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# EAST PRUSSIA

BY

STANISŁAW SROKOWSKI

PROFESSOR OF GEOGRAPHY AT THE SCHOOL  
OF POLITICAL SCIENCES, WARSAW



19

TORUŃ (POLAND)

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THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

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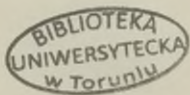
PUBLISHED BY THE BALTIC INSTITUTE  
J. S. BERGSON 4, VERNON PLACE, LONDON W. C. 1

U. 2118

1327836

*Printed in Poland*  
by "Rolnicza Drukarnia i Księgarnia Nakładowa"  
Poznań, Sew. Mielżyńskiego 24

WYDANO Z DUBLETÓW  
Biblioteki Narodowej



W. 122 / 2017

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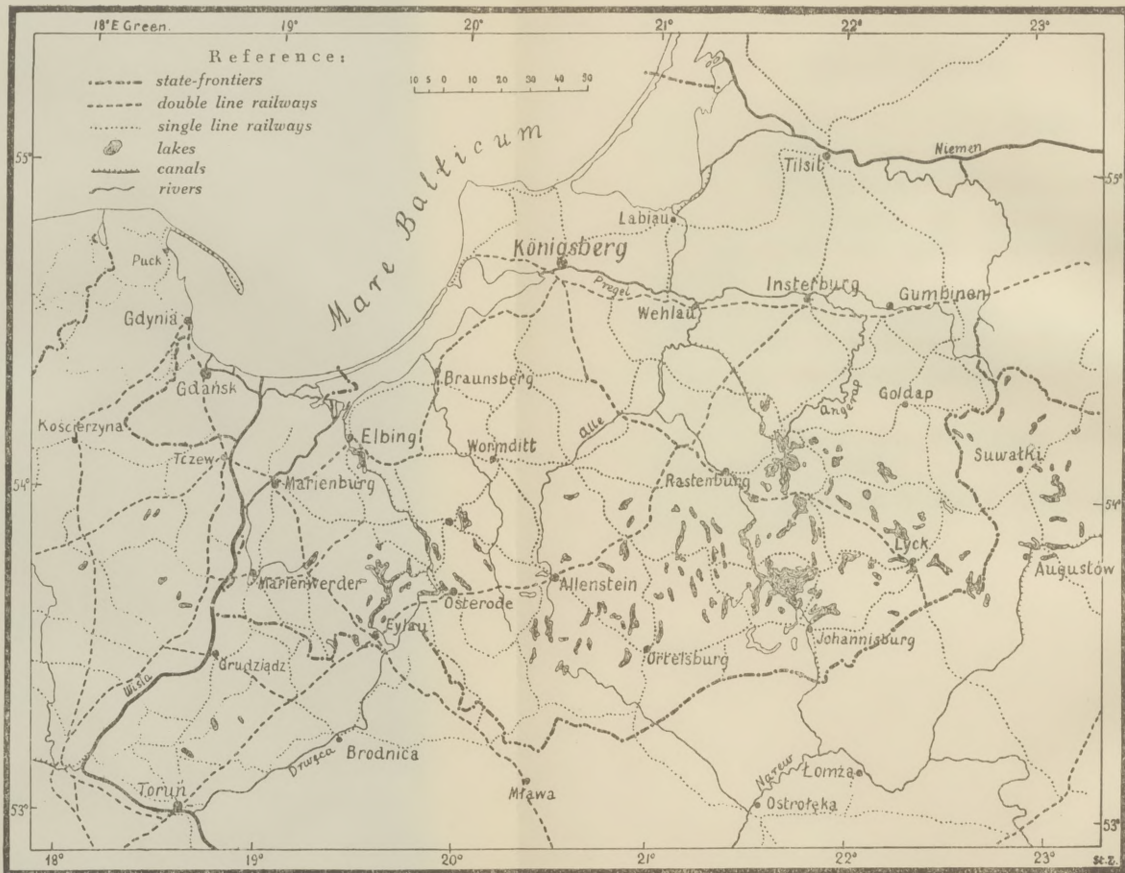
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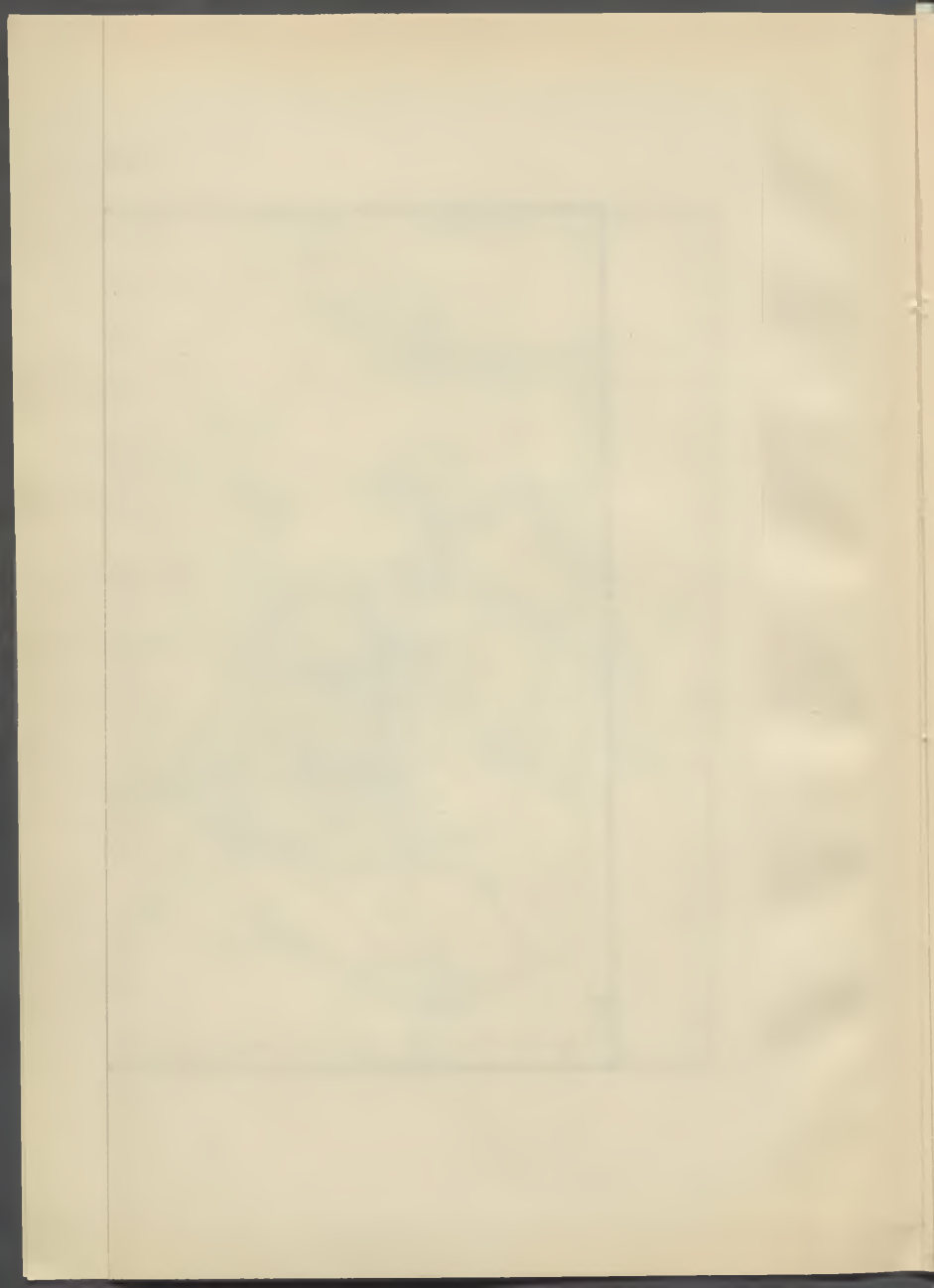
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# EAST PRUSSIA





## CHAPTER 1

# GEOGRAPHICAL SITUATION AND NATURAL CONDITIONS OF EAST PRUSSIA

### CONFIGURATION OF THE SOIL AND HYDROGRAPHY

East Prussia is, geologically, a part of Eastern Europe; it has the same geological forms and strata which are to be found on the whole south-eastern coast of the Baltic Sea. Geographically, it is from every point of view a typical Baltic country. As is the case with the other Baltic countries, East Prussia is situated on the western slope of the Scythian anticlinal which covers the greater part of Ruśsia and stretches down to the Baltic coast. The structure of the soil, the climate, the direction in which the rivers flow and even the flora of East Prussia all confirm that this region is a part of Eastern Europe; nothing can be found which would present any analogy with the other countries of Germany. This fact must be constantly borne in mind when considering the problem of East Prussia, whether from the vantage point of geographical, economic or political relations.

The surface of East Prussia can be divided into three distinctly differentiated regions: that of the

coastal plain belt, part of which is washed by the waters of two large bays or rather land-locked marine lakes, the Frisches Haff and the Kurisches Haff; the transitional region, dotted with the little hills of the Oberland and of the Stablack; and the undulating, irregular lake country district to the south and south-east, covered with large drumlin hills of moraine origin.

The first-named region consists of a system of river valleys, chief of which are those of the Lower Niemen and of the Pregel with its tributaries. The valley of the Pregel, a continuation of its tributary, the Inster, is so low and marshy that the farm-buildings there (*Holländereien*) have often to be built upon piles.

This plain continues westwards through the valley of the Passarge and of other minor rivers. It is then interrupted over a stretch of some miles by the heights which dominate the coast to the east of Elbing; it then proceeds through the valley of the Elbing river, of Lake Draensee and of its tributaries, widening as it approaches the Nogat valley and the delta of the Vistula. In that region, the plain, which was in part submerged during the Middle Ages, dips to below sea level. The land on the banks of the Elbing is, for example 5.9 feet below sea level.

Very characteristic features of this region too, are, the long, narrow strips of land which partly enclose

the two large bays of East Prussia. These peninsulas are covered with numerous sand-dunes, from 160 to 190 feet high, formed in great measure by the action of the frequent and strong winds reigning at this part of the Baltic and driving the sand eastwards. These dunes appear on the very shores of these bays and, sloping down, enter the water, thus evoking a certain danger of silting up the bays. For many years past, this peril has been realized and it has been sought, by wooding the dunes, to avoid or at least to minimize it; the means adopted have so far yielded satisfactory results as the numerous dunes have been immobilized and are at present covered with vegetation.

The second region, that which constitutes a transitional area between the coastal plain and the lake country to the south, comprises the Oberland and the hills of Stablack. The Oberland is itself sub-divided into two parts by the canal of the same name. The western part, with its numerous lakes, resembles the lake country of the south: it is studded with low hills, none of which exceed 460 feet in height, and the southern slopes of which incline gently towards Lake Geserichsee. The eastern part of the Oberland is distinguished by its higher hills which reach a maximum altitude of 650 feet.

The second part of the transitional zone, the Stablack country, situated between the Passarge and the

Alle rivers, has a much more irregular surface configuration and, as in the Heilsberg district, has a picturesque and even an almost mountainous aspect.

The southern region of East Prussia is marked by the number and extent of its lakes on what the Germans call the Prussian Ridge. It is split up into two distinct parts, eastern and western, by the Mazurian Lakes, well-known for the sanguinary fighting which had place there at the outset of the Great War.

The eastern part of this lake country stretches northwards as far as Gumbinnen and eastwards as far as and even beyond the East Prussian frontier, entering the Suwałki region in Poland. High, often flat-topped hills, drumlin hills, of from 650 ft to 980 ft in height are to be observed in that part of East Prussia; they do not form any distinct system or chain and their distribution is markedly chaotic.

The western part of this lake country is composed of the Sensburg heights, pierced at their northern, most elevated part by three river valleys, and covered with numerous, very elongated lakes which stretch northwards or north-northwestwards.

The most westerly part of this third region is composed of the Neidenburg plateau, where the highest peak of East Prussia is to be found, — the Kernsdorfer Höhe (1027 feet).

Reassuming the foregoing, it can be stated that the surface of East Prussia, although irregular in

places, is characterized by its numerous lakes, marshes and rivers.

The hydrographic system is a particularly advantageous one; it offers a natural network of great extent and density, served as it is by excellent, navigable waterways. It is of special interest to stress that, thanks to the Frisches Haff and the Kurisches Haff, as also to the branching out of the Pregel and of the Deime, all the waterways of East Prussia, although forming part of three different river-systems (Niemen, Pregel and Vistula), communicate with each other and unite to form a complete and integrated network.

This network of waterways, maintained in perfect condition and provided with numerous canals, is of great economic importance to East Prussia, not only in view of its aggregate length of 717 miles of navigable routes but also as a source of water-power, estimated to be capable of yielding about 220,000,000 KWh per annum. The water-power reserves of East Prussia have, however, so far only been utilized in a very small degree.

The numerous lakes of this province, especially the Mazurian Lakes, play an important part in the hydrographic system of East Prussia since they act as large, natural reservoirs regulating the flow of water. Thus, whilst the differences in level of the Rhine, by years and seasons of the year, can be expressed by the ratio 1 : 1,000, the general figure for

East Prussian waterways is 1 : 30 and, in the Mazurian lake district, it is as low as 1 : 4.

But, better than any other arguments or data demonstrating the important role of the hydrographic system in East Prussia, the following figures will concisely express the situation: 4 per cent. of the total area of the province is covered with fresh-water surfaces (lakes and rivers), 4.75 per cent. by the two bays (or land-locked marine lakes) and 16.2 per cent. by marshes.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, 25 per cent. of the total surface of East Prussia is under water or subject to its predominant influence. In this way, although the hydrographic system offers considerable advantages in point of communication and water-power resources, yet the enormous extent of its marshes is a very adverse factor in East Prussian economic life.

#### CLIMATE

The other natural conditions of East Prussia are, on the other hand, far from favourable to the prosperity and development of the province in question, and are much worse than the corresponding conditions in Poland or in the Reich. The climate there is more rigorous and the soil poorer. Mineral resources are conspicuous by their absence.

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<sup>1</sup> Mager., *Ostpreussen — die natürlichen Grundlagen seiner Wirtschaft, eine Quelle deutscher Kraft*, Hamburg 1922.



The mean annual temperature ranges from  $5.5^{\circ}\text{C}$  to  $6.8^{\circ}\text{C}$  (as against  $8^{\circ}\text{C}$  to  $9^{\circ}\text{C}$  in Germany and  $7.8^{\circ}\text{C}$  in Poland), whilst, in addition, its oscillations from year to year are very great. It thus happens that the same locality of East Prussia may have 54 days of summer in one year and only three such days in another; the same holds good for days of winter since these oscillate between 11 and 89 days in the various years. Moreover, night-frosts usually last long into the spring: there have been years in which there were only 123 days between spring frosts and autumnal frosts.

The long and rigorous winters have disastrous effects on inland waterway navigation. This is paralyzed for long periods every year owing to the rivers and canals being ice-bound. The Niemen is frozen over during 70 to 100 days in the year; adding to these days the period of seasonal thaws and floods, barely about seven months are left when the river is navigable.

The climate of East Prussia bears a much greater resemblance to that of the Baltic countries than to that of the Reich. As in the former, it is possible to distinguish three distinct climatic zones in East Prussia. The first zone, the coastal one, is influenced by the proximity of the sea and has relatively the mildest winters. The mean January temperature is there as high as  $2.9^{\circ}\text{C}$ . The second zone, the central

one, is already colder, whilst the third one, the southern one, has a distinctly pronounced continental climate marked by its long and severe winters, with a mean January temperature of  $5.1^{\circ}\text{C}$  below zero. Just as in other Baltic countries, spring comes late in East Prussia and the autumns are comparatively mild.

No less adverse a factor for East Prussia, too, is the nature and distribution of the rain- and snow-falls. Their annual mean, is about 24 inches but the figures for individual years vary very greatly in their oscillations and, according to Hellman<sup>2</sup>, oscillate between 14.5 per cent. and 55 per cent. of the multi-annual mean. Taking the average monthly figures, still greater oscillations are to be observed: e. g., during July, the rainiest month in East Prussia, an average of from 3.1—3.9 inches is reported, but there are years when as much as 5.85—7.9 inches and even 9.8—11.8 inches of rain fall in that month.

#### SOIL AND NATURAL RICHES

The soil of East Prussia is on the whole not strikingly inferior to that of the Reich. It is of medium-grade type, clayey and mixed with sand; if cultivated very intensively and with unsparing use of artificial fertilizers, but under other climatic conditions, it

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<sup>2</sup> Hellmann G.: *Verteilung der Niederschläge in Norddeutschland*, Berlin 1914. *Regenkarten der Provinz Ostpreussen*, Berlin 1911.

could yield satisfactory crops. Meitzen<sup>3</sup> classifies the area of East Prussia according to quality into the following groups: 16.1 per cent. heavy loamy clay; 52 per cent. light clay with a strong admixture of sand; 23 per cent. sand; 5.1 per cent. peat-bogs and 3.8 per cent. water-surface.

Apart from the possession of this medium-grade soil, suitable chiefly for the cultivation of rye and potatoes and for forestry, East Prussia has no other natural riches, if the extensive water area suitable for fish-breeding be excepted. It is true that the peat-bogs have a certain value, but they are very little exploited; the extraction of yellow amber is conducted on the coast but this product today has very little commercial value.

In the light of the foregoing, it will be remarked that the poverty of East Prussia is no new phenomenon but one arising out of the inherent natural conditions of the country. It has always existed and it can in no wise be considered to have arisen out of the spatial separation of East Prussia from the Reich. Moreover, German Pomerania, although not separated territorially from Germany proper, but has the same natural conditions as East Prussia, encounters the same economic difficulties as this province. The territorial status of Polish Pomerania certainly

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<sup>3</sup> Meitzen A.: *Der Boden und die landwirtschaftlichen Verhältnisse des preussischen Staates*, Berlin 1868—1906.

cannot exercise any influence on the climate or on the mineral wealth, or rather poverty, of East Prussia.

It would not be amiss at this juncture to cite an opinion as authoritative as it is old-established regarding the antiquity of East Prussian difficulties. In 1822, the governor of East Prussia, Theodore von Schön, in a letter to Prince Hardenburg, then Chancellor of Prussia, wrote: "The landowners have no money... They are making strong representations as a result. But what government could have enough money to regain a natural order of things from the heavens?"<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> M. Kempner, *Bank-Archiv*, March 13th, 1931.

## CHAPTER 2

# POPULATION

### NATURAL MOVEMENT OF THE POPULATION AND EMIGRATION

According to the Census of June 16th, 1933, East Prussia had a population of 2,356,938 inhabitants upon an area of 14,290 sq. miles, thus yielding a density of population of 106.5 souls per sq. mile. This province, therefore, together with Mecklemburg, German Pomerania and the Frontier Province, has the lowest density of population in the whole Reich, which has a mean density of 356 souls per sq. mile (139 souls per sq. km). The environs of Königsberg, of Tilsit and the Gumbinnen district, which have an average density of 205 souls per sq. mile, are the most densely populated regions of East Prussia, with the districts of Niederung, Insterburg, Stallupönen, Allenstein and Elbing following after with a density of between 150—200 souls per sq. mile. The remainder of East Prussia, i. e., the inhospitable regions of Mazuria, the central parts of the province, the coastal area and the borderland areas near the Lithuanian frontier have an average density of 128 souls per sq. mile, whilst the district of Johannisburg even has

only 82 souls per sq. mile. One of the causes for these extremely low figures of density of population is to be found in the typography of East Prussia.

A second cause, no less important, of this state of affairs is furnished by the exceedingly slow growth in the population. This can in no way be attributed to the birth and death rates leaving too small a margin of increment: the natural increase of the population of East Prussia is not only normal and stable but even is in excess of the corresponding figure for the Reich. In 1928, there were 18.6 births per 1,000 inhabitants in the Reich and 23.2 births per 1,000 heads in East Prussia; deducting the respective death-rates of 11.6 and 12.9 per 1,000 inhabitants, yields a natural growth in population of 7.0 per 1,000 inhabitants for the Reich and 10.3 for East Prussia in the year 1928. Although this rate of increase has been since 1896 (when it was 15.8 per mille) evincing a distinct downward trend, as in the great majority of other countries in Europe, it in no wise explains the actual demographic conditions found in East Prussia.

Another factor enters here and counteracts the natural forces at work. This factor is emigration. East Prussia counted 1,821,400 souls in 1871, the year when the German Empire was founded. Starting with this figure and calculating the rates of natural increase on the basis of Prussian official statistics for the forty years following, the population of East

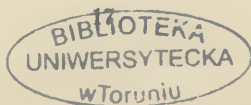
Prussia should have been 2,929,000 souls in 1910. Actually, however, it only came to 2,062,800 inhabitants. During the four decades in question, East Prussia lost 730,000 inhabitants by emigration and, taking into account the rate of natural increase, the accumulated loss by emigration would be one of 866,200 souls, i. e., 78.2 per cent. of the total natural increase during the period in question.

This flow of emigration from East Prussia has thus been shown to have existed for many years before the War, and that it existed on a large scale before East Prussia was ever spatially separated from Germany proper. In fact, since East Prussia has been separated territorially from the Reich, the westward tide of emigration has slackened, although, of course, there is no connection between the two facts. It would be instructive, however, for the entirety of the matter to compare pre-War data with post-War: the total number of persons who left East Prussia during the period 1871—1914 was over 970,000 persons<sup>5</sup> or 17,500 souls per annum on the average; during the period 1919—1925, the corresponding figure was 53,900 persons, whilst since 1925, the average annual figure has been 15,000 persons.

The causes of this comparatively large-scale emigration of Germans from East Prussia must therefore be

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<sup>5</sup> Dr. von Batocki and Dr. Gerhard Schack, *Bevölkerung u. Wirtschaft in Ostpreussen*, Jena, 1929.



sought for less superficially and, above all, in East Prussia itself. There seems no doubt that the adverse natural conditions of East Prussia are to blame here: the rigorous nature of the climate, the total lack of natural riches, the faulty division of the soil and, perhaps, primarily, in the over-close and unnatural union with the Reich.

#### SOCIAL COMPOSITION OF THE POPULATION

According to the 1925 Census, 45.4 per cent. (1,023,500 souls) of the total active and passive population of East Prussia was engaged in agriculture, 19.6 per cent. in industry and handicrafts, 12.9 per cent. in commerce and transport, 11.7 per cent. had no fixed profession, and 10.4 per cent. were engaged in the administration, in the Army or in the free professions. An examination of these figures will at once make clear that the distribution of land-ownership in East Prussia cannot but exercise a profound influence on the movement of population.

In 1925, East Prussia had 2,323,087 hectares of arable land. Of this figure, 39.3 per cent. belonged to 3,440 large land-owners, each of whom possessed over 247 acres (100 ha.) of land, and amongst whom 341 owned estates of over 1,235 acres (500 ha.) in area; 32.4 per cent. of the total area of arable land belonged to peasant farmers owning from 49 acres (20 ha.) to 247 acres (100 ha.), whilst 21.2 per cent.



was the property of peasant farmers having medium-sized holdings of from 12.35—49.0 acres. Peasant holdings of under 12.35 acres (5 ha.) occupied only 7.1 per cent. of the total arable area. Thus, the masses of the rural population possessing no land go to create a numerous peasant proletariat which is obliged to work on the large estates as farm labourers or, failing that, to find work elsewhere. An important part of this landless and workless proletariat is thus forced to emigrate from East Prussia, where the few and feeble industries can do little to furnish work for the surplus population. Quite naturally, the majority of the emigrants is composed of young and energetic men: this results in the percentage of women, children and the aged rising most disquietingly in East Prussia. Obviously, too, the need for some measure of agrarian or land reform, consequentially and consistently carried out in East Prussia, is an essential condition for any improvement in relations in that part of Germany. But it is not the most important condition, since, although the maldistribution of land is largely responsible for the troubles of the province in question, these are at least in equal measure due to the adverse natural conditions and in even a greater degree to a third factor — to the too strait economic and political union between East Prussia and the Reich.

The baneful influence of this factor will be discussed more closely elsewhere in this work: for the time



being it will suffice to indicate it as one of the prime causes evoking the depopulation of East Prussia.

It might seem superfluous but it is necessary to stress the point that the union of an agricultural and, in addition, poverty-stricken area (marked by the very limited nature of its natural resources and by very difficult conditions of life) with one of the most highly industrialized countries of Europe where the inhabitants enjoy an exceptionally high standard of life, must lead to a considerable outflow of population from the first-mentioned area to the second. It can therefore occasion no surprise that the farm-labourers of East Prussia prefer to emigrate to the western provinces of the Reich, where life is easier and more comfortable, than to gain their living with difficulty and in the sweat of their brow, within the inhospitable land of their birth. This westward tide of emigration is still further strengthened by the circumstance that when the German inhabitants of East Prussia proceed to the Reich they do not really leave their birth-places for a foreign country — they merely move to another part of Germany.

Of course this movement could be checked in some way by making emigration impossible or difficult; but such measures would probably lead to nothing else than simply and effectively to reduce the natural growth of the population of East Prussia. It can be accepted as an axiom, that once a people loses hope

that its children will one day better their mode of life, it will certainly have much fewer children. By checking emigration from East Prussia, the only certain effect would be that of lowering the birth-rate of that province.

This emigration would not present any danger to the economy of the country if it were composed of the unfit, unable to combat the onerous conditions of life reigning in East Prussia. In fact it would be beneficial as a natural selection of the population would leave the fittest behind. But, actually it is the contrary which has place: it is, as is usual elsewhere too, the stronger and more enterprising individuals who emigrate — it is those who wish to better their lot practically who leave the country.

In addition, there is another danger, from the German point of view, in this steady mass-emigration from East Prussia — that of a weakening of the German element there. In 1925, Poles formed 17.7 per cent. of the population of the regency of Allenstein according to *Statistik des Deutschen Reiches*, and in some districts this figure is much greater (38.8 per cent. in the district of Allenstein). The Poles and the Lithuanians of East Prussia have much higher birth-rate and natural increase figures than the Germans. The Poles who live in the southern and western parts of East Prussia and the Lithuanians of the north-west have succeeded better than the

Germans in reconciling their mode of life with their earnings. This has, of course, led to a lower standard of life, but it has enabled them to adapt themselves to actual conditions and even to prosper where the Germans fail. Moreover, both these national minorities in East Prussia are bound to the soil by centuries of tradition: they are not comparative new-comers like the majority of the Germans there. For these reasons, the Poles and Lithuanians in that province hardly ever emigrate from the land of their birth, especially as the emigration in question is not so attractive for them as for the Germans: proceeding to central or western Germany, the former would really be going to a foreign country, amongst people not speaking their language and having other customs than theirs. For them, emigration to Germany proper would not be merely moving to another part of the same country as it would be for Germans, but real emigration attended with all the usual disadvantages and hazards of such an undertaking.

#### ARTIFICIAL MEANS FOR SAFEGUARDING THE GERMAN CHARACTER OF EAST PRUSSIA

Germany has always been obsessed by the "danger" of the Polonization of East Prussia and, in fact, of all the German provinces adjacent to the Polish frontier and having a large Polish minority. She has been making great efforts to reassure herself by dint of

prodigal expenditure of money, by colonization and settlement policies and by a great show of energy generally.

It is necessary here to distinguish between the plan of action adopted before the National Socialists assumed power in Germany and that now in course of elaboration and application introduced after their accession.

The former scheme underwent considerable changes and adaptations, its various phases being successively known as the *Ostpreussenprogram* (1922), the *Sofortprogram* (1926), the *Ostpreussenhilfegesetz* (1929) and, finally, the *Sofortprogram* (1931). All these measures fundamentally consisted in a conversion of indebtedness bearing down very heavily on the agriculturists of Germany's eastern provinces, in colonization and settlement activities and in ambitious public works programmes. The scheme was in effect nothing but the more or less planned granting of generous subsidies to the eastern provinces of the Reich, with special attention being paid to their agriculture. Today it can be considered that the plan was a failure, and if it was not, it was at least not adopted but if anything transformed by the new régime of Germany. Enormous sums, the extent of which it is difficult to appraise exactly but which certainly exceed the equivalent of two milliard gold marks, were expended unproductively and wasted: as the recent scandalous case of Herr von Hippel

managing director of the Prussian Mortgage Credit Bank at Königsberg, showed, this expenditure at the best only served to afford some measure of temporary relief to the Junkers of East Prussia who were up to their ears in debt. The new programme prepared by Hitler's government envisages a large-scale colonization of East Prussia. It is planned to industrialize that province and to put through a radical agrarian or land reform. The land secured under the land reform scheme is to be parcelled out into tiny small-holdings amongst the factory workers so that these will be thus tied down to the soil and their possible flight hampered. Those industries, which it is planned to set up, are not to be concentrated in or near the larger towns but are to be scattered over the whole province so that the factory-worker will be simultaneously a peasant-farmer and work his small-holding. This is, according to Herr Koch (Governor of East Prussia), expected to bring about an increase of from one million to a million and a half in the population of East Prussia.

These future colonists are already being prepared for their role: men and women have been brought in from the western provinces of the Reich, quartered at labour-camps (in accordance with the present-day vogue of Germany) and there have to stay for two years during which time they have to prove their ability and suitability before being definitely accepted.

## PLANS FOR INDUSTRIALIZATION OF EAST PRUSSIA

In spite of the speed with which this colossal plan has been inaugurated, at least as regards the furnishing of man-power, serious doubts cannot but be entertained as to its ultimate success. The principal condition for such success is the creation of industries in East Prussia. Yet it is difficult to imagine, in view of the present stagnation in commodity turnovers and the saturation of the world's sales-markets, that sufficient new factories will be able to arise and afford sustenance to as large a number as one and a half million new inhabitants in East Prussia alone. It must also be borne in mind that Germany is the most highly industrialized country on the Continent today, and that any additional growth in its industries will hardly be possible for some considerable time to come. The industrialization of East Prussia can only have place at the expense of the existing German industries and it seems highly improbable that these will lightly agree to sacrifice their own interests even in support of that doubtful ideal of "Germany's mission in the East." East Prussia is a province having no natural riches: it has neither coal nor mineral deposits. Yet it is proposed artificially to create a number of industries there which will be unable even to exist without constant subsidies from the Reich either directly or indirectly granted in the shape of special reduced railway tariffs or of

uneconomic government orders. This support will be certain to cost enormous sums of money and it will be tantamount to economic suicide on the part of Germany. She would be ruining her admirably organized and endowed industry, working under excellent natural conditions, solely in order to give birth to and maintain a little monster, a freak, incapable of independent life.

All the programmes set up for the relief and development of East Prussia have had this one trait in common: they all foresee the granting of more or less openly donated subsidies and grants to that province under the guise of colonization or public works funds, tax relief, government orders to East Prussian factories even when not the cheapest, special low, reduced railway tariffs, etc. In this respect the Nazi programme fully maintains this tradition: it includes all the forms of State-provided financial aid above-mentioned. The only modification is that the conversion of debts has been replaced by the *Entschuldungsgesetz* (Law for reducing debt charges). This measure, the full details of which have not yet been made public, is calculated to help the large landowners by enabling them to give up a part of their estates for colonization purposes as redemption in kind of such debts which prove too crushing a burden.

In order to attract the German element to East Prussia and to restrain its total exodus to the Reich,



attempts are being made to keep up the standard of life of the population, as also to maintain public expenditure on public works in this poverty-stricken province at a level equal to that of the Reich, i. e., well above the natural and prudent limit. As is to be expected, deficits result, and again these have to be of necessity covered by the Reich. A noted authority, writing in the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* (Dec. 4, 1929) estimates this deficit at 200,000,000 gold marks per annum. This rather considerable sum is what the Reich has actually to give outright every year to East Prussia in order to try to assure its inhabitants the same standard of life as other Germans have.

In this connexion, it would be of interest to compare the annual social revenue of East Prussia with that of Prussia as a whole even before the War. This comparison will help us to realize if and what basis there is for the allegation of German propaganda that the poverty of the population of East Prussia is due to its spatial separation from the rest of the German nation. We are informed in a very able and searching study made by Dr. Goedel<sup>6</sup>, that the total income of corporate persons in East Prussia came to 648,368,000 gold marks in 1914, i. e., 319 German marks per head of population: the corresponding figure in the same year for the whole of Prussia (East Prussia included) was 526 German marks per

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<sup>6</sup> Dr. Goedel, *Wohlstandsverhältnisse in Ostpreussen*, 1917.

capita. Moreover, the percentage of inhabitants whose annual income did not exceed 900 German marks (and who were therefore exempted from income-tax) was 72.15 per cent. in East Prussia in 1914 as against 44.58 per cent. in the whole of Prussia. These figures speak for themselves: the social income of the population of East Prussia was already before the War and before the separation of this province from Germany proper much lower than that of all Prussia.

It hence follows that the poverty of East Prussia, not being of post-War origin and having always existed, cannot, despite German claims to the contrary, have been caused by Poland regaining free access to the sea through her own ethnical and traditional territory.

#### TYPES OF RURAL AND URBAN AGGLOMERATIONS

It now remains to describe the character of the habitation in East Prussia. The type of isolated farmstead (*Einzelhof*) is growing more and more common in East Prussia and is tending to replace the system of compactly concentrated cottages in villages. This change is in a great measure due to the agricultural colonization of the country, i. e., to the parcellation of large estates (agricultural and forest) into small-holdings, to a growth in public safety and security, and to the improvement and development achieved in the domain of communica-

tion. This type of dwelling, very common in Lithuania, Latvia and, of recent times, in Estonia (where it is called *Gesinde* by the Germans), nears East Prussia to the other south-eastern Baltic countries and serves to bring out its essentially Baltic character into vivid relief. In this manner, East Prussia constitutes the southern extremity of an uninterrupted belt of territory (stretching from the environs of Lyck to the Gulf of Finland) upon which the isolated farmstead is the most common type of dwelling.

None the less, for many centuries past, the isolated farmstead was not a characteristic type of dwelling in East Prussia: the ancient Prussians, the Germans and the Poles lived in compact villages; the only exceptions were the Lithuanians settled along the Niemen, on the Upper Pregel and on the Kurisches Haff.

Amongst the compact villages found in East Prussia, the most common type is that of the circular one (*Angersdorf*), a relic handed down from the times of the ancient Prussians when this form of community dwelling gave the greatest advantages in point of security against attack and ease of defence. It is from those times that date the numerous villages and hamlets whose names end in the suffixes: *-keim*, *-kehmen*, *-ehnen*, *-lack*, *-itten* and *-unden*. These agglomerations of houses are still inhabited by the germanized descendents of the ancient Prussians or by the children of later settlers.

Multiple-steet hamlets (*Weiler*) and villages constitute a different type of habitation fairly frequent in East Prussia. These were introduced by colonists from the west who came to East Prussia in the 13th and 14th centuries. This type of village is met with along the sea-coast littoral, earliest and most intensively colonized by the Germans. Of more recent origin are the hamlets between Insterburg and Lötzen which form a transitory zone before the region of isolated farmsteads (in Lithuanian East Prussia) from which it stretches far into Eastern Mazuria.

#### CITIES AND TOWNS

At the time of the conquest of East Prussia, the Teutonic Knights of the Cross studded the country with a multitude of castles around which, in time, towns arose. For this reason urban agglomerations in East Prussia are very numerous, although rarely ever attaining large dimensions; with the exception of Königsberg with its population of 311,000 souls, only four towns have over 30,000 inhabitants, viz., Elbing, Tilsit, Allenstein and Insterburg; seven towns have over 10,000 inhabitant and there are eighty small towns and boroughs having a population under this figure.

This explains why it is that East Prussia, although having a much greater number of towns than the other Baltic states (Estonia has only thirteen towns,

i. e., seven times less), has more in common with the demographic structure of the Baltic states than with that of the Reich. One-third of East Prussia's population is urban and 29 per cent. of Latvia's as against 60 per cent. in Germany proper.

The most important towns in East Prussia are situated on the coast (as Königsberg, Elbing and Braunsberg), on the banks of the principal rivers (as Tilsit, Insterburg, Marienburg and Marienwerder) or along important routes today represented by the railway lines (as Allenstein, Osterode, Gumbinnen, Rastenburg and Lyck). The last-mentioned category of towns owe their prosperity and growth to their situation. They often develop fairly quickly as, for example, Allenstein, the population of which grew from 7,435 inhabitants in 1880 to 33,070 in 1910, or Osterode which recorded a growth of 42 per cent. in its population during the period 1864—'75. These two towns, for instance, primarily owe their rapid development to the construction of the Toruń — Insterburg railway, completed at that epoch.

But these cases are none the less exceptional. In general, the towns of East Prussia gain little or no profit from their geographical situation. This is due to the union of this Baltic country to Germany proper. The results of this union have been such that the east-west lines of communication — those of conquest and national expansion — have been maintained and

fostered at the expense of the ancient and natural north-south lines, already used in antiquity as trade-routes. These latter, rational lines of transport and communication, can still be utilized for trade with and through the large neighbouring area of Poland to the obvious and considerable advantage of East Prussia herself. It suffices to see and note the desolation and stagnation in the small towns of East Prussia, carefully masked by an external semblance of tidy and pleasant urbanism, fully to realize all the consequences of an unnatural violation of fundamental economic principles.

### CHAPTER 3

## THE ECONOMIC SITUATION OF EAST PRUSSIA

### ROLE OF AGRICULTURE AND ANIMAL-BREEDING

Having completed this brief review of the natural and demographic conditions of East Prussia, let us now pass to an examination of its economic activities and of the possibilities it still has of developing in the future. In view of the geographical situation, the natural conditions and geological structure of East Prussia, agriculture is, apart from trade (mention of which will later be made), its chief industry. Such is the actual present state of affairs there.

It will be recalled that agriculture in East Prussia has to grapple with two adverse factors apart from the very mediocre quality of the soil: low temperature and superabundant untimely rainfall. East Prussian agriculture has only about 153 days per annum (as against 178—210 days in the Reich) at its disposal: this makes it necessary to supplement its ordinary supply of labour either by engaging seasonal workers or by using extra horses and costly machines if beet-root and potato cultivation is to be maintained. These measures augment the cost of production considerably

and diminish the profitableness of farming. In addition, as has already been shown, the rainiest months of the year are July (with 15.3 per cent. of the total annual rainfall) and August (with 12.9 per cent.). A rainfall of 28.2 per cent. of the yearly total in these two months, exactly at the time when corn needs the sun in order to ripen and when harvesting takes place, is obviously a very grave disadvantage to the conduct of agriculture. Thus it happens that what is saved from the ill-effects of the spring frosts is often ruined in summer by excessive humidity. It is evident that this great handicap of adverse climatic conditions makes the work for East Prussian farmer far from being satisfactory or profitable.

We shall now turn to a review of the principal products of his labour. The most important crops are rye and potatoes. The latter crop finds exceptionally favourable conditions in East Prussia and the yield per hectare (about 140 quintals) exceeds that of any of the other provinces of Prussia. Then follow, in order of importance, oats, barley and wheat.

The cultivation of corn in East Prussia, owing to adverse weather conditions, gives a much smaller yield than that reported for other parts of Prussia, in spite of the soil being practically of the same grade and of the very prodigal use of artificial fertilizers (330,000 tons in 1929). The yield of rye per hectare in 1929 was only 14 quintals in East Prussia, that of



wheat only 16.9 quintals, that of barley 18.2 quintals and of oats 17.9 quintals; the corresponding figures for Prussia as a whole were 17.1, 21.9, 21.7 and 20.6 quintals per hectare respectively in the same year. This difference in yield per hectare in Prussia and in East Prussia has always existed in the same proportions: it has not been caused by any particular or general changes which may have taken place, but is solely due to the inimical climatic conditions of East Prussia.

The production of clover and hay, which stands at a quite satisfactory level, is a most important factor in East Prussian economy in view of the growing significance of animal-breeding there. The climate being more conducive to stock-breeding than to plant-cultivation causes the former to develop better and to play a more important role in the husbandry of the country. As a result of this, the area under corn has tended to decrease and, in fact, since the War has diminished by some 80,000 hectares in favour of pasture and meadow lands, which registered a growth of 75,000 hectares during the period in question.

In general there is a very marked and growing tendency in East Prussia to abandon plant-cultivation and to take up animal breeding. This trend has of late years become still more in evidence and is spreading all over the province. The movement, for that matter, is not a purely local one, but one which is

extending over the whole territory of the Reich. In the case of East Prussia, the change presents considerable advantages: it causes the agriculturists of that part of the world to take up a production better adapted to its natural and climatic conditions. Weather conditions there, so serious a handicap for the production of grain, are far from unfavourable to breeding; in fact, if anything, the contrary holds good: they facilitate the raising of cattle-stock which are hardier and stronger than those brought up in milder climates. For this reason East Prussian cattle-stock has always been much in demand in Germany especially for purposes of reproduction.

Concurrently with the growth of animal-breeding in East Prussia, the industries engaged in working up its products have of recent years likewise registered considerable gains. The production of milk and its derivatives has yielded particularly good results. The output of milk is estimated at about 1,433 million litres per annum. As regards other milk products, East Prussia produces 7.5 per cent. of the total output of butter in Prussia and 35 per cent. of the cheese.

#### IS ANY IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENT OF INDUSTRY IN EAST PRUSSIA POSSIBLE?

Being an agricultural and breeding country, East Prussia has some chances of developing manufacturing industries based on farm, forest and breeding products.

But the present geopolitical situation of the province is so unfavorable that the development of such industries is seriously hampered. The great distances separating the area in question from all the more important centres of consumption in the Reich make it impossible for East Prussia to compete with the output of the other German provinces. Berlin, although the nearest centre, is nevertheless 360 miles distant whilst the wealthy and densely populated western and southern provinces, which could offer a sales-market for East Prussian produce, are over 600 miles away. Commodity exchange with neighbouring countries is rendered impossible by the Customs policies of the Reich: these protect German agricultural production from outside competition by insurmountable Customs barriers but evoke retaliation in the shape of similar prohibitory measures on the part of other countries. The industries in question cannot therefore attain fully satisfactory development unless they benefit by special, reduced railway tariffs which are nothing else but subsidies granted to East Prussia so that it can live at the expense of the other German provinces.

The chances of a metallurgical industry developing in East Prussia appear to be even slighter. The total lack of mineral and natural resources on the spot must cause a considerable rise in the prices of manufactured goods by burdening them with the cost of transport

of raw materials. This factor makes it absolutely impossible for such industries to compete with the industries of the Rhine district and of Saxony, where the factories and plants have all the essential raw materials they need on the spot. They produce under exceptionally favourable conditions with which there is and can be no comparison in the case of East Prussia. Naturally, therefore, East Prussian metallurgical industries cannot meet such competition in their own country without the strong financial backing of the Reich: this support is of a most varied character and ranges from direct to indirect subsidies or bounties which include special railway tariffs, uneconomic Government orders, etc. These artificial aids, being contrary to the normal and natural laws of economics, cannot be maintained in the long run and are moreover harmful to the entirety of the economy of the Reich. It follows that every programme for the development of a metallurgical industry in East Prussia can be nothing but a dangerous and illusionary day-dream — that every attempt made artificially to create such an industry must of necessity evoke grave financial loss and entail extreme risk.

The actual state of affairs appears to confirm this conviction. The very few industrial plants in East Prussia working on shipbuilding or producing aeroplanes, motor-cars or agricultural machines can exist only thanks to the large-scale subsidies given them

by the Reich in direct or indirect form. It is for these reasons that the subsidies granted to East Prussian industry have on many occasions evoked the heated protests of manufacturers in Germany proper: these industrialists consider this policy harms their interests and have often inspired questions in the Reichstag as to the advisability and prudence of the considerable expenditure included in the budget of the Reich for the support of the virtually bankrupt industrial enterprises of East Prussia.

#### EXCELLENT CHANCES FOR COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

But all these considerations by no means lead to the conclusion that East Prussia has no chance of economic development and that it must definitely be numbered amongst those areas fated always to be poor and backward economically. East Prussia's situation, as already stated, is geographically excellent: placed on the Baltic coast, it has a natural hinterland which is as vast as it is rich; it has all the requisite conditions for a lively maritime commerce; it has some manufacturing industries which are developing excellently. But prosperity cannot be achieved by it so long as its relations with the Reich form the basis of all its economic activities. This province, or colony, far-flung comparatively, from its mother-country, cannot successfully compete with the powerful rich German ports on the North Sea, near to the chief

centres of German industrial production and to which they are connected up by excellent, navigable waterways. It is not the distant Reich (Germany proper) which is the natural hinterland of the East Prussian sea-ports but the north-eastern parts of Poland, a part of Russia and the Ukraine. It is solely upon commercial relations with these countries that East Prussian economic prosperity and development can be and should be based.

It is a most symptomatic fact that the goods traffic of Königsberg dates its rise from the time of the conclusion of the Russo-German Commercial Treaty of 1894. By that agreement, Russia accorded the same railway tariffs to German ports on the Baltic as to her own. The goods traffic of Königsberg, only about 500,000 tons in 1875, rose to 1.7 million tons in 1913 and this almost exclusively due to the magnitude of Russian transit traffic through the port. Mass shipments of timber, wheat and sugar from Russia represented 35 per cent. of this total figure. Thus it is that of all the changes brought about by the Great War, it is the withdrawal of the Russian carrying trade which has most profoundly affected East Prussian economy. Russia's share in the commerce of Königsberg has fallen to nearly 10 per cent. of the pre-War figure. This 90 per cent. drop is further exemplified by the following comparative figures: in 1913 Russia sent 575,000 tons of timber and 440,000 tons of grain

to foreign markets through East Prussia: in 1928, the corresponding figures were only 57,000 and 56,000 tons respectively. Similarly with East Prussian exports to Russia: these dropped from 118,000 tons in 1913 to 25,000 tons in 1928. Since the latter year, no improvement in trade has been noted and it would seem there is a strong likelihood that the pre-War magnitude of goods turnovers between Russia and East Prussia will definitely remain nothing but a memory of the past. Russia has just completed the construction of a canal which binds up the enormous network of waterways, serving her more important centres of production, with the White Sea. The newly arisen competition of Russian White Sea ports means that Königsberg must finally forego all hope of gaining any more important part of the sea-borne commerce of Russia as the ports in question are open to navigation the whole year round and never freeze over thanks to the Gulf Stream drift.

As a matter of course, that part of Russian commerce which might again be attracted to the ports of East Prussia can, owing to the changes wrought, never be more than a tiny fraction of the pre-War or present volume of the total traffic issuing from Russia through foreign countries. But there can be no doubt that the greatest advantages for East Prussia can be gained above all by a steady and close economic collaboration between Poland and that province. Poland, with her

rapidly growing population of 33,000,000 is quickly building up her foreign trade and has only two sea-ports available, both situated, moreover, at the north-western extremity of the Republic. As a result, all the north-eastern part of Poland is, as it were, cut off and kept distant from the sea with consequent adverse repercussions on her economic prosperity. For this reason, Poland would be in a position to feed and bring prosperity to the sea-ports of East Prussia without harming her own sea-ports in any way thereby.

The territories of Poland which gravitate towards the East Prussian coast are not parts of the natural hinterland of Gdynia and Danzig which is rather the western and central parts of Poland and certain Central European countries such as Czechoslovakia. There can therefore be no question of competition between Poland's ports and those of East Prussia: on the contrary, a mutually beneficial and useful collaboration would arise. Poland would be able to assist and enrichen part of her territory whilst East Prussia would find an important source of profitable business and potential wealth.

Polish timber would here have to be the first product considered. The timber and wood-products industries of East Prussia (cellulose and paper industries pre-eminently) are important factors in her industrial system. As only 18 per cent. of East Prussia is under forests, these industries depend in a great



measure on wood imported from Poland. But at present all goods exchange between East Prussia and Poland is being held up by the Customs policy of Germany and by her attitude towards Poland. The one who suffers most thereby is primarily East Prussia.

Here, as in all other matters which touch on the economic life of East Prussia, we meet the baneful influence of East Prussia's over-great dependence on Germany — a dependence which not only stifles all chances for the economic development of the province in question, but even makes it impossible for it to take advantage of its geographical situation, — the only but very rich potential source of wealth of East Prussia.

## CONCLUSION

It has been demonstrated that whichever may be the causes of East Prussia's difficulties, its spatial separation from the Reich can in no manner be blamed. The fact that transport between East Prussia and Germany proper passes through Polish territory if routed by land, can neither shorten nor lengthen the distance separating this province from the economic centres of the Fatherland. It has been shown that the evils afflicting East Prussia are due in some cases to such natural conditions as the climate or the nature of the soil and in other cases to the close economic union between East Prussia and the Reich. The first-named factors cannot, of course, be changed by any human agency, but the last-named, and the more important cause of East Prussia's troubles, can be remedied.

Some conclusions can be drawn from this statement of the problem and its present situation. It would be unjust and indeed unrealizable to prescribe the complete detachment of East Prussia from the Reich. But the German constitution indicates a loophole of escape from this tangled and inhibitive situation. The constitution in question permits any member-state of

the Reich to leave the Customs union of Germany and to conclude a treaty of commerce on its own account with a foreign country. It may be objected that East Prussia is not a member-state of the Reich but only a province of Prussia. Yet, the restoration of East Prussia's status as a separate state (a matter which has already been seriously discussed in German circles) in order to permit it to improve its economic situation, is hardly beyond the realm of possibility and such a step would certainly not encounter any insurmountable obstacles.

We have the example of Danzig and of the Baltic countries which although having the same soil and natural conditions as East Prussia, thanks to their economic independence, are enabled to extract profit from their geographical situation: in spite of the fact that they are also affected by the world economic crisis, they find themselves in an incomparably better situation than East Prussia.

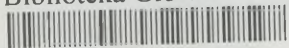
Such a solution of the problem of East Prussia need in no wise affect the German character of East Prussia whilst it would offer the double advantage of cutting short the difficulties of the province in question and of relieving the Reich of the crushing burden of interminable and costly subsidies granted to East Prussia in a hopeless and illusionary cause.

The Germans appear always to seek the causes of any misfortune which overtakes them purely in ex-

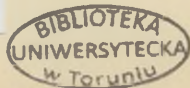
20.-  
ternal factors: in the case of East Prussia's undoubted poverty and misery they have made no departure from the rule. Yet it is obvious that they cannot in good faith lay the blame or responsibility on the fact that Poland has in justice and equity regained her access to the sea and her economic independence by securing the return of a territory which is as Polish in spirit and tradition as it is in point of population and national sentiment.

There is only one factor, dependent on human will and effort which can be blamed for East Prussia's plight, and that would seem to be Germany's own policies. East Prussia can never attain prosperity in an unnatural and uneconomic union with the Reich coupled with virtual isolation from its natural hinterland. For reasons of prestige this union must be maintained; Germany's foreign policy demands it; the Teutonic "Drang nach Osten" is symbolized by it; the bonds tying over 2,000,000 East Prussians to the Reich obviously cannot be loosened. A vicious circle is set up from which there is no issue, and that condition must be maintained at all costs regardless of the iron logic of scientific facts and data, irrespective of the great sacrifices which must be borne year after year and without regard to the hopeless nature of the uphill struggle to keep up appearances.

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## CONCISE INFORMATION ABOUT THE BALTIC INSTITUTE

The Baltic Institute is a scientific institution, called into being in Toruń in 1926, whose purpose, as stated in article 2 of its Statute is "the investigation of Pomeranian and Baltic matters". The research work covers both economic and cultural conditions in the Baltic countries.

### I. Scope of Activities

The Institute's prime aim has been to direct its investigations to Polish Pomerania and the neighbouring countries, but it has also observed with interest all Baltic problems and it now aims at including all the Baltic countries within the scope of its activities, as also to organize co-operation among those studying these countries. The Baltic Institute does not possess its own research staff, but invites specialists from universities and other centres of research as corresponding-members and members-colaborators of its research committees.

### II. Subjects of Investigation

The subjects covered by the researches of the Baltic Institute can be divided into two main fields. The first is economic and is closely connected with maritime and oversea trade, navigation and harbour matters. The second covers all other conditions in the Baltic states, more particularly the mutual cultural relations of the countries in question and their peoples. Economic, historical and geographical problems of various Baltic countries and of the Baltic region as a whole are investigated.

### III. Methods of Action

The lines of action of the Institute are the following:

1. collecting and preserving research material bearing on the Baltic region;
2. publishing the results of research work in the form both of scientific and of popular books;
3. informing such governmental, economic and private bodies as may be interested in the outcome of researches;
4. organizing and maintaining reading-rooms, libraries and archives for further research;
5. organizing lectures and discussional gatherings.

### IV. Organization

The Baltic Institute, being an autonomous organization, is governed under its own Statute and By-laws.

Apart from honorary and ordinary members, who express their interest in Pomeranian and Baltic matters by belonging to the Institute and by paying a small annual contribution, there are two distinct groups of members:

a) supporting members, who assure the funds needed by the Institute;

b) corresponding-members (members-collaborators of Research Committees) who carry out the research work of the Institute.

The General Meeting of its members has the ultimate control of the Baltic Institute and elects the Board of Trustees and the Executive Board.

The Board of Trustees checks the purposefulness of the Institute's activities and establishes the general trend of its work.

The Executive Board has the administrative and financial control of the Institute.

The Executive Officer of the Board is the Director who is appointed by the Committee; he has the general control of the organization of the research work besides directing the general activities of the Institute.

Special Research Committees, appointed by the Director, consist of selected specialists and they are centres of all the research and public work of the Institute.

## V. Publications of the Baltic Institute

The principal publication of the Institute is the "Records of the Baltic Institute", collections of monographs on particular problems investigated. These monographs appear in four series arranged according to subject.

1. *Dominium Maris* comprising works on maritime trade, navigation and ports.

2. *Balticum* comprising geographical and cultural studies of various territories on the Baltic.

3. *Proceedings of Research Workers on Pomerania* comprising the lectures and papers read at the meetings and the minutes of the same.

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Sixteen volumes of the "Records of the Baltic Institute" have already appeared, six more are at present in press and another eight are in process of preparation for printing.

To date the following volumes of the "Records" have appeared:

### *Dominium Maris* Series:

"International Trade on the Baltic", by W. St o p c z y k. Toruń 1928, pp. 192 + VIII, 71 statistical tables and 6 graphs. Price: 6 zł.



- “Defence of Pomerania”, collective work edited by J. Borowik, Toruń 1930, pp. 273 + XV, 42 statistical tables, 14 maps, charts and graphs. Price: 10 zł.
- “The Case of Gdynia”, by A. Siebeneichen and H. Strasburger. Toruń 1931, pp. 180 + VIII, 43 statistical tables. Price: 7,50 zł.
- “The Development of the Port of Danzig”, by K. Świątecki. Toruń 1932, pp. 369 + XIV, 148 statistical tables, 5 maps and 8 graphs. Price: 20 zł.
- “German Transit through Pomerania”, by G. Piasecki (in print).
- “Sea Consciousness”, collective work edited by J. Borowik. Toruń 1934, pp. 390 + XVI, 35 statistical tables, 13 maps, 11 graphs, 6 illustrations. Price: 10 zł.
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