

Baltic Peoples in Kazakhstan: Culture, History of Settlement and Contribution to the Economy of Kazakhstan

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Abstract

In the article, the authors provide an analysis of some issues of Baltic everyday life: the history of its appearance on the territory of Kazakhstan, everyday work in the virgin lands and family and religious life. The sources for archival, statistical and ego-documents (personal archives, interviews and recollections of the participants of the events). The state and party organs imperatively implemented the standards of contribution and 'behaviour' of the Soviet republics in the implementation of the virgin project, shaping various positive/negative socio-cultural everyday practices. According to the authors, the Soviet leadership created 'deviations' in the form of protest sentiments, inter-ethnic conflicts and discontent of national minorities on a wide range of political and socio-economic issues through ideological principles.

Keywords: History of Kazakhstan; Baltic peoples; development of virgin and fallow lands; everyday life.

Introduction

The “Khrushchev Decade” (1953–1964) is marked in history by numerous and controversial reforms, the goal of which was the idea of creating a society for the common good. The way to it was seen not only through the process of de-Stalinization, but also through socio-economic reforms and through the creation of a society of trust in interethnic relations. Those relations were supposed to be the result of a successful domestic policy of Soviet nation-building. By the beginning of that decade, the Soviet Union was experiencing severe economic and social difficulties. The roots of these problems should be sought not only in the post-war period, but also in many respects in the system of Stalinism, which had common features of totalitarianism. Therefore, one of the directions of the economic reforms of the Soviet Union was the development of vast virgin lands expanses of Kazakhstan. The country was supposed not only to get rid of grain dependence, but also to become one of the world’s major grain exporters in the foreseeable future. In order to put this idea into practice, people’s enthusiasm was intensively exploited, vast territories were developed in an extraordinary time frame, new administrative regions were created – the country was preparing to build a communist society, forming directly and indirectly certain norms for those who came to develop the virgin lands expanses of Kazakhstan. Together, economic and socio-political processes influenced the everyday life of the Baltic peoples⁷ who came to Kazakhstan to develop the virgin lands.

The everyday life of the Baltic peoples in the period of virgin land development as a subject of scientific research has not been seriously analysed in historiography for various reasons, i.e., lack of archival materials, “irrelevance” of the topic, traumas of cultural memory and other issues. In the few works of a memoir nature authors have favoured recollections of events that they have participated in or observed (Museums Public Portal, 1957; Kurs, 2019; Raudvere, 2020; Oinas, 2021). The value of these works is not in doubt, as they convey a direct perception of the events, but without reliance on other sources they do not provide a

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⁷ We intentionally use the word “Balts” in inverted commas, as for the peoples of the Baltic States this notion has more of a negative meaning. Culturally, ethnically and religiously, Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians have different national identities. The term emerged during the Sovietisation of these territories and is associated by the Baltic peoples with the Soviet occupation. At the same time, the adjective “Baltic”, e.g. Baltic peoples, does not have a negative meaning and is therefore used in the article.

coherent picture of the everyday life of the Baltic diasporas in that period. In Kazakhstani historiography, this problem has not been actualised in public and scholarly discourse. This article is therefore an attempt to fill in the gaps in the study of Baltic everyday life and in understanding what social practices and norms they used to exist in the Soviet socio-cultural space.

Materials and Methods

For this purpose, the article uses a wide range of sources. The main part of the documentary material was studied in Kazakhstani archives, i.e., in the funds of the Collection of documentary materials on the history of development of virgin and fallow lands in *Tselinny Kray* (or Virgin Lands Region) (F. 136) of the Astana State Archives, which keeps files on the history of participation of the Baltic republics in the development of virgin lands in Kazakhstan. The material of interest to us about the activities of the Baltic party elites was found in the party funds of the North Kazakhstan State Archives. Documents from the party fund (F.1) of the Akmola Oblast State Archives, containing materials of the Regional Committee of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan, allowed to reveal the specifics of camp and special settlers' work in the period of virgin lands campaign. This body regularly received reports from the provincial KGB bodies, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Prosecutor's Office.

The authors note that there is very little information about the Baltic diasporas in archives, newspapers and other materials, and it had to be collected bit by bit. Most of the sources collected, all photos from archives and personal collections of informants are being researched for the first time.

Discussion and Research Results

To the history of the appearance of the Baltic peoples on the territory of Kazakhstan

“The Germans came and hanged my father; the Russians came and did the same...”

The Baltic peoples appeared on the territory of Kazakhstan long before the development of virgin and fallow lands. If we dwell on the history of this issue, we note that the first appearance of these peoples on the territory of Kazakhstan was recorded in the 19th century and connected with the Tsar's exile. Mass resettlement, on the other hand, began during the peasant agrarian resettlement in the second half of the 19th century. The Estonians who moved to Kazakhstan founded three settlements: Petrovskoe in Novocherkassk parish of Akmola county, Lifland parish of Akmola county and Upper Yelovka on the shore of Markakol lake in Zaisan county (see detailed description of Oinas, 2020). The first All-Russian Population census, conducted in 1897, registered 544 Latvians and 58 Lithuanians living only in the Akmola Oblast (Akmolinskaya oblast', 1904) and 375 Estonians (Abdulina, 2017). That time the processes of the Baltic peasants' mass dispossession led to migration to the south-eastern outskirts of the Russian Empire, including the Turkestan Oblast. In the first years after the founding of the villages, the Baltic peoples had conflicts both with the Kazakhs over land selected by the Russian administration for the establishment of resettlement settlements and with other settlers.

“My father remembered well that there was such a story. When they arrived in Siberia, the lands had been taken away by the Russians. There were Russian peasants living everywhere. The Estonians got the swampy areas. This served as a blessing. Because Estonians loved cattle. It happened so that when the Russians were pushing a cart loaded with wheat in the mud, the Estonians were taking a cart with springs to the market – carrying cheese, butter, cheese curd etc. They got the same money as the Russians. They sold a ton or half a ton of wheat. Estonians became more prosperous. In the end they were subjected to collectivisation and dispossession. My grandfather fell under the dispossession. His family had to hide in the forest. They had to run from place to place” (Inf. 1).

Despite difficult relations with the local population and immigrants from the European part of the empire, the Baltic peoples managed to create strong farms and preserve their traditional culture. *“There were several waves, the biggest during the Stolypin reforms. My mother said that first they came to Siberia, then through Petropavlovsk,*

along the Irtysh to Ust-Kamenogorsk. There were whole villages there. Pure Estonian settlements. The Estonian spirit, traditions, language was preserved” (Inf. 1).

According to V. Ya. Nepomnin by the 1920s, 569 Latvians and 307 Lithuanians lived on the territory of the Turkestan Republic (Nepomnin, 1957). Estonian researcher M. Oinas notes that in the early 1920s “representatives of some national groups who found themselves on the territory of Soviet Russia after the collapse of the Russian Empire were given a choice between Soviet citizenship and citizenship of other post-imperial countries. According to the recollections of J. Kanter, only three Estonian families left Pokornyy during the years of the option (...) the economic motives of retaining ownership of the land and the results of their labour prevailed in the basis of the Estonian peasant’ choice of citizenship” (Oinas, 2021). Thus, it can be assumed that the main mass of the Baltic peoples who migrated remained on the territory of Kazakhstan for economic reasons. Until the mid-1930s, Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians lived in closed communities in their villages, preserved their language and traditions and operated schools in their native language.

The next wave of resettlement of these peoples was of a repressive and deportation nature. Soviet ideology, which shaped the “real” members of Soviet society, was based on a collective image in the context of the dichotomy “We – They”. Moreover, the Soviet authorities detected “They” not only outside their own country, but also within Soviet society itself, referring to them as “enemy” elements only by suspicion. Therefore, the process of the forced relocation of people had not only pragmatic goals, but also ideological ones (Saktaganova et al., 2018; Mazhitova et al., 2022).

The next wave of resettlement of these peoples was of a repressive and deportation nature. Forced deportation began in June-July 1941. In this way, the state got rid of “unreliable” peoples, carrying out repression, which was characteristic of the Stalinist totalitarian regime. The “ethnic cleansing” of the border strip of the Soviet Union was an element of preparatory measures for a probable war with Poland and Germany. The Soviet military-political leadership did not believe in the loyalty of national minorities who had strong family ties in neighbouring states. It is no coincidence that, at the insistence of the state security organs, on January 31, 1938, a resolution was adopted by the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks on the continuation of the operation to “defeat espionage and sabotage contingents from among the Poles, Latvians, Germans, Estonians, Finns, Greeks. This list listed “unreliable” peoples who were suspected of sympathy for their “historical homeland” (Kaziev, 2015).

During the summer months of 1941, 656 repressed people arrived in the territory of the Kazakh SSR (KazSSR) from the Baltic states, a significant part of whom were settled as exiled settlers for a period of 20 years in South Kazakhstan, Aktobe, Kzyl-Orda, Karaganda, Guryevskaya, and Akmola Oblasts. New waves of resettlement of the “punished” titular peoples of the Baltic states led to the fact that in the following months of 1941 this number significantly increased. According to the historian V. N. Zemskov, as a result of forced deportations during the war years, 14301 special settlers from the Baltic states were placed on the territory of Kazakhstan (Zemskov, 1993). Of these, by 1953, the following were registered on the territory of Kazakhstan: Guryev Oblast – 89 people, Karaganda Oblast – 40, Kokchetav Oblast – 9, Akmola Oblast – 3, Kzyl-Orda Oblast – 2, Semipalatinsk Oblast – 2, Pavlodar Oblast – 1. *“Before 1938 my grandmother did not know Russian at all. When her husband was imprisoned and taken to Semipalatinsk, she was somehow able to explain herself using mime and gestures to get to Semipalatinsk, to her husband. There was one meeting. He said, ‘This is how they torture me..., under my fingernails..., I’ll probably sign all the documents’. Such a story...” (Inf. 1).*



Figure 1. Repressed S. T. Giraitis

(State archive of Pavlodar Oblast. F. 719. Inv. 2. F. 23. Sh. 1)

Regional and district organizations were looking for opportunities to provide the necessary housing and food for the newly arriving exiled settlers. For this, there were instructions and an action plan for the transfer, resettlement and employment of special contingents expelled from the Baltic States, approved by the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs of the USSR (People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs (NKVD) dated June 14, 1941. The plan approved the mode of operation, accounting and labour and household arrangements for exiled settlers. The archives are replete with materials from the reports of the NKVD officers, testifying to the difficult living conditions in which the "fluid national groups" were found. Thus, it was noted in the memorandum of the head of the Gulag V. G. Nasedkin to the Deputy People's Commissar of the NKVD V. V. Chernyshev about the placement of exiles: "According to the signals coming from the places, these exiles are in very difficult living conditions. There are facts of swelling from hunger, begging, and 'unemployment'" (Baikash et al., 2019). The same difficult situation of the exiled settlers was noted in the report on "Sanitary and preventive work in the Osakarovsky district of the Karaganda Oblast" dated March 3, 1942: "The state farm pays ... great attention to animals, at least we saw a beautifully built calf barn, but people on the state farm live in very difficult conditions. In the dormitories (...) incredible dirt was found, a lot of lice. We were surprised that in the room where the young workers live, 5 Latvian women are settled" (Vvedenskaya, 2015). Judging by numerous documents, no effective measures were taken by the Soviet authorities to build residential premises, prepare housing for winter in the places of resettlement of newcomers.

The Baltic peoples, who arrived in Kazakhstan at that time, worked diligently on the construction sites of the republic. Here is what I. K. Pukenis, who was repressed in 1938 and sentenced to 8 years of imprisonment by extrajudicial repressive bodies ("troika"), wrote in his appeal to the department of rehabilitation of people of Stalin repressions of the Department of Internal Affairs in Pavlodar: "I was 19 years old. I was arrested right in the workplace. (...) they took me to the district centre (...). The investigator Lobziy summoned me. His first question was about you being from a family of kulaks, I answered that you were a family of 9 people, there was only one cow and a bull calf. He answered that we did not break such people. If you deny it, we will do without your confession" (SAPO. F. 719. Inv. 1. F. 405. Sh. 1). I. K. Pukenis, on the basis of the sentence, went a long way: from worker in a prison workshop in Pavlodar, handyman in timber mines in the Sverdlovsk Oblast to turner on the railway in the Moscow Oblast. Exactly 8 years later he was released with a 2nd group of disability.

During the Second World War, Kazakhstan not only provided the front with manpower, but was also a major arsenal for the front. At that time, the country's subsoil was undergoing rapid development. It was not by chance that the deported from the Baltic peoples were placed in strategically important regions of the republic: Karaganda, Akmolinsk, Dzhezkazgan, Semipalatinsk, and other industrial centres. One of those who worked in these years in the mines for mining was A. K. Malleus. In his autobiography he wrote: "I was born on January 7, 1932 in the Republic of Estonia, in a peasant family. I was arrested. I served time in Dzhezkazgan. I was released in 1956. I worked in (...) ROGR (Open Pit Mine) as an electric fitter. On April, 28th, 1989 he was rehabilitated" (SAPO. F. 719. Inv. 1. F. 381. Sh. 4–5).

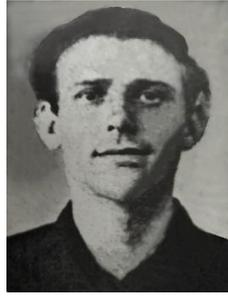


Figure 2. A. K. Malleus

(Figure taken from the certificate of confinement in places of detention

(SAPO. F. 719. Inv. 1. F. 381. Sh. 2)

“Unreliable” ethnic groups were involved in the laying of railways, the construction of factories, mines, and combines. Along with other peoples exiled to the territory of Kazakhstan, they sowed, ploughed, worked at industrial enterprises in non-ferrous, ferrous metallurgy, and other industries. *“My great-grandfather was a clergyman in the Catholic Church during the Soviet era and was convicted for it. My great-grandfather was immediately shot, my grandmother was exiled to Siberia, and my father was sent to Karaganda when he was 16. In Karaganda my father worked in the coal mines. He got to know engineers, was taught the Russian language and technical skills. He became a class specialist. In 1953 he was amnestied without the right to return home”* (Inf. 2).

In the history of the 1920s–1930s, the ties between the Baltic and Kazakh peoples in the archival funds of the Republic of Kazakhstan are poorly traced. However, scarce information is still available. Thus, in the lists of workers at the Chudsky mine in 1930–1945, there was the name Orre M. A. – a non-party Latvian, an engineer who worked as a geologist at this mine. The archive fund of the Irtyshgesstroy Department for the construction of hydraulic structures contained lists of workers who took part in the construction of the Ust-Kamenogorsk hydroelectric power station. Among them there was Zingit Yu. F. Latvian, master of crushing and screening plant. In addition to him, we found characteristic Latvian surnames: Supess R. Ya., Pyanvis A. Ya., Vengrus F. Ya., Berdus V. V. and others (in total, 19 names) (Centre for Documentation of the Modern History of the East Kazakhstan Oblast (TSDNI VKO). F. R-74. Inv. 1. F. 4. Sh. 12–18).

The Soviet and party bodies of the Kazakh SSR tried to actively recruit workers from the “non-local nationality” in their party-ideological work. Table 1 shows this.

Table 1. Nos. 256–258. From the statistical report of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Bolsheviks of Kazakhstan on the national composition of the party organization (Baikash et al., 2019).

National composition	As of January 1, 1940			As of January 1, 1941			As of January 1, 1942		
	Members of the All-Union Communist Party (b)	Candidates	Total	Members of the All-Union Communist Party (b)	Candidates	Total	Members of the All-Union Communist Party (b)	Candidates	Total
Estonians	18	6	24	23	10	33	123	16	139
Latvians	67	11	78	78	6	84	78	6	84
Lithuanians	19	5	24	24	3	27	47	4	51

These tables show a positive trend in the increase in the number of candidates and members of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union among the peoples of the Baltic states. The materials of archival files do not allow us to clearly trace the work of these persons in the party organs. Meanwhile, in the state archives of the East Kazakhstan Oblast there are documents relating to the life and work of citizens of Latvian nationality who lived in Kazakhstan during the 19th–20th centuries. So, in the personal file of Vever August Martsevich, born in 1844, there is interesting information about his activities as the head of the Semipalatinsk department for the evacuation of the population (TSDNI VKO. F. R-73. Inv. 2. F. 96). There is also information about the option of Latvian citizenship to communist Latvians, members of the RCP (Russian Communist Party), about the activities of the Latvian section at the Semipalatinsk Provincial Committee of the RCP, as well as other documents about the participation of Latvians, Lithuanians and Estonians in the work of local party cells (TSDNI VKO. F. R-1p. Inv. 1. F. 50. Sh. 23; TSDNI VKO. F. R-1. Inv. 1. F. 5. Sh. 41; TSDNI VKO. F. R-74. Inv. 1. F. 4. Sh. 10–11). It is worth agreeing with P. Werth that, in challenging conditions, the deported peoples developed their own survival strategies, which were expressed, among other things, through their service in Soviet state and party bodies (Werth, 2005). The political “agreement” of both sides (the elites of the Baltic peoples and the Soviet government) is most likely due to several reasons. On the one hand, the turn of representatives of ethnic elites towards Soviet power is connected with the desire of the former to preserve the path to salvation and save their people, who were excluded from among the most privileged ethnic groups.

On the other hand, we dare to assume that the Soviet practice of engaging and attracting national elites and entire peoples to their side pursued their own goals. Firstly, representatives of ethnic elites suspected of nationalist “deviations” were under the constant control of local special services, which made it possible to coordinate the actions of the authorities in relation to them and gradually remove obstacles to the development of Soviet “internationalism”. Secondly, the deportation of “unreliable” peoples led to a break in the strong ties of these ethnic groups with the ethnic core and in a short time made it possible to Sovietize them. And, thirdly, the party bodies of Kazakhstan involved the ethnic elites of the “punished peoples” in ideological work – as propagandists and instructors to attract the population to the implementation of the plans outlined by the Soviet authorities to form the Soviet consciousness and cultural attitudes of these peoples. The Union helped the Soviet government and the part of the national intelligentsia close to it to survive in emergency conditions.

The occupation and forced deportation of the Baltic peoples was a marker of the national policy of the then Soviet leadership. It became one of the methods used by the Soviet system to achieve its political goals in the national question. It can be argued that in the collective memory of the Baltic peoples the issues of occupation and deportation are still relevant in public and academic discourse today. *“The memory of the past is traumatised. A certain residue has been left behind. The Germans came and hanged my father, the Russians came and did the same. The memory remains not only in the family circle, we try to bring it into the public sphere”* (Inf. 3).

The Kazakhs helped to survive the peoples who suffered in the twentieth century from Stalin’s deportations. The peoples who arrived in Kazakhstan, involuntarily excluded from the number of the most privileged state-forming Soviet ethnic groups, constantly recall how in the difficult years of the deportation of the “punished peoples”, the Kazakhs shared their last bread with the settlers. The memory of these events is preserved in the memories of the older generation:

“My grandmother came to Kazakhstan at the end of the 40s. She could not settle in the city, as her husband’s family was arrested in the 1930s. And she was only allowed to leave Siberia for health reasons. My father – he was in the 7th grade at the time – got to her on the goods trains himself. They had no documents. They were sheltered by a Kazakh family who gave them shelter during the winter and spring. In summer her grandmother built a house: during the day she worked in the beet field as a steward, and at night she made adobe, of which she put up walls. There were practically no materials, so she had to think of ways out (for example, making window sills out of concrete – it was more difficult with wood in the steppe)” (Inf. 4).

According to the leader of the Lithuanian community in Karaganda. Karaganda V. Tvarionas: *“During the occupation you lose practically everything. When they were deported, they took stone millstones because there was a rumour that there were no stones in the steppe. Icons were brought with them. They covered them with Stalin’s portrait, then, when we were alone, the portrait was taken down and the image of the Mother of God was left. Faith disciplines, builds up the spirit”* (Inf.

3).

The Baltic peoples deported to Kazakhstan adapted to the new conditions, some of them managed to return to their homeland after the beginning of the “thaw”, while others remained in Kazakhstan and continued to realise their national potential.

Soviet modernisation had very contradictory consequences for the republic and turned into a national tragedy and famine, a demographic catastrophe in the 1920s and 1930s. These issues have been the subject of much funder research by scholars such as Sarah Cameron, Robert Kindler and Niccolò Pianciola, so we will not dwell on them in this article (Pohl, 2007; Pohl, 2012; Cameron, 2016; Cameron, 2018; Kindler, 2018; Pianciola, 2022).

The peoples of the Baltics in the virgin lands: standards/ deviations in everyday life Voluntarily /forced...

The period of the 1950s–1960s was marked in Soviet history by numerous Khrushchev’s reforms, the ultimate goal of which was to build communism. The transition to the real implementation of this “general idea of the party” was seen, among other things, through the solution of the issue of an acute grain shortage, which was caused by a whole range of socio-economic factors. It was supposed to be eliminated due to a sharp expansion of sown areas. Thus, the first secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU (Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union). N. S. Khrushchev, justifying the need for an extensive method of solving the grain problem, emphasized: “In 1940, in fact, 2 billion 225 million pounds were harvested for all categories of farms, in 1948 – 1 billion 842 million, in 1952 – 2 billion 118 million pounds and in 1953 – 1 billion 850 million pounds. These data show that in terms of grain procurement, we still have not reached the pre-war level, and in 1953 we harvested 375 million poods less grain than in 1940” (Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (RGANI). F. 52. Inv. 1. F. 191. Sh. 9). The official party rhetoric led to the fact that in 1954, at the February-March Plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU, a course was taken to plough up huge land masses in the east of the Soviet Union – on the territory of the Kazakh SSR (Akmola, Pavlodar, North Kazakhstan Oblast (NKO), Kustanai, and Pavlodar Oblasts), Povoga and Siberia. The most large-scale ploughing of land areas was carried out on the territory of northern Kazakhstan, where in total more than 25 million hectares of land were ploughed. It was planned that “all costs...will pay off in one or two years” (ibid.). We should say at once that the project did not achieve its goal; moreover, it was costly and, according to the Kazakhstani historian Zh. Abylkhozhin: “The course for the development of virgin lands, set in the algorithm of the task of the final ‘removal’ of the grain problem, did not solve it. The share of the USSR began to account for 16% of all grain areas on the globe (for comparison, China – 13%, India – 14, USA – 8.5%). Nevertheless, the country has consistently been among the top five world’s largest grain importers. According to some estimates, over ten years (1976–1985) it was purchased more than 308 million tons in the amount of more than 50 billion dollars” (Abylkhozhin, 2020).

One of the important issues that arose in the first months of the virgin land campaign was the search for a professional workforce. There were several channels for recruiting labour resources for the development of virgin lands. Perhaps the most important of them is that the state organised the mass resettlement of specialists (and not only) from the Soviet republics to the virgin lands, who became known as “virgin land workers”. Another channel was the redeployment of camp sites from different regions of the republic was the contribution of prisoners to the economic development of the republic can hardly be overestimated. Prisoners from Karlag, Steplag, ALZHIR and other camps were employed in coal mining, metal and ore mining, capital construction and other heavy works. The cheapest possible labour for prisoners allowed the authorities to save material and labour resources for the development of the “barren steppe”.

In a secret note of 1957 by the Minister of Internal Affairs of the Kazakh SSR, General of the Internal Service of the III rank Sh. Kabybaev, addressed to the Secretary of the Akmola Oblast Committee of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan (CPK), it was reported that four camp sites were stationed in the Akmola Oblast at that time. “Considering the arguments you have given about the need to use prisoners in the construction, and subsequently in the operation of the porcelain factory, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Kazakh SSR considers it appropriate to relocate the ITK-15 light security camp with 200 prisoners from

the city of Akmolinsk to the construction site of the porcelain factory” (it was located 35 kilometres from the city of Akmolinsk) (State Archive of Akmola Oblast (SAAO). F. 1. Inv. 1. F. 2542. Sh. 114).

In addition, in the 1950s the contingent of prisoners was used in the operation and reconstruction of two brick factories in the city of Akmolinsk, in the extraction of stone in the Vishnevsky quarry, in the construction of the industrial base of the Akmolinskstroy trust, in the construction of a colony in Akmolinsk, in the construction of a regional hospital, a department store, a technical school, and in other virgin land facilities. But there were still not enough specialists, particularly those servicing machines and mechanisms (*ibid.*).

One of the channels for replenishing the labour force was to attract personnel from among the exiled settlers. So, in the Akmola Oblast as of September 1, 1955, there were 68,409 special settlers: 40,508 Germans, 20,854 Chechen-Ingush and 7,047 of other contingents (including the peoples of the Baltic States). Of the indicated number of special settlers, 52,143 people were able-bodied, of which 29,022 people were employed in collective farm production, 4,906 people in state farm production, and 17,116 people in other enterprises. Considering that according to the official statistics there were 300,000 people living in Akmola Oblast in 1954, it follows that potentially around 20% of the exiled settlers could be used where there was a shortage of people (Baikash et al., 2019).

As we have mentioned above, the Baltic peoples were victims of Soviet policies. Deportation, hard physical labour, purposeful liquidation of the Baltic intelligentsia, language and culture led to the formation of “Soviet intelligentsia”, for whom attempts to build a career in the Soviet and Party organs became a chance for national self-preservation. It is no coincidence that during the virgin lands development, 4 people from among the special settlers worked as chairmen of collective farms (!), deputy of chairmen of collective farms – 2, foremen of field-breeding brigades – 143, foremen of tractor brigades – 186, head of farms – 12, managers of state farms – 8, agronomists – 58, livestock specialists – 52, veterinary workers – 89, teachers – 381, doctors – 75, engineers – 24, technicians – 37 and other specialists – 3893 people. And these data are only for the Akmola Oblast (SAAO. F. 1. Inv. 1. F. 2348. Sh. 2–11).

Of the total 27472 families of special settlers in the region 17583 families had their own houses, of which 814 families were built in 1954 and 342 families were built that year.

17,068 families had cows, 685 families had horses, and 10,531 families had small livestock (sheep, goats, pigs, etc.). In addition, 67 special settlers had their own cars, 787 motorcycles, 8372 bicycles, and 2181 radios.

Of the special settlers, 167 people were members and candidate members of the CPSU, 1689 people were members of the Komsomol, 51 people were secretaries of the primary Komsomol organizations, 19 of the members of trade unions were chairmen of trade union committees (SAAO. F. 1. Inv. 1. F. 2337. Sh. 19). Among the special settlers, 3802 people had government awards, 269 of them were awarded for the fulfilment and over fulfilment of production plans.

Another channel for replenishing the ranks of the “virgin lands” was the amnesty of 1953, during which people with a criminal past opened “a channel for transferring specifically Gulag and obviously conflicting practices to the ‘big society’” (Kozlov, 2009). We agree with V. A. Kozlov that having lost the social skills of life in the wild, which perceived them as “strangers”, they were not always able to join the system of social relations in the virgin land collective. As a result, “...some persons who were convicted in the past, hooligans, grabbers, who appropriated one or another specialty and did not want to work, ended up in the state farm. Some of these persons escaped from state farms, and some were convicted of serious criminal offenses” (RGANI. F. 5. Inv. 31. F. 3. Sh. 169).

Students of higher and secondary specialized educational institutions, conscripts, demobilized soldiers, public sector workers (teachers, doctors and other categories as seasonal labour) also participated in the forced development of virgin lands.

There were other “non-standard” ways to attract labour. So, in the Decree of the Council of Ministers of the Kazakh SSR dated October 20, 1956 No. 756 “On the involvement of gypsies engaged in vagrancy in labour”, the executive committees of the regional, city and district Councils of Workers’ Deputies were obliged to settle the gypsies for permanent residence, carry out passportization and all mandatory employment (State Archive of the North Kazakhstan region (GASKO). F. 1189. Inv. 1. F. 3225. Sh. 109). Let us also note the measures taken by the authorities to return families of repatriates from the People’s Republic of China and to place them in virgin land regions (SAAO. F. 1. Inv. 1. F. 1982).

We should add to the above that the question of the shortage of human resources was so urgent that at a meeting in 1954 with Mao Zedong, chairman of the Chinese Communist Party, Nikita Khrushchev raised the question of transferring workers from China to areas in Siberia and the Far East. In his memoirs, N. S. Khrushchev recalled this conversation as follows: “We decided to ask the Chinese for labour. Comrade Mao Zedong, here we would like the Chinese brothers to help us: we have few people. I don’t remember how much we wrote, a million or less. Mao Zedong then replied: ‘Come on! Only Shanghai will give you two million. There is unemployment, there is nothing to eat’. The head of the Soviet government N. S. Khrushchev, having seen through the “long-range aim” of his Chinese colleagues, then replied: “No, we will not be able to employ such a number of people” (RGANI. F. 52. Inv. 2. F. 33. Sh. 35).

Among those who came in practice to implement “superprogramme” of Nikita Khrushchev, there were also residents of the Baltic republics. Judging by the materials of the all-Union censuses, we observe a positive growth trend in the number of Baltic diasporas in Kazakhstan until the 1970s (except for Latvians). See table. 2.

Table 2. Change in the population of the peoples of the Baltics (based on the materials of the all-Union population censuses) (Demoskop Weekly, 1926; 1939; 1959; 1970; 1979).

Diaspora	1926	1939	1959	1970	1979
Estonians	2192	3663	3683	4060	3505
Lithuanians	312	818	12132	14163	10964
Latvians	1101	3612	4588	4269	4318

In Decree No. 18 of May 10, 1955 of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Latvia and the Council of Ministers of the Latvian SSR “On Assistance to the Ministry of Urban and Rural Construction of the Kazakh SSR in the selection of engineering and technical workers for construction in the areas of development of virgin and fallow lands” obliged the heads of ministries, departments, construction sites, organizations, enterprises, and institutions to freely transfer all persons who have expressed a desire to go to work in construction organizations of the system of the Ministry of Urban and Rural Construction of the Kazakh SSR. Moreover, the chairman of the State Planning Commission of the Council of Ministers of the Latvian SSR “comrade” Veldre was instructed to revise the plan for the distribution of young technician specialists and civil engineers, with the aim of selecting at least 10 civil engineers, architects, and 40 construction technicians for recruiting construction organizations of the Kazakh SSR (State archive of the city of Astana (SA of the city of Astana). F. 136. Inv. 7. F. 108. Sh. 1).

Numerous inter-republican and intra-republican migrations of the population to the virgin lands organized by the authorities were considered generally accepted, and therefore “standard”. Over time, this process of movement of peoples became unshakable, one of the ways to solve the labour migration in the country. Of course, there was no reason to talk about the mass arrival of citizens of the Baltic republics for the development of virgin lands.

In the archives of the NKO there are applications from several hundred Lithuanians who wanted to come to the virgin lands (GASKO. F. 2084. Inv. 1. F. 60). Some went to the virgin lands as a result of organizational recruitment, when in the course of state management of labour resources, the latter were attracted and moved in the right direction. For those leaving voluntarily, the motivation was based on material matters (good wages, a loan to build a house, to buy cattle, material aid).

Others came to Kazakhstan “voluntarily and by force”, when a trip to the virgin lands might have been the best solution to a difficult life situation.

“Many from Lithuania came voluntarily, but there were also quite a few who came ‘voluntarily-forced’. These people were in a desperate situation. Orphanages ...they existed after the war. There were children of the dispossessed. When they reached adulthood, they were offered a prospect – virgin land, construction of Temirtau plant, meat-packing plant or brick factory. My father’s example. He came here ‘voluntarily-forced’. While serving in the army he had a conflict with a midshipman over domestic issues. The conflict reached the officers. They gave him an unflattering characteristic from the service. When he got a job, he was asked for a character reference, which was spoiled. There were no jobs in the village. Komsomol organizations prepared detachments and offered jobs in Kazakhstan. They said that in Lithuania he had ‘no prospects, you did not serve well’. He was told he had the following perspective – you will go to Kazakhstan to work on the virgin land, you will get education, higher education, you will work. That’s basically what happened. He got an education, worked in the fields, got married here” (Inf. 3).

Those who had been reprimanded in the Komsomol or Party line also came on a “voluntary and forced” basis. The authorities gave them an opportunity to get an indulgence in the form of seasonal work in the virgin land fields: *“I went to Kazakhstan reluctantly, only ‘in order of party discipline’, as I was told – ‘for correction’. The Komsomol voucher said that I ‘voluntarily expressed my desire’” (Inf. 5)*

In addition to them, people were sent to Kazakhstan on “community sentences for involvement in major conflicts”.

Such a small number of virgin land people, compared with hundreds of thousands of families from Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine, is most likely due to the fact that Kazakhstan has been preserved in the collective memory of these peoples as a place of trauma, a place of deportation of ancestors. And yet, some information regarding the migration process is available.

As a narrative of those years, filled with propaganda and publicity, we use an extract from letters and newspaper articles by Estonian virgin land workers who returned to their homeland from Kazakhstan in 1957: *“Komsomol banners were carried with honour through all difficulties. 6,200 thousand poods of first-class grain were handed over to the state. 209 boys and girls of Tallinn were awarded the badge ‘For the development of new lands’” (SA of the city of Astana. F. 136. Inv. 7. F. 110. Sh. 6).*

The virgin lands people of the Baltic republics mastered the widest range of professions: from turners, millers to designers, miners, milkmaids. The names of the best have been preserved in archives, among which it is worth mentioning *“Annok, Vetka, Saviots, Cabral, Puusepp, Ikvils, Kask and Telliskivi from the Central district, ...Veske, Aun, Liiv, ...Sokkmann, Jalak...”* and many others who left their mark on the virgin land epic (ibid.).

In 1957, the State Economic Commission of the USSR and the Council of Ministers of the Kazakh SSR approved a plan for the resettlement of 600 families from the Lithuanian SSR to North Kazakhstan Oblast (GASKO. F. 1189. Inv. 1. F. 3379. Sh. 3). The process of of resettlement from the Baltic republics can hardly be called all-encompassing, but, nevertheless, it was quite massive, and so much so that there were difficulties in issuing monetary benefits to those leaving. The head of the main department of resettlement and organizing the recruitment of workers under the Council of Ministers of the Lithuanian SSR Khmeliauskas, in response to the request of Kazakhstani colleagues for material assistance to those leaving for the virgin lands, answered: *“At your request, we inform you that it is not possible to satisfy your application for granting benefits to resettled citizens due to the lack of funds for resettlement activities” (GASKO. F. 2084. Inv. 1. F. 85. Sh. 7).*

In 1960, a team of high-skilled cabinetmakers and a saddler from the Mööbel factory left for the Sovetsky District of the North Kazakhstan Oblast, which for two months helped organize the production of upholstered and stiff furniture. The cutters of the Lembitu tailoring factory, being in the Sovetsky and Bulaevsky districts, spent two months conducting an advanced training course for the workers of the

tailoring atelier and helping to organize individual training (SA of the city of Astana. F. 136. Inv. 7. F. 110. Sh. 54).

The Design Bureau of the Ministry of Local Economy of the Estonian SSR also helped and produced a design for the local industry department of the SSR to produce bomide, working drawings of non-standard equipment for the same plant, working drawings for the production of continuous weaving springs for furniture and various other technical documentation (ibid.).

In the Decree of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Latvia and the Council of Ministers of the Latvian SSR of July 26, 1961, the Council of the National Economy was obliged to send 200 drivers from the Council of the National Economy, 30 – from the Ministry of Motor Transport and Highways, 85 – from the Ministry of Forestry and Forest Industry, 45 – from the Latvian Republican Association “Latvselhoztehnika” for the harvest period. By the same Decree, the head of the Main Department of Vocational Education under the Council of Ministers of the Latvian SSR, Brodelis, was ordered to send 250 students of agricultural mechanization schools to the Kazakh SSR for a period of two months. In addition, it was planned to send 100 combine operators to the virgin lands.

It should be noted that the “virgin land” project on the part of the Baltic republics had a pragmatic goal: we are sending equipment, household items, breeding stock, furniture, etc., you supply metal, copper, aluminium, bauxite, coal, oil and grain.

Therefore, this project received a lot of attention from the leadership of the Baltic republics. So, on July 11, 1961, the Council of Ministers of the Lithuanian SSR issues Decree No. 845-r, according to which it ordered the Council of the National Economy, ministries and departments of the republic to send by August 1, 1961 to the Tselinny Kray (North Kazakhstan Oblast, Petropavlovsk city) for the harvest period of 1961 200 drivers (SA of the city of Astana. F. 136. Inv. 7. F. 109. Sh. 14). The report of the head of Litzhivkontora (Lithuanian cattle-breeding office) K. Razukas provides information about the supply of pedigree and improved animals to the Kazakh SSR and the Tselinny Kray for the period from 1958 to 1964. Table 3.

Table 3. DATA. On the supply of breeding and improved animals from the Lithuanian SSR to the Kazakh SSR and the Tselinny Kray (SA of the city of Astana. F. 136. Inv. 7. F. 109. Sh. 18).

Animal species	Number of heads by years:							
	1958	1959	1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	Total
Breeding cattle	–	172	460	615	917	736	1664	4564
Breeding pigs	–	704	235	–	–	49	105	1093
Breeding horses	–	–	–	–	–	–	7	7
Improved heifers	–	–	2941	72	1097	4467	1566	10143
Geese	20498	–	–	–	–	–	–	20498
Breeding cattle	–	–	–	86	1397	1265	468	3216
Breeding pigs	–	–	–	112	2209	1561	701	4583
Improved heifers	–	–	–	10295	17440	18002	23388	69125

In 1955, the Järvakandi Combine of the Ministry of Industry of Building Materials of the Estonian SSR sent another batch of prefabricated shop house in the amount of 34 sets to the areas of development of virgin lands. Hundreds of sets of store houses, each consisting of a retail space equipped with counters and cabinets, and a one-room apartment with a kitchen and central heating for the seller, have been sent since the beginning of the year to Aktyubinsk, Pavlodar, Chkalovskaya Oblasts, Kustanai, and other areas of virgin lands development (SA of the city of Astana. F. 136. Inv. 7. F. 110. Sh. 4).

Table 4. Data of the North Kazakhstan Oblast CPK. On the number of inventory items received in the order of patronage assistance from the Estonian SSR for 1960 (SA of the city of Astana. F. 136. Inv. 7. F. 16. Sh. 47).

№	Product name	Unit of measurement	Amount	To the tune of (in roubles)
1	Different bolts	item	59000	69434-00
2	Concrete mixers	item	6	17252-00
3	Oilcloth aprons	item	2000	39300-00
4	Tubs 20–36 litre	item	300	11600-00
5	Suits, caps	item	120	30717-60
6	Shields	item	950	7100
7	Spray guns	item	5	24600-00
8	Tool	item		33901-00
9	Rawhide	item		69938-00
10	Sofa beds	item	120	64800-00
11	Uniform	item	4760	69160-70
12	Electric fittings	item		47153-00
13	Excavators	item	1	51420-00
14	Chess tables	item	3	1450
15	Theatre chairs	item	160	41600
16	Armchairs	item	4	1400
17	Sofa (article 222/2)	item	2	1400
	Total amount			582220-00

Despite the help, there were many unresolved issues in the cultural and community services for collective farmers and state farm workers. The growth of the economy and, in connection with this, a significant increase in the population, especially due to the arriving youth, caused an increased demand for furniture, garments and knitwear, shoes, and household items (SA of the city of Astana. F. 136. Inv. 7. F. 108. Sh. 31). Therefore, through the line of trading organizations at the expense of funds, according to the Ministry of Trade of the Estonian SSR and the ETKVL, consumer goods were supplied in the amount of 12456 thousand roubles (SA of the city of Astana. F. 136. Inv. 7. F. 110. Sh. 44). See Table 5.

Table 5. Name of goods from the ESSR.

№	Name	Ministry of Trade of the ESSR, thousand roubles	ETKVL, thousand roubles
1	Sewing products	6395	743
2	Rubber Shoes	1250	–
3	Leather shoes	480	–
4	Cotton fabrics	1150	–
5	Woollen fabrics	1200	–
6	Linen fabrics	200	–
7	Stockings	50	100
8	Fur	300	–
9	Knitwear	–	293
10	Scarves	–	50
11	Crockery	–	245
	Total:	11025	1431

The rhetoric of Soviet newspapers about the victorious reports of the Soviet people concealed everyday difficulties, economic failures, and party blunders. Here is how Prof. Peeter Järvelaid: “*We worked a lot. They didn’t earn much money, but the experience of living in Kazakhstan was ... very difficult living conditions – they themselves*

built temporary housing in the steppe, there were no candles, vegetables, they cooked simple food themselves ... There were no young people, they went to dances ... it's not customary that in the virgin lands – hundreds of kilometres to cities and 'civilization'" (Inf. 6).



Figure 3. Lithuanian “virgin land workers”. 1955

From the personal archive of inf. 3

From the first months of the virgin land campaign, its unpreparedness affected: the lack of roads, lack of food, social infrastructure, suitable housing, which was reflected in the numerous complaints of the virgin lands. So, in the reports of the authorized Central Committee for new grain state farms in 1954, it was noted: “In many new state farms, the supply of workers and specialists with food and industrial goods is poorly organized, there are serious shortcomings in the organization of public catering ... necessary (...) little clothing and footwear are imported” (RGANI. F. 5. Inv. 31. F. 3. Sh. 11). Unsettledness, lack of work, everyday problems led to an outflow of the population, to the appearance of decadent moods: “In June, I received 176 rubles, I am tearing up the last dress. Of course, they won't let me go home. All that's left is to leave” (State archive of Kostanai Oblast (SAKO). F. 170-P. Inv. 3. F. 157. Sh. 128). According to the reports of the statistical bodies of the North Kazakhstan Oblast in 1967, the number of non-working virgin lands doubled. The arriving Baltic families named various reasons for their lack of employment: “K. B. Stupinas works, his wife sits at home – no work, no fuel, a kindergarten is needed, milk is not released. (...) A. V. Vyantskus – no living conditions have been created. (...) M. K. Zheletsky – ‘ran away without being fired’” (GASKO. F. 2084. Inv. 1. F. 118. Sh. 3).

Conclusion

The Baltic peoples appeared in the Kazakh lands in the pre-revolutionary period. The resettlement of peasants to the northern regions of the Kazakh steppe caused land conflicts between the latter both with the local population and with other settlers. Despite this, they managed to create strong economic communities here and preserve their original culture. Subsequently, several waves of resettlement of the Baltic peoples to Kazakhstan were recorded, which were both voluntary and forced.

The virgin land campaign greatly advanced Kazakhstan's economy, transforming it into one of the largest and most developed grain-producing regions of the country. The mass movement of people from all the republics of the Soviet Union throughout the twentieth century led to the emergence of a multi-ethnic society, shaping various inter-ethnic and socially constructed positive/negative practices of everyday institutions.

Acknowledgment: The article was prepared as part of the implementation of the IRN AP23488158 project “Northern Kazakhstan's population's polyethnic composition history and the process of nation-building (19th – 20th centuries)” (grant funding from Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan) for 2024–2026.

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List of abbreviations

- F. – Fund
I. – Inventory
F. – File
Sh. – Sheet