are held in the Bavarian State Library, Munich. See, for example, Ana 593. B. IV (Vegesack, Siegfried) and Ana 397, II, B (Bergengruen, Werner).

68. Letter of 8 September 1964 reproduced in M. Hagengruber (ed.), *Siegfried von Vegesack. Briefe 1914–1971* (Grafenau: Morsak–Verlag, 1988), 502–3.

69. Von Schnurbein, *Der Turm und die Türmer*, 175. It was published originally in *Baltische Blätter*, Nr. 8/9 (1964).

70. Gatrell, *The Making of the Modern Refugee*, 11.

71. F. Nietzsche, Preface in *Human, All Too Human* (London: Wordsworth, 2008), 3–4.

72. See R. Rieß, *Politik und Freundschaft. Paul Rohrbach und Siegfried von Vegesack. Briefe und Essays von 1919 bis 1969* (Viechtach: edition lichtung, 2021) and N. L. Hackelsberger-Bergengruen (ed.), *Werner Bergengruen, Reinhold Schneider. Briefwechsel* (Freiburg: Herder, 1966).

73. See comments in 'Dank an Bergengruen', in von Schnurbein, *Der Turm und die Türmer*, 174. Also, personal communication from Eckhard Lange, President of the Bergengruen Society (email of 16 March 2025).

74. Michael Garleff, 'Deutschbalten in Auseinandersetzung mit der Weimarer Republik und dem Dritten Reich. Zur Forschungssituation und Problemlage' in Michel Garleff (ed.), *Deutschbalten, Weimarer Republik und Drittes Reich. Band 1* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2001), 7; also, Michael Garleff, Foreword to M. Garleff (ed.), *Deutschbalten, Weimarer Republik und Drittes Reich. Band 2* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2008).

75. Von Wilpert, *Deutschbaltische Literaturgeschichte*, 14–16.

76. Reet Bender, 'Deutsch am Rande Europas – das baltische Deutsch und das deutsch-baltische Wörterbuch von Oskar Massing', *Estudios Fiológicos Alemanes* 19 (2009) 283–97.

77. Von Wilpert, *Deutschbaltische Literaturgeschichte*, 20.

78. Von Wilpert, *Deutschbaltische Literaturgeschichte*, 22.

79. Von Wilpert, *Deutschbaltische Literaturgeschichte*, 19.

80. Reet Bender, "Schanno bleibt true": Schanno von Dinakant as the last hero of Half-German poetry', *Journal of Baltic Studies* 54(4) (2023), 821–34.

81. For studies of empire and difference, see, for example, Farish Ahmad-Noor and Peter-Brian Ramsay Carey, *Racial Difference and the Colonial Wars of 19th Century Southeast Asia* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015) and J. Burbank and F. Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2010). For a critical voice about 'difference', see the review by John Darwin in *The English Historical Review* 127(525) (April 2012), 515–18. For important comments about the contemporary relevance of post-imperial ideas about racial difference, see José F.

Busgalia-Salgado, *Undoing Empire: Race and Nation in the Mulatto Caribbean* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), xii.

82. Bergengruen, *Von Riga nach anderswo*, 31–32.
83. ‘Fremde Gerüche’, in Werner Bergengruen, *Baltische Geschichten* (Munich: F.A. Herbig, 2000; 2007 edn).
84. Siegfried von Vegesack, *Die baltische Tragödie. Eine Romantrilogie* (Graz: V.F. Sammler, 2004). Run in with Latvian workers, p.199; stereotype of poor Russian, p.65; Aurel’s dislike of showing deference to Russia and Russians, pp. 240 and 279.
85. Siegfried von Vegesack, ‘Die Esten und Letten. Versuch einer Charakteristik’. Ana 397.I.M.7.d. Bavarian State Library.
86. Siegfried von Vegesack, *Die Überfahrt* (Munich: Langen-Müller, 1967), 60.
87. Siegfried von Vegesack, *Die baltische Tragödie. Eine Romantrilogie* (Graz: V.F. Sammler, 2004), p.409, for example.
88. Siegfried von Vegesack, *Der Pfarrer im Urwald* (Baden-Baden: P. Keppler, 1947), 70.
89. ‘Jaschka und Janne. Eine Liebesgeschichte aus dem alten Dorpat’, in Siegfried von Vegesack, *Baltische Erzählungen* (Munich: Universitas, 1965; repr. Rowohlt, 1983).
90. Dr Spalwing in von Vegesack, *Die baltische Tragödie*, 246.
91. Von Vegesack, *Der Pfarrer im Urwald*, especially in the concluding pages.
92. Von Wilpert, *Deutschbaltische Literaturgeschichte*, 13.
93. Albrecht Classen, *Short Stories by Werner Bergengruen: A Selection of His Novellas* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2021).