

“Homeland is History – History is our Mission”

Michael Wanner

German Russia Contemporary History 2023

Memorial Book Kazakhstan

State Terror Inflicted on Germans During the Timespan 1919-1953
on the Territory of Today's Republic of Kazakhstan

Contributions to the History of Denominational Confessions
of German Russians in Kazakhstan by

Ludmilla Burghardt / Ust-Kamenogorsk
“The German Catholics in Kazakhstan”

Professor Olga Litzenberger / Saratov
“The German Lutherans in Kazakhstan”

Waldemar Schmidt / Regensburg
“The Settlements of the Mennonites in Kazakhstan”

Johannes Dyck / Oerlinghausen
“The Baptists in Kazakhstan”

2023 Edition

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The memorial “Bajiterek-Turm,” “Tree of Life” in English, was erected in Astana in 2003 at the behest of the President of Kazakhstan by the architect Sir Norman Forster. The memorial is 105 meters high [ca. 330 feet], and the glass sphere has diameter of 22 meters [ca. 5 feet]. The latter symbolizes a golden egg containing many human wishes which the migrant bird “Samruk” placed on the tree unreachable to humans. Within the sphere, there is a panoramic hall with pictures of the old and the new city of Astana, and there is a lovely view of the city. The total costs for the memorial came to \$6 million.

Table of Contents

Introduction, Dr. Viktor Krieger	6
Introduction, Waldemar Schmidt	7
Foreward.....	9
Authors' brief biographies.....	14
Ludmila Burghardt: German Catholics in Kazakhstan	16
Repressions against the Catholic Church in the USSR in the 1920s-1940s	31
A Criminal Case against Catholic Clergy on the Island of Anser.....	32
A Court Trial against Catholic Clergy and Laity "Woino and others"	36
A Court Trial against Catholic Clergy and Laity "Pronzketis and others"	36
A Court Trial against Catholic Clergy and Laity "Warth and others"	37
A Court Trial against Catholic Clergy and Laity "Woronitsch, Blechmann and others"	37
A Court Trial against Catholic Clergy and Laity "Tauberger and others"	37
A Court Trial against Catholic Clergy and Laity "Neugum, Reichart and others"	38
A Court Trial against Catholic Clergy and Laity "Leoni and others"	39
A List of Catholic Clergymen and Laity who Died in Prisons or Exile in Kazakhstan.....	43
German Lutherans in Kazakhstan	52
Russian-German Mennonites in Kazakhstan.....	67
Conclusions	82
The History of German Evangelical Christians-Baptists in Kazakhstan.....	85
State Terror against Germans in Kazakhstan	101
Women's Labor Camp ALGIR near Akmolinsk.....	108
Children of "Enemies of the People"	112
Extract from ALGIR Database	116
Extract from Akmolinsk Database	122
Number of Victims in District Centers and Villages of Akmolinsk Area	153
Brief History of the Settlement of Romanowka.....	158
Romanowka Settlers in Trud Army.....	162
District Schortandy.....	163
Settlement Nowokubanka	164
Koktschetaw Area.....	171
Lineyevka	175
The Beginnings of German Settlement Lineyevka (Talmanovka) near Koktschetaw	176
Memories of Prigorchos near Stepnjak; "Where My Fate Took Me"	178
Germans from Russia in the Aktyubinsk Area	198
Germans from Russia in Alma-Ata (Almaty) Area	227
Germans from Russia in Guryev/Atyrau.....	237
Extract from Karaganda Database	240
Germans from Russia in Karaganda Area	272
KARLAG	274
"Memories of Dsheskasgan" by Elisabeth Boss.....	280
Memories of Rosa Jahner	281

"Memories of Balchasch" by Katharina Oks.....	281
From a Chronicle of Akmolinsk Area	284
Extract from Kostanay Database.....	291
Number of Victims in District Centers and Villages of Kostanay Area	302
Germans from Russia in Kostanay Area.....	303
The History of Village Nadezhdinka based on Archival Documents and Reminiscences of Old-Timers.....	306
Settlements Alexanderpol and Voskresenovka in Kostanay Area	310
Johann Herzog: "Remembering Vikentyevsky"	311
What do I Know about My Native Land?.....	315
Semenovka	318
Mobilizing German Deportees for forced labor in district Taranovsky, Kostanay area	329
History of Church Parishes	334
A Long Way Home.....	335
List of Deported Volga Germans who Arrived in Kostanay on Sept. 9, 1941	337
Germans from Russia in the Kyzyl-Orda Area.....	350
Number of Victims in District Centers and Villages of Kyzyl-Orda area	351
Extract from the Database of Northern Kazakhstan (Petropavlovsk) Area	355
Peterfeld	374
Extract from the database of Pawlodar	381
Number of victims in district centers and villages of Pawlodar area.....	399
Germans from Russia in Pawlodar Area	400
Ethnic and Religious Structure of Irtysch Area (near Pawlodar) Population in the 20th -beginning of the 21st century.....	402
The 1st group: Ethnographic Research	403
The 2nd group: Works Dedicated to the History of Germans in Kazakhstan	403
The 3rd group: Works Devoted to the Study of Religious Beliefs of the German Population in Kazakhstan	404
The 4th group: Works of Research Scientists in Germany on Different Aspects of the Ethnic History of Germans in Kazakhstan.....	404
Dissertation Conclusions	407
Movement for Autonomy in Kazakhstan.....	410
ROSOVKA - Our Home in a Foreign Land (A Brief History of a German Settlement in Kazakhstan)	417
Interview with the Chairman of Kirov Kolkhoz, Viktor Rudi. January 2002 Rosowka - Klein Berlin, by Viktor Weiz.....	422
History of Settlement Konstantinovka	426
Legendary Head of Kolkhoz from Pawlodar.....	435
Ingrid Heinisch/Duesseldorf	439
The history of Labor Camp Maikain.....	442
Extract from the Database of Eastern Kazakhstan Area (Ust-Kamenogorsk)	444
Numbers of Victims in District Centers and of Eastern Kazakhstan Area	462
Germans from Russia in Eastern Kazakhstan Area	463
Ust-Kamenogorsk.....	470
Semipalatinsk	471
Ridder	471
Iwanowka 1901-2011.....	473
German colony Marienburg (Peremenowka).....	474
Marienburg.....	478
Petition.....	479

List of settlers of Marienburg (Peremenowka), Zmeinogorsk Uezd, Uspenka Volost. Aug. 17, 1917. Books 1,2,3. German.....	481
List of the Entire Population of Marienburg Colony according to the Registration Lists of a Meeting of Sept. 27, 1929	489
Marienburg Family List from 1929	494
Extract from the Database of Southern Kazakhstan (Tchimkent/Schymkent)	496
Number of Victims in District Centers and Villages of Southern Kazakhstan Area.....	505
Germans from Russia in Southern Kazakhstan. History of Village Konstantinowka	509
Kaplanbek	517
Extract from the Database of Western Kazakhstan (Uralsk).....	523
Number of Victims in District Centers and Villages of Western Kazakhstan Area	527
Germans from Russia in Western Kazakhstan Area (Uralsk).....	528
Germans in Dzhambeyta.....	532
Numbers and Data on the History of Germans in Kazakhstan, USSR, and Russia	549
Numbers of Germans in Kazakhstan in Population Censuses 1897-2013 with the Indication of Percentage and Locations in Comparison with Other Nationalities	550
Number of Germans in Different Areas of Kazakhstan in 1970-2013 in Comparison with the Total Population and Data on Urban and Village Population	551
Number of Settlements in Areas of Kazakhstan with more than 50% German Population	553
Conclusions	556
Sources and Literature.....	558

INTRODUCTION

The major topic of this book, MEMORIAL BOOK KAZAKHSTAN, deals with something barely known in Germany, that is, the utter extent of the state terror directed at the German minority in Kazakhstan. The book is a serious attempt to analyze and reappraise this tragic chapter of the history of Stalinism. People of German origin began to appear on the territory of what is today Kazakhstan, initially as government officials, in the military, or as experienced members of various professions. A century later they were followed by land-poor farmers coming from older Volga and Black Sea settlements, from Volhynia and Russian Poland—all of them hoping for a better life on the Asiatic steppes. Just before World War I, as many as 40,000 German Russians called the territory now known as Kazakhstan their home.

After the Bolsheviks came into power, this region, thinly settled, but blessed with rich mineral resources, became an autonomous republic (as of 1920) and then a “union” republic (by 1936), to be used as a project area for agro-economic and industrial purposes, which were accompanied by involuntary and massive population transfers. During the 1930s, among the hundreds of thousands of forcefully resettled persons in Kazakhstan, there were tens of thousands of ethnic Germans. Just before World War II, the latter group had as many as 92,600 registered representatives.

During the subsequent German-Russian War, Kazakhstan had to suffer a far greater number of exiles; and in 1942 there already were nearly 400,000 Germans deported from the European part of the USSR. Until 1955, they served as “special settlers,” who endured massive restrictions to their civil rights. To wit, during the entire Stalinist dictatorship, Germans and a series of other minorities - alongside Poles, Latvians, Estonians, Lithuanians, Finns, and others - were the main targets of state-directed policy of repression and suppression. Since 1987, more than a million persons have come from Kazakhstan as legal immigrants to the Federal Republic [of Germany]. Today’s central-Asian country of Kazakhstan, which became independent in 1991, contains approximately 170,000 ethnic German residents.

An international team of historians from Germany, Poland, and Kazakhstan, along with some highly engaged homeland researchers, is undertaking the task of reappraising the historic experiences of immigrant citizens now in Germany, who suffered decades of persecution, suppression, discrimination, and Germano-phobia. This book is one result of these efforts, and its impressive documentation, statistics and lists of names of victims of state violence will certainly encourage further work of documenting the recent history of the German-Russian minority.

Dr. Viktor Krieger
Heidelberg

INTRODUCTION

Right from the arrival of German-speaking settlers in Tsarist Russia during the 18th and 19th centuries, they tended to scatter across the entire territory of the Empire. All of these ethnic groups were ever intent on preserving their cultural identity, and they were quite successful at it. Ethnic Germans settled in closed villages, which were also marked by membership in religious denominations. In contrast to other German settlement regions, the German settlers to the Kazakh steppes were not recruited by the Tsarist government as mid-land tenants and owners as late as the middle of the 19th century. Taking part in this colonization movement, during which Germans again demonstrated their pioneering spirit, were Lutherans, Mennonites and Catholics. Thus the denominational aspect of scattered settlements also strengthened their closed-off nature.

The title of this compact and worthwhile book reflects the entire theme, the fate, and the religious life of the German Russians in the territory of the Kazakhstan republic during the 19th and 20th centuries.

This book is dedicated to a thus far largely unfamiliar regional part of the history of the German Russians. It also sheds light on the development of denominational relationships of the ethnic groups cited above, in Tsarist Russia as well as in the former Soviet Union. This volume offered by the Historical Research Association of the Germans from Russia essentially concentrates on the fate of the German minority in Kazakhstan. It constitutes an important building block toward understanding several unfamiliar chapters of the history of the German Russians. The avowed main purpose of this volume is to present a structured overview of the history of the national minority during the various historical periods.

In addition, the book, via brief and understandable descriptions, provides a good opportunity to present to a broader audience various historical periods from the life of German Russians in Kazakhstan. All in all, the book represents outstanding research work. It belongs among other overall presentations that see the history of the German minority against the background of the general Russian history. The authors concentrate on essential lines of development without losing sight of the details. The text and the meaningful thematic aspects serve to emphasize the German Russian history in the global context. Moreover, a major plus of this book consists of the fact that several informational items might serve as indicators for areas where closer research may be required.

The relevance of this book is obvious. On the other hand, it is also highlighted by a simple occasional absence of information about historical facts and events. This investigative work will certainly contribute to closing information gaps regarding the German population of Kazakhstan, regarding their life during a highly complicated and often very contradictory time. The authors work under rather different ways of looking at the history of and questions about the development of denominational relationships, and the book reflects, more or less representatively, the status of historical investigations.

The Historical Research Association of the Germans from Russia views this book as a useful contribution to the intensifying efforts to research the history of German Russians in the territory of the Kazakhstan Republic. This volume deserves great attention.

Waldemar Schmidt, M.A.
Regensburg, 2014

“The historian is said to determine how things may actually have been. He does not ask what may have been; he does not ever maintain how things may have been; his sole concern is to determine, to the extent possible, what actually was.”

Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886)

PREFACE

The international human rights organization “Memorial,” which was founded by the physicist Andrei Sakharov in 1988, today comprises some eighty independent similar organizations, most of them in post-Soviet territories. Some Polish and German organizations have joined in. As mentioned earlier, on October 30, 1990, on Lybyanka Plaza in Moscow, human rights advocates unveiled a memorial to honor all political victims of the Soviet regime. That date was officially declared as the Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Political Repression in Russia. In sixty regions, memorial books containing the names of more than a million victims of the regime were published, and 500 monuments were established by 2002. According to estimates by Soviet human rights advocates, the number of German victims under Stalin during 1937 and 1938 alone numbered 55,000. From the October Revolution of 1917 to Stalin’s death, the estimate of German victims was 486,000 persons. Memorial books in other countries, including Ukraine, Moldova, Belorussia, the Baltic republics, and other former republics of the USSR, also contain results of successful research on this topic.

Our Association has enjoyed good access to memorial books for Odessa, Nikolayev and Cherson, and thanks to friendly cooperation with the archive keepers, we have been able to publish the names of 10,246 victims, our compatriots.

In 2007, the HFDR began to put together lists of the names of Stalin’s victims in the Altai and Omsk regions. With the help of human rights people from the regions, and with the support of several compatriots from Germany and from those Siberian



regions, two years later we published the Altai and Omsk Memorial Book, which contains the list of 2,811 victims from the Altai and Omsk areas. The data were published in tables of thirteen columns. A total of thirty-two sets of data were entered in our computer database.

In parallel with the Altai-Omsk project, and together with the German Red Cross, we began to work on a similar project for the Archangelsk region. Dr. Anton Bosch, the project leader, had established

contacts with the archive of Archangelsk University, with schools, and with other organizations in Archangelsk and the surrounding area. Documents with the names of some 10,000 imprisoned Germans as well as several thousand German POWs, all of whom suffered difficult fates and often a painful death, are said to be preserved in this region. In the cemetery of Archangelsk, the Association erected a monument in honor of all victims from the region. Video and cassette recorders were donated for interviewing German Russians who are still living. Per contract, we remitted monies for locating, analyzing, and gathering documents pertaining to our compatriots. However, because of misunderstandings or simply due to mistrust between the Russian security service, the Archangelsk Archives, and the Archangelsk University, the project has been stopped and put “on ice” for years now. It is doubtful whether it is possible to complete the project “German Russians on the White Sea.” Letters from our Board to Archangelsk authorities and even to President Medvedev remain unanswered.

During initial discussion about the project “Memorial Book Kazakhstan,” opinions were that this

project might be less complicated than earlier ones. In Kazakhstan, memorial books had been published on all regions. We thought we could extract from regional books the names of German Russian victims, and that via contact to those memorials from Kazakh regions we could obtain additional material and then put all of this together into a comprehensive memorial book for Kazakhstan. Unfortunately, it was all more complicated. When we looked through the Alma-Ata books *Kniga Skorbi* (Books of Mourning), we found in the first book some sixty names of incarcerated German Russians, and in the second book it was 196 persons. But when we compared the data with lists in the Internet (<http://lists/memeo.ru/>), it turned out that the Alma-Ata books contained only a portion of the number of victims. We finally obtained a list of 733 reprisals against Germans in Alma-Ata and in Dzhabul region. Of course, the actual number of victims would have been much larger. The author wishes to point out that in the case of this book, we are dealing mainly with individual victims of the state, i.e., of authorized court groups, special authorities, triple- or dual-membership court committees, etc. Other victims of repressive measures by the state, such as random shootings and arrests during the Civil War, dispossessions during collectivization, administrative banishments, the dissolution of the Volga German Republic and of other autonomous regions, victims of the famines of 1932-1933, being sent to forced labor camps, and other acts of injustice could not be challenged, nor could they lead to claims for compensatory damages. These numbers are in the hundreds of thousands and in some cases, e.g., the lists of Trud-Army inductees, would have been put together in the work camps.

Because documents often do not indicate nationality, it is difficult to determine whether someone with surnames such as Grossmann, Landau, Rosenfeld, Rackovski or Sayaz are Jewish, Baltic, Polish or Russian. A direct look at documents in the regional archives is not possible for our Association, and in recent times has become even more difficult. For these reasons, our sources are memorial books, the internet, and family documents.

Furthermore we have often discovered that information regarding the very same person doesn't entirely match in the memorial books and in the Internet. Frequently, last names, and birth places were spelled differently. For example, Hieronymus might become Miron, Bartholomäus might be

Panteley, Dominicus changes to Timofey; and that was the case with nearly every German name. In the opinion of the author, it was difficult, but very important to determine the actual birthplace of a victim. Because German settlements, the Regions, and even the regions were renamed after the 1917 Revolution, it was frequently the case that a certain place name occurred frequently in a region, so it became difficult to determine where a certain victim came from. Poor knowledge of Russian and untrained interrogators and court personnel left behind a number of grammatical mistakes in the court proceedings. For example, the author's father was born in München near Odessa. On his court documents, the place is called "Minücha." Another relative's birthplace Kandel is written as Kaniltely.

For the work with archive documents, the memorials would engage young people as volunteers. They performed great work, but also left behind a number of mistakes. Frequently, arrest and sentencing dates would be mistaken for each other. For that reason, it is difficult today to distinguish where and when the mistake was made. And finally, it is also possible that, despite multiple checking of tables, a mistake can occur with us as well.

In our search for victims of repression, we used, in addition to the private sources, data from family members. These data usually stemmed from official correspondence from Soviet authorities during the 1950s to the 1980s. They routinely included falsified information in reply to questions regarding the further fate of relatives, the most recent place of residence or place of burial. By now it is no secret that many a person was shot on the same day of the arrest, yet the relatives might continue for months to send packages with food and clothing for an "incarcerated" person, which were received with the promise that the packages would be passed on to the person.

After court proceedings, it was not rare that family members would write to apply for a pardon or for a lesser degree of punishment for their relative, who usually had already been transported to Siberia or Kazakhstan. Those court proceedings rarely had a positive result for the person in custody. In victim lists, under the rubric, "Occupation," the reader will often find the word, "Detainee." Instead of pardon, the verdict often was "Death Penalty." And family members were not informed at all or received false information.

Following the publication of our Odessa Mourn-

ing book, a Mrs. H. of Bietigheim wrote to us and asked why our book indicated that her father was shot in 1943. In 1957, her family had received an official announcement from Moscow which stated that her father had died in a camp in 1943. In such a case one can trust with certainty the lists published in memorial books by HFDR rather than believing an official in Moscow. Until 1988, practically no one had access to KGB documents. Relatives would most often write their letters of inquiry to the archives where the victim had lived earlier. However, these offices were unable to provide concrete answers.

Following the fall of the Soviet Union, access to documents was granted by law in most of the republics. Unfortunately, it was only for a brief period. When I was permitted to look at my father's documents in the Nikolayev Archive, I asked for a copy of the materials. But there was no copier paper in the building, and I was told to come back in a week. Nothing happened then, either. After inquiring again from home, a few months later I received, per registered mail and for a high fee, two uninteresting pages. Many descendants of victims were more fortunate and received copies of their family members' documents.

On October 30, 1990, at the initiative of the MEMORIAL Society, a stone from the Solovetsky Islands was placed on the Lubyanka Plaza in Moscow, across from the KGB building, to memorialize the victims of totalitarianism. A year later, the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation officially declared the date as the Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Political Repression.

In the fall of 1998, the Duma, Russia's parliament, decided to continue, with heightened intensity, the interrupted research regarding victims of repression. Somewhat later, similar efforts were organized in several Republics of the former Soviet Union. According to memorial books in the Kazakhstan Republic alone, investigations of repressive measures against 40,000 persons were conducted. In the Ksylorda region, a second book containing 2,000 names of victims was prepared. Most of the victims, numbering 7,050 people, and among them 940 Germans, were from the Akmolinsk region. The lowest reported number of victims, 840 people, including 472 Germans, originated in the Pawlodar region. As mentioned earlier, the number of victims thus recorded is lower than the number at the website <http://lists.memo.ro/>. In each case,

the actual numbers are much higher than those provided in both sources. The reason is that some of the documents were destroyed after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Our goal had been to determine the names of German victims of the justice system from those sources.

In addition to establishing the victim lists, the



Association was determined to record the history of the four strongest German Russian religious faith groupings beginning with their initial settlement in Germany to the present.

Immediately upon grabbing power in 1917, the Communists took up the war against the various religions. Via a decree of January, 1918, Lenin began the separation of Church and State, at the same time declaring religion to be the "opiate of the people." Properties of the churches were turned into "the properties of the people," clergy and other church workers were declared to be "enemies of the people" and were persecuted. During the years 1923 and 1924, a total of 2,469 members of the clergy of all denominations was arrested and sentenced. By 1931/1932, the number of clergy arrests rose to 19,812. Affected were the Orthodox, Catholics, Lutherans, Mennonites, Baptists, various Protestants, Muslims, and Buddhists. Between 1922 and 1937, several group trials of clergy and the faithful were conducted. Many of them were exiled to the Solovetsky Islands in the White Sea near Archangelsk, located 165 kilometers [just over 100 miles] south of the Polar Circle. The so-called "Solovk Camp" was one of the first penal camps for political prisoners in the Soviet Union. Alexander Solzhenitsyn describes this special camp in his book "Gulag Archipelago." Because of its especially bestial methods of destruction, he deemed it worse than Auschwitz and Buchenwald.

Nowhere else were so many people killed, nowhere else were terror and capriciousness so great,

nowhere else was a person so denigrated as on these islands. In no other Soviet camp were torture and murderous experiments as gruesome as on the Solovetskys. Surviving officers of the White Army called these camps “torture and death islands.” People were tied to a pole and tossed down the Sekirya mountain, the so-called “Torture-Polygon” of 365-steps, or they were tied to a tree branch and dragged through the woods by a horse until the victim could no longer breathe. In groups, naked people were tied to trees and slowly eaten by mosquitoes. Furred animals on the islands were fed human meat, and the furs would later be sold on European markets. It is with such bestial methods that the all-powerful wished to introduce liberty, equality, and fraternity to the entire world. Practices involving torture would later be employed by the “SS” in German concentration camps. The major difference is merely that one side was punished by death at the Nuremberg Trials, while the others were buried with honors on Red Square in Moscow or on the Kremlin Wall. It was not for nothing that Nobel award winner Leo Landau dubbed Lenin as “Fascist Number One.”

Professor Roiy Medvedev, who had published several books about Stalin’s reprisals, discovered that between 1929 and 1953, 40 million people became victims of Communism. In Kazakhstan the number was 103,000 during the same time span, and 23,000 of those people were shot. Forty-two percent of Kazakhs died of hunger, more than a million Kazakhs emigrated to China, Mongolia, Iraq, Afghanistan and other countries. A more exact number of people fleeing to other countries or to the neighboring Union Republics has yet to be established. During those years, the country is said to have lost 48% of its population. Between 1928 and 1932, all active Kazakh Communists, including the founders of the first (Soviet) Republic, were arrested and shot.

One of the country’s first laws passed after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the law of April 14, 1993, called for the rehabilitation of all who had formerly been politically persecuted. At the unveiling of the memorial in the women’s prison ALGIR near Astana, President Nursultan Nasarbattyev said, “Hitler destroyed foreign peoples in his concentration camps - a terrible crime - but Stalin destroyed his own people. That is something one can never forgive.” The day was declared to be “Day of Remembrance for all People in Kazakhstan Who Were

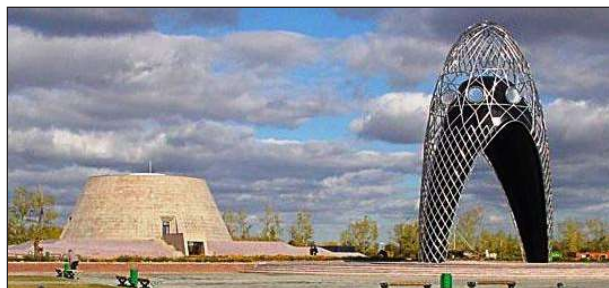
Persecuted Politically.”

Because the churches and their clergy were first to resettle from European regions of Russia to beyond the Urals, and also were first to fall victim to the regime, we decided to pay our respects in this project to their work and their accomplishments during new settlement as well as during later times in Kazakhstan.

Our articles on the religious life of the Germans in Kazakhstan were written by professional historians and other experts in Germany, Russia and Kazakhstan. Ludmilla Burghardt of Ust-Kamenogorsk presents her work on the Catholic colonies in Kazakhstan. Olga Litzenberger of Saratov writes about the German Lutherans in Kazakhstan from the first settlements to this day. Waldemar Schmidt of Regensburg provides research work on the life of Mennonites in Kazakhstan. Johannes Dyck of Oerlinghausen writes about the Baptist Brethren Community from the 1917 Revolution to the present. Without a doubt, these four historical articles constitute valuable research efforts, and for anyone who is interested in our ethnic group they will provide new views of the past.

On behalf of our HFDR Board, and on my own personal behalf as project leader, I wish to thank all researchers for making their work available to the Association. I also wish for collaboration in the future as well.

Sincere thanks are due to Johannes Herzog of



Königswinter for the translation of articles in this book on the Catholics and Lutherans, as well as for final editing of the book. Further thanks are due to our HFDR member Johannes Kampen, who took over much of the proofing of several parts. We wish both of these elder gentlemen many healthy and happy years. [N.B. Johannes Herzog, a second cousin and much-admired colleague of the translator of the German-language book into English, died in January, 2017.]

I also thank all those who, with their village

reports, have made this memorial book more interesting and more valuable, above all Mr. Ju. G. Popov of Petersburg for the article on the former colony of Samarkand/Karaganda; Mr. Oskar Schulz of Berlin for the article on Konstantinovka/Chimkent; and Mrs. Sophia Wagner of Hamburg for the article on Rosovka/Pawlodar.

A sincere “God bless you” to all who support the Association with advice and deed, and for valuable documents and photos sent to us. Additional thanks to Olga Stein of Karaganda, Elena Popova (Erbis) of Alma-Ata, Georg Zerr of Burgau, and to many others for their assistance.

We are grateful to the authors of the series of volumes entitled “Kniga pamyati shertv politicheskich repressiy” (Memorial Book for the Victims of

Political Repression) of Kazakhstan and to the people at the web homepage www.lists.memo.ru for all their efforts and for their helpful cooperation, without which we would have had immense difficulties making this project a reality.

Michael Wanner
Regenstauf, November, 2013

