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Week 8 Reading

APA Referencing

Peters, N. (2001). *Milk and honey—but no gold: Postwar migration to Western Australia, 1945–1964* (pp. 30–33). University of Western Australia Press.

Referencing for Family History

Nonja Peters, *Milk and honey—but no gold: postwar migration to Western Australia, 1945–1964*, University of Western Australia Press, Crawley, 2001, pp. 30–33.

The non-German refugee contingent, variously estimated at between 7 and 12 million, comprised Jews and the leaders of resistance movements who had been placed in concentration camps and had survived persecution; deportees released by the Western Allies; soldiers in military units withdrawing westwards; and a few Germans who had been sent into conquered countries to 'Germanize' the populations. Especially notable were the Polish soldiers led by Lieutenant General Wladyslaw Anders, who had been captured in Italy while fighting alongside Allied troops. Earlier they had been imprisoned in the Soviet Union by Russia during its advance into Poland in the autumn of 1939. Despite these setbacks, this indefatigable contingent of men set about reorganizing their 50,000-strong II Polish Corps in Iran and the Middle East, where they had been released in 1941.

One of the largest groups of dislocated persons were the 8 million young Europeans who had been abducted from occupied countries such as France, Belgium, Denmark, Norway, the Soviet Union, Poland, the Ukraine, Byelorussia, the Netherlands and the Baltic States and forced to work as slave labour for the Nazi regime in Germany and Austria, building airfields and coastal fortifications or working in factories, on farms, on the docks, or in essential war equipment projects.¹⁵ In fact, by May 1944 they had made up approximately 30 per cent of the Third Reich's industrial labour force and 20 per cent of the total labour force.¹⁶

Anna Petrovna Suhajcek (nee Sager) was taken, at age 14, by the German occupational army, along with thirty other youngsters from the village of Bolshii Rogi in Byelorussia, to the labour camp Lager Ellar at Düsseldorf.¹⁷ Here single males and females were accommodated in separate barracks, and four families placed in one room with double bunks.¹⁸ Anna's stay at Lager Ellar was short-lived. Caught singing Russian revolutionary songs with the other children but singled out for punishment, she was sent to a rubber and electric cord factory, where

a guard followed me everywhere and I was not allowed to talk. Turnip soup was given once a day...and 200 grams of bread, a little margarine, that's all. We tried to steal food from the gardens when we could. Or beg and steal when we went to work. We were issued with wooden shoes. We walked in them through the snow to work, accompanied by SS [*Schutzstaffel*] guards. Our feet were raw, red and full of blisters.¹⁹

A year later, Anna was taken to the Police Department (*Polizeiprasidium*) in Wuppertal Festal:

There I was placed in a prison cell and taken out by the guard each morning at 4.30 am and returned at 6.30 pm. My job was to clean up the blood and mess

after an interrogation of prisoners...I was very upset and cried a lot...They used to hit them with iron knuckles, whip them with thongs which had iron edgings...The guard told me that if I did not stop crying I would be taking the prisoner's place.²⁰

Anna's private hell did not cease with liberation:

After we were freed, a group of about 23 of us ran away to Pilzen in Czechoslovakia...We did this to avoid being forcibly repatriated back to Russia.²¹

Anna Vasilevna Herasimovskaya (nee Krasnik) recalls that even in the English zone of Germany, where she and her family were housed, repatriations did not stop until after a large number of Cossacks had committed suicide rather than go back to Russia.²² In Czechoslovakia, they were billeted in private homes by the United States Army, under the auspices of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), which was created to support and protect the countless homeless DPs on the loose at that time.

In 1946, Anna Suhajcek was sent back to Funk Kazerne, a refugee camp near Munich, Germany:

This camp was for different nationalities, Polish, Latvian, Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Byelorussian. About 10,000 people were living there. I stayed in this camp for four years [until repatriated to Western Australia].²³

Many camps also became ethno-specific. Anna Herasimovskaya recalls that Haidenau, a camp near Tosted where she and her family were placed, was



UNRRA distribution outlet. The refugees could obtain quilts and blankets at these venues.
Courtesy: P. Manucci

DPs from Byelorussia, peeling potatoes for the communal kitchen at Haidenau, one of the numerous camps established in postwar Germany for the homeless and stateless, c. 1945.

Courtesy: T. McDonald



Aerial view of Haidenau.

Courtesy: T. McDonald



occupied almost exclusively by Ukrainians.²⁴ Such matters, however, concerned Anna not at all. Already well over 70 years of age, and despite coming from a wealthy background that should have afforded her a fortunate life, she had instead been the victim of many wars. During the Russian Revolution, she had known hunger, beatings and abuse at the hands of the Red soldiers. They had left her and her young daughter destitute when they took the family's land-holdings. During World War II, when the Germans retreated from her home town, she and her daughter and grand-daughters had to flee to Czechoslovakia. They survived the six-month journey on a horse and cart by begging for food for themselves and their horses at all the villages they

entered. Haidenau was for them a symbol of the fact that they had avoided being repatriated to Russia and could expect resettlement in the West. In 1950, Anna and her family arrived in Western Australia.

Franciszka Budas and her 14-year-old son Frank, civilians from Malowody near Tarnopol in Poland, were recruited as forced labour in 1942, when their village was caught in crossfire between the oncoming *Wehrmacht* (German armed forces) and the retreating Russians who had until then occupied it. Frank recalls:

After much bombing between the German and Russian forces the Germans entered the village. They gave my mother and I two hours to pack. After one hour they returned. We only had time to take warm clothes and some food. My mother took a home spun flax flour bag full of dried beans for us to eat. We were loaded into goods wagons and taken to Germany, where we were put to work sorting parcels at the Cologne Railway Station until the Allied forces advanced. Then we became DPs.²⁵

Frank still has the flax bag—a poignant reminder of his family's flight.

Maria Zielazny, a Polish woman who settled in Northam, the Western Australian wheatbelt town where non-British immigrants were accommodated from 1949 to 1963, was also a teenager when she was forcibly taken by the Nazis. She was abducted in 1939, while strolling through the streets of the village where she was born. The family had fled their home when the Russians invaded, but returned some weeks later, thinking that the danger was over. Maria explains:

I was only 17. The Nazis took me to Germany to work on a farm. I was expected to milk 25 cows twice per day. I had never milked a cow in my life. I was abused and beaten. I ran away. The SS picked me up and took me to a labour camp centre to be reallocated to another job. A German gentleman, seeing my distress, said I could come and work in the kitchen on his farm with his wife and mother-in-law. I prayed all the way home in the train with him. When he showed me to my room and it had a cross on the wall, I felt safe. He and his wife took me to church with them early on Sunday morning even though it was out of bounds for me.²⁶

Maria stayed with this German family until the war came to an end.

The Nazis did not discriminate on the basis of gender; their main criteria in their search for workers were youth and fitness. Mirek Jalomski, a retired Northam linesman, was also forced off the streets of his village in Poland by the SS, kicked into a rail wagon and transported to Germany, where he was put to work in a factory. He confirmed Maria's fears about the SS: 'if the SS caught you away from where you were allowed to be, the consequences were fearful'.²⁷



Frank Budas with his mother Franciszka and his uncle Powel Klebicki in Poland before being abducted by the Nazis and taken to work in Germany.

Courtesy: F. and J. Budas