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# “Desertion Leads to Resettlement” – The Consequences of Desertion and Draft Evasion on the Families of Luxembourgish Soldiers (1942–1945)

## 1 Introduction

“When a man excels, he is rewarded and so is his family. And if a man is unfaithful in the Reich, he is punished and so is his family. This is in an ancient Germanic law. The clan is liable for each and every one of its own.”<sup>1</sup> With these words the *Reichsführer-SS* Heinrich Himmler (1900–1945) encapsulated the principle of familial responsibility (*Sippenhaftung*) in National Socialist politics in July 1944, following the assassination attempt on Hitler. The Nazi regime used *Sippenhaftung* as a means of pressuring and punishing the extended families of resisters for any act of opposition to the Third Reich.<sup>2</sup> This involved confiscating their property and depriving them of their liberty. Even though the identification of actual cases of *Sippenhaftung* is challenging, the principle helps to understand the punitive measures inflicted on the relatives of Luxembourgish deserters and draft evaders from the *Reichsarbeitsdienst* (RAD) and Wehrmacht during the occupation of the country. As a deterrent measure to enforce compliance and secure the political objectives of the Nazi regime in the region, thousands of family members endured forced resettlement (*Absiedlung*)<sup>3</sup> to German regions such as Lower Silesia, Sudetenland and the Hunsrück, as well as having their assets confiscated.

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1 “Wenn ein Mann sich auszeichnet, wird er belohnt und zugleich seine Familie. Und wenn ein Mann in diesem Reich untreu ist, wird er bestraft und seine Familie. Das ist in ein altes germanisches Recht. Die Sippe haftet für jeden einzelnen der ihren.” Quotation from a speech by the *Reichsführer-SS* in Grafenwöhr, 25 July 1944, BArch, R 19/4015.

2 Johannes Salzig, *Die Sippenhaft als Repressionsmassnahme des nationalsozialistischen Regimes: ideologische Grundlagen, Umsetzung, Wirkung*, Schriftenreihe der Forschungsgemeinschaft 20. Juli 1944 e.V 20 (Augsburg: Wißner-Verlag, 2015), 47–48; Robert Michael and Karin Doerr, *Nazi-Deutsch/Nazi-German: An English Lexicon of the Language of the Third Reich* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2002), 374.

3 The terms “*Umsiedlung*” and “*Absiedlung*” have been used interchangeably in the sources and literature related to the subject in Luxembourg. “*Zwangsumsiedlung*”, or forced resettlement, primarily refers to the forced “repatriation” of German minority groups from South, East, Central,

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**Note:** “Desertion führt zur Absiedlung,” *Escher Tageblatt* 291 (11/12 December 1943), 4.

This chapter examines the impact of desertion and draft evasion on Luxembourgish families at home and explores the punitive measures imposed on them by the National Socialist administration. It analyses the decision-making process and mechanisms behind these measures, highlighting the key actors, the methods of enforcement, and their strategic use for political purposes. By contextualising the measures within Nazi Germany's wider policies towards its occupied territories, the chapter seeks to contribute to the comprehension of the regional variations in the Nazi regime's treatment of deserter families and ethnic German population groups.<sup>4</sup>

The Second World War, and more precisely the history of the “forced conscription”<sup>5</sup> of young men into the German armed forces, holds a central place in Luxembourg's collective memory and historiography. In the post-war period, draft evaders and deserters were given an important role in the country's master narrative as “those who opposed the occupying forces”. This perspective was also prevalent in public discourse and scholarly publications. However, the impact of deserters' choices on their family members has been largely overlooked. Current understanding of the experiences of these families is primarily based on personal experiences of witnesses, or short chapters in more general studies on the Second World War, or the forced resettlements in general.<sup>6</sup> Internationally, the experiences of the families and communities of ethnic German deserters and draft evaders

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and Southeast Europe, directing them back within the borders of the Greater German Reich, mostly in the newly annexed eastern territories. On the other hand, “*Absiedlung*” represents a distinct form of forced resettlement, where individuals and families from occupied regions were forcibly moved within Germany's original borders, mainly for political reasons, with economic motives. In Luxembourg, the most accurate term to indicate the resettlement of these families is therefore “*Absiedlung*”; Alexa Stiller, *Völkische Politik: Praktiken der Exklusion und Inklusion in polnischen, französischen und slowenischen Annexionsgebieten 1939–1945* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2022), p. 1313; Transcript from the confidential information of the Party Chancellery, September 1943, Archives Nationales du Luxembourg (ANLux), CdZ-A-4556-04.

<sup>4</sup> Given the limited scope of the study, this chapter does not provide a detailed cross-national comparison of how various ethnic German deserter families were treated within the German Reich. This is however an interesting topic for future research.

<sup>5</sup> Considerable debate arises concerning the diverse range of meanings this term encompasses and the numerous implications it carries. For more information see Frédéric Stroh and Peter M. Quadflieg, eds., *L'incorporation de force dans les territoires annexés par le IIIe Reich: 1939–1945* (Strasbourg: Presses universitaires de Strasbourg, 2016).

<sup>6</sup> With the exception of Gilles Kartheiser's quantitative study on the forced resettlements of Luxembourg families. This study does not focus on the families of deserters but nevertheless provides an important basis for this research; Gilles Kartheiser, *Die Umsiedlung Luxemburger Familien 1942–1945: von der numerischen und namentlichen Erfassung bis zur Beschreibung des Lagerlebens anhand von Zeitzeugenberichten* (Saarbrücken, AV Akademikerverlag, 2013).

in the German services, as well as the treatment of ethnic Germans by the Nazi regime in general, have been the subject of numerous publications, which were crucial to this research.<sup>7</sup>

The study uses administrative and judicial documents from both civil and military authorities during and after the war. These include interrogation files from the local police, military court files, witness statements from post-war trials, and a limited number of personal records. While ego-documents such as memoirs and letters provide insights into life during resettlement, they offer only brief mentions of the underlying processes, and are thus less relevant here. This chapter presents findings from a broader doctoral research project focusing on the social environments of Luxembourgish soldiers and recruits during World War II, based on a case study of resettled families from Schiffflange, an industrial town in southern Luxembourg.<sup>8</sup> By examining private and official documentation related to this specific group, the chapter seeks to critically examine policy guidelines, procedures and objectives by comparing them to the experiences of these resettled families.<sup>9</sup>

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7 See among others Leopold Steurer, Martha Verdorfer, and Walter Pichler, *Verfolgt, verfehmt, vergessen: Lebensgeschichtliche Erinnerungen an den Widerstand gegen Nationalsozialismus und Krieg, Südtirol 1943–1945* (Bozen: Edition Sturzflüge, 1993); Maria Fritsche, “. . . haftet die Sippe mit Vermögen, Freiheit oder Leben . . .”. Die Anwendung der Sippenhaft bei Familien verfolgter Wehrmachtsoldaten”, in *Opfer der NS-Militärjustiz. Urteilspraxis – Strafvollzug – Entschädigungspolitik in Österreich*, edited by Walter Manoschek (Vienna: Mandelbaum Verlag, 2003); Kerstin von Lingen and Peter Pirker, eds. *Deserteure der Wehrmacht und der Waffen-SS: Entziehungsformen, Solidarität, Verfolgung* (Paderborn: Brill Schöningh, 2023); Salzig, *Die Sippenhaft als Repressionsmassnahme des nationalsozialistischen Regimes*; Alexa Stiller, *Völkische Politik*; Lothar Kettenacker, *Nationalsozialistische Volkstumspolitik im Elsaß* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1973).

8 This doctoral research is part of the project “WARLUX – Soldiers and their communities in WWII: The impact and legacy of war experiences in Luxembourg” (2020–2024) at the Luxembourg Centre for Contemporary and Digital History (C<sup>2</sup>DH) at the University of Luxembourg; see also Sarah Maya Vercruysse, “Families of Luxembourgish Wehrmacht recruits during the Nazi occupation and the impact of local authorities and National Socialist organisations on their everyday lives”, last updated 05 October 2022. <https://haitblog.hypotheses.org/category/sonderreihen/doktorandenforum-demokratie-und-diktaturforschung-im-20-und-21-jahrhundert-individuum-und-organisation-in-autoritaeren-und-demokratischen-gesellschaftsordnungen>

9 In accordance with archival regulations and GDPR, the author has opted to pseudonymize the names of contemporaries, unless they were already openly published, or the individual held a public position.

## 2 Luxembourgers: In German Territory, in the Wehrmacht, and as Deserters

On 10 May 1940, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, which had a population of around 290,000 people,<sup>10</sup> was invaded by Germany and placed under a military administration. In early August 1940, a civil administration (*Zivilverwaltung*, CdZ) was established under the direction of Gustav Simon (1900–1945), who held the positions of Head of the Civil Administration and *Gauleiter*<sup>11</sup> of the Koblenz-Trier administrative division. Just like the *Gauleiters* of Alsace and Lorraine, Simon reported directly to Hitler and held a position of significant authority.<sup>12</sup> One of his main concerns was to Germanise and Nazify the country, as well as to protect and promote the German “people’s community” (*Volksgemeinschaft*) living there. As in other occupied regions, German laws were applied, public life was brought under German control, and connections to French culture were removed, as can be seen, for example, in changes to family and street names. The Luxembourgish population was considered to be ethnic German (*Volksdeutsch*) – German descendants by blood – who had to be reintegrated into the German Reich as part of the new administrative district *Gau Moselland*.

While the civil administration originally thought this reintegration would be welcomed by the population, rising protest made it clear that this would not simply be accepted. Following the establishment of compulsory labour service for young men and women between the ages of 17 and 24 on 23 May 1941, the central administration introduced compulsory military service for young men born between 1920 and 1924 – later extended to 1927 – on 30 August 1942.<sup>13</sup> The “Ordinance on citizen-

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10 Gérard Trausch, *La croissance démographique du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg du début du XIXe siècle à nos jours: les mouvements naturels de la population*, 2. ed. (Luxembourg: Imprimerie Victor S.A. Esch-sur-Alzette, 1973), 46.

11 *Gauleiters* served as the leaders of regional administrative districts known as *Gaue*, established by the Nazi Party. They held supreme authority within their designated territories, playing a pivotal role in the party’s regional governance structure. Their position in the party hierarchy ranked higher than district leaders (*Kreisleiter*) and local group leaders (*Ortsgruppenleiter*); Michael, *Nazi-Deutsch/Nazi-German*, 176.

12 Marc Schoentgen, “Arbeiten unter Hitler. NS-Sozialpolitik und Herrschaftspraxis im besetzten Luxemburg 1940–1944” (PhD thesis, University of Luxembourg, 2017), 38.

13 Verordnung über die Reichsarbeitsdienstpflicht in Luxemburg in: *Verordnungsblatt Chef der Zivilverwaltung Luxemburg*, 23 May 1941, 232; Verordnung über die Wehrpflicht in Luxemburg in: *Verordnungsblatt Chef der Zivilverwaltung Luxemburg*, 31 August 1942, 253.

ship in Alsace, Lorraine, and Luxembourg”, dated 23 August 1943, granted German citizenship to ethnic German conscripts of the Wehrmacht and Waffen-SS from these areas.<sup>14</sup> The announcement of military service was followed by a wave of strikes throughout the country. Despite the opposition, in total more than 10,000 young men were conscripted into the Wehrmacht over the course of the war. It is estimated that around 3,500 of them deserted or hid before the draft could reach them. Approximately 3,000 died at the front or never returned home.<sup>15</sup>

From mid-1943 onwards, the German military noticed a steady rise in desertion rates following the initial wave of enlistment that took place between August and October 1942, the training period and the first leave permits.<sup>16</sup> Historian Stefan Kurt Treiber’s survey on Luxembourg revealed that the majority of desertion cases involved soldiers who failed to return after being granted home leave.<sup>17</sup> *Gauleiter* Simon attributed this increase to the powerful resistance movement in the country, which helped conscripts obtain false passports and escape across the border, as well as to the “lenient” sentencing of deserters by some military courts.<sup>18</sup> He asked Hermann Passe (1894–1977), who was responsible for matters regarding the Wehrmacht at the Party Chancellery, to enforce the harshest measures against the deserters from Luxembourg and to rule out pardons for deserters sentenced to death.<sup>19</sup> In accordance with the well-known statement by the Führer, he wrote in February 1944 that “[. . .] no deserter from the CdZ area of

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14 Nonetheless, naturalisation was only conferred after their enlistment in the military; more information on this subject can be found in the article of Denis Scuto in this volume, *Citizenship, Naturalisation and Military Service during the Second World War: The case of occupied Luxembourg*; Verordnung über die Staatsangehörigkeit im Elsaß, in Lothringen und in Luxemburg in: *Verordnungsblatt Chef der Zivilverwaltung Luxemburg*, 23 August 1942, 254.

15 Ministère de l’Intérieur, *Livre d’or des victimes luxembourgeoises de la guerre de 1940 à 1945* (Luxembourg: Ministère de l’Intérieur, 1972), 18; Paul Dostert, *Luxemburg zwischen Selbstbehauptung und nationaler Selbstaufgabe: die deutsche Besatzungspolitik und die Volksdeutsche Bewegung 1940–1945* (Luxembourg: Imprimerie Saint-Paul, 1985), 181; Peter M. Quadflieg, “Zwangssoldaten” und “Ons Jongen”. *Eupen-Malmedy und Luxemburg als Rekrutierungsgebiet der Deutschen Wehrmacht im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, Aachener Studien zur Wirtschafts- Und Sozialgeschichte 5 (Aachen: Shaker Verlag, 2008), 115.

16 For more information on the desertion of the Luxembourgish forced conscripts and how the civil and military administration dealt with this, please consult Sarah Maya Vercruysse and Nina Janz, *The “long arm” of the military justice of the Wehrmacht – A case study on Luxembourgish desertions*, which will be published by De Gruyter in 2024–2025.

17 Stefan Kurt Treiber, *Helden oder Feiglinge? Deserteure der Wehrmacht im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag GmbH, 2021), 204.

18 *Gauleiter* Simon to *Generaloberst* Friedrich Fromm on the treatment of Luxembourgish deserters, 8 February 1944, BArch, NS 19/2179.

19 Letter from *Gauleiter* Simon to Hermann Passe, 16 July 1943, BArch, NS 19/1163.

Luxembourg may survive this war”.<sup>20</sup> Draft evaders and deserters were both seen as traitors, and were subjected to severe punishments, including death or lengthy prison terms. The number of Luxembourgers prosecuted by the German military justice system during World War II is not known because of a lack of reliable data. Nevertheless, it is estimated that approximately 2,300 Luxembourgers deserted, while 1,200 evaded the draft, accounting for roughly 34.5% of the total number of Luxembourgers recruited.<sup>21</sup>

### 3 General Consequences of Desertion on Families and Communities

The act of desertion by any soldier from the Wehrmacht had immediate consequences, not only for the person in question but also for their family members at home. If a unit noticed that a soldier was missing and suspected that he was absent without leave<sup>22</sup> or had deserted, it had to immediately inform a whole series of authorities, who would launch search operations. This included the respective military court, the local commandant’s office, the Reich Criminal Police Department (*Reichskriminalpolizei*amt), and the local civilian and police authorities “in all possible places of residence”.<sup>23</sup> According to military protocol, if a soldier failed to return from leave, a fugitive report, containing the details of his closest relatives, had to be submitted within 14 days of the expected arrival time.<sup>24</sup> An

20 “[. . .] dass kein Fahnenflüchtiger aus dem CdZ-Bereich Luxemburg diesen Krieg überleben darf.” Quotation from BArch, NS 19/2179.

21 André Hohengarten, “Die Zwangsrekrutierung der Luxemburger in die deutsche Wehrmacht”, *Histoire & Mémoire. Les Cahiers du CDREF* 1 (2010), 23; Norbert Haase, “Von ‘Ons Jongen’, ‘Malgre-Nous’ und anderen. Das Schicksal der ausländischen Zwangsrekrutierten im Zweiten Weltkrieg”, in *Die anderen Soldaten. Wehrkraftzersetzung, Gehorsamsverweigerung und Fahnenflucht im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, edited by Norbert Haase and Gerhard Paul (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1995), 171; Quadflieg, “Zwangssoldaten” und “Ons Jongen”, 115.

22 *Unerlaubte Entfernung*: anyone who left or was absent from his unit or post without authorisation and was intentionally or negligently absent for more than three days – or for more than one day in the field – was to be punished by imprisonment or detention for up to ten years (§ 64 Militärstrafgesetzbuch).

23 In certain instances, the State Protection Police and the Luxembourg military district command (*Wehrbezirksskommando* Luxembourg) were aware of the desertion of a soldier on leave before the unit and initiated the desertion investigation; Leaflet for processing cases of absence without leave/desertion, 27 January 1944, BArch, RH 26/1023:3.

24 Leaflet for processing cases of absence without leave/desertion, 27 January 1944, BArch, RH 26/1023:3.

analysis of local police investigations and military court files regarding Luxembourgish deserters reveals that the timeframe for launching investigations varied, ranging from a few days to several months after the suspected desertion.<sup>25</sup> This delay was considered unproductive and detrimental to the military's efforts to implement effective countermeasures.<sup>26</sup>

Upon receipt of the report, the local police in the fugitive's home community launched a local investigation by conducting house searches, confiscating the deserters' personal belongings, and interrogating close family members who may have hosted or been in contact with him.<sup>27</sup> Post-war testimonies reveal that families often had considerable knowledge about the deserters, but did not always cooperate as effectively as the official documents would have us believe. Relatives made false statements and fabricated evidence in an attempt to mislead investigators.<sup>28</sup> For example, some wrote letters to the deserters' units, expressing their concern and seeking news of their missing sons or husbands, while being very well aware of the situation. A few even openly refused to collaborate with these investigations. The father of X.B. declared, for instance, "However, I must state that in the future, if I were to become aware of the whereabouts of my son X., I would not reveal them."<sup>29</sup> The mother of J.B. stated, "I cannot provide any information about his field post number because I didn't memorise it and I burned all

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25 Local police investigations against deserters and draft evaders in the Esch/Alzig region, Lëtzebuerg City Museum, collection Kreisleitung N.S.D.A.P. Esch-sur-Alzette (at the moment this article went to printing, these documents were transferred to the National Archives of Luxembourg under reference numbers CdZ-G-15291; CdZ-G-15292; CdZ-G-15290; CdZ-G-15293; CdZ-G-15291; CdZ-G-15292; CdZ-G-15290; CdZ-G-15282); Military court file, J.W., BArch, Pers 15/128200; Military court file, J.D., BArch, Pers 15/152095; Military court file, J.D., BArch, Pers 15/152759; Military court file, R.G., BArch, Pers 15/128567.

26 Leaflet for processing cases of absence without leave/desertion, 27 January 1944, BArch, RH 26/1023:3.

27 Local police investigations against deserters and draft evaders in the Esch/Alzig region, Lëtzebuerg City Museum, collection Kreisleitung N.S.D.A.P. Esch-sur-Alzette; Maria Fritsche, *Entziehungen: Österreichische Deserteure und Selbstverstümmelter in der Deutschen Wehrmacht* (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2004), 72.

28 Marc Trossen, "Verlure Joëren": *85 Luxemburger Zeitzeugen des Zweiten Weltkriegs berichten*, vol 1., *Zwangsrekrutierte, Refraktäre, Deserteure, Resistenzler, aber auch Kollaborateure, Kriegsfreiwillige* . . . (Redange/Attert: Les Amis de l'Histoire – Luxembourg, 2015), 552; Aimé Knepper, *Les réfractaires dans les bunkers* (Luxembourg: Éditions Saint-Paul, 2004), 44 and 61.

29 "Auf Vorhalt muss ich jedoch sagen, dass ich in Zukunft den Aufenthalts meines Sohnes X. nicht verraten würde, wenn mir dieses bekannt werden sollte." Quotation from the interrogation file of J.B., 24 February 1944, Lëtzebuerg City Museum, collection Kreisleitung N.S.D.A.P. Esch-sur-Alzette, folder II.



of his mail.[. . .] Additionally, I don't possess a photograph of my son J. that I could attach to this interrogation."<sup>30</sup>

On 6 May 1943, the father of Rudi Scheuer, a labour service recruit who had deserted on 22 February 1943, provided the following statement to the local police officer of Schiffflange, "My son Rudi did not send me any messages after his disappearance from the RAD camp in Zobten. I have also not heard anything about his whereabouts from other people. I have searched for him among all relatives and acquaintances, but I have not been able to find anything."<sup>31</sup> However, according to the memoirs of Ady Schoux (one of Rudi's comrades) as documented in the publication *Verluere Joeren*, Rudi and the other deserters travelled to Düsseldorf, where they spent several days at Rudi's uncle's residence before returning and going into hiding in the area around their home town for the remainder of the war. The father's statement includes contact details for a relative in Düsseldorf, and in a post-war questionnaire, Rudi himself asserts that his father was hiding him at the time of the interrogation. Although the accuracy of this last claim could not be confirmed, a comparison of the source material strongly suggests that it is unlikely that Rudi's father had no additional information about his son's whereabouts in May 1943, especially considering that Rudi was in hiding with relatives and had been residing in the same town as his parents since March that year.<sup>32</sup>

The investigations involved close collaboration between the local police, the local administration, the Security Police (*Einsatzkommando der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD*), the deserter's unit, and the competent military court, as evidenced by their extensive correspondence. Military court records, for instance, provide insights

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30 "Angaben über seine Feldpostnummer kann ich nicht machen, weil ich mir diese nicht gemerkt und alle seine Post verbrannt habe. Ich habe sie verbrannt, weil ich keinen Wert darauf legte, sie längere Zeit aufzubewahren. Auch habe ich kein Lichtbild meines Sohnes J. im Besitz, welches ich dieser Vernehmung beifügen konnte." Quotation from the interrogation file of T.K., 24 February 1944, Lëtzebuerg City Museum, collection Kreisleitung N.S.D.A.P. Esch-sur-Alzette, folder II.

31 "Mein Sohn Rudi liess mir nach seinem Verschwinden aus dem RAD-Lager in Zobten keinerlei Nachricht zukommen. Auch durch andere Leute habe ich bisher noch nichts über seinen Aufenthaltsort erfahren. Ich habe bei sämtlichen Verwandten und Bekannten nach ihm geforscht, habe jedoch nichts entdecken können." Quotation from the interrogation file of "Kaspar" Scheuer, 6 May 1943, Lëtzebuerg City Museum, collection Kreisleitung N.S.D.A.P. Esch-sur-Alzette, folder III.

32 Interrogation file of "Kaspar" Scheuer, 6 May 1943, Lëtzebuerg City Museum, collection Kreisleitung N.S.D.A.P. Esch-sur-Alzette, folder III; Marc Trossen, "*Verluere Joeren*": *Luxemburger Zeitzeugen des Zweiten Weltkriegs berichten*, vol. 3, *Peenemünde und die Verdienste der Luxemburger Resistenz*, (Redange/Attert: Les Amis de l'Histoire – Luxembourg, 2018), 701; see information sheet of Rudi Scheuer for the "Ons Jongen" Ligue des réfractaires et déportés militaires Luxembourgais, 29 August 1946, Musée National de la Résistance et des Droits Humains.



into how courts sought updates on cases and conducted further investigations within the deserters' communities. They also reveal the use of parents' statements, confiscated letters and pictures as part of the assessment process for deserters, as well as during the trial.<sup>33</sup>

In addition to the search measures, desertion could also have consequences on the financial and material situation of a family. The National Socialist regime offered material and financial support for the dependents of labour service recruits and conscripted soldiers to provide for their basic needs while the conscripts were away serving in the military or the labour service. Under the “Deployment Family Support Act” of 26 June 1940, provision was made to allocate financial assistance to the families of military and labour service personnel in order to cover essential living expenses, including housing, food, clothing and medical care.<sup>34</sup> As naturalised Germans, Luxembourgish conscripts were also entitled to this support. Yet it remains to be investigated whether this support had a significant financial impact. However, if a conscript was absent without leave, deserted, or was arrested, he lost his eligibility for military service and his entitlement to this financial aid, leaving his family without the financial assistance.<sup>35</sup> In the case of family support file nr. 2891, which pertains to a family from the Schiffflange research sample, it was observed that the monthly payment of 47 RM, which the family had been receiving since 15 February 1943, was stopped in August 1944 following the soldier's desertion and arrest at the end of June 1944.<sup>36</sup> Additionally, the Nazi Party's Welfare Organisation (*Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt*, NSV) had the authority to deny deserters' families access to any social welfare services, as indicated in a Nazi Party

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<sup>33</sup> For more information on this topic, see the article by Sarah Maya Vercruysse and Nina Janz, *The “long arm” of the military justice of the Wehrmacht – A case study on Luxembourgish desertions*, which will be published by De Gruyter in 2024–2025; Military court file, R.G., BArch, Pers 15/128567 Military court file, J.D., BArch, Pers 15/152095.

<sup>34</sup> *Einsatz-Familienunterhaltsgesetzes* vom 26. Juni 1940 in: *Reichsgesetzblatt*, part I, 28 June 1940, 911–912.

<sup>35</sup> It is notable that the law provided for family support to be continued if a soldier went missing in action, was imprisoned, or voluntarily returned to his unit; *Verordnung zur Durchführung und Ergänzung des Einsatz-Familienunterhaltsgesetzes* vom 26. Juni 1940 in: *Reichsgesetzblatt*, part I, 28 June 1940, 912–918; Treiber, *Helden oder Feiglinge*, 280; Fritsche, *Entziehungen: Österreichische Deserteure und Selbstverstümmelter in der Deutschen Wehrmacht*, 72.

<sup>36</sup> In accordance with Luxembourg archival legislation and the agreements made with the National Archives during the inspection of this file, this information had to be anonymised and cited as follows: ANLux, CdZ-G-12843.

circular from the district leader (*Kreisleiter*) of the Luxembourgish district Esch/Alzig, Wilhelm Diehl (1889–1965), and highlighted by historian Robert Loeffel.<sup>37</sup>

Beyond these investigations and the overall repercussions potentially experienced by relatives of all types of deserters, the families of ethnic German conscripts faced the additional threat of forced resettlement, which involved displacement and the confiscation of their belongings. To understand the full scope and context of these repressive measures, they must be viewed within the broader political, economic and ethnological frameworks in which various levels of the National Socialist civil and military authorities operated, interacted and pursued distinct interests.

## 4 From Resettlement to the Confiscation of Assets

### 4.1 Resettling Ethnic Germans: a Historical and Contextual Overview

With the aim of reorganising Europe based on National Socialist ideology and racial principles, commonly referred to as the New European Order,<sup>38</sup> the National Socialist regime carried out large-scale expulsions and population transfers in occupied territories from the late 1930s onwards. Within the framework of the *Volkstumspolitik*, the Reich Commissioner for the Consolidation of German Nationhood (*Reichskommissar für die Festigung deutschen Volkstums*, RKF), operating under the authority of Heinrich Himmler, orchestrated the removal of individuals deemed “harmful” to the German people and the German community, including Jews and Poles. The focus was primarily on the incorporated eastern territories and annexed western Poland. Simultaneously, the regime resettled (*Umsiedlung*) ethnic German minorities from regions such as the Baltic, Russia or South Tyrol into these territories, aiming to repopulate and Germanise these areas. As Alexa Stiller noted, the RKF’s ethnic politics (*Völkische Politik*) exhibited a symbiotic relationship, interconnecting the reinforcement of Germanification efforts in the occupied and annexed territories with the expulsion and mass murder of undesired groups. She estimates

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<sup>37</sup> Robert Loeffel, “Sippenhaft in the Third Reich: Analysing the ‘spectre’ of family liability punishment against opposition in Nazi Germany 1933–1945”, (PhD thesis, University of New South Wales, 2004), 70.

<sup>38</sup> Michael, *Nazi-Deutsch/Nazi-German*, 153.

that some 12 million individuals from the eastern, western and south-eastern annexed territories were affected by this.<sup>39</sup>

For the practical implementation of the forced resettlements of ethnic Germans, the Reich Commissioner enlisted the support of numerous entities such as the different Reich ministries, the Wehrmacht, as well as existing SS offices or entities affiliated to the SS.<sup>40</sup> These included, among others, the *Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle* (VoMi), which was responsible for housing the new settlers in temporary resettlement camps, and the *Deutsche Umsiedlungs- und Treuhandgesellschaft* (DUT), a private company which was responsible for the collection, administration and exploitation of their property. The RKF also delegated tasks within a widespread network of offices and encouraged middle and lower authorities to take on executive tasks in order to increase its influence in various areas while maintaining control.<sup>41</sup>

While the ethnic politics initially centred on the eastern territories, it later also extended westwards to the civil administrations in Lorraine, Alsace and Luxembourg, where it took on a distinct form.<sup>42</sup> Following initial discussions between Himmler and Robert Wagner (1895–1946), the head of the civil administration of Alsace, Hitler decided in early August 1942 on the policy of resettlement for per-

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39 Alexa Stiller, "Völkisch Capitalism: Himmler's Bankers and the Continuity of Capitalist Thinking and Practice in Germany," in *Reshaping Capitalism in Weimar and Nazi Germany*, edited by Moritz Föllmer and Pamela E. Swett, Publications of the German Historical Institute (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 286–287; Stiller, *Völkische Politik*, 11; Markus Leniger, *Nationalsozialistische "Volkstumsarbeit" und Umsiedlungspolitik 1933–1945 – Von der Minderheitenbetreuung zur Siedlerauslese* (Berlin: Frank & Timme, 2013), 11 and 15; Detlef Brandes, *Lexikon der Vertreibungen: Deportation, Zwangsaussiedlung und ethnische Säuberung im Europa des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2010), 682.

40 A detailed examination of the general functioning of the RKF and its policy of forced resettlement can be found in Alexa Stiller's study *Völkische Politik*.

41 Stiller, *Völkische Politik*, 257; Michael Fahlbusch, Ingo Haar, and Alexander Pinwinkler, eds., *Handbuch der völkischen Wissenschaften: Akteure, Netzwerke, Forschungsprogramme* (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2017), 1941–1942.

42 The RKF initially had no jurisdiction in the western occupied areas. It was gradually able to increase its influence there by working together with the civil administrations and having them assign roles to RKF personnel within their administrative systems. In Luxembourg, *Gauleiter* Simon was designated as "Commissioner for the tasks of the Reich Commissioner for the Consolidation of German Nationhood" (*Beauftragten für die Aufgaben des Reichskommissars für die Festigung deutschen Volkstums*) on 20 December 1940. Subsequently, the Higher SS and Police Leader "Rhein" was assigned as the *Gauleiter's* representative and also served as the deputy representative of the RKF. This allowed the RKF to consolidate its power in the region. It was not until September 1942, with the start of the forced resettlements, that a regional office of the RKF was established in Luxembourg. For more information see Stiller, *Völkische Politik*, 146; Dostert, *Luxemburg zwischen Selbstbehauptung und nationaler Selbstaufgabe*, 206 and 212.

sons who were considered unreliable in those three territories, but who did not require permanent elimination as they were deemed acceptable based on their race. Nevertheless, they were still considered to be a nuisance and not politically reliable enough to be placed in the newly annexed eastern territories. The territory east of the Rhine, within the original borders of the Reich, was seen as an ideal place to settle these “troubled” residents, as they would not negatively affect the Germanisation policy in the East and would be easily assimilated with the local German population. Despite Gustav Simon’s initial reservations about implementing this measure in his area of jurisdiction, he eventually revised his stance shortly thereafter.<sup>43</sup>

In response to the considerable resistance encountered after the introduction of military service at the end of August 1942, the civil administration in Luxembourg hardened its policy and decided to resettle Luxembourgers who were believed to be uncontrollable. On 9 September 1942, the press publicly announced that, in order to safeguard the integrity of the western border region of the Reich and its ethnic German community, “unreliable elements” were to be removed and resettled.<sup>44</sup> The resettlement process was to be carried out by the offices of the RKF on behalf of the civil administration, under the direction of the Higher SS and Police Leader, *SS-Obergruppenführer* Theodor Berkelmann (1894–1943). The procedure was presented as a politically necessary and expedient measure, which should not be seen as a punishment but rather as an opportunity for “re-education”.<sup>45</sup> With a view to their gradual integration into the *Volksgemeinschaft*, the Reich Ministry of the Interior issued a circular on 9 July 1943, granting “German citizenship upon revocation”<sup>46</sup> to individuals from Alsace, Lorraine and Luxembourg who had been resettled after 23 August 1942, provided that they were assessed for racial suitability

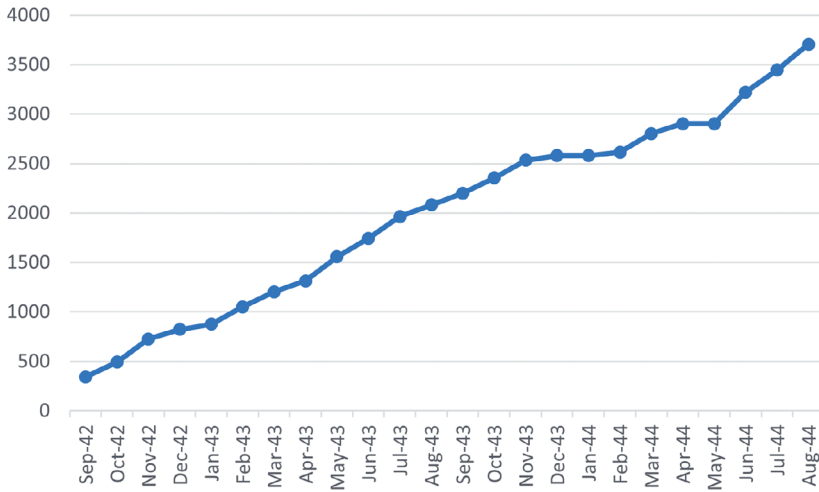
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43 Dostert, *Luxemburg zwischen Selbstbehauptung und nationaler Selbstaufgabe*, 211; Isabel Heinemann, *Rasse, Siedlung, deutsches Blut: Das Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamt der SS und die rassenpolitische Neuordnung Europas* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2003), 324; Valdis O. Lumans, *Himmler’s Auxiliaries: The Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle and the German National Minorities of Europe, 1933–1945* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 181.

44 “Umsiedlungsaktion für Luxemburg”, *Luxemburger Wort* 252 (9 September 1942), 3.

45 “Umsiedlungsaktion für Luxemburg”; classified report on the first meeting of the CdZ regarding the start of the “Umsiedlung”, 11 September 1942, ANLux, CdG-003; Letter from *Gauleiter* Simon to the *Oberkommando der Wehrmacht*, 6 July 1943, BArch, NS 19/1163.

46 This meant that they received German citizenship with reduced rights for a ten-year probationary period. This remained a discriminatory form of citizenship which did not give many rights. For more information see the article of Denis Scuto in this volume: National Socialist Ethnicity and Citizenship Policy under growing military pressure in occupied Luxembourg (1940–1944).



**Fig. 1 (1):** Total amount of Luxembourgish individuals resettled from Luxembourg.  
(Statistical tables of the CdZ Luxembourg, BArch R 49/622)<sup>47</sup>

and “Germanisability” by the SS Race and Settlement Main Office.<sup>48</sup> During the prior discussions, the Reich Chancellery recognised the national and security policy reasons behind this but commented internally to Himmler that “it is in itself paradoxical that people who are resettled here because of political unreliability are granted German citizenship, while this is otherwise precisely a reason for not granting it to them. However, since the granting is considered necessary from ethno-political and police-related perspectives, there seems to be no reason to object from our standpoint.”<sup>49</sup> Between the end of September 1942 and August 1944,

<sup>47</sup> During the analysis of these statistics, counting errors regarding the last transports were noted for at least 100 families and five individuals. The author has chosen to present all figures as they appear in the statistics, without any corrections.

<sup>48</sup> This citizenship was officially granted as of 1 August 1943; According to a letter from the RKF main office (*Stabshauptamt*), *Absiedler* who were racially unsuitable, but of German origin or racially unsuitable and not of German origin were to be treated as foreign workers; Letter of the RKF *Stabshauptamt* to the head of the civil administration, acting as the representative of the RKF, 24 September 1943, BArch 49/2070; Letter of the Reich Ministry of the Interior to the Representative for the four-year plan, 4 January 1945, BArch, R 59/61; Heinemann, *Rasse, Siedlung, deutsches Blut*, 326.

<sup>49</sup> “Es ist an sich paradox, dass hier Leuten, die wegen politischer Unzuverlässigkeit umgesiedelt werden, die deutsche Staatsangehörigkeit verliehen wird, während diese sonst gerade ein Grund für ihre Nichtverleihung ist. Da jedoch aus volkstumpspolitischen und polizeilichen Gesichtspunkten heraus die Verleihung für notwendig erachtet wird, dürfte kein Grund bestehen, von hier aus zu widersprechen.” Quotation from a memorandum of the Reich Chancellery, 12 April 1943, BArch, R 43/II/137, 92.



**Fig. 1 (2):** Map depicting the German Empire in May 1944, with additional points showing resettlement camps containing Luxembourgers.  
(Bennet Schulte/Wikipedia)<sup>50</sup>

approximately 4,000 Luxembourgers from all over the country were forcibly resettled to resettlement camps in Lower-Silesia, Sudetenland and the Hunsrück and put to work there (Fig. 1(1)-1(2)).<sup>51</sup> The resettlements to this last region, situated west of the Rhine, started only in the Spring-Summer of 1944 driven by economic

<sup>50</sup> “Greater German Reich NS Administration 1944”, Wikimedia Commons, Accessed 27 July 2023 [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Greater\\_German\\_Reich\\_NS\\_Administration\\_1944.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Greater_German_Reich_NS_Administration_1944.png).

<sup>51</sup> The available source material presents varying figures. According to the official statistics from the civil administration, 3,705 individuals were permanently resettled, from a total of 1,310 families. Gilles Kartheiser’s research, which combines lists from the war and post-war period, reports a total of 4,165 individuals; Kartheiser, *Die Umsiedlung Luxemburger Familien 1942–1945*, 78; Statistical tables of the CdZ Luxembourg, BArch, R 49/622; Marc Gloden, “Zur ‘Wiedereindeutschung’ ins Reich: die Umsiedlungen von 1942–1945 – Une rééducation au cœur du Reich: les transplantations de 1942 à 1945”, in *Le Luxembourg et le Troisième Reich: un état des lieux – Luxembourg und das Dritte Reich: eine Bestandsaufnahme*, edited by Musée National de la Résistance et des Droits Humains (Luxembourg: Op der Lay, 2021), 625.

and political imperatives of the *Gauleiter*, which will be discussed later. Official figures from the civil administration indicate that 30.85% of the total resettled individuals came from the central district of Luxembourg, 30.4% from the northern district of Diekirch, 28.26% from the southern district of Esch/Alzig, and 10% from the less populated eastern district of Grevenmacher.<sup>52</sup>

The forced resettlements served the consolidation and Germanisation policies of the *Gauleiter* in the border region, with the aim to fully integrate the territory into the Reich once the Germanisation process was completed. "Uncontrollable" individuals were removed and replaced by ethnic German resettlers (*Ansiedler*) from Bosnia, South Tyrol and Bukovina, who would infuse "new German blood" into the area, cultivate the newly available agricultural lands, continue to run companies that had been vacated, and ultimately enhance the Germanisation of the region.<sup>53</sup> According to the official numbers provided by the civil administration, by July 1944 approximately 432 individuals from South Tyrol, 659 from Bosnia and Croatia, 134<sup>54</sup> from Bukovina, and 62 from Transylvania had been settled in Luxembourg, as well as a small number of individuals from the Baltic, Russia and the current Kočevje region of Slovenia (formerly *Gottschee*) (Fig. 1(3)).<sup>55</sup> Additionally, the civil administration used the measure to create a climate of fear with the aim of maintaining order and compliance within the population. Only a limited number of individuals were chosen to serve as examples, as the measure was not meant to be implemented extensively, following orders from Hitler and Himmler.<sup>56</sup> This decision was made, among other factors, to prevent resistance from the population and to avoid any disruption to war production.

At first, those targeted were mainly family members of strike participants, but this quickly expanded to include other individuals deemed to be "agitators and disturbers of the peace". This group encompassed senior civil servants, members of the Luxembourgish elite, and business owners who were perceived to have marginalised the leading members of the *Volksdeutsche Bewegung*, a Luxembourgish National Socialist organisation, in their dealings. Interestingly, a significant exception was made for parents of soldiers. According to the report of a meeting held

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52 Statistical tables of the CdZ Luxembourg, BArch, R 49/622.

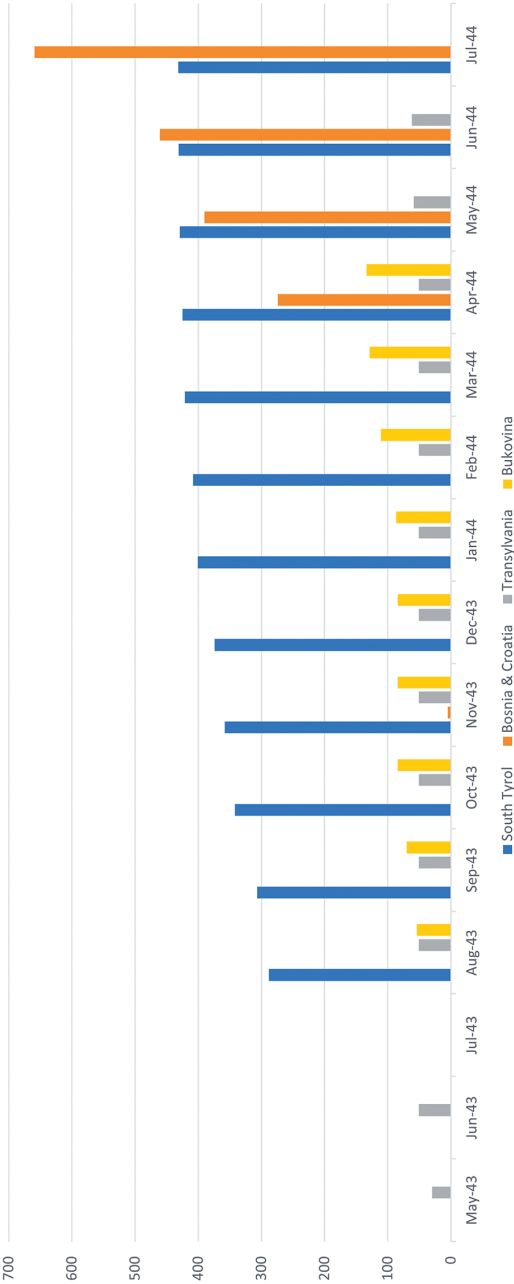
53 Dostert, *Luxemburg zwischen Selbstbehauptung und nationaler Selbstaufgabe*, 109–110; Lumanns, *Himmler's Auxiliaries*, 180.

54 This number represents the situation from April 1944. However, RKF statistics indicate that 241 ethnic Germans from Bukovina had moved to Luxembourg by June 1944. Wolfgang Schumann and Ludwig Nestler, eds., *Europa unterm Hakenkreuz*, vol. 4. *Belgien, Luxemburg, Niederlande* (Berlin: VEB Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, 1990), 222.

55 Statistical tables of the CdZ Luxembourg, BArch, R 49/622.

56 Letter from Heinrich Himmler to *Gauleiter* Simon, 3 May 1943, BArch, R 49/2768; Dostert, *Luxemburg zwischen Selbstbehauptung und nationaler Selbstaufgabe*, 211; Stiller, *Völkische Politik*, 613.





**Fig. 1 (3):** Total amount of ethnic German individuals settled inside Luxembourg. (Statistical tables of the CdZ Luxembourg, BArch R 49/622).

on 10 December 1942, Berkelmann and *Gauleiter* Simon decided that “parents of volunteers currently serving in the Wehrmacht or Waffen-SS should not be subjected to resettlement”.<sup>57</sup> An additional report from that meeting – written a few days later in the district of Esch/Alzig – went even further, emphasising that “soldiers’ parents are to be treated as gently as possible. Even if they exhibit anti-German sentiments, they are to be resettled only as a last resort. First of all, attempts should be made again and again to make the point of view clear to them and to offer them the opportunity to change their political views. They should always be given a probationary period.”<sup>58</sup> This study cannot confirm the accuracy and direct application of these criteria, as no such cases were found in the researched town of Schiffange. However, these directives can be seen as potential indicators of the unique role and position of the military service in the public sphere in Luxembourg.<sup>59</sup>

## 4.2 The Resettlement of Families of Deserters: Implementation and Regional Dynamics

As the number of deserters continued to rise, the civil administration faced mounting pressure, leading to changes to the directives regarding the treatment of soldiers’ families, particularly those of deserters.<sup>60</sup> Following a meeting with *Gauleiter* Simon, Bruno Jung (1886–1966), the district administrator (*Landrat*) of Esch/Alzig, clarified in May 1943: “The resettlement of soldiers’ parents must be avoided under all circumstances. On the other hand, the families of deserters must

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57 “Dass Eltern von z. Zt. bei der Wehrmacht oder Waffen-SS dienenden Freiwilligen nicht zur Absiedlung kommen sollen.” Quotation from the report of the meeting held on 9 December 1942 about resettlements in Luxembourg, 10 December 1942, ANLux, CdG-003.

58 “Soldateneltern sind möglichst schonend zu behandeln. Selbst bei deutschfeindlicher Gesinnung sind sie erst in letzter Linie umzusiedeln. Zunächst soll immer wieder versucht werden, ihnen den Standpunkt klarzumachen und ihnen die Möglichkeit zu bieten, sich politisch umzustellen. Man soll ihnen immer noch eine Bewährungszeit lassen.” Quotation from the report of a meeting with the *Gauleiter* on 9 December 1942 regarding resettlements and the related confiscation of assets, 16 December 1942, ANLux, CdG-003.

59 This is also exemplified by the statement by the German Military High Command that conscripted individuals who had been resettled were also to be called up for active military service without any restrictions and could not be deferred for reasons of resettlement; Letter from the OKW on the military service of *Umsiedler*, 17 April 1943, ANLux, CdG-003.

60 While a significant portion of the procedure was identical for both political resettlements and resettlements due to desertion, this chapter will specifically concentrate on the resettlements resulting from desertion.

be resettled under all circumstances.”<sup>61</sup> This directive aimed to exert pressure on fugitives and discourage conscripts from deserting and fleeing by directly targeting their relatives with punitive measures. Consequently, by the end of the war, this group constituted a significant portion of the total resettled population.<sup>62</sup> The research also indicates that parents of volunteers who deserted during their service were not exempt from these repercussions. The parents and five siblings of N.K., who was a volunteer in the Wehrmacht for six months, were resettled to Lower-Silesia in July 1943 after his desertion in May 1943.<sup>63</sup>

The imposition of responsibility on the families of deserters was not exclusive to Luxembourg. In fact, between 1942 and 1945, relatives of ethnic German deserters and draft evaders from occupied and annexed regions such as Alsace, Lorraine, Upper Carniola, Lower Styria and South Tyrol faced similar consequences, including forced resettlement, imprisonment and confiscation of property. However, German military law did not provide for such actions. There were no clear guidelines for the application of familial responsibility until the German Military High Command initiated its codification on 19 November 1944 with a decree on measures against defectors, extending the threat to all soldiers within the Wehrmacht, not only to ethnic Germans.<sup>64</sup> Although this comparison requires further study, it's worth noting that the regulations and measures varied considerably from region to region. Nevertheless, they did share some common features, such as exerting pressure on and controlling the local population, and preventing further desertions.<sup>65</sup>

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61 “Die Umsiedlung von Soldateneltern muss unter allen Umständen unterbleiben. Dagegen sind Familien von Deserteuren unter allen Umständen umzusiedeln.” Quotation from the report of a meeting held in Luxembourg on 6 May 1943, chaired by the *Gauleiter*, regarding resettlements, 10 June 1943, ANLux, CdG-003.

62 Unfortunately, owing to the absence of detailed statistics differentiating between so-called political and Wehrmacht resettlements, no exact percentage can be provided.

63 War compensation file of family K., ANLux, DG2DOS-02481 nr.24642; *Affaire Politique* against N.K., ANLux, CT-03-01-01123.

64 According to Johannes Salzig, although all Wehrmacht soldiers were threatened with family liability at the end of the war, this remained the exception rather than the rule; Order by the OKW WFSt/Qu. 2/NSF/W no. 09395/44 dated 19 November 1944, quoted in Rudolf Absolon, “Das Wehrmachtstrafrecht im 2. Weltkrieg: Sammlung der grundlegenden Gesetze, Verordnungen und Erlasse” (Kornelimünster: Bundesarchiv Abt. Zentralnachweisstelle, 1958), 97–98; Salzig, *Die Sippenhaft als Repressionsmassnahme des nationalsozialistischen Regimes*, 458 and 475.

65 Stiller, *Völkische Politik*, 597, 603, 675–76; Brigitte Entner, “Slowenische Soldaten: Organisierte Flucht innerhalb der Reichsgrenzen?” in *Deserteure der Wehrmacht und der Waffen-SS: Entziehungsformen, Solidarität, Verfolgung*, edited by Kerstin von Lingen and Peter Pirker, Krieg in der Geschichte 122 (Paderborn: Brill Schöningh, 2023), 51–64; Martha Verdorfer, “Desertion in der mehrsprachigen Grenzregion Südtirol” in *Deserteure der Wehrmacht und der Waffen-SS: Entziehungsformen, Solidarität, Verfolgung*, edited by Kerstin von Lingen and Peter Pirker, Krieg in der

With the “Regulation on measures against draft evasion” of 10 July 1943, the civil administration in Luxembourg stated that it could “impose property confiscation or other appropriate measures on relatives of deserters or people who evade military service or compulsory labour service, as well as on relatives of other disturbers of the peace”.<sup>66</sup> The legislation was to be implemented retrospectively from the introduction of the military service in August 1942, and legalised a practice that had already started several months earlier. In comparison to a similar law in Alsace, which defined which relatives would be considered for forced resettlement, the regulation in Luxembourg did not mention this, nor did it clarify who was considered as a relative, which left the door open for interpretation.<sup>67</sup>

The participation of family members in the desertion was evident to the German authorities. In a newspaper article dated 16 July 1943, the regime justified the new legislation by stating that “One must assume that they [deserters] are typically victims of a narrow, false, and anti-people atmosphere within their families and thus live in an environment that consciously induces and promotes this cowardly and unmanly attitude. [ . . . ] Consequently, harsh action against the relatives of deserters and those who fail to comply with the conscription into the Wehrmacht and the labour service is justified in every way.”<sup>68</sup> Interestingly, in comparison with

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Geschichte 122 (Paderborn: Brill Schöningh, 2023), 65–80; Martha Verdorfer, “Nein zum Krieg: Widerstand und Verweigerung in Südtirol 1939–1945 – Überlegungen zu einem Oral-History-Projekt”, *Storia e regione*, 1 (1992), 120–128.

66 “Der Chef der Zivilverwaltung kann gegen Angehörige von Fahnenflüchtigen oder solchen Personen, die sich der Wehrpflicht oder Arbeitsdienstpflicht entziehen, sowie gegen Angehörige sonstiger Friedensstörer Vermögensbeschlagnahme und Vermögensseinzziehung oder andere geeignete Maßnahmen verhängen.” Quotation from Verordnung über Maßnahmen gegen Wehrpflichtentziehung in: *Verordnungsblatt Chef der Zivilverwaltung Luxemburg*, 15 July 1943, 152; Interestingly this law was issued one day after the circular of the Ministry of Interior about granting German citizenship upon revocation to resettled individuals.

67 Internal communications and post-war declarations, however, specify that the concept of family was defined as all the individuals living together in a household, commonly referred to as the “hearthplace” or “hearth site” (*Herdstelle*); Classified report on the first meeting of the CdZ regarding the start of the *Umsiedlung*, 11 September 1942, ANLux, CdG-003; Testimony of the district leader of Luxembourg, Adolf Schreder, on the resettlements, ANLux, CdG-003; Kettenacker, *Nationalsozialistische Volkstumspolitik im Elsaß*, 228; Frédéric Stroh, “Refus et résistance face à l’‘incorporation de force’ à l’Ouest et leur répression: Eupen-Malmedy, Luxembourg, Alsace, Moselle”, in *L’incorporation de force dans les territoires annexés par le IIIe Reich – Die Zwangsrekrutierung in den vom Dritten Reich annektierten Gebieten*, edited by Peter M. Quadflieg and Frédéric Stroh (Strasbourg: Presses universitaires de Strasbourg, 2016), 55.

68 “Man muss deshalb annehmen, dass sie in der Regel das Opfer einer engeren, falschen und volksfeindlichen Atmosphäre bei ihren Angehörigen sind und so in einer Umgebung leben, die bewusst diese feige und unmännliche Haltung hervorruft und fördert. [ . . . ] Infolgedessen ist ein scharfes Vorgehen gegen die Angehörigen der Fahnenflüchtigen und jener, die den Einberufenen

the article from 9 September 1942, the press here acknowledges the punitive nature of the measure.<sup>69</sup> Consistent with the measures implemented across Nazi Germany, individuals who could be proven to have participated in or been aware of the criminal act were convicted as accomplices (*Beihilfe*) by the German special civilian court (*Sondergericht*) and sent to prison or concentration camps.<sup>70</sup> This was the case for the family of H.G., a young man who attempted to evade the draft in February 1944. Two days after his arrest, two of his sisters were arrested, deported to concentration camps and later convicted as accomplices. On the day of the sisters' sentencing, the mother was also arrested and deported. Shortly after, another sibling was sent to a resettlement camp in Boberstein (Bobrów).<sup>71</sup>

In the case of the resettlements, the families were punished under the pretext of providing help, as the sources lack any proof of their involvement and contain no indications of judicial inquiries, which again points to the principle of *Sippenhaftung*. The testimonies of the Luxembourg district leaders during their post-war trial also suggest that the *Gauleiter* rejected any connection between resettlements and legal or quasi-judicial proceedings.<sup>72</sup> The assessment forms of resettled families, prepared by the Luxembourg resettlement commissions and the RKF, remain equally vague, as exemplified by the form concerning H.K's family: "It can

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zur Wehrmacht und zum Arbeitsdienst keine Folge leisten in jeder Weise gerechtfertigt." Quotation from "Jeder Deserteur siedelt seine Angehörigen oder seine Sippe um", *Escher Tageblatt* 164 (16 July 1943), 4.

69 „Diese Maßnahmen sind aber nicht ausschließlich strafender Natur, sie sind im Gegenteil besonders dazu bestimmt, die Angehörigen und die Arbeitsdienst- und Wehrpflichtigen vor einem Schritt zu bewahren, der sie ins Unglück und in Schande führen würde [ . . . ].“ Quotation from "Jeder Deserteur siedelt seine Angehörigen oder seine Sippe um", *Escher Tageblatt* 164 (16 July 1943), 4.

70 See Artikel 49 on the participation in crimes in: A. Grosch, *Strafgesetzbuch für das Deutsche Reich vom 15. Mai 1871: Mit einem Anhang von wichtigen Bestimmungen des Gerichtsverfassungsgesetzes und der Strafprozessordnung. Zum Gebrauch für Polizei-, Sicherheits- und Kriminalbeamte*, (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1907 – reprint 2020), 16; Verordnung über das Sonderstrafrecht im Kriege und bei besonderem Einsatz (Kriegssonderstrafrechtsverordnung) vom 17. August 1939 in: Reichsgesetzblatt, part I, 26 August 1939, 1455–1457; Verordnung über Maßnahmen gegen Wehrpflichtentziehung in: Verordnungsblatt Chef der Zivilverwaltung Luxemburg, 15 July 1943, 152; Lena Haase, "Verfolgung – Verhaftung – Verschleppung. Die Deportation von Luxemburgerinnen nach Flußbach und Ravensbrück", in *Le Luxembourg et le troisième Reich: un état des lieux – Luxembourg und das Dritte Reich: eine Bestandsaufnahme*, edited by Musée national de la Résistance et des Droits Humains (Luxembourg: Op der Lay, 2021), 661.

71 War compensation file of H.G., ANLux, DG2DOS-613 dossier 70099.

72 Report of the first appearance of Wilhelm Diehl at the district court, 10 December 1948, ANLux, CdG-003; Post-war interrogation of Adolf Schreder, 9 November 1948, ANLux, CdG-003.

be assumed that the parents approved of their son's defection. Therefore, the family is unsuitable for the border region of Luxembourg."<sup>73</sup>

The findings of the research indicate that far from all of the deserters' families were subjected to this repressive measure. In Schiffange, around 32% of the desertions and draft evasions known to the authorities at the time led to the resettlement of close relatives (Fig. 2(1)).<sup>74</sup> Despite the impression given through official communication channels and the legal framework that this measure was systematically applied, its actual implementation was less extensive, with many underlying criteria influencing the selection process. In May 1943 – two months before the publication of the law – the civil administration had already issued internal guidelines stating that only the most politically unfavourable families of deserters could be selected for resettlement.<sup>75</sup> On 27 November 1943, the *Gauleiter* wrote a confidential circular to the district leaders, stating "if it is certain that the parents neither instigated nor supported the desertion and, on the contrary, are politically reliable, resettlement should be avoided".<sup>76</sup> In December he went even further by stating that "political passivity alone would not suffice as a reason for resettlement".<sup>77</sup> Families who had another son serving in the military, or who was expected to be drafted into the labour service or the military in the foreseeable future, were also to be exempted.<sup>78</sup>

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73 "Es ist anzunehmen, dass die Eltern die Flucht ihres Sohnes gutgeheißen haben. Die Familie ist somit für das Grenzland Luxemburg untragbar." Quotation from the assessment form of H.K. BArch, R 49/93.

74 The research, conducted as part of the WARLUX project, identified approximately 300 male labour service and military recruits residing in the municipality during the war, born between 1920 and 1927. Analysis of wartime sources – such as deserter registries – revealed that around 22% of them, totalling 67 individuals, were pursued by the police and military justice system for draft evasion, absence without leave, or desertion. In total 38 families from Schiffange were resettled between September 1942 and August 1944. Within this group, 28 families could be linked to 21 individual deserters or draft evaders, representing approximately 31.8% of their total number.

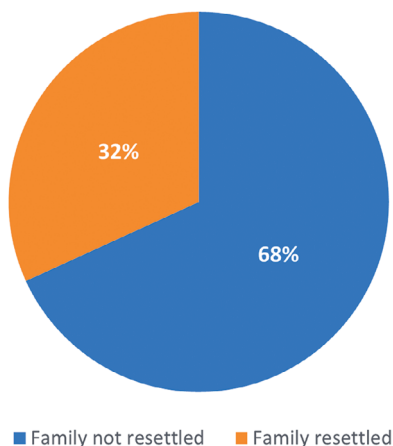
75 Generally, individuals over 65 years old were also excluded from resettlement; Confidential letter from Dr. Münzel to all district leaders with regard to Luxembourgish deserters, 13 May 1943, ANLux, CdG-003.

76 "Sofern aber feststeht, dass die Eltern die Desertion weder veranlasst noch unterstützt haben, sondern im Gegenteil politisch zuverlässig sind, muss die Umsiedlung unterbleiben." Quotation from an extract of a circular from *Gauleiter* Simon to the district leaders in Luxembourg, 27 November 1943, ANLux, CdG-003.

77 "Eine politische Passivität allein genüge nicht als Absiedlungsgrund." Quotation from notes of a meeting held with *Gauleiter* Simon on 10 December 1943 with regard to resettlements in Luxembourg, 16 December 1943, ANLux, CdG-003.

78 In the file of the family of deserter E.B. from the deserters' register (*Fahnenflüchtigen-Kartei*) it was noted: "Protected, the brother K.B. is still with the Wehrmacht" see the deserters' registry at the Musée National de la Résistance et des Droits Humains (MNRDH) in Esch-sur-Alzette; Extract of

These guidelines imply a progressive narrowing of instructions from the civil administration, with a certain degree of vagueness to allow for interpretation. Luxembourg historian, Vincent Artuso, noted that the original will of the civil administration to hit desertion with harsh measures was quickly reduced, owing to the complexity of the situation and to avoid opposing the sentiments of pro-German Luxembourgers.<sup>79</sup> However, it is important to note that in practice, different logics conflicted, revealing a discrepancy between the official doctrine and the practical realities on the ground. The decision-making power rested at the regional administrative level, resulting in variations and deviations from the prescribed guidelines. These variations were influenced by local dynamics (especially in light of the evolving war effort), individual circumstances, and personal judgements.



**Fig. 2 (1):** Proportion of desertions and draft evasions leading to family resettlement in Schiffange between September 1942 and September 1944.

In each district, a specific commission had the task of identifying and investigating individuals for resettlement. Led by the district leader, the commission consisted of officials such as the *Landrat*, a representative from the Gestapo,<sup>80</sup> the district medical officer, and in some cases the district farmer leader or the district master crafts-

a circular from *Gauleiter* Simon to the district leaders in Luxembourg, 27 November 1943, ANLux, CdG-003.

<sup>79</sup> Vincent Artuso, *La collaboration au Luxembourg durant la Seconde Guerre mondiale, 1940–1945: accommodation, adaptation, assimilation*, Études luxembourgeoises / Luxemburg-Studien 4 (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang GmbH, 2013), 250.

<sup>80</sup> The Gestapo informed the commissions of any records and data they held on the individuals. If a person targeted for resettlement fled to avoid resettlement, the Gestapo would launch a search operation; Chapter XVI on “Umsiedlung” during the postwar trial against the members of



men.<sup>81</sup> From 1943 onwards, the leader of the *Volksdeutsche Bewegung*, along with a special representative for personnel matters from the civil administration, were also involved.<sup>82</sup> The district leadership gathered lists and information on deserters and draft evaders from sources including the local police offices, the Security Police, and the *Wehrbezirksskommando*.<sup>83</sup> They instructed local group leaders (*Ortsgruppenleiter*) of the *Volksdeutsche Bewegung* to communicate the political stance of the families in question and to investigate the military or labour service of other relatives, as well as these relatives' specific political connections.<sup>84</sup> For this, the local group leaders made use of the extensive information they had already gathered on the inhabitants through their surveillance networks and through denunciations from neighbours and other locals. Based on this information, they also proposed certain individuals and families for resettlement to the district leaders. The district leaders, in turn, decided which cases to present to the commission based on these assessments. Once a final decision was made, the commission notified the representative of the RKF in Luxembourg, Leonard Motz, about the selected cases. Motz then compiled the transport lists, coordinated transportation, and informed other RKF entities, including the VoMi, responsible for the camps, and DUT, responsible for the confiscation of assets.<sup>85</sup>

This regional selection process was characterised by ambiguity, potential for abuse, and personal motives. District leaders held significant influence, not only in determining which cases would be presented to the commission but also during the voting process. An illustrative example is seen in Diehl's claim of personally intervening to prevent the resettlement of a deserter's family based on the father's physical disability (he only had one leg).<sup>86</sup> Additionally, local group leaders, despite

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the *Einsatzkommando der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD* in Luxembourg and Gestapo, ITS Arolsen (online archive), 9029900, 213–216.

<sup>81</sup> These commissions existed only in the territory of Luxembourg and were allegedly set up by the *Gauleiter* as a precautionary measure to prevent arbitrary resettlements.

<sup>82</sup> Kartheiser, *Die Umsiedlung Luxemburger Familien 1942–1945*, 68.

<sup>83</sup> Post-war testimony of district leader Wilhelm Diehl, ANLux, CdG-003; Letter from the *Wehrbezirksskommando* Luxembourg regarding non-compliance with the conscription order for 24 February 1944, 24 February 1944, ANLux, CdZ-G-15182.

<sup>84</sup> See the files assembled as part of the political trial against the local group leader of Schifflange Peter Anheuser, ANLux, CT-03-01-05421; Post-war testimony of district leader Wilhelm Diehl, ANLux, CdG-003; Post-war testimony of J.K., former clerk at the *Kreisleitung* of Luxembourg, ANLux, CdG-003; Report of post-war interrogation of Leonard Motz, 24 June 1948, ANLux, CdG-003; Benoît Majerus, "Faiblesse, opportunisme, conviction . . . : les degrés de l'implication dans la collaboration avec l'Allemagne nationale-socialiste à travers l'exemple des Ortsgruppenleiter luxembourgeois" (Master diss., Université Libre de Bruxelles, 1999), 104.

<sup>85</sup> Report of post-war interrogation of Leonard Motz, 24 June 1948, ANLux, CdG-003.

<sup>86</sup> Post-war interrogation of Wilhelm Diehl, 30 June 1948, ANLux, CdG-003.

not being members of the commissions themselves, possessed first-hand knowledge of the families involved and exerted significant influence in the decision-making process through their evaluations.<sup>87</sup> The commissions failed to offer clear explanations for their resettlement decisions, and kept no record of their meetings. As a result, affected families often remained unaware of the precise reasons for their displacement, even post-war.<sup>88</sup> In a post-war statement, Motz acknowledged this and provided examples demonstrating how resettlement orders were sometimes based on trivial matters and personal conflicts.<sup>89</sup> Regional disparities, linked to the local economic situation, also played a role in the selection process. For instance, despite numerous desertions in the northern agricultural district of Diekirch, the district leader refused the forced resettlement of 150 farmers from this region in mid-December 1943 because of a shortage of *Ansiedler* to replace them on their farms.<sup>90</sup> Directors from the mining industry could also object to specific resettlements if certain workers were deemed indispensable for their jobs.<sup>91</sup> Due to the numerous influences and differences at play, it is almost impossible to determine why certain families were chosen for forced resettlement while others were not. The family M. from Schiffflange is illustrative of this: between November 1943 and May 1944, three members of the same household, two sons and a son-in-law, deserted while on leave.<sup>92</sup> Contrary to what might be expected, the study did not uncover any evidence of reprisals against this family, nor was it able to identify any reason for their exemption from such measures.

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87 Post-war testimony of J.K., former clerk at the *Kreisleitung* of Luxembourg, ANLux, CdG-003; Majerus, "Faiblesse, opportunisme, conviction . . .", 104.

88 Wartime documents included multiple reasons for the resettlements such as non-membership in Nazi organizations, connections with opponents and political passivity. Post-war testimonies from descendants of affected families suggest that active resistance activities were the main contributing factor.

89 Report of the post-war interrogation of Leonard Motz, 24 June 1948, ANLux, CdG-003.

90 The study by Gilles Kartheiser also shows large regional differences in the country and reveals that at the end of the war, percentage-wise more people were resettled from the northern regions of the country; Kartheiser, *Die Umsiedlung Luxemburger Familien 1942–1945*, 85; Notes of a meeting held with *Gauleiter* Simon on 10 December 1943 with regard to resettlements in Luxembourg, 16 December 1943, ANLux, CdG-003.

91 Whether this was taken into account is a separate matter; Letter from the Vereinigte Hüttenwerke Burbach-Eich-Düdelingen to the civil administration with regard to the forced resettlement of J.D., BArch, R49/3661; Directives from the Moselland District Personnel Office Leader (*Gaupersonalamtsleiter*) regarding the compulsory employment of Luxembourgish skilled workers within the *Gau Moselland*, 22 February 1944, ANLux, CdG-003.

92 See files on E.M., J.M. and F.M in the deserters' registry (*Fahnenflüchtigen-Kartei*) at the Musée National de la Résistance et des Droits Humains in Esch-sur-Alzette.

**Familienkartei**

Umsiedler Nr. Lux. 833 833 20


Name: Scheuer Vorname: Casper  
Geb. Datum: 27.11.01 Ort: Differdingen Kreis: Esch  
Staatsangeh.: Volksdeutscher Luxbg. Herkunftsländ: Luxemburg  
relig. Bekennt.: kath. Familienstand: led. verh. verw. gesch.  
Beruf erlernt: Hüttenarbeiter jetzt: Hüttenarbeiter, Werk Angestellter selbst: Schifffl. Beamter:  
Letzter Wohnort: Schiffflingen Strasse und Nr.: E. Mayrischstr. 132  
Ehefrau: Oppermann Lina Geb. 9.7.06 Ort: Differdingen Kreis: Esch  
(Mädchenname)

**Kinder:**

Kopfzahl der Familie:	unter 15 Jahren:		über 15 Jahren:		V. D. B. seit: Nr.:
	männl.	weibl.	männl.	weibl.	
<u>1 2 3</u>			<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>Nein</u>

Besitztum: in Miete

Arbeitgeber: Werk Schiffflingen Hüttenarbeiter  
Ort: Schiffflingen  
Abgesiedelt am: 3.12.1943  
nach: Mittelsteine



**Namentliche Aufstellung der Kinder unter 15 Jahren:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Vorname: \_\_\_\_\_ Geb. \_\_\_\_\_ Ort: \_\_\_\_\_

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Vorgang: Der Sohn Rudi Scheuer geb. am 20.4.24 in Differdingen hat sich am 22.2.43 unerlaubt vom RAD. entfernt und ist flüchtig. Die Familienangehörigen sind abzusiedeln.

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Der Kreisleiter Landrat Vertreter d. Stapo der SA Der Kreisbauernführer bzw. Kreishandwerksmeister

Fig. 2 (2): Resettlement card of the Scheuer family signed by the members of the resettlement commission.(BArch R 49/3751).

The research findings strongly support the notion that the civil authorities in Luxembourg held primary responsibility for implementing punitive measures. The RKF acted at the request of the civil administration and had little to no control

over the criteria for expulsions, as is also corroborated by Stiller's findings.<sup>93</sup> Once the process had been initiated, however, the RKF and the entities it appointed took charge of managing the individuals; this involved transportation, settlement, employment and asset acquisition. Furthermore, no evidence was discovered to suggest active involvement of the military or military tribunals in the procedure, as indicated in the author's prior study.<sup>94</sup> This research showed that the military courts were somewhat passive observers of the resettlements, only interested in them in the context of their own investigation of the deserter. The resettlements also often took place before the conclusion of the trial or the pronouncement of the sentence, showing that they were not linked to the conviction of a deserter.

In early 1944, *Gauleiter* Simon ordered that skilled workers who could no longer stay in Luxembourg because of their "anti-German attitude", such as the families of deserters, were to be transferred to the Hunsrück – a region in the eastern part of his administrative division – and forced to work rather than be resettled. This measure was intended to strengthen war production in the region and address the immediate labour shortage in the local industry.<sup>95</sup> In collaboration with the *Gauarbeitsamt Moselland* and the main industry players – particularly the Arbed steel plant – a procedure was established in mid-1944 for transferring a large workforce outside the usual resettlement process, without the involvement of the RKF.<sup>96</sup> This primarily affected the male members of families, particularly the heads of households, while other family members were resettled to nearby camps such as the camp in Nohfelden. This does not only highlight the economic motivations behind the punitive measures, but also underscores the dominant role of the *Gauleiter* and the civil administration in the policy of penalizing families of deserters, demonstrating their capacity to adapt existing procedures to suit their own political and economic agendas.

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<sup>93</sup> Stiller, *Völkische Politik*, 613.

<sup>94</sup> See the article by Sarah Maya Vercruysse and Nina Janz, *The "long arm" of the military justice of the Wehrmacht – A case study on Luxembourgish desertions*, which will be published by De Gruyter in 2024–2025.

<sup>95</sup> This also concerned individuals and families who had already been resettled to Lower Silesia. Despite the difficulties and risk of repercussions for industry in Lower Silesia, the VoMi agreed with this transfer and supported the *Gauleiter's* action; Letter from Gustav Simon to *SS-Obergruppenführer* Lorenz of the *Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle*, 21 February 1944, ANLux, CdG-003; Letter from the *Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle* to the *Reichsführer-SS*, June 1944, BArch, R 59/59.

<sup>96</sup> Directives from the Moselland District Personnel Office Leader (*Gaupersonalamtsleiter*) regarding the compulsory employment of Luxembourgish skilled workers within the *Gau Moselland*, 22 February 1944, ANLux, CdG-003.

### 4.3 Confiscation of Assets

A crucial and underexamined aspect of this policy was the imposition of economic measures on the families through the confiscation of their belongings by the DUT. This company was designated by the RKF for the collection, management and exploitation of the assets of resettled individuals within the Reich from 1939 onwards.<sup>97</sup> Based on the available source material, it is not possible to discern a distinction in the confiscation of belongings between families of deserters and other forcibly resettled individuals in the case of Luxembourg.<sup>98</sup> This topic is characterised by significant ambiguity, and the available sources often present contradictory information depending on the individuals or services providing the data and the context in which it was shared.<sup>99</sup>

The civil administration of Luxembourg issued a total of five regulations concerning forced resettlement and the associated confiscation of assets. The “Regulation on resettlement in Luxembourg” dated 13 September 1942 and the “Regulation on the seizure of assets in the event of resettlement in Luxembourg” dated 9 January 1943 laid the foundations for these confiscations. According to these regulations, the RKF and the bodies it appointed were responsible for handling property-related tasks following the resettlements and had full authority to take control of and manage these assets. The latter regulation was specifically designed to prevent asset withdrawal by individuals anticipating resettlement.<sup>100</sup> The “Regulation on the pre-emptive rights of the Reich Commissioner for the Consolidation of German Nationhood in the sale of commercial and agricultural enterprises or properties” of 9 January 1943 focused on the pre-emptive rights of the head of the civil adminis-

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97 The DUT had a central office in Luxembourg but appointed local representatives in the different districts to communicate directly with local authorities. In March 1944 the company started transferring tasks to the regional district administrations (*Landrat*) and municipal mayors (*Amtsbürgermeister*) because of the evolving war situation; 1943 semi-annual report of the DUT, 10 August 1943, BArch, R 49/460; Transcript of the proposal to transfer tasks from the DUT to managing bodies of the civil administration, ANLux, CdG-003.

98 It is also important to highlight that some deserter families had their property confiscated without being subjected to forced resettlement. This was for example the case for those who were older than 65 years of age. The decision was taken by the settlement commissions during their meetings.

99 In addition, important source material on the subject, such as the post-war compensation files, is very difficult to access due to the sensitive nature of these files and the strict archival legislation in Luxembourg, which restricts access and involves lengthy procedures to obtain special permission for access. Further research is essential to gain a comprehensive understanding of these disposessions. It is hoped that this research will be possible in the near future.

100 1943 semi-annual report of the DUT, 10 August 1943, BArch, R49/460.

tration, acting as the representative of the RKF, in these specific property transactions. However, the RKF had the power to delegate the tasks related to exercising this right to another body. The “Regulation for the implementation of the regulation on resettlement in Luxembourg” dated 21 April 1944, which followed the aforementioned regulation of 10 July 1943, provided practical details for the implementation of property-related measures during resettlement, including the filing of claims, the suspension of payment obligations, and legal proceedings. Interestingly, there was no specific legislation regarding the resettlement of the families themselves; instead, these instructions were communicated through internal orders. The legal framework focused primarily on implementing measures for the confiscation of property, underlying the importance of this aspect in the eyes of the civil administration.<sup>101</sup>

On the day of their transportation, families were allowed to take as much as was “easily transportable”, with a maximum of 50 kilograms per person.<sup>102</sup> In order to determine the property of the families, the heads of the households were required to provide the DUT with a detailed inventory of their belongings, categorised into private assets, business operations, urban real estate and property ownership, agricultural operations, and claims and debts.<sup>103</sup> The company would record this information, seal the house, and take over the administration of the goods through a trust on behalf of the RKF. The items would then be appraised to determine their estimated value. Bank accounts, securities accounts or other deposits held or admin-

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**101** Verordnung über die Umsiedlung in Luxemburg in: *Verordnungsblatt Chef der Zivilverwaltung Luxemburg*, 17 September 1942, 277; Verordnung über die Sicherstellung von Vermögenswerten bei der Absiedlung in Luxemburg in: *Verordnungsblatt Chef der Zivilverwaltung Luxemburg*, 29 January 1943, 9; Verordnung über das Vorkaufsrecht des Reichskommissars für die Festigung deutschen Volkstums bei Veräußerungen von gewerblichen und landwirtschaftlichen Betrieben oder Grundstücken, 29 January 1943, 10; Verordnung über Maßnahmen gegen Wehrpflichtentziehung in: *Verordnungsblatt Chef der Zivilverwaltung Luxemburg*, 15 July 1943, 152; Durchführungsverordnung zur Verordnung über die Umsiedlung in Luxemburg in: *Verordnungsblatt Chef der Zivilverwaltung Luxemburg*, 21 April 1944, 67.

**102** Classified report on the first meeting of the CdZ regarding the start of the *Umsiedlung*, 11 September 1942, ANLux, CdG-003.

**103** In March 1944, in the district of Esch/Alzig, district leader Diehl instructed the local mayor (*Amtsbürgermeister*), Dr. Josef Kohns, to place 144 notices on the doors of deserters' families prohibiting the sale of any property. Furthermore, a comprehensive inventory of the furniture was made to ensure that no items were removed from the houses. Many of these families were later resettled; Guidelines for the resettlement commands, September 1942, ANLux, CdG-003; Letter from district leader Diehl to *Amtsbürgermeister* Kohns, 3 March 1944, ANLux, CdG-003.



istered by banks were commonly declared seized and blocked by the DUT, as indicated in an internal memo of the *General-Bank Luxemburg* in January 1943.<sup>104</sup>

The administration of both movable and immovable property, including companies, houses and furniture, was closely controlled by the DUT, the RKF and Gustav Simon as "Commissioner for the tasks of the Reich Commissioner for the Consolidation of German Nationhood". To ensure the continuity of confiscated enterprises of public interest, temporary administrators were appointed and made accountable.<sup>105</sup> *Ansiedler* were assigned to take over vacated enterprises and farms, and were given priority in acquiring residences, furniture or household items from those who had been displaced.<sup>106</sup> A circular dated July 1943 also stated that certain proceeds from the remaining Jewish assets were to be used for the benefit of the South Tyrolean settlers.<sup>107</sup> On the instructions of Gustav Simon, confiscated houses and buildings were also made available to civil servants or party leaders or for official party purposes, even though they were not allowed to officially acquire property of any kind without his personal approval.<sup>108</sup> Specific items, such as works of art and objects of cultural value, were to be sold to Luxembourg museums or to "politically reliable individuals in the *Gau Moselland*".<sup>109</sup> Houses not required by the administration or new settlers were handed over to the local housing office to be put on the housing market.<sup>110</sup> Items that were not

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**104** The funds on these accounts could also be used to cover the former owners' debts, or for continuing industrial or commercial operations; Record note from the *General-Bank Luxemburg* following a visit to the DUT, ANLux, CdZ-B-0351; "Die DUT und die Umsiedlung für Luxemburg", *Luxemburger Wort* 261 (18 September 1942), 3.

**105** Information sheet from the DUT Luxembourg regarding the *Absiedlung* in Luxembourg, September 1943, ANLux, CdG-003; Transcript of the proposal to transfer tasks from the DUT to managing bodies of the civil administration, ANLux, CdG-003.

**106** Notes of a meeting held with *Gauleiter* Simon on 10 December 1943 with regard to resettlements in Luxembourg, 16 December 1943, ANLux, CdG-003.

**107** Circular of the CdZ of Luxembourg, Nr.4, July 1943, ANLux, CdG-003.

**108** By instruction of 12 July 1943, the *Gauleiter* forbade houses of *Abgesiedelten* from being used for official purposes as they were to remain available to cover the housing shortage; Article 2 of General Order (*Allgemeine Anordnung*) no. 13/42, 24 October 1942, ANLux CdZ-A-1423; Article 7 of General Order (*Allgemeine Anordnung*) no. 14/42, 9 November 1942, ANLux CdZ-A-1423; Article 3 of General Order (*Allgemeine Anordnung*) no. 5/1943, 9 August 1943, ANLux CdZ-A-1430.

**109** Report of the meeting on 9 December 1942 with regard to resettlements in Luxembourg, 10 December 1942, ANLux, CdG-003; Marie-Madeleine Schiltges, *Die Umsiedlung in Luxemburg 1942–1945* (Ettelbruck: Imprimerie Saint-Paul, 1988), 20; Fabio Spirinelli, "Staging the Nation in an Intermediate Space: Cultural Policy in Luxembourg and the State Museums (1918–1974)" (PhD thesis, University of Luxembourg, 2020), 393–394.

**110** Giving war wounded and bombing victims priority; letter from the *Landrat* of Esch/Alzig to district leader Adolf Schreder, 16 July 1943, ANLux, CdG-003; Notes of a meeting held with *Gaulei-*



needed, as well as certain personal objects, were returned to representatives of the resettled families – often appointed relatives acting under a power of attorney – to cover the most urgent needs.<sup>111</sup> In the case of the resettled family of deserter Rudi Scheuer, his grandmother, acting as the representative, managed to transport most of the furniture to her house in Niederkorn.<sup>112</sup>

Throughout the war, the National Socialist administration maintained an ambiguous stance regarding the true nature of the confiscations and the potential compensation of Luxembourgish resettled families. When looking at the general *modus operandi* of the DUT in the eastern parts of the Reich, a procedure of property compensation, also called “*Vermögensausgleich*”, was applied in the form of a restitution in kind. For each resettled family, the DUT kept a separate account of the value of the property they had to leave behind. Once a family had permanently settled in the German Reich, they would be compensated with goods confiscated from undesired local populations such as Jews or Poles. The aim was that the resettled families should live in conditions similar to those they would have lived in had they not been resettled, without the administration having to use cash resources from the Reich budget.<sup>113</sup>

In Luxembourg, the German authorities gave the impression that resettled families would also receive compensation. It used the threat of uncompensated confiscation to discourage incomplete inventories or acts of resistance.<sup>114</sup> The legislation left room for interpretation stating that claims for damages could be considered if the RKF decided to do so on an individual basis.<sup>115</sup> District leader Diehl also testified in June 1948 that “according to Simon’s explicit instructions, the resettled individuals were not supposed to incur any financial harm. The value of

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ter Simon on 10 December 1943 with regard to resettlements in Luxembourg, 16 December 1943, ANLux, CdG-003.

111 If no representative was assigned by the resettled family, the administration of the property would immediately be assigned to the *Landrat*; Confirmation of receipt by J.W., ANLux, CdZ-G-00685; Declaration by Frau N., 25 April 1944, ANLux, CdZ-B-0352; Post-war interrogation of Ludwig Metzger, IfZ München, ZS 1222.

112 War damage file of S.-O. G., ANLux, DG2DOS-02534 file 47590.

113 Stiller, “Völkisch Capitalism”, 292–93; Robert Lewis Koehl, *RKFDV: German Resettlement and Population Policy, 1939–1945 – a History of the Reich Commission for the Strengthening of Germanism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), 98.

114 “Die DUT und die Umsiedlung für Luxemburg”; Empty form for the declaration of assets, ANLux, CdG-003.

115 Verordnung über die Umsiedlung in Luxemburg vom 13. September 1942 in: *Verordnungsblatt Chef der Zivilverwaltung Luxemburg*, 17 September 1942, 277.

the confiscated items was to be credited to the resettled individuals."<sup>116</sup> Ludwig Metzger, the former head of the legal and organisational department of the DUT in Luxembourg, also stated after the war that the value of the sold items of forcibly resettled Luxembourgish families was recorded in order to determine how this value would be returned to them after the war.<sup>117</sup> The accuracy of these statements is questionable, as no clear records of these accounting books were ever found.<sup>118</sup> The legal advisor to the post-war Sequestration Office also testified that the DUT files, which the affected families could consult after the war, did not contain detailed and truthful inventories of the confiscated assets. He concluded that there was no provision for compensation by the German administration.<sup>119</sup> Internal wartime documentation of the DUT also shows that no compensation was foreseen by the end of the war. A report regarding the closure of the DUT offices in the West, dated two days after the liberation of Luxembourg on 9 September 1944, states that "a furniture compensation claim of the *Absiedler* does not exist".<sup>120</sup> Furthermore, a note from the company in December 1944 states that "the establishment of a proper asset registry, as originally planned, is unnecessary, as the asset equalization is not to be carried out for the time being".<sup>121</sup>

Between 1942 and 1944, the DUT amassed substantial funds in Luxembourg through the liquidation and rental of properties of forcibly resettled families. Of the multiple accounts used to transfer funds from and to the DUT Luxembourg, three could be examined in the accounting books of the civil administration in Luxembourg, revealing large transfers of money during this period. Two of these accounts were held by the *Bank der Deutschen Arbeit*, with a total revenue of 102,912 RM at the end 1942 and 1,306,697 RM a year later, coinciding with the in-

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116 "Gemäß den ausdrücklichen Anordnungen Simons persönlich sollten die Abgesiedelten keinen finanziellen Schaden haben. Der Wert der beschlagnahmten Sachen sollte den Umgesiedelten gutgeschrieben werden." Quotation from the post-war interrogation of Wilhelm Diehl, 30 June 1948, ANLux, CdG-003.

117 Post-war interrogation of Ludwig Metzger, IfZ München, ZS 1222.

118 Despite numerous inquiries, the existence of these files could not be confirmed by the archivists of the Luxembourg National Archives. No trace of these files could be found in the files of the Sequestration Office, or in the war damage files.

119 Post-war declaration of lawyer E.N., 21 July 1948, ANLux, CdG-003.

120 Note regarding the closure of the DUT offices in the West, 11 September 1944, BArch, R 1702/1018.

121 "Die Aufstellung einer ordnungsgemäßen Vermögenskartei, wie sie ursprünglich vorgesehen war, erübrigt sich, da ohnehin der Vermögensausgleich bis auf weiteres nicht durchgeführt werden soll." Notes of a meeting between the DUT and members of the former branch office of Luxembourg, 1 December 1944, BArch, R 1702/1018.

creasing pace of resettlements.<sup>122</sup> According to Stiller, the DUT's total balance was approximately 245 million RM at the end of 1942 and 420 million RM at the end of 1943.<sup>123</sup> Another bank account, numbered 447785 at the *General-Bank Luxemburg*, contained 200,000 RM in early August 1944, but was almost entirely emptied a few days before the arrival of the Allied forces.<sup>124</sup> The funds were transferred to a bank account in Mühlhausen in Thuringia, to which the Luxembourg and Strasbourg offices of the DUT had been transferred.<sup>125</sup> The subsequent destination and use of these financial resources, as well as the role of the other bank accounts, require further investigation for clarification (Fig.3).

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**122** Unfortunately, the account statements for the year 1944 could not be located; Account statements from 1943 for account numbers 7509 and 7523 belonging to the DUT at the *Bank der Deutschen Arbeit*, ANLux, FIN-18143; Account statements from 1942 for account numbers 7509 and 7523 belonging to the DUT at the *Bank der Deutschen Arbeit*, ANLux, FIN-18266.

**123** Stiller, *Völkische Politik*, 197.

**124** Account statements from July-September 1944 for account number 44785 belonging to the DUT at the *General-Bank Luxemburg*, ANLux, SEQDOS-0064 no. 1644.

**125** At the end of the Summer of 1943, the central accounting office of the DUT had moved from Berlin to Mühlhausen; Correspondence between the DUT central accounting office and the DUT branch in Luxembourg, August-September 1943, BArch, R 1702/155.

Account nr.	Account name	Initial communication date
216	<i>Postcheckkonto</i>	5.11.1942
30114 / Lux: 7509	<i>Bank der Deutschen Arbeit, Luxemburg, Laufendes Kontos (7509)</i>	5.11.1942
30115 / Lux: 7523	<i>Bank der Deutschen Arbeit, Luxemburg, Sonderkonto (7523) / für Mietzahlungen</i>	5.11.1942
5029	<i>Verrechnungskonto Strassburg bei der Verbindungsstelle Luxemburg</i>	5.11.1942
675	<i>Grundstückverwaltungskonto. Absiedlung Luxemburg (Strassburg)</i>	17.11.1942
88010	<i>Erlöskonto Luxemburg</i>	20.11.1942
88011	<i>Nahrungs- und Genussmittel, Luxemburg</i>	20.11.1942
88012	<i>Garten- und landwirtschaftliche Erzeugnisse, Luxemburg</i>	20.11.1942
88013	<i>Viehverkauf, Luxemburg</i>	20.11.1942
88014	<i>Möbel, Hausrat und Sonstiges, Luxemburg</i>	20.11.1942
5033	<i>Verrechnungskonto Berlin bei der Geschäftsstelle Luxemburg</i>	17.12.1942
5125	<i>Verrechnungskonto Luxemburg bei der Zentrale Berlin</i>	17.12.1942
6448	<i>Transportspesen, Lagermiete, Verpackungsmaterial und sonstige Kosten w/ Absiedlung Luxemburg</i>	17.12.1942
6637	<i>Schätzungs- und Bewertungskosten Luxemburg w/ Ferdinand Schumann</i>	17.12.1942
219	<i>Postscheckkonto Luxemburg / Sonderkonto Grundstücksverwaltung</i>	21.01.1943
6449	<i>Umzugskosten wegen Absiedler Luxemburg // Übernommene Kosten für Dritte</i>	2.03.1943
6638	<i>Schätzungs-Bewertungskosten Luxemburg w/ Architekt Gabel</i>	2.03.1943
6639	<i>Schätzungs-Bewertungskosten Luxemburg w/ Johann Schwartz</i>	2.03.1943
6640	<i>Schätzungs-Bewertungskosten Luxemburg w/ Karl Ruppert</i>	2.03.1943
6450	<i>Umzugskosten für Absiedler aus Luxemburg</i>	12.03.1943
6710	<i>Sammelkonto für Verwertung landwirtschaftlicher Objekte Luxemburg</i>	11.05.1943
6456	<i>Versicherungsspesen und andere Kosten wegen kommissarisch verwalteter Betriebe Luxemburg</i>	11.05.1943
10119	<i>Postscheck-Konto Luxemburg</i>	N/A
822	<i>Postscheck-Konto für Mietzahlungen Luxemburg</i>	N/A
4478	<i>Deutsche Umsiedlungs-Treuhand-Gesellschaft G.m.b.H. Nebenstelle Luxemburg (General-Bank Luxemburg)</i>	N/A

**Fig. 3:** Table of DUT bank accounts linked to the forced resettlements in Luxembourg. (BARch, R 1702/155; ANLux, SEQDOS-0064, n°1644).<sup>126</sup>

<sup>126</sup> These bank accounts were communicated by the DUT's central accounting office in Berlin to the branch in Luxembourg between 1942–1943. Account 6449 was previously reported as being designated for “*Transportwesen, Lagermiete, Verpackungsmaterial und sonstige kosten w/Absiedlung Elsass*”. It remains uncertain whether this account truly pertains to Luxembourg or if this was an error. Apart from the three investigated accounts, the others could not be subjected to further examination in this study.

## 5 Conclusion

The consequences of desertion and draft evasion on the families of Luxembourgish soldiers during the occupation of the country had profound and enduring consequences. As highlighted by Norbert Haase, over the course of the war, the measures taken by the Nazi civil authorities, the Wehrmacht, the Gestapo, and the police intertwined to discipline the population.<sup>127</sup> In Luxembourg – as in other occupied regions such as Alsace, Lorraine, South Tyrol, Lower Styria and Upper Carniola – the forced resettlement and asset confiscation of certain families emerged as potent tools wielded by the occupying forces to assert dominance, instil fear, and undermine resistance from the ethnic German population.<sup>128</sup> They were also used as threats and means of pressure to secure loyalty from soldiers, relying on the deterrent effect of exemplified cases.<sup>129</sup> With their families serving as hostages of the state, deserters were compelled to (re)consider their actions, thereby showing the complex interplay between actions occurring in the military sphere and their repercussions within society.<sup>130</sup> The extent to which this deterrent strategy actually influenced soldiers remains unverifiable.

The sanctions imposed on the families of deserters were mainly the responsibility of civilian authorities, ranging from those in Berlin to the local administrations in Luxembourg. However, these authorities had varying motivations and exerted different levels of influence on the process. The civil administration in Luxembourg played a central role and exercised considerable authority over the implementation of the measures. It acted as an overseer and instigator, issuing directives, while the RKF carried out the resettlements and confiscations on its behalf.<sup>131</sup> Both the civil administration and the RKF benefited from this, but pursued distinct objectives and interests. The politically unreliable individuals were removed from Luxembourg and replaced by more reliable ethnic Germans, who were intended to influence the local communities and strengthen the border area. At the same time, the resettled Luxembourgers, due to their favourable ethnicity, were “reused” in other regions of the Reich as a valuable labour force. These actions supported the *Gauleiter*’s efforts

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127 Norbert Haase, “Justizterror in der Wehrmacht am Ende des Zweiten Weltkrieges”, in *Terror nach Innen. Verbrechen am Ende des Zweiten Weltkrieges*, edited by Cord Arendes, Edgar Wolf- rum and Jörg Ziedler, Dachauer Symposien zur Zeitgeschichte 6 (Göttingen: De Gruyter, 2006), 82.

128 Salzig, *Die Sippenhaft als Repressionsmassnahme des nationalsozialistischen Regimes*, 479.

129 Salzig, *Die Sippenhaft als Repressionsmassnahme des nationalsozialistischen Regimes*, 492.

130 Haase, “Justizterror in der Wehrmacht am Ende des Zweiten Weltkrieges”, 93.

131 Stiller, *Völkische Politik*, 613.

towards “pacification” and Germanisation, as well as the RKF’s racial and settlement policies in line with the New Order framework, and its aim to increase its influence in the Western regions.<sup>132</sup> Although both bodies worked together, it can be concluded that the measures were not driven by a centrally directed German settlement policy, but were more closely linked to *Gauleiter* Simon’s regional policy of Germanisation and Nazification of the country. The alignment with Stiller’s observations in Lorraine further supports this understanding.<sup>133</sup> Furthermore, the study shows that considerable power was held at the regional and local levels, including district and local group leaders, as well as representatives of the industry, who determined which families were to be resettled and in what numbers. In practice, different, at times conflicting logics were at play, leading to a discrepancy between the official directives and the realities on the ground.

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<sup>132</sup> Stiller, *Völkische Politik*, 605; Haase, “Justizterror in der Wehrmacht am Ende des Zweiten Weltkrieges”, 93.

<sup>133</sup> Stiller, *Völkische Politik*, 612.

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