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## Integration/Assimilation of the Danube Swabians in the American zone in Germany after World War II



Heimatlos/Freddy

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## Contents

<b>The concept of the allies concerning the issue of the refugees/expellees</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1.1 Economic integration</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Cultural heritage</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>POLITICAL INTEGRATION</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>1.2 „Day of Return“</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>THE TOPIC „EXPULSION“ IN THE PRESS AND IN MOVIES UP TO 1950</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>THE RIGHT OF THE HOMELAND</b>	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
<b>British zone</b>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<b>Soviet zone</b>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<b>SUMMARY</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>2 DIE CHARTA DER HEIMATVERTRIEBENEN</b>	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
<b>3 QUELLEN UND LITERATUR:</b>	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

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## Introduction

Ronald Reagan said: „*The whole world knows everything about the crimes the Germans committed, but no one knows anything about the hard times and the crimes perpetrated to the Germans*”.

The object of this presentation is to discuss the experience of attempting to integrate/ assimilate roughly 8m refugees/expellees of German heritage in Germany since the end of WW II.

My speech will mainly deal with the integration and assimilation of the expellees and their hope of the “Day of Return” as well as their welcome in the occupation zones. I would like to concentrate on the American occupying zone, since most of the Danube-Swabians settled in that area.

From the establishment of the German Republic of West Germany in 1949 the challenge of the expellees’ integration and their return to their homeland has been an important topic, since the accommodations and provisions have been an overbearing task to the political, social and economic environment. Chancellor Adenauer and some other politicians believed in the 1950’s that the integration had been successful and therefore this topic disappeared from the political agenda and no more research was done. Only at the end of the 80’s with the arrival of the guest laborers and ethnic German resettlers from Russia, was this topic revived.

### **The concept of the allies concerning the issue of the refugees/expellees**

As early as November 1943 (Conference in Teheran) Stalin insisted on the partition of Germany, since his aim was to eliminate Germany as a super power. In the conference of Yalta (11.02.1945) and later at Potsdam Stalin asked for German slave laborers. Both, the British Prime Minister Churchill and the American President Roosevelt agreed.<sup>1</sup> This meant that Ethnic Germans living outside of the German borders – men and women could be displaced to the Soviet Union in order to work in the coal mines. In his parliamentary speech on 15th in December, 1944 Churchill called this expulsion “Population Transfer”.

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<sup>1</sup> Protokoll über deutsche Reparationsleistungen, S. 982 ff

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Nevertheless there were quite a few British members of the commission who were against this enormous transfer and warned of monstrous devastating human grief and sorrow. It is worthwhile mentioning that at the Potsdam conference (2. August 1945) the British, Americans accepted the Russian demand to remove Germans from Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, however, Yugoslavia and Romania was not mentioned.“

Before I go on I would like to define the following terms:

**Refugees** leave their home, not because of governmental decrees, but rather because of perceived dangers to them. They are not forced to leave their homes as defined in the refugee law from February 14<sup>th</sup>, 1947.

The German Federal Expulsion law defines such people as **expellees** who were expelled and deported. Expulsion is a forced departure due to discrimination or persecution.

**Integration** means a change of the local population, alteration of norms, values and traditions and happens on several levels.

**Assimilation** on the contrary is a complete merger of the immigrants in the host society. It takes at least two to three generations until there is a homogeneous society. Assimilation means the immigrants have adapted to the existing society and they do not feel themselves anymore as foreigners.

With the “Declaration of Berlin” on June 5<sup>th</sup>, 1945 the allies USA, Great Britain, France and the Soviet Union took over the supreme governmental power in Germany. The existing German authorities were dissolved. The military authorities appointed mayors and district officials; however, these had only a limited authority. Priority of the allies was the four „D“s: disarmament, denazification, dismantling and democratization and not the solution of the influx of the ethnic Germans.

The American military authorities stated very clearly that they called for the transport to the west-German communities and considered the problem of accommodation, provision of these expellees and refugees a sole German issue.<sup>11</sup> Once there, the expellees were temporarily housed in old German army barracks, where they were registered. The mayor had to move the refugees in with the locals, however, these communities did not want to have the refugees, since there were no funds. There were cases where the expellees could only get an accommodation by force of the American military police and the unarmed German police. Not until June 1950 could

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the expellees freely choose their location.<sup>III</sup> It was not unusual for several families to share rooms. Neither the Americans nor the German people were prepared for this influx of the refugees, expellees, deportees and displaced persons. By the middle of 1946 in Baden-Württemberg, 20.000 expellees would arrive every week. By publishing in September 26th, 1946 the *Previous guidelines for the refugees' and expellees' care*.<sup>IV</sup>, the American military authorities put pressure on the communities to accelerate the assimilation, therefore 70% of the expellees were settled in the countryside,<sup>V</sup> due to devastation of the cities. Furthermore the Americans did not want the expellees band together and ask for a revision of the postwar borders, thus causing political destabilization. Another reason was to make it more difficult for expellees to form cultural, social and political cohesion. With the census carried out in on 13th September 1950 16.5% of the German population was refugees or expellees, i.d. 8 million people.<sup>VI</sup>

During the early postwar years the refugees of German descendents from Eastern Europe were deliberately excluded from receiving aid given by large help institutions, as you will see with Truman statement quoted below.

Another example of the international ostracism of the German refugees/expellees was the exclusion of the international welfare for the refugees care by the United Nations, which was explicitly expressed in the Charta of the UNO-refugees organization.<sup>VII</sup> The Danube Swabians merely asked for the same rights for all citizens and the equal distribution of the burden of the lost war.

The years from 1945 – 1948 were marked by ongoing antagonism between ethnic Germans and the locals. Faced with huge economic problems, severe housing shortage and unemployment, an economic recovery in this overpopulated and malnourished country, seems to be unlikely. This was due to the dismantling of industrial facilities by the allied forces, thus resulting in a high unemployment rate.(siehe Bild) Furthermore the famine was aggravated by the forced acceptance of the millions of expellees.

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<sup>III</sup> Vgl. Grosser, Die Integration der Heimatvertriebenen, S. 41

<sup>IV</sup> Vgl. *ibid*, S. 20

<sup>V</sup> Memorandum für den Länderausschuß Flüchtlingswesen am 16. März 1946

<sup>VI</sup> Flucht Vertreibung Integration, S. 111

<sup>VII</sup> Kuhn, Nicht Rache, nicht Vergeltung, S. 205

The winter of 1946/47 was the coldest winter in 100 years<sup>VIII</sup>, temperatures were well below minus 65° Fahrenheit. People lived in cramped, overcrowded and insanitary dwellings; they died of malnutrition, frost-bite, pneumonia and pleurisy. The infant mortality was very high and the number of tuberculosis increased. James Bacque\* counted 5.7m people who died under these conditions.

### **Conflict between Local and Newcomers**

After all the disorder, extortion and hardship, the expellees/refugees went through, they also felt the rejection and contempt of the locals. The locals did not show any understanding or sympathy for the people who had lost everything. They received the worst accommodations, they were cramped together and received only the lowest-paid jobs. These people had nothing to swap, they had to get everything new, because most of them came direct from the work camps to Germany from Russia or Yugoslavia. It took a long time till the “newcomers” were accepted. They had to work for everything and very often suffered humiliation. A statistical survey in 1947 showed that an average of 2,8 refugees lived in one room, which was twice as high as the dwelling density at the locals.<sup>IX</sup>. The most important characteristics of the camps are: segregation from the host population, the need to share facilities, a lack of privacy, plus overcrowding and a limited, restricted area within which the whole compass of daily life is to be conducted. This gives the refugees a sense of dependency, and the clear signal that they have a special and limited status, and are being controlled.

The American population expert, Pierce Williams, coming to Stuttgart in January 1948 and having seen the dwellings of the refugees in Heilbronn and Esslingen, said that he was appalled by the provincial lack of sympathetic understanding on the part of local officials. *He visited two families who had been resettled in two community camps in which still over 1.300 expellees lived in filth and destitution for over 15 months without adequate light, heat, water or sanitary provisions.* (Bild von der Schlotwiese)

Since most refugees were tenants they had no possibility to plant a garden. The communities tried to provide gardens, but there was not enough land nor money for tools to tend a garden. In 1950 there were still 38.000 (5.8%) expellees from Yugoslavia in Baden-Württemberg.<sup>X</sup> The housing of refugees in the emergency and transfer camps lasted until 1955.

<sup>VIII</sup> Nawratil, Die deutschen Nachkriegsverluste, S.82

\* kanadischer Journalist

<sup>IX</sup> Kuhn, Nicht Rache, nicht Vergeltung, S. 187

The group that was affected most, were women with small children and elderly, because they had the most difficulty in finding accommodations, since they were not able to work. They lived on hand outs that the community had to provide. The expellees and deportees had no money and they had nothing to bargain with. They depended on the help and sympathy of the locals, so they were often called “beggars” or good-for nothing. That let them to feel that they were not socially equal to the locals.

### **The aim of the allied forces**

The allied forces wanted to punish the Germans collectively. Particularly President Truman did not change his hard-line, he even refused to allow private aid. He said:

„I agree, there are of course many innocent people in Germany not being involved in the Nazi terror. However, to allocate these people in order to treat them different, can hardly be achieved.

An **American** Directive published on 1. April 1945 states: „Nothing should be undertaken that the living standard in Germany will be better than that of neighboring nations“. The starvation period in Germany during 1945/46 was the deliberate policy of the Americans; it was supposed to be a punitive measure. General Clay who was in 1945/46 deputy military governor of the US occupying zone says: (my translation)

“I believe that the Germans should suffer hunger and cold, because such suffering is necessary to clearly impress them with the consequences of a war which they have initiated.”<sup>XI</sup>

This rigid policy costs a lot of Germans their lives particularly the expellees who had nothing. This prompted Franz Josef Strauß, at that time district administrator<sup>XII</sup> of Schongau to declare the following about the Americans:

“We have been waiting for you as liberators, however, you came as looters and Puritan schoolmasters; you told us you wanted to give us humanity and democracy, but you ignore the laws and condemn a whole people to starvation.”<sup>XIII</sup>

Since the East-West conflict became more and more evident, the Americans recognized that they needed stability in Germany and only now they were prepared to offer economic aid. On 5 June, 1947 US foreign secretary Marshall implemented

<sup>XI</sup> Schöbener: Die amerikanische Besatzungspolitik, S.180

<sup>XII</sup> der Landrat war verantwortlich für alle Dienststellen, die im Kreis arbeiteten, aber unter der Aufsicht und Weisung der jeweiligen Militärregierung: Landräte wurden von den Alliierten ernannt, die gegen den Nationalsozialismus waren und aus der Gegend stammten

the Marshall plan. The reason for this plan was the basic conviction of the Americans that cooperative working relations would improve economic growth and this leads to a democratic stability<sup>XIV</sup> The Marshall-Plan did not only save Europe's economy but also contributed to the American economic growth.<sup>XV</sup>

1946 President Truman handed the responsibility for the occupied zones over to General Clay, the military administrator. Due to the interference of the American Secretary of foreign affairs Byrnes the allied forces (6 September 1946 in Stuttgart) finally changed the rigid and strict policy. They established the so-called Hoover-commission. This commission travelled around Germany and noticed the poor state of the economy and concluded that a massive economic aid had to be granted, since without that aid Germany could never restore the productivity which was needed for the stabilization of Europe. Furthermore the free World and Germany was getting gradually aware of the immense impact of the expulsion of the Germans, the penetration of communism into the centre of Europe and the resulting tension of East-West.<sup>XVI</sup>

### **Laws that affected living conditions**

In 1947 due to the pressure of the Americans to accelerate the assimilation, the so called "refugee bill"<sup>XVII</sup>.was passed in order to regulate the **legal** position of the expellees. However, with this **legal** equality, the **social** and **political** challenge of the integration was not been solved. On the contrary: due to the growing refugee influx in 1947 and the increasing conflict due to economic distribution, the social tensions between locals and „newcomers“ became more and more evident.<sup>XVIII</sup> As soon as there was no doubt anymore that the expellees and refugees would not return home, but would stay in the Federal Republic of Germany the conflict increased even more. While many of the locals felt overburdened, the expellees were disappointed, because they felt that the consequences of this lost war were disproportionate on their shoulders.<sup>XIX</sup> On 3rd. December 1947, 2 ½ years after the unconditional surrender, the release of the refugees pension bill was passed and that helped to improve the situation.

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<sup>XIV</sup> Steininger, S. 55

<sup>XV</sup> Vgl. Haffner, S. 154

<sup>XVI</sup> ibid, S. 129

<sup>XVII</sup> Vgl.Schmidt, Die Deutschen aus Bessarabien, S. 281

<sup>XVIII</sup>

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Another bill called “equalization of burden” was passed, however, this was not a compensation for what they have lost – their homeland.

### **Economic integration**

On 1<sup>st</sup> December 1948 the “First equalization of burden law” was passed by the Frankfurter Economic Council. This brought considerable support and improvement for the needy.<sup>xx</sup> In 1952 the “Second equalization of burden law” was passed, but did not become effective until 1959 due to difficulties in financing. The idea of the equalization of burden was that all citizens should participate based on their financial situation in the costs of the lost war. The refugees and expellees would not benefit until very late into the economic miracle of the Federal Republic of Germany, even though they contributed an essential part of their labor to the reconstruction of West Germany. The government itself admitted that the newcomers did not have the same opportunities.<sup>xxi</sup> In 1955 there were still more than 3.000 barracks for the refugees and expellees.<sup>xxii</sup> The allied forces were not very enthusiastic about the equalization for them this was pure socialism.<sup>xxiii</sup>

### **Social integration**

There is not only „one“ integration, but there are different ways of integrating.<sup>xxiv</sup> Refugees, expellees and deportees as well as the receiving population have to cooperate and make concessions. Integration can best be achieved by Kommenzium (exchange of goods, Konnubium (getting married – that is the highest level) and Kommensalität (sharing a table). West German politicians, particularly Adenauer talked about a tentativeness of integration and postponed the solution to the future. The social integration of the expellees proved to be more difficult, because they not only lost all their property and assets, but more importantly had lost family members and their homeland. Not knowing who had survived, they started to search for their family members with the help of the Red Cross, friends and radio. It was their most important task to re-establish their family.

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<sup>xix</sup> ibid S. 283

<sup>xx</sup> Vgl. ibid, S. 285

<sup>xxi</sup> Flucht Vertreibung und Integration, S. 123

<sup>xxii</sup> Schriftenreihe Haus der Heimat, S.25

<sup>xxiii</sup> Flucht Vertreibung und Integration, S. 180

<sup>xxiv</sup> Vgl.Krauss, S. 11

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After the war the unemployment rate in West Germany was very high, however, it was much higher for the expellees, but having a decent job, made it much easier to get socially integrated. Previously many of them were self-employed, but did not now have the opportunity, since they were lacking the necessary funds. That was the reason why they had to work as employed workers which they perceived as a social decline. At the end of 1950 the unemployment rate of the expellees was almost 40 %.<sup>XXV</sup>

With the rise of the economic boom in 1951 the refugees and expellees had more opportunities and their financial situation improved. They moved into towns because that's where the better paying jobs were. They were welcomed by the industries because they urgently needed hard working, cheap labor.

As time went by the locals saw that the expellees were not that different, even though they spoke a different dialect and had different customs. One of the ways of fast social integration was due to intermarriages. Integration of the young occurred through sport and music clubs.

The magazine *Der Spiegel* stated in 1950 that the expellees now should no longer be considered poor, especially since the arriving refugees from the GDR now took that status. When the guest laborers arrived in the mid 50ies, that marked the end of the expellees politics.<sup>XXVI</sup> (Bausinger 1987)

## Political Integration

The policy of detention of the super powers had a big impact on the dealing with the problems of the expellees, because they had the right of self-determination. Up to 1950 they were not allowed to have their own party, since the American Military authorities had decided that no special treatment should occur (Assimilationsdekret).<sup>XXVII</sup>

Since 1949, when the expellees were allowed to organize, they set up the Association of the expellees (BdV), because up to now no registered party has really taken interest in the refugees or expellees. Only after the foundation of the Federal Republic of Germany (May 1949) attention was paid to the integration of the expellees: A ministry for the expellees was set up. In the 50's and 60's this group was

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<sup>XXV</sup> Schriftenreihe Haus der Heimat, S. 24

<sup>XXVI</sup> Coming home, S. 28

<sup>XXVII</sup> Grosser, Ankunft im Ungewissen, S. 23

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important and was courted by SPD and CDU. In the midst 60's their influence decreased. In 1969 the ministry was dissolved.

Because of the policy of the SPD and their slogan "Waiver is betrayal" the expellees leaned more to that party. The SPD used the politicians of the expellees for their own change in the strategy of the existing east policy. They wanted to be elected with the help of the expellees, while in the background they already worked on the new east policy of Willy Brandt /Walter Scheel called "change by approaching". The expellees who pleaded for „*a condition for the return*“ and their thought of a temporary stay. was now becoming all of a sudden a big obstacle. There was a considerable tension between the government and the association of the expellees referring to the „*right to live in the west*“ and the „*right of residence in the east*“.<sup>XXVIII</sup>

Due to this new east policy several important members left the party SPD. Since that time the association of the expellees has been leaning more to the CDU

### **Cultural heritage**

The ministry for the expellees, refugees and victims of war tried to force social integration. On 5th August 1950 the expellees in Stuttgart announced the "Charter of German expellees". In 1970 "The House of the Danube Swabians", where people meet from all over the world was built. There you will find a collection of Danube Swabian cultural treasure and a voluminous library.

#### **1.1 „Day of Return“**

The aim of chancellor Konrad Adenauer was to align Germany with the western powers. Since Adenauer needed the votes of the expellees he camouflaged quite a lot concerning the German East borders. He often spoke about: "The day of return" and a "positive outcome in the East", however, his politics did not reflect his view. In reality he feared that the refugees would ask for a revision of border. That was one reason why he did not seek sympathy for the expellees, since he did not want to touch the property of the locals. In 1948 90 % of the refugees expressed a desire to return to their homeland. In 1957 when the French-Saarland voted to align itself with Germany, Adenauer revived the hope that this could happen as well for the expellees in the east. Even Willy Brandt talked in 1964 of a return, although he had already undertaken steps for a new East policy.

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## The topic „expulsion“ in the press and in movies up to 1950

Due to the general information ban hardly anybody outside Europe knew anything about the unconceivable agony and suffering of the expellees.<sup>XXIX</sup>

Neither the British nor the Americans wanted to have any special attention paid to the expellees, they only wanted a quick assimilation. Because of that idea the topic “flight and expulsion” played a minor role, be it in magazines, movies or literature.

There were two documentaries that present the immediate consequences of flight and expulsion: one is called „The right of asylum“. (1949/1950). In this film the flight from the Soviet zone to the British zone is shown and the whole procedure of acceptance. The second movie called “A village takes the initiative” (1950). In which the situation of the refugees is presented and it shows that the locals are better off and have more opportunities than the newcomers.<sup>XXX</sup>

Peter Härtlings book called „The Refugees“ informs us explicitly about the procedure of the arrival starting with the delousing and vaccination against typhus.

Johannes Weidenheim<sup>XXXI</sup> describes in his short story called: „Pannonischen Novelle“ (1991) the life of a Danube Swabian woman from the Austrian-Hungary Monarchy up to the 1960 in the Federal Republic of Germany.

The British publisher, author and Member of Parliament Victor Gollancz as well as the scientist and philosopher Bertrand Russel were the few that protested against the expulsion. On October 19<sup>th</sup> 1945 Bertrand Russell wrote in the „Times“:

„The allies conducted mass deportation in an unprecedented number. Millions of Germans were eliminated not by gassing but by a slow painful death by hunger. This was not an act of war, but rather a specific peace policy.<sup>XXXII</sup>

## Summary

Despite of all the fears of the allies and the West German politician no upheaval occurred in the destroyed Germany with her millions of unemployed and hungry refugees and expellees that were originally perceived by the politician as a ticking time bomb. Even Stalin’s attempt to bring chaos into the West zones was unsuccessful. These homeless, desperate rootless poor were not interested in a revolution.

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<sup>XXVIII</sup> Grosser, Die Integration der Heimatvertriebenen, S.5

<sup>XXIX</sup> De Zayas, Die deutschen Vertriebenen, S. 185

<sup>XXX</sup> Flucht. S. 125

<sup>XXXI</sup> Deutscher Schriftsteller aus Jugoslawien

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The expulsion of the Danube Swabians was against basic human principles.

Expulsion and deportation is a form of genocide which was practiced by Tito against the Danube Swabians. They were robbed, their property was confiscated and they were ethnically, psychologically and physically extinguished. This is genocide. The former Yugoslavia has not accepted this fact yet and I'm afraid the present alignment of the former Yugoslavia will not feel responsible either. Therefore should any country that does not admit to such crimes be admitted to the EU?

I have some pictures here that substantiate my paper.

**Menschenverluste**  
 an deutschen Zivilpersonen in Jugoslawien  
**durch den Völkermord**  
 verübt durch das kommunistische Tito-Regime von 1941-1948

Von den  
**540 000**  
 Deutschen Jugoslawiens fielen zwischen Oktober 1944 und April 1945 rund  
**200 000**  
**Zivilpersonen unter das Tito-Regime.**

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Von Juli 1941 bis Oktober 1944 wurden in den deutschen Wohngebieten  
**durch Partisanenüberfälle**  
**1 500**  
 Zivilisten bestialisch ermordet

**Durch Erschießungen und andere Mordpraktiken**  
**sowie durch die Aktion Intelligenzija**  
 sind vom Oktober 1944 bis Juni 1945 rund  
**9 500**  
 Männer und Frauen umgekommen

Von den 170 000 internierten deutschen Zivilpersonen gingen,  
**vor allem in den Todeslagern,**  
 von Oktober 1944 bis März 1948  
**51 000**  
**Kinder, Greise und Frauen**  
 meist durch Hunger und Seuchen elend zugrunde.

**Von den Anfang 1945 in die UdSSR deportierten Zivilpersonen,**  
**über 8000 Frauen und über 4000 Männer, sind**  
**2 000**  
 einem jahrelangen Martyrium erlegen.

Damit sind zusammen von 200 000 Zivilpersonen mindestens  
**64 000**  
**dem Völkermord anheimgefallen - also fast ein Drittel**

Davon sind in Band IV der Dokumentationsreihe  
 Leidensweg der Deutschen im kommunistischen Jugoslawien  
**über 40 000 namentlich erfasst**



Table 1.2: Number of Expellees

Expelled from	Expelled to West Germany	Total of Expelled To West*	Deported to Soviet Union **	Died as a result of expulsion or deportation
German Eastern Territories	4,520,000	6,987,000	350,000	870,000
Poland	785,000	1,405,000	460,000	174,000
Czecho Slovakia	1,935,000	3,055,000	30,000	220,000
Yugoslavia	135,000	283,000	40,000	106,000
Romania	65,000	133,000	80,000	75,000
Hungary	175,000	210,000	30,000	84,000
Baltic States	50,000	72,000	10,000	3,000
Total	7,665,000	12,450,000	1,000,000	1,532,000

\* Includes FRG, GDR, Austria and other countries

\*\* Between 1941 and 1944, 700,000 Russian Germans were deported from European settlement regions to Asian parts of the Soviet Union.

Source: Reichling, (1986).



### MITTELEUROPA VOR DEM ERSTEN WELTKRIEG

Die donauschwäbischen Siedlungsgebiete auf beiden Seiten der mittleren Donau vom Raabfluß im Nordwesten bis zum Eisernen Tor im Südosten in der Doppelmonarchie des Kaiser- und Königreiches Österreich-Ungarn (schraffiert dargestellt).

(Quelle: J. V. Senz, Donauschwäbische Siedlungsgebiete, München 1974)

## Gesamtzahlen

Gesamt	ab Okt. 1944 dem Tito- Regime ausge- liefert	davon in die UdSSR deportiert			in der UdSSR umgekommen		
		insge- samt	Männer	Frauen	insge- samt	Män- ner	Frauen
Batschka	90700	5620	1235	4385	825	398	427
Banat	79400	6760	2676	4084	1169	708	461
<b>zusammen</b>	<b>170100</b>	<b>12380</b>	<b>3911</b>	<b>8469</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>1106</b>	<b>888</b>