

Cosmopolitan Entrepreneurs:

Culture, Mobility and Survival among Baltic German Family Businesses in the Twentieth Century.

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Introduction: researching family business history

Family business history has a highly engaging literature. In the 1970s, Alfred D. Chandler characterised family businesses as vital contributors to early phases of economic development, but as less suited to modern times during which rationally bureaucratic corporations have come into their own.² By the early 1990s, views were becoming more nuanced, with Manfred Kets de Vries addressing not only the potential disadvantages of family firms (such as complicated institutional structures), but also their potential advantages (such as the creation of a family-oriented ethos in the organisation).³ Since de Vries's study, optimistic readings of family businesses have advanced further. So, for example, although Andrea Colli recognises that family firms can be organised idiosyncratically, she insists—amongst other things—that they can provide ‘the optimal solution when the managerial enterprise faces high transaction and agency costs in a hostile environment.’⁴

Probably the most magisterial study of family business to date is Harold James's discussion of the Wendels, Haniels and Falcks.⁵ His rich narrative highlights the importance of family capitalism as an engine of growth at times of state weakness—a point which often

¹ I wish to thank the following for supporting the research which stands behind this article: the British Academy, The Herder Institute, Marburg the Nordost Institute, Lüneburg and Greifswald University.

² For discussions of Chandler's work, see A. Colli, ‘Family Firms between Risks and Opportunities: a Literature Review’, *Socio-Economic Review* 11 (2013) p. 584; Andrea Colli, Carole Howorth and Mary Rose, ‘Long-Term Perspectives on Family Business’, *Business History* 55: 5 (2013) pp. 842–3; and A. Colli, *The History of Family Business 1850–2000*. CUP, 2003, p. 7.

³ M.F.R.K.. de Vries, ‘The Dynamics of Family controlled Firms: The Good and the Bad News’, *Organizational Dynamics* 21, 3 (1993) pp. 59–71.

⁴ Colli, *The History of Family Business*, p. 4.

⁵ Harold James, *Family Capitalism. Wendels, Haniels, Falcks and the Continental European Model*. Harvard University Press, 2006.

held good in the nineteenth century but which also transcends that period.⁶ Similar to Colli, James has recognised that family firms can be well-suited to withstanding disrupted economic environments and can manage high-risk situations effectively. This image of family firms as strong performers in difficult environments has been underlined by C. Dejung. Family businesses are said to perform particularly well in situations where information is 'sketchy', markets are 'volatile' and property rights are 'not always guaranteed'. In part at least, this is because business and family relationships can intertwine to give entrepreneurs confidence that deals will be honoured.⁷ Equally, family businesses can display excellent 'soft skills' which facilitate the construction of 'networks of trust' among business associates.⁸

All of these are interesting points which require rooting in evidence and Andrea Colli has highlighted that case studies are fundamental to family business history.⁹ To date, case studies have dealt especially with the UK, USA, Germany, Italy, France and Japan.¹⁰ It is a good list, but nonetheless incomplete. As yet, there has been relatively little scholarly interest in Eastern Europe or Russia. Given that family businesses have been counted as advantageous in the context of weak states and disrupted economies, this is an important gap because Eastern European and Russian territories have seen more than their fair share of weak states and disrupted economies. Furthermore, in these lands upheaval often has been associated with population movement, either due to state policy or threat to the person. If family businesses are effective at withstanding crises, East European and Russian experiences

⁶ James, *Family Capitalism*, p. 8 and p. 12.

⁷ C. Dejung, 'Worldwide Ties: the Role of Family Business in Global Trade in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries', *Business History* 55, 6 (2013) 1002.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ A. Colli, 'Business History in Family Business Studies: from Neglect to Cooperation?' *Journal of Family Business Management* Vol 1 No 1 2011, p. 15.

¹⁰ See James, *Family Capitalism* plus the comments of Colli, Howarth and Rose, 'Long-Term Perspectives', p. 841.

should tell us much about business resilience in the face of economic disruption in general, and in the face of physical displacement in particular.

But what of the area's culture? According to Harold James again, there are searching questions about cultural variation and entrepreneurial activity.¹¹ For instance, Finnish and American business activities are different, with Finnish businessmen more modest and risk averse than their American counterparts.¹² Networking practices vary by culture too. Historically and distinctively in Finland, for instance, godparents were chosen as a way to foster social connections and to seek out social advantage.¹³ In non-European cultures, connections constructed by gift-giving (such as happens in the systems of 'guanxi' in China and 'wasta' in Lebanon) can look corrupt to European eyes.¹⁴ So, based on what we know already of the importance of culture for the pursuit of business around the globe, there is every chance that study of family business practices in Eastern Europe and Russia will show distinctive cultural traits related to the particular characteristics of those regions.

'Culture' runs deep. It frames not only business practices, but the whole business environment (through law, politics and institutions). It even defines what is understood by 'family' and hence what constitutes 'a family business'. This is why Andrea Colli maintains that both the idea of a family firm and its prospects for success are cultural matters.¹⁵ A number of studies have underlined this cultural variation of family firms. We believe, for

¹¹ James, *Family Capitalism*, p. 17.

¹² Heli Valtonen, 'Does Culture Matter? Entrepreneurial Attitudes in the Autobiographies of Twentieth-Century Business Leaders in Finland and the United States', *Business and Economic History* 5 (2007) 1–24.

¹³ K-M. Piilahti, 'Climbing up the Social Ladder: Godparental Patterns among New Entrants into the Business Élite in Finland in the Nineteenth Century', *The History of the Family* 17:1 (2012) 51–76.

¹⁴ F.L. Isac and E.F. Remes, 'Culture and Business Ethics—a Comparative Perspective', *Studia Universitatis Economics Series* 27, 3 (2017) 54–6; P. Khakhar and H.G. Rammal, 'Culture and Business Networks: International Business Negotiations with Arab Managers', *International Business Review* 22 (2013) 578–90; 'The Changing Chinese Culture and Business Behaviour', *International Business Review* 17 (2008) 141–45; K. Leung, 'Chinese culture, modernization and International Business', *International Business Review*, 17 (2008) 184–87; Y. Luo, 'The Changing Chinese Culture and Business Behaviour: the Perspective of Intertwinement between Guanxi and Corruption', *International Business Review*, 17 (2008) 188–93;

¹⁵ Colli, *The History of Family Business*, p. 28 and pp. 73–4.

instance, that family firms have special significance in Italy,¹⁶ that ideas of family firms in China are different to those in Japan¹⁷ and that the Finnish business élite has favoured family businesses with ‘mixed’ approaches to sales, industrial production and local banking.¹⁸ Nonetheless such individual observations only serve to highlight that our understanding of the full cultural variability of family businesses is still in the process of emerging: it is patchy rather than comprehensive.

Again, closing the gaps calls for work on Eastern Europe and Russia. To cite Harold James once more, *ancien* regimes were family affairs at every level.¹⁹ If this was true in France, Germany and Italy, how much more true was it for Eastern Europe and Russia? This article, therefore, will begin to address gaps in the history of family business by discussing several cases which originated in the Russian Empire, which operated in interwar Latvia and Estonia, and which (in some cases) moved successfully to the Federal Republic of Germany after 1945. In the process, the paper will indicate some possibly distinctive characteristics of businesses drawn from the Baltic German community. Particular attention will be paid to the way local culture framed family businesses, not least in respect of efforts to influence policy-formation, social engagement and business resilience in the face of profound change.

The Baltic German context for family business

The survival of family firms cannot be separated from the self-understanding of families.²⁰ Among Baltic Germans, ideas of family were, and indeed can remain even today, distinctively strong.

¹⁶ Ibid p. 65.

¹⁷ Ibid p. 46.

¹⁸ J. Kansikas, ‘The Business Élite in Finland: a Prosopographical Study of Family Firm Executives 1762–2010’, *Business History* 57: 7 (2015) 1112–32

¹⁹ James, *Family Capitalism* p. 12, 22–25, 29.

²⁰ Ibid p. 13.

There are good historical and cultural reasons for this. Families and their names could be associated with centuries' long inhabitation of the Baltic region and the ownership of landed estates (e.g. the Camphausen and Stackelberg families). They could be associated with important historical events (e.g. the Manteuffel family and the storming of Riga on 22 May). Some families practiced the same vocation generation after generation (e.g. the Hasselblatt family and service in the church). Inter-marriage between élites consolidated the importance of lineage (e.g. Axel de Vries's marriage to a 'Manteuffel'). Furthermore, the significance of family membership was underpinned by the system of *Ritterschaften* (chivalrous orders), which provided the structure of political organisation in the Baltic Provinces during the Russian Empire. In a system which takes aristocracy seriously, genealogy defines nobility and hence a claim to power.

The significance of 'inheritance'—genealogically for some families, but culturally for all—was strengthened further by the community's link to the Teutonic Knights who had sought to 'civilise the East'. Even families which arrived late in the Baltic could take strength from joining a community which embodied myths of élite status and world historical purpose. Putting everything together, it is no mere chance that *Ritterschaft* organisations continue to exist 'in exile' in Germany today and at least some of the Baltic German community remain enthusiastic about genealogical research.²¹ This is why the post-war memoirs of even 'ordinary' Baltic Germans can provide extensive details of family trees and biological family inheritance.²²

The administration of the Baltic Provinces by the *Ritterschaften* during imperial times meant that aristocratic Baltic German families didn't just have a *relationship* to the system of political control; they *were* that system. A parallel system of organisation existed in the

²¹ So there is still a *Verband der Baltischen Ritterschaften* and there is a *Deutschbaltische Genealogische Gesellschaft*. See <https://www.baltische-ritterschaften.de/> and <http://www.dbgg.de/> (both accessed 19 November 2018).

²² For example, see Eugen Berg, *Die Familie Wilhelm Hjardt. Riga—Lauda*. Privately published: Lauda, 1970.

economy, namely the guilds. Although membership of the guilds was not heritable as in the case of the *Ritterschaften*, nonetheless they were reserved for specifically Baltic German entrepreneurs and artisans who met as members of an élite imperial national group among a population of non-élite nationalities (e.g. Estonians, Latvians, Russians and Jews). Given the level of autonomy allowed to the Baltic Provinces by St. Petersburg, it followed that the guilds had an important role to play in organising the economic development of this strategically important region. Arguably they were important players in legitimising the rule of both the Russian Empire and the *Ritterschaften* because they helped deliver prosperity for the local economy. Furthermore, in terms of the traditional ‘civilising mission’, the guilds could be seen as promoters of ‘civilised’, ‘Christian’ economic practices—the latter being reflected in the guilds’ social aims (see below). Without doubt, it was a mark of social distinction for an entrepreneur or craftsman to obtain a senior position in a guild.

The historical importance of the Baltic Provinces was emphasised further by their location on old Hanseatic trade routes leading to the Russian heartland and so the region’s businesses were well placed to thrive during the economic boom period of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.²³ In Eastern Europe, however, historical development—and especially economic development—was not a story of linear progress and material improvement. All too frequently the region experienced fundamental breaches and discontinuities—not least war, occupation, revolution and decolonisation—which brought substantial economic dislocation. The numerically small Baltic German community was well aware of its vulnerability to change and took practical steps to secure its existence. Hence when, during the Baltic independence period of the 1920s, proponents of educational and cultural autonomy promoted autonomous schooling for local ethnic Germans, they recognised the need to prepare their young people for practical careers in trade, industry and

²³ The point is noted in the family history of a firm discussed later in this paper, Berg, *Die Familie Wilhelm Hjordt*, p. 25.

the crafts.²⁴ Likewise, after 1945, as some Baltic Germans sought to re-build the community away from its historic homeland, a number of leading figures highlighted practical training opportunities for its young members.²⁵ So how did Baltic German family businesses experience their community's history?

Ewald Ammende and the family business

The interwar period as experienced in Central and Eastern Europe should be fascinating for business historians. Across the region, massive old empires were destroyed in favour of much smaller new nation states which were sandwiched between Weimar Germany and the Soviet Union. The transformation brought profound economic consequences. Suddenly the economic dictates of old empire were removed; established markets and supply chains no longer held good; transport and distribution systems experienced deep dislocation; miles of new state borders were drawn up and new protectionist tariffs introduced. The border of the Soviet Union became an all but insurmountable hurdle for western businesses. At the same time, formerly imperial societies experienced processes of decolonisation which threatened the privileges and practices of established business élites.

Consider a family business located in Pärnu (formerly Pernau). Before 1914 it was located at the heart of the Russian Empire's flourishing Baltic Provinces in the northern part of Livonia, whence it looked to Riga as its dominant city. By the peace settlement of 1920, however, it was allocated to Estonia. Now the town was required to look to that state's capital (Tallinn, formerly Reval) and, economically, it was cut off from Riga (Latvia's capital) by a state border and trade tariffs. Worse, now Pärnu's businesses had become part of a small nation state on the fringe of Europe and, thanks to the Russian Revolution, they had lost their

²⁴ See, for instance, H. Pantenius, 'Berufswahl und Schule', *Revaler Bote* 29 September 1925. As an imperial élite, historically many ethnic Germans had gone into state employment, such as state administration. In the 1920s, however, increasingly such jobs were being staffed by ethnic Latvians, Lithuanians and Estonians.

²⁵ 'Richard Kablitz: Fördert unsere Jungen! Die BB besuchen Landsleute', *Baltische Briefe. Heimatblatt der Deutschbalten*. No. 7 (81), Marburg, July 1955. Vol. 8.

traditional access to the opportunity-rich lands further to the East. One member of a family business based in Pärnu, Ewald Ammende (1892–1936), responded with determination and creativity.²⁶ He attempted to address personal and civic problems through policy, in the process highlighting how private and public interests could converge in this time and place.²⁷

The Ammendes were among Pärnu's 1,200 ethnic Germans and in keeping with its pre-1914 élite imperial status, the family had a history of community engagement—a background which prepared it well to engage in policy debates about economic futures. Ewald Ammende's grandfather had been a *Ratsherr*, while his father had been a *Stadtrat* and deputy council leader in their home town.²⁸ His father was also president of the local School Association which supported the local German school and his mother was involved in the local branch of the Estonian Women's Association.²⁹ Ewald Ammende was active in public affairs too. At the level of the Estonian state, he supported the achievement of cultural autonomy (1925), while internationally he helped establish the Association of German National Minorities in Europe (1922) and later the European Congress of Nationalities (1925).³⁰ His early life, however, reflected his family business background.

After he graduated from the German grammar school in Pärnu in 1909, it was decided that Ewald shouldn't continue his education in the thoroughly academic, though rather remote, surroundings of Tartu (then Dorpat) University, but in the more practical and cosmopolitan environment of Riga Polytechnic where he studied trade. He went on to study in Germany, first at the Business High School in Cologne (where he graduated in 1912) and

²⁶ For a biography which focuses on Ewald Ammende's work promoting the rights of national minorities in the interwar period see M. Housden, *On their own Behalf. Ewald Ammende, Europe's National Minorities and the Campaign for Cultural Autonomy 1920–1936*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2014.

²⁷ The figure of 1,200 is cited in 'Rund um die kleineren Städte der Heimat', *Revaler Bote* 20 September 1924. It is also cited as the number of members of the town's Nikolai Church community, see H. v. B., 'Rund um die kleineren Städte der Heimat', *Revaler Bote* 4 October 1924

²⁸ See Ewald Ammende's curriculum vitae, 1502–1–30. Russian State Military Archive, Moscow (hereafter RSMA)

²⁹ H. v. B., 'Rund um die kleineren Städte der Heimat', *Revaler Bote* 4 October 1924.

³⁰ Housden, *On their own Behalf*, also S. Bamberger-Stemmann, *Der Europäische Nationalitätenkongreß 1925 bis 1938*. Marburg: Verlag Herder Institut, 2000.

then Tübingen, before diversifying his educational experiences further with a spell at the Institute of Economics in Moscow. After the First World War he returned to Germany to study at universities in Cologne (1919–20) and Kiel (1922). While a student, Ammende wrote a dissertation about Dutch trading history and later a doctorate about German minorities. He made study trips to England, France, the Balkans and northern Russia. It appears that the Ammende family had good links with Liverpool and Mukden.³¹

During the First World War, Ewald Ammende began running his father's firm, which appears to have been a general trading house. He learned how to deal with different kinds of administrations when, in 1915, he became Plenipotentiary for Supply to Livonia and when, in 1918 (with the area now under German occupation), he negotiated with the Hetman of the Ukraine for raw materials and food for Estonia and Livonia. He visited Ukraine to procure a shipment of sugar, eastern Moscow to facilitate the movement of a cargo of rice, and St. Petersburg to acquire petrol.³² At this time, being a businessman in the Baltic brought risk. In March 1917, Ewald's father was arrested by Bolshevik authorities.³³ After the war, his brother (Edgar) was imprisoned in Moscow.³⁴

As war drew to an end, so massive social and economic transformations occurred across Eastern Europe. Back in the newly independent Estonia, and notwithstanding the fact that Baltic Germans had lost their former status as a colonial élite, Ewald Ammende attempted to become a business opinion-former. Certainly he was assisted by his family's wealth and connections. After the First World War, he acquired some shares in the newspaper *Rigasche Rundschau* (edited by the famous liberal, Paul Schiemann) and so began a career in

³¹ Housden, *On their own Behalf*, p. 379. Also 6.12.35, Ammende to Roediger. R 31832. Political Archive of the Foreign Office, Berlin.

³² Relevant documents are held at 1502–1–11 and 1502–1–47, RSMA.

³³ See 1502–1–15, RSMA.

³⁴ This event is recorded in various letters written in 1921 which are located in 1502–1–84, RSMA.

journalism which, in due course, led him to contribute regularly to Estonia's leading Baltic German newspaper, *Revaler Bote*.³⁵

Through journalism, Ewald Ammende not only discussed policy issues but gained entrées to policy circles. For *Revaler Bote*, he attended the Genoa Conference where he interviewed Professor Cassell, an expert in international economics. They discussed how new borders were dividing markets from traditional sources of raw materials and hindering the flow of trade. Ammende warned of the 'Balkanisation of the Baltic'.³⁶ More specifically, at another time he explained how Latvian tariffs were hindering Pärnu's agricultural trade by disrupting the export of flax via the traditional route through Riga.³⁷ Ammende maintained that economic unity was a pre-requisite for Baltic economic success. He favoured the Baltic States becoming a trading unit and, eventually, providing a single efficient transit land between the West and Russia. Predictably, when Ammende met German Foreign Minister Rathenau, they discussed the possible flow of German trade to Russia via the Baltic coast.³⁸

Ammende met several other European statesmen in Genoa, for example President Beneš (Czechoslovakia) and Foreign Minister Skirmunt (Poland). His reporting presented a coherent politico-economic vision. Ammende advocated that Estonia should remain aloof from bloc-based international politics and ally with neutral states such as Switzerland. This would permit less money to be spent on armaments and more on socially useful projects.³⁹ With the economy thus reinvigorated (and no doubt aided by neutral status), in due course the

³⁵ Ferdinand von Uexküll-Güldenband, 'Dr. Ewald Ammende—Obituary', *Nation und Staat* 1936, p. 531–37.

³⁶ E. Ammende, 'Professor Cassell über die Konferenz von Genua und das euopäische Sanierungsproblem', *Revaler Bote* 3 June 1922.

³⁷ Undated article, 'Soll Südestland eine Handelskolonie Rigas werden?' 1502–1–60, RSMA. Also 'Zur Frage der Zollunion mit Lettland', 1502–1–60, RSMA.

³⁸ E. Ammende, 'Russland, Deutschland und die baltischen Staaten. Ein Gespräch mit Walter Rathenau', *Revaler Bote* 31 May 1922.

³⁹ Articles by E. Ammende: 'Die baltischen Staaten und die Genua Konferenz, Abrüstung und Neutralität', *Revaler Bote* 31 March 1922; 'Die baltischen Staaten und die Genua Konferenz. Der Wiederaufbau Russlands und das Prinzip der "offenen Tür"', *Revaler Bote* 1 April 1922; 'Die baltischen Staaten und die Genua Konferenz. Unsere Taktik in Genua', *Revaler Bote* 8 April 1922.

Baltic region could re-engage with Russia, which he considered fundamental to the economic well-being not just of the Baltic region, but of Europe as a whole.⁴⁰

It's at this point we have to remember that Ammende's family was an international trading family, and so it would flourish when the Pärnu region flourished, when Estonia flourished, when the Baltic flourished and when Europe flourished. So as a businessman and journalist with a wide spread of cosmopolitan experience, he appreciated how all of the economic levels (from familial, to local, to regional, to national and to continental) fitted together. This was reflected in his discussion of railways. At the time, railways were vitally important trade arteries. The Baltic's rail system had been developed, however, according to the needs of the Russian Empire not those of independent nation states. So, the existing system tended to bind centres such as Riga and Tallinn not to the peripheries of the Latvian and Estonian states, but to Russian hubs. Hence Ammende campaigned to link Pärnu more efficiently to Tallinn by upgrading the existing narrow-gauge railway.⁴¹ Also he promoted the idea of an efficient rail link between Pärnu and the main rail system running towards the Russian heartland because one day this would carry trade between East and West.⁴² Ammende illustrated his argument with reference to old Hanseatic trade routes which ran from the Baltic to Pskov and Novgorod.

In 1921, Ammende's travels took him to Trieste. He found an Adriatic port which had thrived as part of Austria-Hungary but which now, as part of Italy, had lost its old imperial hinterland. Political isolation, high tariffs and assertive trades unions had caused its trade to drop by about 30%.⁴³ Ammende maintained that at least some of Trieste's lost trade was being routed through Hamburg. With an eye for an opportunity, he proposed that other

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ 'Übernahme der Pernau-Revaler Schmalspurbahn', *Revaler Bote* 2 November 1923; 'Das Projekt des Umbaues des Revaler Eisenbahnnotenpunktes', *Revaler Bote* 22 August 1924. E. Ammende, 'Pernau', *Revaler Bote* 24 May 1924 plus Ammende's papers located at 1502-7-19, RSMA P. 28, note 62. P. 15, note 8.

⁴² Ibid plus 'Der nordlivländische Handelsweg', 1502-7-35, RSMA.

⁴³ E. Ammende, 'Italien und das tote Triest', *Revaler Bote* 22 October 1923.

northern ports (by implication Riga, Tallinn and, of course, Pärnu) should capitalise on Trieste's misfortune.

In fact, Ammende was able to locate his hometown (and hence his family's economic prospects) even more creatively in prospective economic developments. With Pärnu located half way between Riga and Tallinn, he recommended promoting it as a holiday centre. In the mid-1920s, Pärnu's council was considering the strategy and Ammende 'egged them on'.⁴⁴ He proposed that Latvians and Finns would flock to the town to escape their own countries' stringent anti-alcohol laws. He also wanted to attract German tourists, but in this connection recommended marketing the land's Germanic cultural heritage.⁴⁵ Perhaps drawing on experiences from an earlier study trip, he proposed developing Pärnu's beach as a French-style 'Plage' (beach). He wanted better hotels and a 'Kurhaus' to make guests feel welcome. Existing spa facilities could be enhanced by using nearby fenland mud for medicinal purposes. Returning to a 'hobby horse', Ammende advised that in order to capitalise on Pärnu's potential, all these developments should be underpinned by transport infrastructure. He wanted better rail, road and coach connections to Tallinn and Riga; steamers should run to Riga, Helsinki, Rügen and Stettin; he even floated an air service to Finland.

Despite everything, the Ammende family firm failed in the late 1920s and the family home (Villa Ammende, Pärnu) was sold to the town council.⁴⁶ The failure, however, followed remarkable policy arguments to enhance the economic prospects of his region, home town and family alike. As he argued, the creativity of Ewald Ammende's ideas testified to the long-sightedness and resilience of Baltic German mentalities; his appreciation of all levels of economic function (from local to continental) testifies to the former status of the

⁴⁴ 'Rund um die kleineren Städte der Heimat', *Revaler Bote* 20 September 1924.

⁴⁵ The issue of Germans and cultural tourism was explored further in an article which was unnamed, but which might well have owed something to Ewald Ammende anyway. 'Estland als Touristenland', *Revaler Bote* 1926..

⁴⁶ See the web site of Villa Ammende, <https://ammende.ee/en/about-us/history/>. (Consulted 25 November 2018.)

Baltic Germans as a colonial élite which, historically had capitalised on the benefits of a world empire.

Business culture and Ewald Ammende's participation

In the 1920s, Ewald Ammende attempted to understand and make the best of Europe's new business environment. For instance, before 1914 Livonia and Courland could hardly have been major tourism destinations for *Reich* Germans. On the one hand, the age of mass tourism had not yet arrived and, on the other hand, such a trip would have involved movement between two mutually suspicious empires. But Ammende realised that Europe's new political circumstances had opened the way to all kinds of new possibilities, including international tourism. And he understood that new technology (such as air travel) would help business exploit the new possibilities. Here was a mind that understood how a business environment never stands still. As society 'progressed', so 'Ammende the businessman' was ready to 'progress' too—recognising the need to replace lost markets with new ones and to update anachronistic transport infrastructure accordingly. Furthermore, perhaps this 'progression' had a deeper meaning for a member of the Baltic German community. In addition to the benefit that his proposals would offer his family's business, the possibility is open that strategies for the economic transformation, modernisation and arguably Europeanisation of the Baltic region also reflected a variant of the historic 'civilizing mission in the East' adapted to the interwar period.

Ammende's attempts to provide policy-leadership also should be located in the context of the guilds and social responsibility. The guilds had a history stretching back to at least the thirteenth century. In imperial times, Riga's *Grosse Gilde* (or *St. Marien Gilde*) was a forum for Baltic German trades people, while the *Kleine Gilde* (or *St. Johannes Gilde*)

served the artisans.⁴⁷ These were not solely networking centres; they promoted social engagement too. Hence, the *Grosse Gilde* was supposed to nurture companionship, healthy co-existence, also social and spiritual welfare. Other long-established guilds existed in other cities and they too were committed to fulfilling comparable social functions.⁴⁸ This social role of the guilds was reiterated during the interwar period when the new Latvian state passed legislation requiring that the *Grosse Gilde* reform as a private (rather than public) organisation. In its revised terms of reference, the organisation undertook to address the welfare of the community, offer mutual support and promote the common good.⁴⁹ Although it's unclear whether Ewald Ammende was a member of a guild, his commitment to seeking out ways to promote the general welfare his home region fitted well within the guilds' established terms of reference.

A contribution to social leadership by senior business figures was part of Baltic German culture. As we have seen, the Ammende family was very much engaged in Pärnu's social affairs. A Baltic German industrialist discussed below (Wilhelm Hjardt) was a senior member of the *St. Marien Gilde* and belonged to 26 social organisations in Riga; Kurt Brieger (see below) was also engaged in a guild and social projects.⁵⁰ In addition, take the case of Oskar Jaksch.⁵¹ Before 1939, he was member of the trading house *J. Jaschke and Co.* and served as Spanish Consul in Riga as well as being a member of the *Grosse Gilde*. After 1945

⁴⁷ D.M. Goetze and P. Woerster, 'Stadtverfassung im Baltikum: die Grosse Gilde zu Riga', <https://www.herder-institut.de/servicebereiche/dokumentesammlung/archivale-des-monats/2010/maerz.html> (consulted 26.10.18)

⁴⁸ See for example: 'Gildebruderschaft der Schwartzhäupter will ihr Haus in Tallinn zurück', *Die Baltische Rundschau*. Online-Redaktion, 06.01.2013. <https://baltische-rundschau.eu/gildebruderschaft-der-schwarzhaeupter-will-ihr-haus-in-tallinn-zurueck/> (consulted 26.10.2018) and 'Eid der Grossen Gilde aus Tartu ist unser Archivale des Monats', Aktuelle Nachrichten, Termine und Veranstaltungen. https://www.herder-institut.de/no_cache/aktuelles/detailansicht/calendar/event/termin/2018/02/12.html?tx_cal_controller%5Buid%5D=17964&cHash=e1fa494b5f7ad9171d0353a968c63090 (consulted 26.10.18)

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Berg, *Die Familie Wilhelm Hjardt*, p. 22. 'Ältester Dr. Ing. Kurt Brieger', *Baltische Briefe. Heimatblatt der Deutschbalten*. Nr. 12 (26) Vol. 3, Marburg December 1950.

⁵¹ See *Baltische Briefe. Heimatblatt der Deutschbalten*. Nr. 2 (40) Vol. 5, Marburg February 1952.

he was active in charitable work organised by the Protestant Church in western Germany which assisted Baltic refugees.

In the intricately constructed Baltic world (where businessmen had been members of an imperial élite, where they were used to thinking in terms of social-political engagement and where they had experienced either international trade or trade with far-flung parts of the Russian Empire), it was obvious that after 1918 they would try to influence the emerging business and economic environments at every possible level. Based on the durability of the Baltic German community over the centuries, they might even have had grounds to expect no small degree of success.⁵² As family business representatives, such as Ewald Ammende, offered ideas to policy-makers to help drive along economic development, they blurred the lines between the interests of their private firms and those of public society. In their minds, the categories flowed together seamlessly, creating perhaps the idea of a state with hybrid business and political components in which individual and common benefit amounted to the same thing.

Family Businesses and refugee experience

Introduction

If the post-1918 peace settlement in Europe posed major problems for Baltic German family businesses, events associated with the Second World War were even more challenging. First, the ‘dictated option’ of the *Umsiedlung* uprooted businesses to *Warthegau*; later, the approach of the Red Army forced flight further westwards.⁵³ Consequently, amongst other things, we can use the Baltic Germans as a prism through which to view the implications of

⁵² For a discussion of circumstances in which business, and perhaps in particular family firms, can influence society, see Colli, *The History of Family Business*, p. 25. Also Colli, ‘Family Firms between Risks and Opportunities’; also Cassis quoted in Colli, *The History of Family Business*, p. 25.

⁵³ D.A. Loeber, *Diktierte Option: Die Umsiedlung der Deutsch-Balten aus Estland und Lettland 1939-1941-Dokumentation*. Hamburg: Wachholtz, 1972..

war and different kinds of displacement—including *transnational* displacement—for family businesses.⁵⁴

There are, however, problems associated with the study of conflict and flight, not least that emergency and turmoil can lead to the loss of historical evidence. This paper takes some evidence from the post-war Baltic German community newspaper, *Baltische Briefe*. It has been assisted tremendously, however, by the Baltic German community's interest in family history because, once established in the Federal Republic, some families produced their own business histories.

Mixed success: Brieger and Prindull

Not all Baltic German family firms survived the turmoil of war. The business *H.A. Brieger* was founded in 1849 in Riga to manufacture high class soap and perfume. Kurt Brieger was born in Riga in 1888 and trained in Chemistry at the Technical High School, Zürich before returning to his home city to work in the family firm.⁵⁵ After the First World War, Kurt worked alongside his father (Wilhelm) and his uncle, before taking over sole leadership of the business. According to reporting in *Baltische Briefe*, he was a 'friendly patriarch' who was appreciated by his Latvian workers. He was also a senior member of the *Grosse Gilde* and gave time to local social organisations. He left Riga with the *Umsiedlung*, returned to run the family business again (presumably under the German occupation), only to leave for a final time in 1944. Thereafter he and his wife settled in Göttingen. Once in the Federal Republic, he appears never to have tried to re-establish the firm and his obituary implies that loss of the Baltic homeland sapped the motivation of a man who previously had been renowned for his work ethic. Kurt Brieger died in Göttingen in 1950.

⁵⁴ On the need for more studies of entrepreneurs crossing borders, see James, *Family Capitalism*, p.384.

⁵⁵ 'Ältester Dr. Ing. Kurt Brieger'.

Other family firms fared better, even if they failed to regain all of their former success. In August 1889, Nikolai Prindull founded a shop for specialist optical equipment in Riga.⁵⁶ The business thrived and, in July 1918, Alfred Prindull took over a dynamic enterprise. Before 1914, Alfred had studied Chemistry at Riga Polytechnic before undertaking work experience at optical firms in St. Petersburg and Stuttgart. While in the latter city, in 1922 he gained his diploma in Optometry from the professional high school. The family firm prospered to such an extent that in 1928 Alfred opened a second branch in Riga. By 1939 it was certified by Zeiss (Jena) and handled 80% of that firm's sales in Latvia.

1939 changed everything. Alfred Prindull relocated to Poznań (Posen) and ran the firm as independently of the Nazi administration as possible. Hopes of return to Riga were dashed by the Red Army's success, so the family fled to Goslar (in western Germany) to stay with relatives. There, in December 1946, Alfred opened an optical shop in *Rosentorstrasse*. The new venture was aided by business contacts which he had developed over the years in Germany's optical industry. The new business did not, however, compare with what had been lost in Riga. A family enterprise once based in an imperial hub was transformed according to the more limited opportunities of a provincial home. The family's circumstances changed too. When they left Riga, the Prindulls had only been able to take two suitcases, and so retained only a few reminders of home (e.g. Baltic table linen, cutlery and crockery). The journalism about the family suggests they lived in rather cramped circumstances after 1945. Nonetheless, Alfred's professional specialism enabled him to continue making a living for his family.

But there's an addendum to this story. If you Google *Prindull Optik*, you are taken a current business, *Schmidt—Augenoptik und Hörakustik* which has the address of *Rosentorstrasse 10, Goslar*.⁵⁷ A small banner notes 'Formerly Prindull Optics (*Ehemals Prindull Optik*)'. The web site explains that, although the Schmidt family has run the firm

⁵⁶ 'Die BB besuchen Landsleute (II). Fernoptik—nah gesehen', *Baltische Briefe. Heimatblatt der Deutschbalten*. Nr. 3, March, Vol. 3, 1950.

⁵⁷ See <https://optik-akustik-goslar.de/>. (Consulted 20 October 2018)

since 2002 (and is currently in its second generation), formerly the firm was *Prindull Optik* which was founded in 1889.⁵⁸ A simple paragraph omits a great deal of information about the firm's past, but still it's interesting to see that the Prindull family business lasted until 2002 and that its new owner values a long business heritage.

Success across the generations: the Hjardt family's obsession with lacquer

Today, a firm called *Hjardt Lacquer and Colours (Hjardt Lacke und Farben)* is based in Lauda, near Rothenburg ob der Tauber and is owned by Werner Schütz.⁵⁹ It was, however, founded in Riga by the Hjardt family and had its history unveiled first in a report carried by *Baltische Briefe* in 1951 and later in a short book.⁶⁰ The book is a testament to Baltic German culture in its own right because it comes complete not only with a timeline of family history stretching back to 1674, but also with notes about ancient family members and family trees. The family trees show how some firm members had married into the business.

In the late eighteenth century, Carl Frederik Hjort left Denmark for the Baltic lands.⁶¹ He was a skilled woodworker who made notes about ways to preserve and paint wood. It was natural, therefore, that his son Alexander (with the surname now spelled Hjardt—the name is derived from the Danish word for 'deer') joined a lacquer factory, *IC Koch*, which had been founded in Riga in 1842. He worked there for 50 years and, in time, was joined in the work by his son, Wilhelm (1863–1935). In 1901, Wilhelm used the 700th anniversary of Riga as an opportunity to strike out on his own and establish the *Russian-Baltic Lacquer Factory: Wilhelm Hjardt*. Appropriately enough, the firm's logo featured the picture of a deer. The firm won critical acclaim for its products in 1928, 1930 and 1932. Buoyed up by this success, Wilhelm joined the supervisory committee of Riga's Association of Producers. He also

⁵⁸ <https://optik-akustik-goslar.de/index.php>. (Consulted 20 October 2018.)

⁵⁹ <http://www.hjardt-lacke.de/kontakt>. (Consulted 5 December 2018.)

⁶⁰ '50 Jahre Firma Wilh. Hjardt KG', *Baltische Briefe. Heimatblatt der Deutschbalten*. Nr. 7 (33) Vol. 4, Marburg July 1951 and Berg, *Die Familie Wilhelm Hjardt*.

⁶¹ The following discussion of the family firm is based mostly on Berg, *Die Familie Wilhelm Hjardt*.

displayed considerable commitment to social engagement, becoming a member of multiple local organisations and a senior guild member.

The firm was based in the Thorensberg suburb of Riga and served the Latvian market. It made its fortune, however, by supplying lacquers more widely—especially to the Russian heartland. A bright new lacquer developed in 1910 (the same year the factory was electrified) sold particularly well in the lands to the east of the Baltic Provinces. In the empire, however, sometimes enterprise had to be underpinned by political engagement and on occasion Wilhelm and his wife Elise Hjortd (1869-1952) had to travel to St. Petersburg to lobby government figures to ensure helpful business conditions.

During the First World War, some of the factory's machinery and personnel were relocated to St. Petersburg and Moscow. Other machines, however, remained in Riga so the facility could re-open quickly after the war. Now the firm had to operate in a small independent nation state; it had to respond to wartime technical innovations in the field of lacquer; it had to take account of how the business was changing from a craft to a field of Chemistry; and it had to assess how to meet the needs of new kinds of products (such as automobiles—since new products required new kinds of lacquer). The firm dropped reference to Russia from its name (since Soviet markets were closed to it); it diversified its production and began to import necessary materials via Hamburg.

The interwar period was busy. Recent technical developments in lacquer highlighted that the firm required its own research laboratory and the need to innovate impelled Wilhelm's son, Alexander (born 1902), to work for a while with BASF in Germany. Moreover, the adoption of protectionist policies by the new nation states meant that the Thorensberg factory could no longer export to Lithuania. In order to tap into the Lithuanian market, therefore, it opened a new factory in Klaipėda (Memel). On top of all of this, when a

washing powder firm began to produce lacquer, Hjordt responded by buying a washing powder firm, *Borsil*.

According to the Hjordts, a businessman working in the Baltic had to be a diplomat. If he made a phone call, he had to be ready to talk in one of several languages. There was nothing diplomatic about the events of 1939, however. The firm had to relocate to *Wartheland*, where it developed facilities in Włocławek (Leslau) and Poznań (Posen). In 1941, the German occupation of Latvia enabled the factory in Riga to be re-opened. Throughout all of this upheaval, money appears to have kept rolling into the firm, first thanks to the continuity afforded by the Klaipėda facility and also due to military orders (for instance, lacquer used to coat munitions boxes for the army). True, as the war went on, the *Warthegau* workforce became increasingly de-motivated, but the real crisis came in 1944-45. Then, the facility relocated to Usti Nad Labem (formerly Assig—today in the Czech Republic) before everyone had to flee in disorder. Eventually the family came to rest in a small town near Rotherburg ob der Tauber. It was located near to both a communications node and a camp for displaced persons; it was called Lauda.

Family folklore maintains that Alexander Hjordt decided to re-establish the firm on 20 August 1948, the day of currency reform. It was resurrected in a cattle shed and (when the weather was good) production moved outside to a farmyard. Initially the firm focused on its core business, namely coatings for wood, and soon it won a contract to supply lacquer for school equipment. In due course, the Hjordts benefited from a federal loan supplied through Lauda town council and in January 1956 the family firm expanded into larger premises. Its solid economic performance was, in fact, built on a base of reliable specialists including two people linked to the firm before 1939 (Karl Marx, born 1902, married to Olga Hjordt and a senior employee; also Ernst Ankinewitsch, born 1924 whose father had been a senior employee and who was married to Sophie Hjordt) plus a chemist drawn from a well-known

Baltic German family (Georg Girgensohn). The resilience of the firm ensured that when a revolutionary new lacquer was discovered that could coat both wood and metal, the firm was able to respond by enlarging its facilities again.

The family firm adapted, survived and prospered. In 1961 it celebrated its 60th anniversary and, six years later, expanded its facilities further. Now it was managed by Sven Hjordt (born 1935) who had been trained at the *Karl Woerwag* lacquer factory in Stuttgart and *Cellon* in Kingston upon Thames. By this point, the family was settled in Lauda and inhabited several houses in nice parts of the town. This was their new *Heimat*. But when the short book about the Hjordts likens them to a flock of birds, all held together by their instincts, it doesn't tell the whole story. They were bound together by the ties to the family business as well; and this provided for their material needs and career successes.

The Hjordt lacquer firm truly was a family business. Key businessmen, such as Karl Marx and Ernst Ankinewitsch, were bound in through marriage. Other family members, including the matriarch Elise Hjordt, participated in many different ways, both formal and informal. With family members training at home and abroad, the Hjordts evidenced a commitment to lacquer and coatings' technology which spanned the generations. The family displayed a remarkable ability to adapt to new political-economic circumstances as well as to the business's technical innovations. For this family of refugees from the Second World War, chemistry and industrial expertise, supplemented perhaps by 'softer' business skills learned in the Baltic region (such as diplomacy and lobbying) became portable resources which could be deployed to good effect when it had to re-establish itself in Lauda.

More success: Richard Kablitz and inventive engineering

The firm *Richard Kablitz und Mitthof* is also based in Lauda. Currently it is owned by an Italian concern, *Engitec Technologies*,⁶² but the enterprise was founded in Riga by Richard Kablitz himself (1868–1959).⁶³ In time, like the Hjordts, Kablitz became the subject of a brief study,⁶⁴ also he has been included in the *Baltisches Biographisches Lexikon*.⁶⁵ As with the Briegers, Prindulls and Hjordts, journalists from *Baltische Briefe* visited Richard Kablitz in the early 1950s to document the achievements of a man who was then in his mid-eighties. The firm, at the time called *The German Richard Kablitz Society for Cost-Effective Steam Production and Furnace Control (Deutsche Richard-Kablitz-Gesellschaft für Ökonomie der Dampferzeugungskosten und Feuerungskontrolle mbH)*, was identified by the journalist as an integral part of Baltic history—true praise indeed.

Kablitz was born in 1868, on his father's estate of Eichhof located near Võru (Werro, Estonia). He went to school in Dorpat (Tartu) before studying mechanical engineering at Riga Polytechnic, where, aged 23 he became an assistant and taught mechanical engineering.⁶⁶ For two years he worked in Moscow and St. Petersburg, but returned to Riga to work for Richard Pohl's engineering firm, where he had already worked while a student. In 1896 he won a gold medal at the World Exhibition in Nizhny-Novgorod for two petrol engines and from 1897 until 1901 he played a leading role in the Riga firm *Motor*, where he developed especially his two-stroke engine. For the next three years he worked as a civil engineer until, in 1904, he co-founded and later ran alone the firm *The Society for Cost-Effective Steam Production and Furnace Control*. Apparently one of his main concerns was to help produce cheaper heating

⁶² Page: <http://www.kablitz.de/management-change.html>. (Consulted 18 October 2018.)

⁶³ <http://www.kablitz.de/jubilaem.html>. (Consulted 18 October 2018.)

⁶⁴ 'Richard Kablitz und sein Werk', *Baltische Briefe. Heimatblatt der Deutschbalten*. No. 10 (60), Marburg, October 1953. Vol. 6; 'Richard Kablitz: Fördert unsere Jungen!' *Baltische Briefe. Heimatblatt der Deutschbalten*. No. 7 (81), Marburg, July 1955. Vol. 8; *Richard Kablitz: ein Leben im Dienste der Wärmetechnik. 1869–1958*. Unknown location of publication: Stieber, 1959.

⁶⁵ <https://bbld.de/0000000386303258>. (Consulted 6 December 2018.) *Baltisches Biographisches Lexikon* (hereafter BBL)

⁶⁶ The biography is compiled from the articles in *Baltische Briefe*, from the BBL entry and from the Kablitz firm's web pages.

and electricity for ordinary people, but the enterprise was disrupted by the 1905 disorders and Kablitz fled to Germany for a short time. Further disruption followed during the First World War when, to prevent everything falling in to enemy hands, Kablitz and his undertaking were relocated to the Russian town of Čerepet (Kaluga district).

He re-established the firm in Riga in 1918 and in the 1920s designed a revolutionary heat exchanger which aroused considerable international interest. His business was so important that it was granted a major concession to supply technology to the Soviet Union, but the concession ended in 1930. After this, the firm tried to market its heating products for countries all over the world which had an interest in using fuel sparingly (including Western Europe, South America, Congo and China). Kablitz's firm collapsed, however, as a result of 1939–40. He was forced to move to Łodz where he began to run a mechanical engineering factory and an iron smelting works as a *Treuhandstelle*. By 1945 he was employing 800 people. The advance of the Red Army, however, forced Kablitz to flee towards the West and, with the assistance of American occupation authorities, he came to rest first in Marbach and then Lauda.

The close proximity of iron industry facilities and an appreciation of Kablitz's skills by both the Baden *Land* government and the government of Luxemburg meant that in 1950 he received a German government loan to help acquire buildings and machinery. Former employees of the firm were brought from around Germany and out of the eastern zone in order to help build a skilled workforce. At the time of his newspaper interview, Kablitz was employing over 150 people, many of whom were Baltic refugees. By 1954 the firm had a turnover of over 3 million *Deutschmarks*, with over 80% of its products going abroad. It had strong links with engineering firms in Paris and Wakefield (England).

Richard Kablitz was always inventive and dynamic. Soon after the Second World War, a group of German industrialists went to see some of Kablitz's most innovative

technology being used in Switzerland and as a result of the trip he won a major commission from the Bavarian government. The real post-war breakthrough, however, was a contract to supply hot air heating systems for 24 tankers belonging to the Onassis shipping line. Despite all of this personal success, Richard Kablitz still thought more generally rather than simply about his own ventures. Aged 87, in his interview for *Baltische Briefe*, he displayed a clear sense of responsibility towards his Baltic German community. With an emphasis on the difficult financial realities experienced by many refugee families, he explained all of the advantages that training and a career in engineering could bring a young Balt.

Conclusion

Themes

So what concluding comments can we make about Baltic German family businesses and those who staffed them in the twentieth century? In general, Baltic businessmen were cosmopolitans. Those discussed here were born in Courland or Livonia and so, from the outset, experienced linguistic and cultural diversity. Brought up as German-speakers, they would have been exposed to Russian, Latvian and (for some) Estonian. Until 1939, the region had a thriving Jewish business community too. Here, businessmen had to be linguists and diplomats. Cosmopolitanism flowed through their training and early careers, with professional development routinely involving exposure to ways of working in Riga, Russia and Central Europe. This amounted to a rich international education and must have offered many opportunities for intellectual and technical cross-fertilization. It must also have provided understanding for the 'soft skills' necessary to negotiate deals with fellow businessmen located from Berlin to the Russian heartland. These were businessmen brought up and educated to be transnational: to be prepared to think locally and internationally; to

look East and West for business; to be ready to deal with people no matter what their cultural and linguistic heritage.

Perhaps this background equipped Baltic German family business people well to deal with disruption and even to become refugees. They had a considerable repertoire of skills and experiences on which they could draw at a time of crisis and movement. After all, in addition to their intrinsic cosmopolitanism, they had learned a lot about adapting to radical change from all of the disruptions associated with the Russian Revolutions (1905 and 1917), the First World War and the rise of Baltic independence. During this period, some even had developed business contacts in Germany which would prove helpful in due course.

Naturally, they were also helped by being part of the German cultural group. The characteristic was the basis of a privileged position in the Baltic Provinces of the Russian Empire and in *Wartheland*; it can only have facilitated adaptation to life in the Federal Republic of Germany. Indeed, some had family members in western Germany who offered support through the most difficult of times. This does not mean that their lives were entirely 'a bed of roses'. There was no small level of post-colonial resentment towards Baltic German minorities in Latvia and Estonia after the First World War and, after 1945, western Germany did not receive ethnic German refugees with open arms. Often they experienced popular discrimination. Nonetheless, on balance, after 1945 it helped that the Baltic Germans shared language and many aspects of culture with their new host society. After 1945, refugees could also find a number of supports for their businesses. Interventions by Allied authorities and the provision of government loans were helpful. Both were tailored to getting the German economy moving again and to finding employment for a destitute population.

Several of the examples cited here emphasise how very resilient family firms can be. Evidently the mixture of family bonds, education for the long-term and the build up of specialist know-how created a strong amalgam which had the potential to weather even the

most difficult of times. In the face of upheaval and displacement, in some cases at least family ties pulled businesses back together with considerable effectiveness and enabled them re-enter the marketplace relatively quickly. This observation provides a perspective on the well-established idea that when a state is weak, family relationships provide an important resource for economic construction.

Culture, mobility and survival

Studies of variation between different business cultures have focussed on, for instance, leadership, networking and ethics.⁶⁷ Of course, far more variables than just these differ by culture, for example: the role of the state in the economy, processes of decision-making, access to decision-makers, senses of entitlement, sense of social responsibility, attitudes to borders and the definition and perception of business opportunities—the list could go on and on. In myriad ways and at every level, cultural differences can influence business behaviour just as they do any other kind of human conduct. So the history of family businesses in the Baltic is about much more than bare profit and loss; it's about everything that goes into and provides a context for economic performance. Dealing with the world before 1914, it's a tale of how family businesses operated in a large continental, multinational empire. During the interwar period, it's a story of how family businesses responded to the rise of independent nation states in Central and Eastern Europe. From 1939 on, it becomes a tale of business resilience in the face of conflict, calamity and flight. Through all of this, Baltic German family business history reflects the culture of a very specific group. Apart from everything else, it's a story about how one community conceived itself and the methods it adopted to survive for as long as possible. In this light (and given the outstanding success of some of the

⁶⁷ See, for example, Isac and Remes, 'Culture and Business Ethics'.

firms), Baltic family business history cannot be overlooked as an important part of Baltic—and perhaps to some extent even German—economic history in general.⁶⁸

The richness of material informing this article highlights the need for future studies of family businesses originating in the Russian Empire, Eastern Europe and the Baltic. There should be plenty of scope for studying further how such firms were framed by their environment and how they responded to it. Given the history of the region, there should be plenty more stories about resilience in the face of disruption. Furthermore, the phenomenon of family businesses relocating from the East to West after 1945 provokes a whole additional series of questions. How many such firms were there? What was their relationship to the Allied occupation authorities and to the German government? How many people did they employ? What did they contribute to Germany's post-war economic reconstruction? And, of course, how many of these firms are still operating today?

Implicit in this paper are also themes (raised elsewhere by Hofstede *et al*) concerning the challenges facing ethnic minorities and refugees as they start to function in 'foreign' and / or 'new' social environments.⁶⁹ Which characteristics assist the transfer of businesses from one cultural milieu to another and, by implication, which business skills are valuable universally and which are specific?⁷⁰ Clearly the capacity to innovate (like Richard Kablitz), to build a strong family team (like the Hjorjds), to cultivate good professional connections (like Alfred Prindull) all helped firms withstand displacement—as did the cosmopolitan backgrounds of the businessmen in question and cultural connections between the lands of origin and of destination. But to draw to a close, hopefully this paper has highlighted a truism of Baltic history: the Baltic Germans were few in number, but time and again their

⁶⁸ M. North, *Geschichte der Ostsee: Handel und Kulturen*. Munich: C.H. Beck, 2011.

⁶⁹ Geert Hofstede, Gert Jan Hofstede and Michael Minkov, *Cultures and Organizations. Software of the Mind*. 3rd Edition. McGraw Hill, 2010. pp. 396–8.

⁷⁰ Valtonen, 'Does Culture Matter?'.

experiences, practices and ideas prove generally interesting and instructive. This is as true for family business history as it is for many other kinds of history.