

THE DESTINIES OF GERMAN-BORN PEOPLE IN RUSSIA AT THE TURN OF THE MILLENNIUM* **

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This article studies the stories of Russian citizens who were born in Germany but reside in Russia. Most of them had relocated to Russia as a result of the withdrawal of Russian troops from Germany after 1990. Analysing individual data from the 2002 and 2010 censuses, the author traces the lives of children born into the families of Soviet military men based in East Germany after World War II. Over 140,000 such migrants can be found in the 2002 census, far more than from any other country that was not part of the Soviet Union. Repatriation was accomplished from 1991 to 1994; and even though Germany financed part of the operation, it was necessary to solve the problems of accommodation and employment of the military men and their families locally. As a result of the study, the author manages to determine the territories inhabited by Russians born in Germany in the early twenty-first century. The number of people among them who speak foreign languages and have post-secondary education is higher than average, which testifies to the fact that the joint effort of the two countries was more beneficial for the future of the people born in Germany than might have been expected. The competence and education they acquired, together with the social networks between those repatriated, added significantly to their human capital and their contributions to Russian society.

Keywords: migration, historical demography, Russia, repatriation, social integration, population censuses

Статья посвящена исследованию истории российских граждан, родившихся в Германии, но проживавших в России согласно переписям 2002 и 2010 гг. Большая часть этих людей оказалась в стране в результате вывода группы советских войск из Германии. На основе анализа индивиду-

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альных данных переписей населения Российской Федерации прослежены судьбы детей, родившихся в семьях советских военнослужащих группы советских войск, дислоцированных в Восточной Германии после Второй мировой войны и до 1990-х гг. В переписи Российской Федерации 2002 г. было зарегистрировано более 140 тыс. чел., родившихся в Германии, что намного превышало число выходцев из любой другой страны, не входившей в состав Советского Союза. Репатриация должна была быть осуществлена с 1991 по 1994 г., и, хотя Германия частично финансировала вывод войск, необходимо было решить проблему размещения и трудоустройства военнослужащих и членов их семей. В результате проведенного исследования удалось установить территории концентрации рожденных в Германии россиян в начале XXI в. При всем многообразии индивидуальных сценариев адаптации выходцев из Германии в России в целом как в отношении рынка труда, так и в отношении брачного рынка эта группа людей была интегрирована в общество не хуже, чем основное население. Более высокая доля владевших иностранными языками и имевших уровень образования выше среднего по сравнению с показателями для населения в целом свидетельствует, что ресурсы, вложенные в эту группу совместными усилиями двух стран, сказались на будущем уроженцев Германии лучше, чем можно было ожидать. Кроме того, полученный опыт, образование, а также наличие социальных связей вели к росту человеческого капитала на тех российских территориях, где они расселились.

Ключевые слова: миграция, историческая демография, Россия, репатриация, социальная интеграция, переписи населения

As is well known, groups of people originating in Germany settled in the Russian Empire for centuries. The most intensive wave of immigration was in the mid-eighteenth century, when Tsarina Catherine the Great (herself an ethnic German) inspired potential emigrants from the West to use sparsely settled eastern areas more intensively. We shall not follow the ups and downs of these ethnic Germans in the Volga area and Siberia, or their many descendants who returned to Germany in the 1990s. Our topic here is the more than 100,000 persons born in Germany who live in Russia according to the censuses taken in 2002 and 2010, many of whom were part of the repatriation of troops from Germany in the early 1990s. That the sending of Russian troops to East Germany would lead to large return migration conforms to both the classic theories of Ravenstein and a more recent overview of migration theories [Albrecht; Ravenstein]. Still, their return to Russia has been described as rather chaotic, with a lack of basic facilities such as housing upon settlement in districts spread over the country [Braithwaite]. Did this affect their future negatively, or did the substantial compensation paid by Germany on the condition that the troops left quickly ameliorate their future conditions? There will always be differences with respect to how well individuals in such large groups adapt and how successfully they manage to live in their new abodes. In general

terms, however, the future of many German-born individuals was brighter than might have been expected.

Sources and methods

Russia took its first modern census in 1897, a practice the Soviet Union continued in 1926, 1936, 1939, and each decade from 1959. Unfortunately, most of the manuscripts for these have been discarded, leaving us only with published statistical aggregates. Where individual-level manuscripts survive, we can create more detailed statistical results in order to avoid ecological fallacies, and we can link censuses and other sources to form personal life stories. The Soviet Union took its last census in 1989, and the first census of Russia after the disbanding was taken in October 2002 (repeated in October 2010). These two enumerations are available as individual-level microdata together with censuses from nations that left the Soviet Union: Ukraine (2001), Belarus (1999), Armenia (2001), and the Kyrgyz Republic (1999 and 2009). These are part of the IPUMS – Integrated Public Use Microdata Series. The IPUMS of the Minnesota Population Center started out with the US decennial censuses from 1850 onwards and have since been expanded internationally with post-World War II census data from all continents except Australia and with historical data sets from the period 1787 to 1911. While the latter contain identifiable information and often are full counts, confidentiality measures protect personal privacy in recent data samples. Professor Steven Ruggles has headed the work of harmonizing the variables and value labels, making it easier to perform comparative research across time and space. Professor Robert McCaa negotiated for years with statistical agencies around the world to assemble the necessary microdata, an effort recognized by a United Nations’ resolution of support¹. For further information about the IPUMS and related databases, which contain over two billion records, cf the Internet at [Sample Characteristics; Census Questionnaires; Spouse Location Variable].

Individual-level data records from nominative census manuscripts provide new opportunities to use birthplace, occupation, and other information for detailed analysis of many aspects of human life. For instance, the degree to which migration and inter-marriage has helped to integrate different nationalities has been studied in the 2001 census for Ukraine [Thorvaldsen, 2016]. The 2002 and 2010 Russian enumerations were combined housing and population censuses taken by canvassing according to the *de jure* principle [Thorvaldsen, 2006; Thorvaldsen, 2018]. The available samples contain five percent of all households (over seven million persons in each census year), which Rosstat (the Federal State Statistics Service) selected by including every twentieth household. Further details, questionnaires, and instructions (also in English) can be found online. Identity-oriented ethnicity variables

¹ “Encourages Governments to adopt open-data policies allowing the dissemination of public-use, geo-referenced and anonymized microdata from censuses, household surveys, civil registration, population registers, health information systems and other relevant administrative records with respect for confidentiality;” Cf point 22 of: [Resolution 2016/1].

are left out of the microdata versions, presumably to protect personal privacy, but for Russia there is some information about language. Religion was not asked for in the 2002 or 2010 census questionnaires (just like in most Soviet censuses) and is thus not available as a variable even in the aggregates [Thorvaldsen, 2014]. Fortunately, the encoded birthplace variable is intact in the microdata sample, providing the *oblast'* for those born in Russia and the *country* for those born outside.

According to the instructions, census takers should in principle visit all inhabited places and ask questions of each individual (or, in the case of small children, ask their parents). The definition of a household is a group living together and at least partly sharing financial resources and/or having their meals together. It could consist of one person, family members, and others. The census included group habitations such as hospitals and orphanages, but this article does not deal with these places separately. There is much carry over in the 2002 and 2010 censuses from those taken during Soviet times. For instance, GIS map files for the Soviet Union can be used with slight modification of names². There is also continuity in the inclusion of questions about language but not about “nationality” or ethnicity. Like in the 2002 and 2010 Russian enumerations, the Bolsheviks asked about *national'nost* (national belonging) in all censuses from 1937/39 onwards, while they used *narodnost'* (ethnic origin) in 1926. There are, however, no international (UN) standards for using the ethnicity census variable [Thorvaldsen, 2011], which may help explain why ethnicity was not specified in the new millennium.

Return destinations and demography

In 2002, there were 146,980 persons who were born in Germany but now live in Russia, a number that dropped to 136,460 in 2010. According to the former census, only a few countries have sent more immigrants to Russia: there were more persons born in Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Moldova, all of which used to be part of the Soviet Union. This means that persons born in and perhaps belonging to the ethnic groups inhabiting these countries were internal migrants rather than *immigrants* if they settled in Russia before 1992. Thus, Germany ranks higher than tenth place among countries sending *emigrants* to Russia. It is also noteworthy that the Slavic countries allied with the Soviet Union are represented with significantly smaller groups of immigrants: the closest is Poland, with 31,340 persons born there but living in Russia in 2002.

“Volga Germans” was a frequent label for the eighteenth-century immigrants from Germany. However, modern Germans have preferred to settle in urban rather than rural areas. They are concentrated in and around the biggest cities: Moscow and Moscow oblast', St Petersburg and Leningrad oblast', Novosibirsk and Novosibirsk oblast', and Ekaterinburg and Sverdlovsk oblast' (Fig. 3). As expected, Volgograd oblast' (ranked

² I constructed the map with the software package *Mapinfo*.

eighth) and Kaliningrad oblast' (ranked ninth) are well represented, but not significantly more than the latter two Asian oblasts listed in Table 1.

Table 1

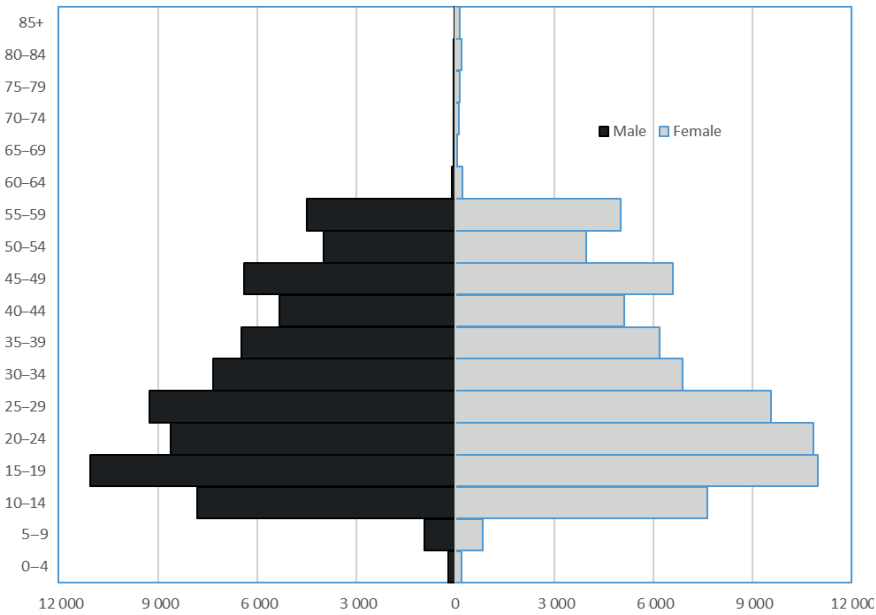
Number of men and women born in Germany in regions of the Russian Federation with at least 2000 such residents in 2002³

Place of residence	Male	Female	Sum
Moscow city	7,760	8,080	15,840
Moscow oblast'	6,660	6,380	13,040
St Petersburg city	3,180	3,980	7,160
Rostov oblast'	2,980	2,860	5,840
Krasnodar krai	2,520	2,720	5,240
Leningrad oblast'	2,340	1,820	4,160
Samara oblast'	1,860	2,280	4,140
Volgograd oblast'	2,020	1,900	3,920
Kaliningrad oblast'	2,000	1,900	3,900
Nizhny Novgorod oblast'	1,460	2,060	3,520
Saratov oblast'	1,580	1,880	3,460
Sverdlovsk oblast'	1,380	1,940	3,320
Voronezh oblast'	1,300	1,500	2,800
Novosibirsk oblast'	1,260	1,480	2,740
Tver oblast'	1,320	1,320	2,640
Stavropol krai	1,480	1,140	2,620
Chelyabinsk oblast'	1,380	1,100	2,480
Vladimir oblast'	960	1,120	2,080
Primorsky krai	1,060	980	2,040
Republic of Tatarstan	920	1,120	2,040
Khabarovsk krai	900	1,100	2,000

Given the predominance of urban residents among the German-born [Kinzer], it is not surprising that one finds a surplus of females: the gender proportion in 2002 was 104 women to 100 men. However, the gender proportion among the entire Russian population was much more skewed, with 117 women per 100 men: the gender rates changed only marginally from 2002 to 2010. The differences in age distributions between ethnic groups is the main explanation for this, since life expectancy among Russian women is higher than among men. In 2002, the average age was 40 and 36 years for women and men, respectively (41 and 36 in 2010), while among the German-born it was 31.2 and 30.9, respectively (close to

³ Source: The IPUMS version of the 2002 Russian population census.

38 and 36 in 2010). Such averages can be misleading, however, as can be seen from the age pyramid showing the distribution of German-born males and females divided into 5-year age groups. Less than one percent of those who immigrated from Germany were sixty years or older. Also, there were relatively few children: only in the groups aged over 10 can boys and girls be counted in the thousands rather than hundreds (Fig. 1).



1. 5-year age groups and gender of the German-born in 2002⁴

Most of these children must be the offspring of the 540,000 troops who stayed in East Germany until they were repatriated to Russia from 1991 to August 1994. As such, they can be classified as ethnic Russians. This indicates that the immigration of families with children born in Germany ground to a halt in the second half of the 1990s, which is also mirrored in the increasing average age for the whole group between the two censuses.

The Treaty on the Conditions of the Temporary Stay of Soviet Troops and the Planned Withdrawal were negotiated with Germany in 1990 and approved on the highest levels of both countries in the spring of 1991. However, the ousting of President Gorbachov and the fracturing of the Soviet Union made adjustments necessary, especially for troops returning to Belarus and Ukraine. Even though they demanded more, the latter had to be content with about 9.7 % of the housing payments from Germany, since at least 90 % of the troops were scheduled to return to the Russian Federation. Negotiations between President Yeltsin and Chancellor Kohl led to increased financial support from Germany for the repatriation programme, allowing

⁴ Source: The IPUMS version of the 2002 Russian population census.

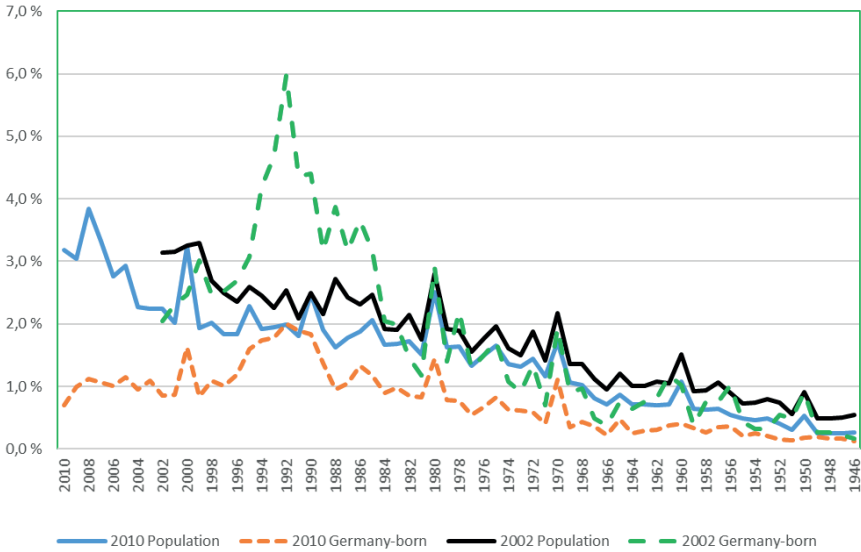
the migration of troops to proceed as planned. In August 1994, the leaders of the Russian Federation and Germany oversaw the completion of the withdrawal of the Western Group from Berlin [Трунов].

At the same time, elderly persons of German ancestry in Russia in particular tended to move to Germany, which admitted approximately 1.63 million ethnic Germans and 120,000 Jews from the former Soviet Union between 1990 and 1999 [Dietz]. From 1955 to 1986, 104,000 ethnic Germans emigrated from the Soviet Union to Germany [Stricker, p. 254].

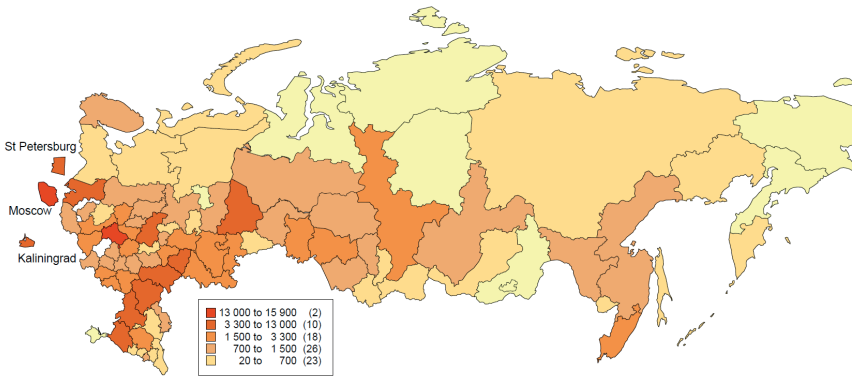
Education and language skills

A further sign of Russian ethnicity among the many immigrants to Russia from Germany is the language question in the 2002 enumeration. Here, everyone except 320 persons was marked as “fluent in Russian”, and the rest were mostly cases of missing information. Their somewhat western background (in relative terms) is more noticeable by the quite high proportions of young German-born individuals who “speak English”, which amount to about 25 % compared to about half of this proportion in the whole population. 98.7 % were classified as Russian citizens in 2002 compared to 98.1 % in the whole population. These results are the same when analysing the 2010 census, except that proficiency in English is somewhat higher. The later census contained a question about mother tongue: only about 2,500, or two percent, of the German-born were classified with German as their main language. Among the Russo-German immigrants to Germany, Russian is the main language in the home, while German is spoken in the workplace [Graßmann, S. 522].

A variable meant to throw further light on the migration history of the mobile part of the population is “Years residing in current locality”, which exists both in the 2002 and 2010 census microdata. Supposedly, this question should have been answered by all migrants, and thus by all immigrants from Germany. It turns out, however, that it was answered by only 25 % of the German-born in 2002 and by only 12 % of the whole population. The reason for this may be that it was part of a complicated set of questions, dropped by many respondents. In 2010, however, 98 % of the German-born answered the question. In Fig. 2, the interval of residence at present address is displayed as yearly percentages of everyone who answered the question in both 2002 and 2010. For the German-born, the number of years peaked in the early 1990s, indicating they had moved to their current address then, at the time of the exodus of the Russian army from East Germany. In the 2010 census, this is supported by the numbers peaking at the same time to a certain extent. This flattening is in part explained by many persons having migrated again after they immigrated to Russia. However, this re-migration effect was not strong with respect to distance, since according to the 2010 census more than 96 % of the German-born live in the same major administrative region as one year earlier; less than a thousand were classified as living abroad. Another additional problem with this variable is the year-heaping tendency for the numbers to peak at 10-year intervals, revealing that the answers were often inexact and were rounded to the nearest start of a new decade.



2. Interval of residence at present address as annual percentages of all who answered the question in both 2002 and 2010 for the German-born and for the whole population, respectively⁵



3. German-born by district in 2002

The education levels of persons who were born in Germany are not dramatically different from the general population in Russia according to the 2002 census in terms of primary and secondary schooling. The main difference is that the proportions who completed a university degree or received some college education were double among immigrants born in Germany. This can also explain the relative differences on the lower levels. We can see how attention to engineering in the Soviet

⁵ Sources: The IPUMS version of the 2002 and 2010 Russian population censuses.

Union and Russia led to high levels of technical education, especially among women.

Table 2

Education levels among the German-born and the whole population by gender in 2002 (n = 144 800 and 128 395 780 respectively)⁶

Education levels	German-born		Population	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
No schooling	0.0 %	0.2 %	0.5 %	1.3 %
Primary (4 yrs) completed	10.9 %	10.3 %	13.7 %	14.8 %
Lower secondary general completed	9.0 %	7.7 %	13.1 %	12.9 %
Secondary general track completed	15.7 %	13.0 %	16.7 %	15.4 %
Some college completed	5.0 %	6.7 %	2.9 %	2.9 %
Secondary technical track completed	5.8 %	3.9 %	14.3 %	9.4 %
Post-secondary technical education	17.8 %	22.9 %	23.0 %	27.0 %
University completed	35.6 %	34.8 %	14.7 %	15.3 %
Unknown/missing	0.3 %	0.5 %	1.2 %	1.1 %
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0 %</i>	<i>100.0 %</i>	<i>100.0 %</i>	<i>100.0 %</i>

Labour and marriage markets

Since a large proportion of the German-born ended up in cities, it is relevant to use urban escalator theory as a point of departure. This hypothesises that in-migrants end up in inferior positions towards the bottom of society after moving [Thernstrom]. Unfortunately, the work categories in the available microdata from the 2002 and 2010 censuses are rather general and do not allow us to see statistics for specific occupations. Table 3 has been constructed from the detailed variable “Status in employment (class of worker)”, where most categories are not used: I added the homemaker category from the variable “Activity status (employment status)”. As might be expected, over 90 % were employed. In general, the differences between the German-born and the whole population are too small to be interpreted in any specific direction. Nonetheless, one can still note that persons working independently or as employers are a bit less frequent and that homemakers are somewhat more frequent among the general population. The cooperative category was small and disappeared in the 2010 census; otherwise, work categories and relative numbers were nearly the same as those from eight years earlier.

⁶ Sources: The IPUMS version of the 2002 and 2010 Russian population censuses. Children under school age have been removed.

Table 3

**Work categories by gender for the German-born and the whole population,
relative numbers with the non-employable left out
(n = 84,020 and 61,954,020 respectively)⁷**

Work categories	German-born		All	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Homemakers	0.3 %	3.1 %	1.2 %	4.6 %
Employer	2.3 %	1.4 %	1.9 %	1.0 %
Working on own account	3.6 %	3.0 %	3.5 %	2.7 %
Member of cooperative	0.6 %	0.2 %	0.5 %	0.3 %
Self-employed unspecified	0.2 %	0.1 %	0.2 %	0.2 %
Wage/salary worker	92.9 %	92.1 %	92.6 %	91.1 %
Unknown/missing	0.1 %	0.1 %	0.1 %	0.1 %
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0 %</i>	<i>100.0 %</i>	<i>100.0 %</i>	<i>100.0 %</i>

One possible sign of adaptation is how well the German-born were integrated into the marriage market in their new homes. This is possible to analyse in the IPUMS version because these are equipped with constructed variables. One variable, “sploc” or spouse’s location, tells reciprocally the ID numbers of the spouses for married persons in each household. By using these ID numbers, it is made explicit which husbands and wives belong together, even if there was more than one couple in the household. In big, complicated households, the computer program may create errors, but as a rule of thumb these will apply to less than ten percent of the couples (and likely far fewer). As we shall see below, the results are so clear that it is highly unlikely the conclusions about partner preferences have been affected by software problems. We should recall, however, that we are analysing a random census sample of 5 %, so the numbers in this specific table should be multiplied by 20 to get results for the whole group of those born in Germany. Thus, approximately $207 \times 20 = 4\,140$ German-born married partners born in Ukraine. Results based on small numbers from random samples are uncertain, so the smallest groups were removed from the table.

Table 4 shows no significant tendency for immigrants from Germany to marry each other. Only $25 \times 20 = 500$ couples (meaning 25 in the sample, ca. 500 in the population) had birthplace as a common background, fewer than those who found a bride or groom born in the “-stan” countries which used to be part of the Soviet Union ($76 \times 20 = 1\,520$ brides and $66 \times 20 = 1\,320$ grooms). In general, the German-born married persons born on Soviet territory, especially in Russia, where most of them settled after coming east, and Ukraine, with its large ethnic Russian minority. Except for persons born in Germany, there were only $18 \times 20 = 360$ brides and $16 \times 20 = 320$ grooms born in countries now inside the European Union, so

⁷ Source: The IPUMS version of the 2002 Russian population census.

we must conclude that the tendency for immigrants from Germany to choose western spouses was weak. In comparison, 94 % of women and 92 % of men born in Russia had Russian-born spouses, which was the case for 82 % of women and men born in Germany. Thus, their *outlandisch* background may have disposed the German-born to choose immigrants to Russia from the former Soviet Union to a higher degree: after all, partners from the West were less available due their dispersion all over such a big country. This is natural for immigrants. The conclusion is that the German-born were well integrated into the marriage market, both the Russian one and its extension into other ethnic groups. Thus, contrary to what is expected from urban escalator theory, the German-born were at least in average positions in the labour and marriage markets and with respect to education. This is rather more in line with the theories of the Human Capital Project at Ural Federal University. Combining the hypotheses of the Ural School of Modernization with the theories of Boris N. Mironov, they argue that leading social groups from different strands and with diverse ethnic backgrounds bring together ideas, some of them imported from abroad, inspiring progress through socio-demographic and economic reforms [Бахарев, Главацкая].

Table 4

**Marriage partners by country of birth for persons born in Germany
according to the five percent 2010 census sample for Russia**

Country of birth	Brides	Grooms	Total
Russia/USSR	1,474	1,264	2,738
Ukraine	107	100	207
Kazakhstan	45	38	83
Belarus	26	25	51
Germany	25	25	50
Uzbekistan	23	16	39
Azerbaijan	7	10	17
Georgia	5	13	18
Kyrgyzstan		10	10
Moldova	9	4	13
Latvia	5	5	10
Tajikistan	5	6	11
Moldova	9	4	13
Turkmenistan	3	6	9
Latvia	5	5	10
Poland	4	4	8
Lithuania	5	1	6
Estonia	2	3	5
Armenia	2	2	4
Missing/other	3	8	11
<i>Total</i>	<i>1,756</i>	<i>1,550</i>	<i>3,306</i>

In addition, the sample contains one partner born in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Iran, Romania, South Africa, South Ossetia, Syria, and the US and two in Abkhazia, Bulgaria, China, and Iraq.

* * *

Migration from Germany to Russia is part of a centuries-long tradition. This article portrays how the most recent geographic mass movement from the West is described in the census microdata from 2002 and 2010. The main migration currents are well known: 1.6 million descendants of ethnic German immigrants and over 100,000 Jews moved westwards and over half a million Russians connected with the armed forces in East Germany moved eastwards. Rosstat in Moscow has sent five percent of the anonymized household samples from the two most recent censuses to the Minnesota Population Center, which has standardized and harmonized them and included them in IPUMS, which is available via the Internet. This effort to make census microdata easily accessible for research is also supported by the United Nations. Since these contain information on the individual level, we can create aggregates which are more detailed and more tailored to specific research questions than the published aggregates. Very few persons aged over 60 and born in Germany were found – they left for Germany in the 1990s. However, we found more than 140,000 German-born individuals spread across Russia in the 2002 enumeration, far more than from any other country that was not part of the Soviet Union. The relative lack of children under ten means that few families emigrated from Germany after 1994.

The exodus of the Russian military from Germany was a stressful event completed between 1991 and 1994 according to an agreement between the two countries. The splitting up of the Soviet Union and the ousting of President Gorbachev caused uncertainties and delays at the start of the troop transfer. That this, the biggest movement of troops ever during peacetime, could be completed on schedule was far from obvious and must have been tough for those involved, not least because many were reluctant to leave and adequate housing in their destinations was lacking. There will always be differences with respect to how well individuals in such large groups adapt and how successfully they manage to live in their new homes. In general terms, however, with respect to education and the labour and marriage markets, after the turn of the millennium the German-born were integrated at least on par with the general population. They married more frequently to other groups than the average Russian. A higher proportion than in the general population had foreign language skills and post-secondary education, signs that the resources invested in the transplantation of this group by both Russia and Germany made the futures of many German-born Russians brighter than might have been expected. Thus, rather than ending up at the bottom of the urban escalator, the competence and education they acquired, together with the social networks between

those repatriated, must have added significantly to their human capital and their contributions to modernizing Russian society. This fits well with the thinking of the Human Capital Project at Ural Federal University, which argues that groups with diverse ethnic backgrounds promote ideas which inspire socio-demographic and economic reforms.

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