Cossack Identities: From Russian Émigrés and Anti-Soviet Collaborators to Displaced Persons

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Keywords: displaced persons, Cossacks, Russia, post-war, migration, oral history, family history

Funding details: This work was supported by the Australian Research Council under Grant DP 130101215.

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Cossack displaced persons who were re-settled in Australia as part of the post-war International Refugee Organisation scheme had already survived several turbulent eras. Anti-Bolshevik Cossacks refashioned their identities in the post-Civil War period as Russian émigrés and then, during the Second World War, as anti-Soviet collaborators of the Germany Army. At war's end these Cossacks were rounded up by the British and handed to the Soviets. This paper traces the traumatic (and opportunistic) migration trajectory of one Cossack family, who escaped forced repatriations to become 'New Australians'.

Cossack displaced persons who were re-settled in Australia as part of the IRO scheme had already survived several turbulent eras, including what could be described as genocide at the hands of the Bolsheviks in 1919 and then again in 1937. Survivors refashioned their identities in the post-Bolshevik period as Russian émigrés and then, in the Second World War, as anti-Soviet collaborators of the German Army. At the end of the war, members of the Cossack Army were rounded up by the British and handed to the Soviets. Those who managed to escape melted into the DP camps, while keeping a wary eye out for Russian repatriation missions. This article takes a micro-history approach inspired by the story of extended family members and oral history interviewees who were attached to the Cossack Army during the Second World War, and who then, through various machinations, arrived in Australia as displaced persons. Using the Cossack case study, this article interrogates some of the myths about displaced persons in Australia, namely that they were politically unproblematic 'New Australians', and also that they were exemplars of the usual emigration-immigration dichotomy which emphasises the end-point of settlement. It also uncovers something of what historian Wendy Webster has termed 'transnational journeys and domestic histories': individual and familial migration trajectories, and the inherent difficulties of settlement for displaced men and women in the post-war period.[2]

Cossacks in Europe during the Second World War

In May 1945, the Drau Valley in Austria was host to a scene from an earlier century. In the immediate aftermath of the Second World War in Europe, 73,000 Cossacks, including several thousand women and children, camped in several formations under the stars in the area along the Drau River between Lienz and Oberdrauburg.[3] They had with them about 4,000 horses as well as cows and camels. A London *Times* reporter described the scene as

'no different in any major detail from what an artist might have painted in the Napoleonic wars'.[4] The official British army entry described the Cossacks as 'an amazing sight':

> Their basic uniform was German, but with their fur Cossack caps, their mournful whiskers, their knee-high riding boots and their roughly made horse-drawn carts bearing all their worldly goods and chattels, including wife and family, there could be no mistaking them for anything but Russians.[5]

Long-time enemies of the Soviet state, Cossacks of the Don and Kuban regions had fought with the Whites (Monarchists) against the Reds (Bolsheviks: Russian Social Democrat Party). Traditionally a warrior people, by 1914 there were eleven separate Cossack 'hosts', both Ukrainian and Russian, some of which were formed deliberately and others which sprang up from peasant communities close to the frontier, and steppe bandits.[6] In the early years of the twentieth century, Cossacks (already an anachronistic group) were self-governing 'rich peasants': they received taxation and landholding privileges from the Tsar in return for a heavy military obligation.[7] So, the two million Don Cossacks, on the eve of the revolution, owned 13 of the 17 million hectares of arable land in the Don area, with double the land per household of the average peasant household in Russia. Non-Cossack peasants in the Don region either tilled marginal land or worked as their labourers. Rather than being necessarily ideologically motivated against the Bolsheviks, the Cossacks' aim in the Don region was separatist: to establish an independent Don republic.[8] During the Civil War (1917-22), Moscow ordered the death of Cossack officials and officers, as well as the annihilation of Cossackdom as a separate economic group.[9] Thousands of Cossacks were executed by revolutionary tribunals.[10]

After their defeat, 50,000 Cossacks left under French protection, finding refuge in Turkey and then Yugoslavia. They were later dispersed throughout Western Europe. Some ended up in Basra, Mesopotamia, where the British saw the presence of a Cossack fighting unit in their newly acquired sphere of influence as a problem and arranged to have the Cossacks and their families transported to Vladivostok, from whence they escaped into China.[11] Those who remained in the Soviet Union were victims of mass expulsions from their land, as part of the Soviet Union's dekulakisation and collectivisation campaigns.[12] As historian Shane O'Rourke notes:

> Cossacks fell into nearly every definitional category of kulak issued to activists: those who were active white guards in the past, Cossack ideologues and authorities, former white officers, members of punitive detachments, returned émigrés, former white-green bandits, those who have officer sons in emigration.[13]

These expulsions continued in waves until 1933, and then in 1937 a new directive of the NKVD (the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs) ordered the arrest of former kulaks, including 'active participants of Cossack-Whiteguards rebel organisations which are presently in the process of being liquidated'.[14] O'Rourke says that on the basis of this decree alone, more than half a million people were arrested, and almost half of these were shot, including many Cossacks.[15] Historian Norman Naimark has labelled these sorts of Soviet actions as genocidal.[16]

After Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941, somewhere between 800,000 and one million Soviet citizens and Russian émigrés, including Cossacks, volunteered to fight with the German army. Conversely, 'Cossack' was sometimes used as a more palatable descriptor for 'Russian' allies in Nazi Germany, as Hitler thought of the Cossacks as racially Aryan rather than Slav.[17] These Cossacks had varying backgrounds: deserters and prisoners-of-war from the Red Army, ranking general officers (including Generals Pyotr Krasnov and Andrei Shkuro) who saw their chance to see off the Bolsheviks, and émigrés resident in Europe (and particularly Yugoslavia) in the inter-war period.[18] As one Kuban Cossack acknowledged: 'many non-Cossacks joined early, "becoming" Cossacks to save themselves from the [prisoner-of-war] camps; later many Ostarbeiter [forced labourers] too enlisted with the Cossacks'.[19] These 'Cossacks' served in various fields during the war, arousing much 'fear and animosity' amongst civilian populations.[20] In Belorussia, the 102nd Cossack Unit 'distinguished itself by skill in battle and by brutal reprisals against the partisans as well as a disgraceful treatment of the population'.[21] In Yugoslavia, Cossack units under General Helmuth von Pannwitz 'robbed the population … burned their homes, raped the women, and when confronted with the mildest form of resistance killed the population'.[22]

About half of the Cossacks in the Drau Valley seem to have been those who had left their homelands in late 1942 or early 1943, and had been moved repeatedly since their departure with the retreating Wehrmacht following Stalingrad.[23] This group was made up of around 16,000 fighting men, and 7,000 civilian men, women and children.[24] In September 1942 a 'Don Cossack Republic' had been somewhat precipitously declared in Novocherkassk in the Don region under the leadership of Ataman S. V. Pavlov. A German army officer noted: 'In spite of the far-reaching extermination of the Cossacks by the Soviet regime, it is striking how small an influence Bolshevism really had in the Cossack area and how little it managed to break the healthy peasant vitality'. Cossacks were deemed 'friendly' groups and expendable additions to the armed forces.[25] The Cossacks also viewed the Germans as 'friendly'. One man who was later interviewed in America said, 'We expected the Germans

eagerly. We were misled, isolated. Everybody considered them such a cultured people. Even before their arrival, they dropped leaflets. But we would have awaited anybody – the Chinese, the Negroes, and that much more the Germans.'[26]

Within weeks the German army was forced to withdraw, and joining them were Cossack separatists, forced to retreat from their lands and relying on the protection of the German army. In late 1944 the Don, Kuban and Terek Cossacks, led by Major-General Timofei Domanov, were sent to Northern Italy, fighting Italian partisans. In early 1945 they then made a 'hazardous trek' across the Alps to camp near the Austrian town of Lienz.[27] These soldiers and civilians and their families were joined by Generals Krasnov and Shkuro and *their* soldiers.[28] The camp also attracted those who sympathised with the Cossack cause, such as freed forced labourers of Soviet origin. One such 'straggler', a Red Army deserter turned forced labourer, described this refuge: 'The camp was a sight I will never forget. There were Cossacks with their horses everywhere. Smoke from the campfires lingered like a cloud in the valley … It was like … the whole village had moved and recamped. Stragglers like ourselves, who had joined them on the way, automatically fell under their protection.'[29]

More of a roving refugee village than a military force, the self-styled *Kazachi Stan* (Cossack nation) had hopes of being allowed to settle permanently in the Drau Valley. They saw themselves as refugees, displaced from their homeland.[30] They were, perhaps, 'the last dying echo of the Revolution'.[31] Historian Nikolai Tolstoy has described their home in the Drau Valley as incorporating 'old ways, old songs and old decorations … a brief and pathetic resurgence of a way of life that was soon to be destroyed forever'.[32] The Cossacks surrendered to the British and offered to assist the Western powers in what, as historian Samuel J. Newland has noted, 'seemed to be the next logical phase of the war': the battle against the Soviet Union.[33] Some Cossacks speculated that the British were planning to send them to join the French Foreign Legion, or to fight in the Middle East.[34]

At the Yalta Conference in February 1945, the Allies had agreed to repatriate all Soviet citizens, defining these as those displaced persons originating from within the 1939 boundaries of the Soviet Union. All collaborators were seen by Joseph Stalin, then leader of the Soviet Union, as traitors. In the Soviet Union, all military collaborators were referred to as 'Vlasovites' (*vlasovtsy*), whether or not they were part of General Andrei Vlasov's Russian Liberation Army,[35] which in any case purported to speak on behalf of all national minorities in Russia in its dealings with Nazi leaders.[36] Historian Mark Edele notes that as the Red Army advanced across Europe:

> *Vlasovtsy* had ropes tied around their neck, which were then attached to the cannon of a gun, which would be lifted slowly to strangle the traitor; or they were weighed down with stones and thrown off cliffs into the sea. On the path to Berlin, remembers another veteran, the trees at the side of the road bore strange fruit: 'On each apple tree hung several people with signs around their necks: 'For betrayal of the Motherland'.[37]

The Cossacks at Lienz, though, were under the protection of the British, in the British zone. And technically, many of those Cossacks were not Soviet citizens but pre-war Russian émigrés.[38] However, a British Army memorandum directing all Cossacks to be 'treated as Soviet Nationals' sealed the fate of what the British described as traitorous, but 'unfortunate peoples'.[39]

On 28 May 1945, the British took 1,500 Cossack officers from the main Lienz camp at Peggetz to a conference, supposedly to meet Field Marshal Harold Alexander to discuss future plans, assuring them that they would be returned to their camp that night. The British Army memorandum on the evacuation notes that 'the vast majority of the Cossacks were bitterly opposed to return to the Soviet Union', so 'it was considered essential that the fact that they were to be sent to the USSR should be kept from them as long as possible'. Not all were fooled, however. 'A [Cossack] Mother' later remembered watching the officers leave under a reinforced guard and:

> Suddenly – the terrible shriek of a young girl saying farewell to her father, so frightened, so heart-breaking … She tore herself away from her mother and ran to the truck her father was in. She felt that she would never see him again. All were shaken by her childish despair …[40]

At Spittal, near the border of the newly demarcated Soviet zone, the Cossacks found that they were to be handed over to Soviet authorities the next day. During the night, two officers committed suicide by hanging themselves on lavatory chains. A British Army memorandum noted that the next day:

> The officers were dragged out in twos and threes but difficulties were considerable as they all sat on the ground with linked arms and legs. One Russian officer bit the wrist of a Company Sergeant Major. This not unnaturally caused the CSM and the British troops around him to turn to sterner measures; rifle butts, pick helves and the points of bayonets were freely used with the result that some of the Russian officers were rendered semi-conscious. This show of force had the desired effect and the loading of the remaining officers was quickly completed.[41]

Men pleaded with the British to show mercy, showering their valuables on the guards, while 'belts, spurs and badges of rank' were 'thrown out of trucks all the way between Spittal and

Judenberg'.[42] The British Army memorandum noted that 'during the journey, two of the Russian officers committed suicide, one by leaping over a precipice and one by cutting his throat. [There were] frequent requests by the officers that the escorts shoot them'.[43] Another man tried to escape 'but a burst of TSMG [Thompson submachine gun] made him change his mind'; 'no prisoners escaped, and the bodies of the suicides were handed over'.[44] Reportedly, upon handover the Soviets immediately took 31 of the repatriates behind a dockside warehouse and shot them with machine guns.[45] According to Michael Protopopov, whose father was on the train, the journey from the handover point at Judenberg to a 'check-and-filtration camp' at the Kuznetsk coal basin in Siberia was grim: 'Bodies with broken heads, arms and legs were publicly displayed on the reserve tracks at railway junctions, and the 'prison telegraph' was quick to relay the message that attempting to escape was useless'.[46]

British officers then informed the Drau Valley camp, now bereft of officers and a 'seething cauldron of rumour and recrimination', that the Yalta Agreement committed the Allies to return all Soviet citizens.[47] They said that British soldiers would be back to put the whole camp – men, women and children – on trains to the Soviet Union. The people, in shock at this betrayal and now 'terrified and hysterical', declared a hunger strike, and hung up black flags and placards to plead against their return. They also wrote petitions addressed to various world leaders, including King George VI, declaring: 'WE PREFER DEATH than to be returned to the Soviet Russia, where we are condemned to a long and systematic annihilation'.[48] A British Army officer guarding the camp reported: 'I was witness to many amazing incidents of fanatical fear and dread of the future they thought was in store for them. Men outstretched on the ground bearing their chests to be shot where they lay. There were many women in a state of frenzy … also.'[49]

The British arrived on the morning of 1 June. The Cossacks, who were holding an Orthodox Mass, formed a protective circle with women and children in the centre, hoping the British would show mercy. What happened next is infamous. The British Army memorandum notes that at a smaller camp, 'movement was continued only by the further persuasion of the bayonets and the firing of automatic weapons'. At the main camp, Peggetz:

> Highly organised resistance, apparently led by priests, was overcome only by the liberal use of helves and rifle butts. As individuals were pulled away from the main body, the remainder compressed themselves into an ever-tightening mass; those on the outside pushed inwards to avoid the approaching British soldiers. A panic developed … one of the Cossacks clutched the rifle of one of the soldiers, tried to turn it on himself and pulled the trigger; the bullet killed a nearby Cossack boy.[50]

There was a ‘resultant stampede’ and people were trampled to death. A British Army officer reported that ‘scenes were pretty wild by this time, and the big worry was that we might shoot up our own people’.[51] According to one eyewitness: ‘It looked like a battlefield’. Another described how trucks were ‘loaded with corpses of men, women and children’, while men shot their families before shooting themselves, women threw themselves and their children into the ‘cold, raging’ Drau River, and ‘entire families shot themselves in the woods and hung themselves’.[52] The interpreter for the camp later recalled: ‘Sobbing women ran across the field, searching for their children, while children, in tears, called to mothers who had been taken away. Many parents were thrown into trucks, while their children were left behind, and vice versa.’[53] Eyewitness Maria Volkova later lamented: ‘Cossack men and women and children / the bright light of the last Cossack land / Forgotten by all on earth’.[54]

Ivan and Nastasia:[55] Europe and Australia

Watching this chaotic and terrifying scene through binoculars was a small group of Cossacks that included Ivan and his young Ukrainian wife Nastasia, who was about five months’ pregnant.[56] Ivan was a Don Cossack from Rostov travelling with his uncles. He was probably a member of a prominent Cossack family from Novocherkassk.[57] Ivan later told his son that the Soviets had shot his brothers and sisters in front of him and then sent him to Siberia, to Gulag; some aspects of this family history are borne out by newly digitised archival records.[58] He had left behind a wife and daughter in Russia.

Ivan met Nastasia in 1943, when she was working as a forced labourer under the Nazis in eastern Ukraine. Ivan was a friend of her father, and much older, around 43 years to her 17, but he had offered her an escape if she would marry him and journey across Europe. A week after this proposition they were married, and then left Ukraine on 31 December 1943, travelling with the Cossack Army to Italy via Romania, Poland and Hungary. Their son, Maxim, was born in a shed in Italy during a bomb attack but he died of malnutrition at 14 weeks of age. From Italy, Nastasia and Ivan journeyed over the mountain ranges, evading Italian partisans, until they reached the apparent safety of the Cossack camp outside Lienz.

After witnessing the merciless repatriation of the Peggetz camp, Ivan, Nastasia and their small group fled up the snow-covered mountains. The British estimate that about 4,000 of the original group of around 23,800 at Peggetz camp managed to escape, and 1,300 were recaptured the following month. A British Army memorandum is chilling:

> Initially, finding the Cossacks proved easy. When they were in large bands with their wives and families, they were reluctant to climb higher into the mountains on the approach of British patrols. But when the weaker recalcitrant had been rounded up, there remained a few determined characters who were prepared to go to extreme measures in the evasion of patrols … The work of the patrols was far from easy. Sometimes it was necessary to resort to bullets.[59]

After the initial repatriation effort, the British treated recaptured Cossacks as 'surrendered personnel' and did not hand them over to the Russians. Apparently, by mid-June the Russians were satisfied with the numbers they had received and did not want any more.[60] Field Marshal Alexander wrote to the War Office on 23 August:

> A large proportion of … Russians have been repatriated, but there remains a certain number who, because they fear the fate that awaits them on arrival in Russia, refuse to be repatriated. To compel them to accept repatriation would certainly either involve the use of force or driving them into railway coaches at the point of the bayonet and thereafter locking them in.[61]

Alexander argued that such treatment was 'out of keeping with the principles of democracy and justice as we know them' and urged that the Russians 'be treated as stateless persons for the time being'. He ended his plea: 'The matter is urgent'. Allied military authorities ceased forced repatriations around the end of 1945 as it became apparent that large numbers of returnees met with violence, were deported to Gulag or executed as soon as they crossed the border.

Ivan and Nastasia managed to evade British patrols and they survived in the mountains for three months by hiding in ravines and occasionally killing sheep at night. They were eventually caught by Austrian police at gunpoint and sent to Kapfenberg displaced persons camp. Their story is, of course, not typical of the displaced persons story. In fact, there is no 'typical' story. A displaced person, or DP, has become the generic label for someone resettled by the United Nations' International Refugee Organisation (IRO) following the Second World War. In 1945, DPs were predominantly from Central and Eastern Europe and included Jewish concentration camp survivors, voluntary and forced labourers of the Reich, non-German soldiers in military units withdrawing westwards, and civilian evacuees fleeing west from the oncoming Russian Army. By 1947, they were joined by refugees from Soviet-occupied countries: Jews escaping anti-Semitism in Poland and Romania, and border-hoppers, usually young, single men from Czechoslovakia and Hungary who were attempting to out-run the encroaching Iron Curtain. Most were anti-Communist and refused to repatriate to Soviet bloc countries.[62]

Anti-Soviet feelings were exacerbated by rumours that the Soviets persecuted returnees. A Soviet radio broadcast warned that displaced persons who delayed their return until after November 1945 would 'be arrested and sent on the road to the police'.[63] There were reports that local people attacked convoys of returnees at the border and many DPs received letters from family members warning them not to travel home. Cossacks and other 'collaborators' specifically feared death, or a decades-long sentence of hard labour, if they were sent back to the Soviet Union.[64] In October 1945, Nastasia gave birth to a son, in Klagenfurt displaced persons camp, and then received a letter from her father in Ukraine. He wrote: 'Don't come home'; her mother, a forced labourer in Germany, had been repatriated and sent to Siberia. On 17 January 1947, *Pravda*, the official newspaper of the Communist Party of the USSR, announced that Domanov, Krasno and Shkuro had all been hanged; Vlasov and eleven of his officers had been executed in July 1946.[65]

Soviet authorities made concerted efforts to persuade the displaced persons to repatriate, in order to replenish population losses from the war, thwart the rise of an anti-Soviet movement in the West, and prevent international loss of face as the Cold War began. The Allies refused to listen to offers from the Cossack, Vlasov and Anders (Polish) armies to join forces against the Soviet Union, and made little effort to exploit the anti-Soviet attitude of the non-returners. But Moscow took the remnants of collaborator units seriously. Soviet Deputy Commissar of Foreign Affairs, Andrei Vyshinsky, told the United Nations General Assembly in 1946: 'It is no secret that refugee camps, situated in the western zones of Germany, Austria and certain other countries of Western Europe, are springboards and centres for the formation of military reserves of hirelings, which constitute an organised military force in the hands of this or that foreign power.'[66] Soviet liaison officers visited camps, pleading with the inhabitants to return, and disseminated propaganda in various languages. Russian interpreters in Nastasia's camp asked: 'Poor people, aren't you sick of this life, moving, hiding? Your country waits for you, your relatives miss you'.[67] The couple lived in various DP camps in Austria for four years, evading these repatriation attempts.

Initially cared for by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), the displaced persons who could not be repatriated soon became a 'continuing, nagging' problem for the Western Allies. They were all eventually categorised by the United Nations as political (rather than economic) refugees from the Soviet system and the IRO started resettling them in any country that would take them. In 1947, Australia joined countries such as Argentina, Canada and the United States in resettling the DPs. The Australian government, under the slogan of 'populate or perish', sought to bulk up the population and solve a post-war labour shortage. The DPs represented assimilable 'white' migrants to make

up for a disappointing absence of post-war British settlers. It was Australia's first experiment with mass, non-British migration. Australia's first Minister for Immigration, Arthur Calwell, sold the idea to the Australian public by publicising blond, attractive (and predominantly middle-class) Baltic migrants, who of course weren't typical either.[68]

In order to escape forced repatriation and to seem suitable for resettlement purposes, displaced persons sometimes concocted false background stories, and an entire underground industry grew up providing false identity papers.[69] So, Ivan and Nastasia's immigration documents are opaque. Middle-aged Ivan chopped some years off his age, and rather than hailing from the Don Cossack region, he claimed Rosolovka, Nastasia's Ukrainian birthplace, as his own. Nastasia, meanwhile, added seven years to her age, in order to make the pair more convincing as a married couple. Ivan told the Australian selection officers that he was an 'old Russian emigrant', stateless since 1920, who had 'escaped from Poland before the Bolsheviks' (he means the Soviet Army), since he had 'an old emigrant fear that they would abduct or imprison him'. He did not admit to fleeing west with the Cossack Army, but instead claimed that he had been forcibly evacuated by the German Army and he concocted an entirely imaginary work history in Poland, Germany and Austria. He was pronounced 'fit', with suggested employment in Australia: 'Labourer'.[70]

Ivan had told the International Refugee Organisation that he wanted to be resettled in Venezuela, to join his brother. An uncle, who was with them in the Drau Valley, reportedly ended up in the United Kingdom. Australian migration officials interviewed Ivan and Nastasia in April 1949. They noted that Nastasia was 16 weeks pregnant with her third child, and labelled her fit for the journey. The pair travelled to Australia on the *Anna Salen* in June 1949 with their three-year-old son. They joined 170,000 displaced persons who came to Australia under strict selection criteria. The most important category for Australia was race. Mirroring the prejudices of other settlement countries, the DPs were graded on a quasi-official hierarchy, with 'Balts' at the top and 'Jews' at the bottom.[71] One Australian medical officer working in Europe thought that the Ukrainians 'seem pretty dumb, but I dare say that they will make good workers'.[72] The strict racial criteria were soon relaxed in the race to populate Australia cheaply; by May 1949, ostensibly everyone categorised by the IRO as 'displaced persons', including families, were welcome in Australia. As Wendy Webster has pointed out, the assimilability of displaced children and the fertile potential of displaced women were particularly highlighted; the narrative was that 'their children will grow up as Australian as you or I'.[73]

In Australia, Ivan and Nastasia were processed at a reception and training centre in Bathurst, New South Wales. Ivan was required to complete a two-year work contract while Nastasia was sent to holding camps for dependent women and children in Cowra and Scheyville, New South Wales. The separated breadwinner had to pay two lots of accommodation fees – for himself near his workplace and up to £3 per week for his wife and children.[74] This situation caused great hardship when some men took advantage of the distance and refused to pay for dependants. Ivan was sent to work for the army in Sydney and refused to send money to Nastasia to pay maintenance for herself and the children. He then became ill and stopped sending the accommodation charges. She was forced to work as a cleaner at the camp, while also caring for her toddler and newborn son, and didn't leave Scheyville holding centre until 1953. It was a harsh introduction to her new country for the young mother.

In Australia, as in other settlement countries, the issue of race tied in neatly with politics. As historian Suzanne Rutland has noted, the preferred (white, non-Jewish) racial type also happened to be the preferred anti-communist political type. This led to a laxity in political screening.[75] The selection teams in Europe operated with minimal instruction from Canberra; there was no formal policy excluding Nazi collaborators from Eastern Europe and no information about the various institutions of collaboration.[76] Leading (collaborationist) Cossacks who entered Australia at this time include Ivan Nikitich Kononov, the Ataman of All Cossack Forces within General Vlasov's Russian Liberation Army, who led forces in both Belorussia and Yugoslavia.[77] Kononov arrived in Australia as a (Polish) displaced person named Iwan Gorski and continued his anti-Soviet activism.[78] General V G Naumenko and Colonel Nicholas Nazarenko, who were both active in various Cossack units, also reportedly migrated to Australia as part of the displaced persons cohort, as did Domanov's Chief of Staff, Vladimir Stakhanov.[79] Konstantin Lagoridov, a captain in the Fifth Cossack Division under the command of Kononov, also migrated to Australia, under the false name Duljschers, where he worked as a gardener.[80]

In November 1950 Ivan was among the founding members of the National Cossack Association of Australia, based in Sydney. This association published a weekly newspaper in Ukrainian and Russian titled 'The Cossack Bulletin'. Membership of the organisation was reported to be 200 in Sydney and 2,000 across Australia.[81] The editor and publisher of the Bulletin, Alexander Malyj, was a Kuban Cossack who carried with him a certificate dated 1942 in which he attested to 'hating the Bolshevik regime from the bottom of his heart' and working for a 'new, true regime of the people'.[82] In 1953 a large group of Cossacks, led by Lieutenant-General Burlin, attended the consecration of a new Russian Orthodox Church in

Cabramatta, Sydney, and Ivan and Nastasia were regular attendees. Cossack associations were also formed in Brisbane, Adelaide, Canberra and Melbourne.[83] In the late 1950s, two burial plots at Melbourne's Fawkner Cemetery were donated for a memorial to those who died at Lienz, or were forcibly repatriated to the Soviet Union.[84]

Unlike many other displaced persons cohorts, the Cossacks arrived in Australia to an already existing community. In 1923, a group of nearly 4,000 Ural Cossacks, still under the command of their Ataman, arrived via China; they were accepted into the country, and resettled in Queensland, in recognition of their services to the Allies in the war against Bolshevism. In 1937 a Don Cossack choir visited Australia and some decided to discontinue their tour and settle in Australia. In the following decades, Cossacks also migrated from China.[85] Journalists were fascinated by the colourful Cossack heritage and feature articles on these 'new Australians' began to appear in the mainstream press. 26-year-old Ivan ('John') Kudrenkov, living in Perth, was interviewed in 1950 while still working out his two-year contract as a cook. Apparently a 'master of the wild knife-dances of his countrymen', John showed off his prize possession, a 4ft sabre. He thrilled by saying: 'Fall many heads from this sabre, I think'.[86] For the Cossacks themselves, these sorts of festivities were 'a bright spot on an otherwise dark background of hard daily toil'.[87]

In 1953, Ivan reunited with Nastasia, and they bought a plot of land in the western suburbs of Sydney. They lived in a garage for seven years while both working various jobs, until they were able to buy a house in an adjoining suburb. During this time they were naturalised, although Ivan refused to learn English. They divorced in 1968 due to an escalation of domestic violence. Ivan, a violent alcoholic, threatened to kill members of his family many times, and once confronted his eldest son, Luka, with a loaded rifle. In the divorce proceedings, Nastasia's lawyer alleged that:

> [Ivan] has always been a brutal man and drank to excess throughout the whole period that the parties cohabited … In Austria [Ivan] assaulted [Nastasia] once every four to six weeks and this occurred mainly after he had consumed methylated spirits, which he used to drink like water. From approximately 1954 onwards [Ivan] hit [her] more often. This usually occurred by him hitting her about the head with his fists and he hit so hard that he raised bruises on her quite often … [From approximately 1960] almost every day when affected by liquor would punch the petitioner with his fist in the head … every week she had bruises from these assaults and black eyes which had been caused by [Ivan's] assaults, the number of which [Nastasia] has lost count.[88]

These assaults included an occasion on which Nastasia lost consciousness and the police were called. Luka thought that 'what [Ivan had] suffered in Siberia had got to him and

clouded him', that 'his earlier life might have caused his brain to snap'.[89] That was perhaps a generous reading of the situation, and yet we do know that alcoholism and domestic violence among displaced persons was common enough to become something of a cliché. In her fictional account of a Ukrainian second-generation childhood in the Australian suburbs, Helen Demidenko described '[watching] the telly and [eating] junk food and [telling] each other stories about who was fucking whom and just why Mrs Izbegevic's husband had given her a broken nose....' [90] Similarly, author Richard Flanagan, whose bleak novel *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* was based on oral history interviews in Tasmania, described DP workers as 'drunk and violent men' who had trouble talking about the past.[91] DP alcoholism became such a stereotype that one man died of a sub-cranial haemorrhage after doctors refused to treat him, accusing him of being an alcoholic.[92]

Sociologist Caitlin Nunn (et al.) has recently drawn attention to the difficulties inherent in refugee settlement, arguing that arrival in a new country is not an easy endpoint, but an 'ongoing negotiation of unstable, multiscalar socio-political terrains in the pursuit of viable futures'.[93] In the case of post-war displaced persons, including the Cossack contingent, it has been argued that Australia's high-speed assimilation program was to blame for some of the mental stress, which was (stereo)typified by alcoholism.[94] The forced family separation component of the work contract particularly worked against familial happiness, and was described by one DP as 'one of the most cruel things … Imagine! In a new country where you need the support of each other, you are suddenly dislodged as a family unit'.[95] Perhaps legacies of past trauma were compounded in some cases by an inability in Australia to recover mental health effectively. Ivan died soon after the divorce, in 1973.

Ivan and Nastasia's story highlights particularly well the disparity between the story told by the Australian government in its pro-immigration propaganda, and the individual backgrounds, war and post-war experiences of the displaced persons themselves. The International Refugee Organisation and the Australian migration selectors were not always aware of the real stories, amid the false stories and fake documents. Strategies of accommodation and resistance, of individual and collective agency, worked to transform Russian émigrés and Nazi collaborators into fit workers and New Australians. Instead of passive subjects, Ivan and Nastasia, along with other post-war DPs, traversed complex (and opportunistic) migration trajectories away from the threat of the Soviet Union and towards an indeterminate resettlement. This micro-history of one family also emphasises trauma as a component inherent in the post-war migrations of displaced persons, which has left a legacy of trauma in both domestic histories and broader cultural narratives.

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[1] Parts of this article have been previously published in my book *Beautiful Balts: From Displaced Persons to New Australians.* An earlier version of this article was presented at the *Global Histories of Refugees in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries* conference in Melbourne in October 2016, and I would like to thank Professors Sheila Fitzpatrick and Mark Edele for their useful comments. I would also like to acknowledge funding from the Australian Research Council.

[2] Webster, "Transnational Journeys and Domestic Histories", 651.

[3] Protopopov, *'We Shall Swallow Them Alive …'*, 238; Persian, *Beautiful Balts*, 1-9.

[4] Wyman, *DPs*, 17.

[5] 1st May, 1945 – 31st May 1945, HQ, Cossacks, War Diaries, Second World War, Italy, 1945, 36 Infantry Brigade, Brigades, War Office: Central Mediterranean Forces (British Element), WO 170/4461, National Archives (UK) (hereafter Cossacks, WO 170/4461).
[6] O'Rourke, *The Cossacks*, 7; Peeling, "Cossacks".
[7] Kenez, *A History of the Soviet Union from the Beginning to the End*, 34; Peeling, "Cossacks".
[8] Pipes, *Russia under the Bolshevik Regime*, 19.
[9] Ibid., 131.
[10] Peeling, "Cossacks".
[11] Protopopov, "The Russian Orthodox Presence in Australia", 418.
[12] Pipes, *Russia under the Bolshevik Regime*, 135; Peeling, "Cossacks".
[13] O'Rourke, *The Cossacks,* 272.
[14] Ibid, 276.
[15] Ibid., 276.
[16] Naimark, *Stalin's Genocides*, 133.
[17] Edele, *Stalin's Defectors*, 128, 132; Newland, *Cossacks in the German Army*, 86; Andreyev, *Vlasov and the Russian Liberation Movement*, 35.
[18] Schleha, *Surviving Lienz*, 14; Newland, *Cossacks in the German Army,* 177.
[19] Harvard Project on the Soviet System, Schedule B, Vol 11, Case 500 (Interviewer AD), Widener Library, Harvard University.
[20] 1st May, 1945 – 31st May, 1945, Cossacks, WO 170/4461.
[21] Edele, *Stalin's Defectors*, 131.
[22] Ibid., 132.
[23] Newland, *Cossacks in the German Army*, 174.
[24] 1st May, 1945 – 31st May, 1945, Cossacks, WO 170/4461. *The Times* (London) reported 8,000 active soldiers out of a total of 24,000 men, women and children. "Trek from the Don", *The Times* (London), 15 May 1945, 5.
[25] Appendix III, 'The Cossack Self-Government District', Register of the Alexander Dallin Papers, 1928-2000, 79093, Hoover Institution Archives.
[26] Harvard Project on the Soviet System, Schedule B, Vol 11, Case 322 (Interviewer AD), Widener Library, Harvard University.
[27] O'Rourke, *The Cossacks*, 277; Protopopov, "The Russian Orthodox Presence in Australia", 4.
[28] Protopopov, "The Russian Orthodox Presence in Australia", 378, 405.
[29] Schleha, *Surviving Lienz*, 26.
[30] Tolstoy, *Victims of Yalta*, 152.
[31] 1st May, 1945 – 31st May, 1945, Cossacks, WO 170/4461.
[32] Tolstoy, *Victims of Yalta*, 151.
[33] Newland, *Cossacks in the German Army*, 171.
[34] Stakhanova et al., *Separated at Stavropol*, 143; Naumenko, *Great Betrayal*, 278.
[35] Protopopov, "The Russian Orthodox Presence in Australia", 48.
[36] Andreyev, *Vlasov and the Russian Liberation Movement*, 60.
[37] Edele, *Stalin's Defectors*, 137.
[38] A sizeable number (perhaps 3,000) sent back to the Soviets had been elderly émigrés who, according to the Yalta Agreement, should not have been repatriated. Schleha, *Surviving Lienz*, 45.
[39] Memo from Brigadier, General Staff: Definition of Russian Nationals, undated, Evacuation of Cossack and Caucasian Forces from 36 Infantry Brigade Area, War Office: Allied Forces, Mediterranean Theatre: Military Headquarters Papers, Second World War. 78 Infantry Division. WO 204/10449, National Archives (UK) (hereafter Cossacks and Caucasians, WO 204/10449); 1st May, 1945 – 31st May, 1945, Cossacks, WO 170/4461.
[40] 'A Mother', 'Excerpt from the Letter of a Cossack Mother on the Removal of Officers from Peggitz', in Naumenko, *Great Betrayal*, 148.
[41] Evacuation of Cossack and Caucasian Forces from 36 Inf Bde Area, May-June 1945 by Lt Col. Cmd. 36 Inf Bde, 3 July 45, Cossacks and Caucasians, WO 204/10449.
[42] Appendix 'D' Extract of Statement by Lieut. J T Petrie, 2LF, Regarding Events at Spittal 28/29 May, Cossacks and Caucasians, WO 204/10449.
[43] Evacuation of Cossack and Caucasian Forces from 36 Inf Bde Area, May-June 1945 by Lt Col. Cmd. 36 Inf Bde, 3 July 45, Cossacks and Caucasians, WO 204/10449.
[44] Extract of Statement by Major G Goode, 56 Recce Regt. OC Armd Car Escort to Judenberg, 29 May, Appendix 'E', Cossacks and Caucasians, WO 204/10449.
[45] Gilbert, *A History of the Twentieth Century*, 736-737.

[46] Protopopov, *'We Shall Swallow Them Alive …'*, 62.
[47] Ibid., 242.
[48] Appendix 'O': Extract of statement by Major W. R. Davies, OC 'Y' Company 8 A & SH regarding collection of Cossacks on 31st May, Cossacks and Caucasians, WO 204/10449; Evacuation of Cossack and Caucasian Forces from 36 Inf Bde Area, May-June 1945 by Lt Col. Cmd. 36 Inf Bde, 3 July 45, Evacuation of Cossack and Caucasian Forces from 36 Infantry Brigade Area, Cossacks and Caucasians, WO 204/10449; Protopopov, *'We Shall Swallow Them Alive …',* 244..
[49] Extract of statement by Lieut. R. Shields, 'D' Coy, 2 Innisks regarding collection of Cossacks on 1 June, Appendix 'M', Cossacks and Caucasians, WO 204/10449.
[50] Evacuation of Cossack and Caucasian Forces from 36 Inf Bde Area, May-June 1945 by Lt Col. Cmd. 36 Inf Bde, 3 July 45, Cossacks and Caucasians, WO 204/10449.
[51] Extract of statement by Lieut. R. Shields, 'D' Coy, 2 Innisks regarding collection of Cossacks on 1 June, Appendix 'M', Cossacks and Caucasians, WO 204/10449.
[52] Evacuation of Cossack and Caucasian Forces from 36 Inf Bde Area, May-June 1945 by Lt Col. Cmd. 36 Inf Bde, 3 July 45, Cossacks and Caucasians, WO 204/10449; Letter from Tatiana Tiashelnikov, Camp Kellerberg Austria Karnten to Mr Tufton Beamish [Major], 30 June 1947. Attachment: Details of Forcible Repatriations of Old Emigrants from Austria in 1945. Extracts by Ministry of Defence from WO 204/10449, Evacuation of Cossacks and Caucasian Forces from 36 Infantry Brigade Area, War Office: Allied Forces, Mediterranean Theatre: Military Headquarters Papers, Second World War, 78 Infantry Division, WO 204/10450, National Archives (UK); Schleha, *Surviving Lienz*, 26; Naumenko, *Great Betrayal,* 132.
[53] Mrs R, Interpreter for Camp Peggetz, "June 1, 1945", in Naumenko, *Great Betrayal,* 210.
[54] Maria Vokova, "Valley of Death", in Naumenko, *Great Betrayal*, 108-109.
[55] Ivan and Nastasia are anonymised extended family members of the author. Nastasia and her sons 'Luka' and 'Simon' participated in oral history interviews with the author in 2007, 2008 and 2015.
[56] See also, Naumenko, *Great Betrayal*, 135, 171-172, 214, 236.
[57] Dmitrii Andreevich Persiyanov (1890-1962), Poliakov (Ivan Alekseevich) Papers, 1942-1969, 2008C66, Hoover Institution Archives.
[58] Participants of the White Movement in Russia, http://swolkov.org/2_baza_beloe_dvizhenie/pdf/Uchastniki_Belogo_dvizhenia_v_Rossii_15-P.pdf.
[59] Evacuation of Cossack and Caucasian Forces from 36 Inf Bde Area, May-June 1945 by Lt Col. Cmd. 36 Inf Bde, 3 July 45, Cossacks and Caucasians, WO 204/10449; Protopopov, *'We Shall Swallow Them Alive …'*, 238.
[60] 1st June, 1945 to 30th June, 1945, Cossacks, WO 170/4461.
[61] Bethell, *The Last Secret,* 236.
[62] Persian, "Displaced Persons and the Politics of International Categorisations", 481-496.
[63] Boshyk, "Repatriation and Resistance", 202.
[64] Protopopov, "The Russian Orthodox Presence in Australia", 6, 378; see Edele, *Stalin's Defectors*, 139.
[65] Protopopov, *'We Shall Swallow Them Alive …'*, 254; Edele, *Stalin's Defectors*, 138.
[66] Elliott, "The Soviet Repatriation Campaign", 344.
[67] 'Nastasia', 'My Life', unpublished life history in the possession of the author.
[68] Persian, *Beautiful Balts*, 71, 113.
[69] Persian, *Beautiful Balts*, 23.
[70] 'Ivan', Migrant Selection Documents for Displaced Persons who travelled to Australia per Anna Salen departing Naples, Italy 22 May 1949, 425-427, A11937, National Archives of Australia.
[71] Persian, *Beautiful Balts*, 61.
[72] Letter from Dr Cameron, Australian MO with the Selection Committee in Germany, to Dr Walker, Bonegilla, 1949, Medical – Displaced Persons Policy and Procedure in regard to Migrants and Applicants, for Landing Permits, Correspondence Files, Department of Immigration Central Office, 200/1/5, A445, National Archives of Australia.
[73] Webster, "Transnational Journeys and Domestic Histories", 660.
[74] Persian, *Beautiful Balts*, 83.
[75] Rutland, 'Sanctuary for Whom?', 25.
[76] Persian, *Beautiful Balts*, 68.
[77] Edele, *Stalin's Defectors*, 131-32.
[78] Edele, "Not an Ordinary Man", 547, 560.
[79] Newland, *Cossacks in the German Army*, 176; Russ Bellant, *Old Nazis, the New Right and the Republican Party* (Boston: South End Press, 1991); see Naumenko, *Great Betrayal*.

[80] 'Biography', Konstantin Stavrovich Cherkassov (Lagoridov), 1984, 2008C41, Hoover Institution Archives; Konstantin Duljschers DOB 2 March 1925, 256, Department of Immigration, Central Office, A11937 National Archives of Australia.
[81] Letter from F. G. Gallagher, Deputy Director, to the Director, Department of Immigration, 8 January 1951, 'The Cossack Bulletin' – Publication in Russian and Ukrainian Languages, 1952/15/1486, Correspondence Files, Department of Immigration, Central Office, A443, NAA (hereafter 'The Cossack Bulletin', NAA).
[82] Certificate, District Management of the Cossack Settlement of Kamyshevatskaja, Kuban Area, Cossack, 10 December 1942, 'The Cossack Bulletin', NAA.
[83] Protopopov, "The Russian Orthodox Presence in Australia", 131, 118.
[84] Ibid., 131, 191.
[85] Ibid., 38, 43, 64.
[86] "He dreams of his own Cossack troop", *The Daily News* (Perth, WA), 3 June 1950.
[87] Protopopov, "The Russian Orthodox Presence in Australia", 125.
[88] Decree Absolute, 'Ivan' and 'Nastasia', Supreme Court of New South Wales, 366/1968.
[89] Interview with 'Luka', 10 January 2008.
[90] Demidenko, "Writing after Winning".
[91] Flanagan, *The Sound of One Hand Clapping*, 109.
[92] Walsh, *Reaching for the Moon*, 211.
[93] Nunn et al., "Navigating Precarious Terrains", 46.
[94] Murphy, "The Assimilation of Refugee Migrants", 203.
[95] York, *Michael Cigler*, 63.