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**COMMITTEE ON MIGRATION, REFUGEES AND DEMOGRAPHY**

**DRAFT REPORT**

**on the situation of the German ethnic minority  
in the former Soviet Union**

**(Rapporteur: Mr SCHREINER, France,  
European Democratic Group)**

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*Summary*

The history of the German minority in the former Soviet Union has been marked by major upheavals, due in particular to the two world wars and to repression under Stalin. At the present time, members of this minority are living in several former Soviet states, often in difficult conditions which prompt some to seek repatriation.

The Assembly draws attention to the necessity of ensuring full equality of rights in law and practice for everyone belonging to this minority, and of safeguarding its linguistic and cultural identity. In this respect, the Assembly welcomes the readiness of the Federal Republic of Germany to receive ethnic Germans in Germany and to improve living conditions for those who have chosen to stay in the successor States of the former Soviet Union.

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## **I. Preliminary draft resolution**

1. The Parliamentary Assembly recalls its Recommendations 972 (1983) and 1040 (1986) on the situation of the German ethnic minority in the Soviet Union, Recommendation 1106 (1989) on the reception and settlement in the Federal Republic of Germany of refugees and resettlers of German origin coming from countries in Central and Eastern Europe and Resolution 996 (1993) and Recommendation 1207 (1993) on population movements between the states of the former Soviet Union.
2. The Assembly notes that the situation of the German ethnic minority in the former Soviet Union, which has already been affected by many historic upheavals in the past, has again undergone profound changes following the break-up of the Soviet Union and the collapse of the communist regime.
3. The German minorities now live in several successor states of the Soviet Union and are experiencing different political, economic and social developments.
4. Along with other minorities, they are often confronted with nationalist pressures and particularly difficult living conditions, especially in the former Soviet republics of Central Asia. An increasing number of persons belonging to the German minority are therefore choosing repatriation, which has been made easier by the ending of the Cold War.
5. Nevertheless, other ethnic Germans prefer to remain in their current places of residence or to settle in other regions of the former Soviet Union. The personal decision of each individual must be respected here.
6. The Assembly welcomes the financial and political effort made by the Federal Republic of Germany with a view to reintegrating repatriates from the countries of the former Soviet Union, as well as Germany's commitment to improving the economic, social and cultural situation of the ethnic Germans who prefer to remain in the former USSR.
7. The Assembly also welcomes the political will shown by certain former Soviet republics, notably Russia, to resolve the problems of the German minorities living on their territory.
8. In this connection, the Assembly underlines the importance of the decision taken at the Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe Member States (Vienna, 8-9 October 1993) to draw up a framework convention for the protection of national minorities, also open for signature by non-member States.
9. The Assembly therefore calls on the governments of the States which were previously republics of the former Soviet Union:
  - i. to take all legislative and administrative measures needed to ensure the protection of the German minority on their territory, in particular:
    - to guarantee full equality of rights in law and practice to all persons belonging to that minority,
    - to study, in conjunction with the bodies representing the German minority, all forms of co-operation aimed at resolving the problems facing it in a harmonious manner,

- . to allow the minority to develop its culture, customs and religion,
  - . to guarantee the right to use the German language in both private and public life, in accordance with the provisions of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, and to promote teaching of the language;
  - ii. to guarantee ethnic Germans the freedom to choose where they wish to live and to undertake to facilitate their return to their traditional homes, particularly in the Volga region;
  - iii. to conclude bilateral agreements with Germany on the status of the German ethnic minority on their territory and the terms of German assistance to the persons belonging to the minority;
  - iv. to curb systematically any demonstrations of intolerance or extreme nationalism;
  - v. to create governmental bodies to deal with the problems facing those national minorities which do not live within territories enjoying autonomy.
10. In addition, the Assembly invites the member States concerned to submit to the Social Development Fund and co-finance concrete projects aimed at resolving the resettlement problems of persons belonging to the German ethnic minority in the former Soviet Union.

## II. Explanatory memorandum

by Mr SCHREINER

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## **1. THE HISTORY OF THE GERMANS IN RUSSIA**

### **1.1 The German minority in the tsarist empire up to the beginning of World War I (15th century - 1914)**

#### *1.1.1 (15th century - 1762)*

1. Already a long time before the systematic settlement of German farmers, there had been Germans in Russia. As early as the Middle Ages, the subjects of German principalities, attracted by recruitment campaigns, came to the tsarist empire. Merchants of the German Hanseatic League settled in Novgorod (Northern Russia).

2. As early as the 15th century under Ivan III (1462-1505) and later under the rule of Ivan the Terrible (1533-1584), an increasing number of experts was called into the country - military experts, scientists, craftsmen, master builders, doctors, officers, administration experts and others. Under Tsar Peter I (1689-1725) who initiated the process of Europeanising Russia, the demand for foreign experts surged. These experts constituted an elite contributing to the modernisation of the economic sector, the administration and the military. Most of them stayed in Russia for a limited period only, while others stayed for good. They constituted the beginnings of German people and culture in the towns and cities.

3. However, a distinction is to be made between these experts and the settlers (colonists), who are the ancestors of the Germans still living in the area of the former Soviet Union today and mainly came of peasant stock.

#### *1.1.2 The recruitment by Catherine II*

4. A substantially larger and more stable community of Germans came into existence in the form of systematic settlements of a rural nature. The Russian territory was enormously expanded under the rule of Catherine II (1762-1796) and Alexander I (1801-1825).

5. At that time, the essential thing was to cultivate the new areas in the Northeast and the wide, sparsely populated regions in the Southeast, to exploit them for the benefit of the whole national economy. It was hoped that pursuant to the "population theory" it would be possible to achieve the country's economic upswing by increasing the labour force.

6. Therefore, Catherine II issued a manifesto on 22 July 1763 in which she promised foreign colonists a number of privileges if they settled in Russia. These included: freedom to practise religion, exemption from military and other national service, exemption from taxes for a period of up to 30 years, self-government and governmental support for resettling. Particular mention should be made of the guarantee to be allowed to leave Russia unhindered at any time.

7. Between 1764 and 1767, between 23,000 and 29,000 Germans emigrated to Russia. Some of the immigrants were settled near St. Petersburg and in the area of the Black Sea; the majority, however, were destined for colonising the Volga steppes near the town of Saratov. In all, they founded 104 colonies there.

### *1.1.3 Consolidation in the tsarist empire*

8. The next wave of German immigrants came to Russia during the rule of Alexander I (1801-1825). At that time, settlers were recruited for the areas of the present Ukraine, Crimea, Transcaucasia and Bessarabia. In the period from 1763 to 1914, the German settlers in Russia founded more than 3,000 colonies in the European part of the Russian Empire, in the Caucasus and Siberia.

9. In the late 19th century, colonies were also founded in Kazakhstan and Central Asia. Germans settled there as early as the 1860s. Most of them were military staff and entrepreneurs, but also doctors and civil servants.

10. The German settlers were economically successful; this was partly due to their discipline and their efforts to produce efficiently, and partly to the aforementioned privileges accorded to them by the Russian government. Their economic success, but also the difference in terms of language and religion gave rise to tensions with the Russian population, which were exploited by Panslav forces. The reforms introduced by Alexander II (1855-1881) finally repealed, in 1871, part of the privileges accorded to the colonists. For religious reasons (refusal to bear arms) many emigrated to North and South America. In spite of the changed conditions, i.e. the loss of privileges, most German immigrants stayed in the country. Until 1914, the German population increased to 2.4 millions.

## **1.2 The German minority from the beginning of World War I to the end of World War II (1914-1945)**

### *1.2.1 World War I, The Revolution and the period between the wars*

11. As a result of World War I, the living conditions of the Germans in Russia deteriorated considerably. Germans living within a 150 km-wide zone along the Western border of the Russian Empire, the coast of the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea were deported as members of a hostile nation in accordance with a law passed in 1914.

12. Some 150,000 Germans from Volhynia were taken to the east; many of them did not survive the transport. The deportation of the rest of the German population, for which plans had already been prepared, was not implemented because of the revolution in 1917. After the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II in March 1917, the provisional government announced civil rights for all inhabitants of the Russian Empire. For the Germans as well as for all other minorities, this was an impetus to set up national bodies representing their interests; the Central Committee of Volga Germans, the South Russian Central Committee in Odessa as well as German Committees in Slavgorod and Tiflis were founded at this time.

13. The objective of national autonomy in the Soviet Union was almost implemented, at least for the German population living there, when Lenin ordered the autonomous region of the Volga Germans, which had been founded in 1918, to be elevated to the status of Autonomous Socialist Soviet Republic (ASSR) in January 1924.

14. In Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan, the Crimea and in the region of Altai, German national districts ("rayons") were created. German, which had been forbidden during World War I, became the official language; there were German universities and technical colleges, theatres, libraries as well as some German newspapers and periodicals. In regions where there were only few German villages, national village soviets were founded.

15. In 1929, there were as many as 550 German village soviets in the Soviet Union outside the Volga Republic and the rayons. The Autonomous Volga Republic served the German population as a political and economic centre, which played an outstanding role in shaping their identity.

16. How important this territorial unit was became clear *inter alia* from the fact that many social activities of the Autonomous Volga Republic boomed already in the twenties. Over time, more and more German schools were founded. The number of publications in German increased and there were excellent achievements in the economic field, too. Up to the late thirties, five universities and eleven technical colleges were set up in the Volga Republic, as well as a German national theatre, a theatre for children, a national publishing house and a number of newspapers and periodicals.

17. All in all, many Germans living outside the Volga Republic identified with it as their centre. The compulsory collectivization ordered by Stalin in 1928/29 very seriously affected the rural German population since the majority of them regarded themselves as farmers managing their own affairs on a private basis.

18. Ninety-five per cent of the ASSR of the Volga Germans was already collectivized on 1 July 1931. This meant that the Volga Republic was the first major administrative unit in the Soviet Union to come under full control. Large farmers and members of the relatively wealthy rural middle class in the Ukraine, the Volga and Black Sea areas, who besides their family members employed other persons, too, were incriminated as "kulaks" and deported to, or forced to resettle far up in, the North of the Soviet Union, Siberia or Kazakhstan.

19. Already at that time, many Germans attempted to emigrate from Russia. Because of her bad economic situation and showing regard for Moscow, Germany did not give them a fair chance. Those who had the opportunity went to China and from there to Canada or South America where their descendants still live as ethnic groups today.

### *1.2.2 The Nazi period and World War II*

20. Hitler's accession to power in Germany had an impact also on the Germans in the Soviet Union. The authorities took a number of measures against the German population in the various settlement areas. As early as 1934, all Germans in the Soviet Union including the Communist emigrants from Germany were registered in lists unnoticed by the general public. The arrests during Stalinist purges, arrests and deportations after the outbreak of the war between Germany and Russia were carried out on the basis of these lists.

21. The German rayon Pulin in Volhynia was dissolved in October 1935, the rayon in the Altai region in November 1938 and all German rayons in Ukraine late in March 1939. The population of these rayons was deported after the outbreak of war.

22. The beginning of World War II constituted a turning point in the lives of many Germans, which has deeply marked their lives until today. Immediately after the outbreak of the war, the Soviet government which feared collaboration of the Germans with the invading Wehrmacht had ordered the deportation of all Germans living in the Western part of the Soviet Union to Siberia, Central Asia and Kazakhstan.

23. This procedure was based on a decree issued by the presidency of the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union on 28 August 1941 on "the resettlement of the Germans living in the rayons of the Volga regions". Early in September, the residential buildings, the



livestock and the equipment of the Germans were seized by the authorities. On 7 September, the territory of the ASSR of the Volga Germans was divided between the regions of Saratov and Stalingrad, violating the constitutions of the ASSR and the Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic (RSFSR).

24. At the same time, the deportations began. Over days and weeks and under inhumane conditions the Germans were transported to the deportation areas in Siberia, Central Asia and Kazakhstan. Many of them died during the transfer.

25. Together with about 400,000 Volga Germans, another 80,000 Germans from other regions in the European part of Russia as well as about 25,000 people from Georgia and Azerbaijan were deported to Siberia in Central Asia. In the period 1942-44, they were followed by another 50,000 Germans from Leningrad and minor settlement areas. Able-bodied males and later on childless women were drafted into the "working army" (trud army) where they had to do forced labour under most difficult circumstances.

26. The fate of the Germans in the Western part of the Soviet Union who could not be deported because of the rapidly invading German troops was different from that of those carried off eastward by the Soviet government, but not less tragic. When the German troops had to withdraw westward, their resettlement - organised by the German Wehrmacht - began.

27. From January 1943 they left their former homeland in large treks, most of them for the Warthegau (in occupied Western Poland), others for Upper or Lower Silesia, where they were to settle. Due to the invasion of Warthegau by the Soviet Army in January 1945, it was not possible to evacuate all, but only part of the German civilian population from the Soviet Union living there at that time. For the Soviet government, they and all other Germans from the Soviet Union who had fled or had been carried off westward continued to be Soviet citizens.

28. All people staying in areas occupied by the Red Army - about 200,000 Germans - were immediately repatriated to the Soviet Union or, to be precise, taken to camps or special settlements e.g. in Siberia. The Soviet government had concluded an agreement on the basis of reciprocity with the Western Allies according to which all Soviet citizens finding themselves in Western occupied zones should be repatriated. There were about 70,000-80,000 Germans from the Soviet Union. Many families were torn apart in the course of these repatriation measures. The loss in human lives during arrests and transports are estimated at 15-30 per cent.

29. The survivors were concentrated in special settlements under the control of the Internal Affairs Commissioner and, like those in the working army, had to do heavy labour until the end of 1955. At this time, all of the approximately 1.5 million Germans in Russia were in custody.

### **1.3 The German minority from the end of World War II until the beginning of glasnost and perestroika (1945 - approx. 1987)**

#### **1.3.1 Post-war period and the beginning of internal migration**

30. The German-Soviet negotiations of September 1955 on the return of German prisoners of war and civilians who had collaborated with the German occupation power, immediately affected the lives of the Germans in Russia.

31. A decree by the presidency of the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union of 13 December 1955 amnestied the German population and ordered their release from the special settlements. However, they were not allowed to return to their former homelands, and they did not get any damages for their property seized in 1941. In spite of this, the decree by the Supreme Soviet gave them back their civil rights.

32. Yet they remained displaced persons in their own country, stigmatised as fellow countrymen of the defeated enemy. Still today, one can occasionally read in Soviet newspapers that the Germans in Russia are considered in their neighbourhoods as descendants of prisoners of war.

33. There was no restitution of the jointly owned property of kolkhozes and collective farms which the farmers had owned before the collectivization. The schools, libraries, the editorships and the German publishing house in Engels as well as the central museum of the ASSR of the Volga Germans were also retained by the Soviet government. All in all, the year 1956 in all respects was "point zero" in the post-war history of the Germans in Russia.

34. The deportation, the prohibition on return and the internal migration from 1956 onwards lead to a completely new distribution of the population as compared with the pre-war period.

35. The first corroborated information on the number and regional distribution of the Germans in the Soviet Union, or more precisely in the republics of the Union, was made available by the census of 1959.

36. According to this census, a total of 1,619,655 Germans (0.77 per cent of the total population) lived in Soviet territory, a relative large number in relation to their demographic development during the war and post-war period. This may be explained by the new hopes which the German population obviously fostered after their release from the special settlements in 1955. The 1959 census showed particularly clearly the major changes in the settlement areas of the Germans. While their focal areas of settlement had been in the west of the country before the war, they now were in Kazakhstan and Siberia.

37. The process of internal migration began probably immediately after the dissolution of the special settlements. Many Germans moved from the far north and areas with a rough climate and unfavourable working conditions to West Siberia, Kazakhstan and Kirghizistan where the climate was more favourable - above all in Kazakhstan where new land was reclaimed - and there was a good chance of finding a job. In addition, there were Germans already living in these areas, which constituted another point of attraction. Another motive of migration was family reunification since the war had torn many families apart.

### *1.3.2 The situation after the decree of 29 August 1964*

38. The situation of the Germans finally improved by a decree of the presidency of the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union issued on 29 August 1964. Inter alia, it took back the heavy charge of collaboration with Nazi Germany brought against the Germans living in the Volga Republic on 28 August 1941. But again, they were not allowed to return to their former settlement areas. The results of the 1970 census showed that the trend of migration that had already become obvious in 1959 had become even more marked. The total number of Germans living in the RSFSR, notably east of the Urals, declined, while the number of those resident in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan

increased. The climatically favourable areas of the southern republics undoubtedly were very attractive.

39. During these years, the Soviet policy mainly was to increase the percentage of the European population in the Asian territory. These parts of the country were attractive for the Germans presumably also because they were not as subject to discrimination as they were in Russia where the memories of World War II were still alive. Likewise, the percentage of the German population very strongly increased in Moldavia and the Baltic republics. This growth may be explained by the emigration movements to Germany, which slowly began at that time. While it was impossible to obtain a permit to leave in some republics of the Union, it was easier in others such as the Baltic republics and Moldavia. Up to 1979 when the next census took place, the number of Germans in all republics of the Union - except Estonia - increased, although to different degrees. These differences were due to minor migratory movements between the republics of the Union, and probably also to differences in natural growth rates. In Estonia, the number of Germans dropped by half, which can be explained by migration to Germany. The marked increase in the German population in Moldavia suggests that it was often used as a "stepping stone" towards the West. Already in the seventies, the process of re-migration to the areas of the former Republic began on a very small scale, although it was not officially approved.

40. In the post-war period, many Germans had become townspeople; the traditional links with rural life and farm work had in many cases been disrupted by the deportations.

41. In 1979 - there are no up-to-date figures available - about 50 per cent of the Germans lived in towns and cities. This figure is below the Soviet average (62 per cent), but compared with their situation in 1959 (38 per cent town dwellers) and 1970 (45 per cent town dwellers), it shows a steady depopulation of rural areas.

### *1.3.3 The beginning of the autonomy movement (up to 1987)*

42. Since the amnesty of 1955 the German population of the Soviet Union has repeatedly tried to convince the government and party leaders of the necessity of full political and legal rehabilitation and the restitution of the Autonomous Volga Republic.

43. Up to 1964, mostly individual and small groups submitted petitions to this effect. In 1965 this led to an autonomy movement which was represented by two delegations to negotiate with the heads of government and party leaders. The delegations failed. This resulted in resignation and increased efforts for repatriation to Germany during the seventies.

44. The idea of autonomy, however, was not abandoned. The existence of an autonomous republic with a functioning education system, a publishing house, libraries, theatres, press, broadcasting and TV was seen to be the precondition for the survival of the ethnic Germans. In the summer of 1972 another delegation therefore prepared for negotiations in Moscow. The security authorities were informed of these efforts and prevented the delegation's trip to Moscow.

45. Under the flag of perestroika and glasnost, the debate about the autonomy of the Germans regained momentum. Early in 1987 the German-language newspapers in the Soviet Union began to deal with the history of the ethnic Germans in Russia, and thus with the "blank spaces" of the past such as the living conditions in the special settlements and in the working army. This was to reinforce the Germans' national consciousness and self-assurance and to create the conditions for a people's movement. The Parliamentary

Assembly of the Council of Europe discussed the destiny of the ethnic Germans in Russia in 1983 and 1986 (Recommendations Nos 972 and 1040).

## **2. THE SITUATION OF THE GERMAN MINORITY IN THE PERIOD FROM 1987-1991 AND AFTER THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE SOVIET UNION**

### **2.1 General remarks**

46. In the late eighties, the living conditions of the Germans in Russia changed. The new scope for manoeuvre in the framework of perestroika now provided the possibility to take one's own initiative. On the initiative of the then Secretary General of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Mr Gorbachev, the conditions for leaving the country were eased by a Decree of 28 August 1986, which resulted in a surge in the number of repatriates. Since then, the ethnic Germans have been in a state of tension between staying and leaving.

47. The disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991 then decisively changed the situation of the German minorities. Today they live in the successor states of the Soviet Union, a fact which in many respects makes it more difficult to render assistance. There are diverging political, economic and social developments in the various successor states. In many cases it is difficult to predict future developments. This insecurity unnerves not least the ethnic Germans. In Kazakhstan and especially in the Central Asian Republics of Kirghizistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, increased pressure is exerted on all "Europeans" to leave the country. Resulting ethnic, religious and cultural conflicts in these republics manifest themselves in a new displacement process which also affects the German minorities.

48. According to the 1989 census the distribution of the Germans among the successor states of the Soviet Union is as follows:

- Kazakhstan	957,518
- Russia	842,295
- Kirghizistan	101,309
- Uzbekistan	39,809
- Ukraine	37,849
- Tajikistan	32,671
- others	27,152

49. The official figures only include persons who have declared themselves to be Germans (entry in the passport: Soviet citizenship, German nationality). Many Germans, however, for fear of repression, formerly had "Russian" entered as their nationality. Estimates of the actual number of Germans range from three to six million (including mixed marriages and resulting offspring). It is safe to assume that the aforementioned displacement process and, after 1989, the clear upward trend in the number of repatriates to Germany, have resulted in major changes in the above figures so that these can only be a rough indication. More recent figures are not available.

50. The alternatives for the future of these German minorities are as follows:

- staying in their present places of residence
- resettlement within the former Soviet Union with the aim of establishing German rayons or autonomous areas

- return to and resettlement in Germany (repatriation).

## **2.2 The consolidation of the autonomy movement**

51. In April 1988 the existing unofficial groups of the autonomy movement formed a working group consisting of 14 members. It was known as the "third delegation" and was to negotiate with the party leaders and heads of government, without success, however. A coordination committee was set up to direct and manage the movement. A later delegation of the autonomy movement, which travelled to Moscow in July/August 1988, explained the unsolved problems of the ethnic minority and submitted proposals for solution there. The composition of the delegation showed that the movement encompassed all regions of the country as well as all age groups and all walks of life.

52. In 1989, there were numerous activities of the autonomy movement and signals from official bodies which suggested full political and legal rehabilitation and restoration of autonomy by the end of the year. At the end of March, the individual groups joined together to form the Union-wide society "Wiedergeburt" (rebirth). The statutes of the society laid down as its main objectives full rehabilitation of the Germans in the Soviet Union and the same rights as other peoples in the country as well as the restitution of their state - the Autonomous Socialist Soviet Volga Republic.

53. In an appeal to the non-German population of the Volga region, the population resident in this region were assured that they would not be prejudiced by the restitution of the rights of the German population. Rather, the aim was to build up a better life together.

54. After the foundation of the Union-wide society "Wiedergeburt", sub-organisations of this society were established in nearly all republics of the Union, regions and districts where ethnic Germans lived. Although it was never quite clear how many members it had - reportedly 50,000 in 1990 - it succeeded for the first time in post-war history to advocate and represent the interests of the Germans on the political scene.

55. Since its foundation the "Wiedergeburt" has organised several conferences which also contributed to making the general public aware of the fate of the Germans, e.g. of the situation of the Germans during the war, and of the demand for the restitution of the German Autonomous Volga Republic.

### *2.2.1 The development of the autonomy movement and its congresses*

56. It became more and more obvious that there was a conflict of views within the society. A crucial issue was the question of how the restitution of the German Autonomous Republic might be brought about. The majority, headed by Heinrich Groth, insisted on territorial autonomy without delay: the Volga Republic should be restituted immediately in accordance with its former borders. The minority, siding with the then deputy chairman H. Wormsbecher, were prepared to content themselves with a step-by-step restitution of autonomy. In concrete terms this would have meant initial acceptance of "autonomy without territory", i.e. more rights with regard to language and culture (cultural autonomy).

57. The future of the ethnic Germans was to be decided by the "1st Congress of Soviet Germans" for the preparation of which the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union set up an organising committee. The hesitant, secretive work of the organising committee, which was composed of representatives of the authorities and some Germans, and the growing impatience among the population, which was due to the increasing instability in the

country, resulted in the congress being postponed several times and in increasing conflicts within the autonomy movement.

58. The congress was planned to take place in Moscow on 11-15 March 1991. However, on 7 March the government postponed it to a later date. The reason given for this cancellation at short notice was that the relevant legal instruments had not yet been finalised by the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union and the RSFSR. The majority of the organising committee, most of whom were followers of Wormsbecher, agreed to the postponement whereas Groth and his supporters did not. They set up a new organising committee and convened the 580 delegates already present for an "Extraordinary Congress of the Germans in Russia", where the "German Autonomous Social Soviet Republic on the Volga" was proclaimed and a "Provisional Council" consisting of 50 members was established as sort of a preliminary parliament of the Volga Republic.

59. In June 1991, the autonomy movement finally split up: the group which had advocated a "step-by-step" approach to autonomy within the framework of the "Wiedergeburt" founded the new "Association of Germans in the USSR" in June 1991 and continued to show willingness to compromise vis-à-vis the Soviet government. It was emphasised that all forms of self-government of the Germans as well as the required reanimation of the German language and culture had to be supported. The most important interlocutor of the "Association" at that time was the Soviet government, which in the eyes of many Germans created the impression that the Association was collaborating with the old ruling powers.

60. In contrast to this, the "Wiedergeburt" maintained the conviction that the first step had to be the promotion of autonomy on the Volga. They addressed their request primarily to the government of the then Russian Republic (RSFSR) within the former Soviet Union. The positions of the "Wiedergeburt" and of Wormsbecher's "Association" which prefers "staying" to "leaving" were also affected by political developments and the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Another congress was convened on 18-20 October 1991. It was characterised by conflicts between the two wings and showed that the great majority was behind the "Wiedergeburt" and the course pursued by Heinrich Groth.

61. Since this congress, the "Intergovernmental Council for the Rehabilitation of the Germans in Russia", which consists of 100 members, is the representative body of this majority and sees itself as their only legitimate representative, a sort of elected executive of the Germans in Russia. On 22-23 August 1992 there was another congress of the "Wiedergeburt". Because there was still no tangible success in restituting the Autonomous Volga Republic, Groth now gave priority to the idea of repatriation (return to Germany). However, the "Volga Republic" remained a symbol of the Germans' self-assertion and right to rehabilitation in the sense of an unalienable legal asset.

62. The most recent congress of the Germans in Russia was held in Moscow on 26-28 February 1993. 705 delegates from all parts of the former Soviet Union and the Baltic region attended. The congress elected the "Council of the Germans in Russia" (German National Council), headed by Heinrich Groth. At the end of 1993 Heinrich Groth relinquished this position as well as that in the "Intergovernmental Council". The current Chairman of the Council of the Germans in Russia is Mr Diesendorf, while Mr Jakob Hauser chairs the Intergovernmental Council. The existing "Intergovernmental Council" retains all its responsibilities, and 22 of its members will be delegated to the "Council of the Germans in Russia". This "Council of the Germans in Russia" will be represented by 7 delegates on the Intergovernmental Council. Another 7 delegates from Kazakhstan, 5 from Ukraine and one from each of the other republics are to be represented on the Intergovernmental Council in order to allow increased regional coordination. Thus the

attempt was made to implement the idea of regionalisation as practised by the successor states of the Soviet Union also for the representation of the Germans in Russia. In the meantime there is also a Council of the Germans in Kazakhstan (chaired by Alexander Dederer), where the number of Germans amounts to about 1 million, and a Council of the Germans in Kirghizistan (Chairman, Mr Dill). The "Council of the Germans in Russia" has made the representation of the Germans willing to stay in Russia the focus of its activities and is to look after the interests of all Germans vis-à-vis the Russian government. The Russian Parliament and the Russian government decided in March 1993 to recognise the German National Council as the central negotiating partner for German projects in Russia.

### **2.3 Territorial variants for settlement areas for Germans in Russia**

63. Since the time when the discussion about the restitution of a German Autonomous Republic, or the establishment of German rayons (rural districts), was held in public, other variants were suggested besides the Volga Republic. There were several proposals both with regard to the territory on which German autonomy might be developed, and with regard to the legal form of autonomy, e.g. an autonomous republic, autonomous rayons or autonomous okrugs (counties), or a combination of these. This is of some importance for the future status of the Germans: pursuant to former Soviet law an autonomous republic had its own constitution and political autonomy while an autonomous okrug only had the power of administration.

#### *2.3.1 The Volga region*

64. The restitution of the Volga Republic has been vehemently called for since the beginnings of the autonomy movement in the mid-eighties, not least because it had been dissolved illegitimately - a fact which has meanwhile been recognised also by the Russian government. This is why a legal claim to this region can be inferred. The resistance by the population resident there today, which had been tacitly condoned by the public authorities until the early nineties, and the disintegration of the Soviet Union made the Volga region no longer appear the only possibility for an autonomous republic. Nevertheless, those concerned never abandoned the idea of the Volga Republic; on 10 July 1992, a protocol on "cooperation of the government of the Federal Republic of Germany and the government of the Russian Federation aimed at the gradual restitution of the Autonomous Volga Republic of the Germans" was signed. As a first step towards the restitution of the autonomy of the Germans in Russia, President Yeltsin issued a decree on 21 February 1992, which established a German national rayon in the Saratov region, and a German national okrug (county) in the Volgograd region. These regions are among the focal areas for assistance provided by the Federal Republic of Germany.

#### *2.3.2 The Altai region and the area of Omsk in West Siberia*

65. There was frequent discussion about the establishment of German autonomy in a region where there was a dense German population, for instance in certain areas of West Siberia. The establishment of German national rayons in these regions was actively pursued above all in 1991 and crowned with success: now there are two German rayons in West Siberia - one with the capital Nekrassovo/-Halberstadt in the Altai region and the other in the region of Omsk (Asovo). They have meanwhile become very attractive for Germans, above all for those from Kazakhstan and the Central Asian republics who want to leave these areas because of national conflicts.

66. According to the figures gathered in the census, as many as 260,000 Germans lived in the aforementioned areas in 1989. It may be assumed that this number has increased,

all the more since these rayons benefit from economic assistance from the Federal Republic of Germany.

### *2.3.3 The region of Kaliningrad (North East Prussia)*

67. Proposals from among the members of the "Wiedergeburt" were taken up in 1989, to open up the area of Kaliningrad (formerly Königsberg), the northern part of the former German province of East Prussia, for the settlement of Russian Germans. The region which belongs to the Russian Federation became a Russian exclave when Lithuania and Belarus became independent.

68. Over 900,000 persons of varying nationalities, including a large number of Russians, are living there today, the majority of them members of the military or retired servicemen. The entire German population was evicted after World War II. Exercising their right of freedom of movement, several thousand Russian Germans have settled there, mainly from the Central Asian republics.

69. Exact figures are not available. Estimates range between 6,000 and 18,000. There is no deliberate and targeted settlement policy for this region either on the Russian or the German side.

### *2.3.4 The areas in Ukraine*

70. Early in 1992 the then Ukrainian President L. Kravchuk suggested to the Germans that up to 400,000 Russian Germans might resettle in Ukraine, the same number as lived there before the deportation of 1941. Mainly the administrative districts of Odessa, Nikolojev, Cherson and Sapovoshje were provided for resettlement. On account of many problems still to be solved on the Ukrainian side, the resettlement programme is stagnating at the moment. The Federal Republic of Germany therefore supports mainly the approximately 2 000 Germans who resettled there on the basis of the declaration of the former President.

### *2.3.5 The areas in the Republic of Kazakhstan*

71. According to the 1989 census, about 950,000 Germans live in Kazakhstan. This is the largest number of all successor states of the Soviet Union. The ethnic Germans thus constituted about 6 per cent of the total population of Kazakhstan. There are compact settlement areas in the north of the country, in the regions near Karaganda, Kustanaj, Akmola (former Zelinograd), Pavlodar and others, and in the south mainly in the region of Almaty. However, now that Kazakhstan has become an independent state, the situation of the resident Germans has deteriorated. The governmental institutions of the multiracial state curbed all autonomy efforts and took on an increasingly restrictive attitude towards the ethnic Germans. For instance, financial assistance for the ethnic German people was no longer granted, and the subject "German" at schools was abolished. The Kazakh government repeatedly points out that autonomous regions for the Germans are out of the question. The economic situation has deteriorated dramatically.

72. It is therefore not astonishing that in 1991 alone, 225,000 Germans in Kazakhstan filed applications for repatriation to Germany. In 1992, 114,382 Germans moved from Kazakhstan to the Federal Republic of Germany. This figure has to be seen against the background of a total number of 194,382 from all successor states of the former USSR. In 1993, they were 113 288 out of a total of 207 347 repatriates from the successor States. In addition, the recent offer to Russian Germans to resettle in the Russian Federation and



in Ukraine have resulted in many Germans from Kazakhstan moving to these areas. The aforementioned number of 950,000 may have strongly decreased accordingly.

### *2.3.6 The areas in the Republic of Kirghizistan*

73. In 1989, the census registered about 100,000 Germans in the Republic of Kirghizistan. They live mainly in the capital Bishkek and its surroundings. Like in Kazakhstan, the situation of the German minority in Kirghizistan has become worse so that an emigration wave has begun. Since Kirghiz was introduced as the official language in April 1992, many uncertainties have arisen and the situation of the Germans at schools, universities and in everyday life has deteriorated. In analogy to the situation of the Germans in Kazakhstan, the Germans in Kirghizistan, too, seek to resettle in the Altai and Omsk region or apply for repatriation. At present the number of Germans in Kirghizistan is estimated at 30 000.

## **3. MEASURES TAKEN BY THE STATES CONCERNED FOR THE BENEFIT OF GERMAN MINORITIES**

- Who want to stay in their residential areas
- Who want to resettle within the territory of the former Soviet Union
- Who want to resettle in Germany.

### **3.1 Federal Republic of Germany**

#### *3.1.1 Legal basis*

74. - 22.11.1991: On the occasion of the visit of the Russian President, Mr Boris Yeltsin to Bonn, a "Joint Declaration" was signed by Chancellor Kohl and President Yeltsin, in which Russia professed its commitment to "the re-establishment of the republic of the Germans in the traditional settlement areas of their ancestors on the Volga" as well as to the creation and promotion of national rayons for the Germans in their present settlement areas.

75. - 10.7.1992: Signature in Moscow of the Protocol on Cooperation between the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany and the Government of the Russian Federation for the gradual rehabilitation of the Autonomous German Volga Republic.

76. - 16.12.1992: German-Russian Cultural Agreement

77. - 1.1.1993: Entry into force of the "Act to Settle the Consequences of War" (Kriegsfolgenbereinigungsgesetz) in the Federal Republic of Germany. The Act provides that Germany will admit each year as many repatriates as have returned to Germany in 1991/92 on an average. This means that 220,000 repatriates can in the future be admitted in the framework of an admission procedure. The Federal Act on Displaced Persons continues to be the legal basis for the admission of ethnic Germans from Russia. There are no restrictions or time limits for such admission. The persons concerned are given the status of "Spätaussiedler" (repatriates).

78. - 24.3.1993: Entry into force of the protocol of 10.7.1992.

#### *3.1.2 Measures in the economic and social fields and for community development for the German minorities in the successor states of the former Soviet Union*

79. In 1992, agreement was reached on the establishment of Government Commissions with Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Kirghizistan. In these commissions, which consist

of representatives of the two governments as well as representatives of the Germans in Russia, all assistance measures for the benefit of the Germans in Russia are discussed and agreed.

80. In January 1993, a sub-commission of the German-Russian Government Commission was set up in which mayors, chief administrative officers and heads of regions where the ethnic German population is concentrated cooperate with representatives of the associations of Germans in Russia and with the German intermediary organisations which organise assistance on the spot in the CIS.

81. - Economic measures:

- . assistance for housing construction in the focal settlement areas of the Germans (e.g. building equipment pools; construction, purchase and financing of housing; transitional accommodation for resettlers);
- . assistance for the establishment of farms (counselling, procurement of seeds, fertilisers and agricultural machinery);
- . support for the establishment of cooperative agricultural associations;
- . promotion of new craft businesses especially in the building sector (counselling, assistance in procuring machinery and tools);
- . promotion of the establishment and equipment of small-scale-food-processing enterprises (e.g. provision of machinery);
- . promotion of vocational basic and further training.
- Social assistance:
  - . medical support (medicaments, supplies, medical care in individual cases);
  - . providing hospital equipment (medical apparatus, ambulances etc.);
  - . provision of means of subsistence (food and clothing, other social benefits).
- Community-promoting measures:
  - . establishment and equipment of community centres and other social facilities (technical equipment, books, newspapers, tape and video equipment etc.);
  - . organisation of seminars, encounters with Germans, training courses;
  - . promotion of German language training outside schools;
  - . provision of German songbooks, textbooks and newspapers;
  - . structural assistance for the Germans' organisations;
  - . counselling and support in setting up self-administration structures (in the two German national districts with self-administration).

82. Since 1990, the Federal Republic of Germany, through the Federal Ministry of the Interior, has made available altogether over 500 million Deutsch marks for community promotion, economic, social and agricultural assistance programmes for Germans in their settlement areas. Furthermore, the Foreign Office provides assistance in the cultural field, notably - though not exclusively - for the secondment of teachers and the provision of teaching material for the German language.

### *3.1.3 Focal areas of assistance*

83. - In the *Russian Federation*: assistance for the reconstruction of the national rayon of Halbstadt in the Altai region and Asovo in the Omsk region (West Siberia) as well as for reconstruction of the Volga Republic together with support of ethnic Germans from other regions intending to resettle in the aforementioned regions.

84. - In *Ukraine*: support for the resettled Germans in the administrative district of Odessa.

85. - In *Kazakhstan*: assistance to the settlement areas of the Germans in the north of the country in the vicinity of Karaganda, Kustanaj, Akmola, Pavlodar and others; in the south, mainly in the region of Almaty.

86. - In *Kirghizistan*: assistance to the Germans, the majority of whom live in the capital Bishkek and its vicinity.

### *3.1.4 Assistance for Germans in Russia who want to resettle in Germany*

87. The Act to Settle the Consequences of War (in force since 1.1.1993) constitutes a reliable legal basis to ensure that all Russian Germans living today can now as before come to Germany in so far as they meet the legal requirements. They are fully integrated pursuant to Art. 116 of the Basic Law and are given "repatriate status". More than 200,000 repatriates can be admitted per year.

88. Integration assistance (such as an integration allowance and language training of up to 6 months duration) is provided under the Act to Settle the Consequences of War.

### *3.1.5 Other assistance*

89. - For 1994, the Foreign Office plans to open Consulates General in Novosibirsk and Saratov, in agreement with the Russian government.

90. - The German Economic Committee for the East provides information services.

91. - The Protestant and the Catholic Churches support churches and social institutions in Russia.

92. - Some Federal Laender take on "sponsorships" for successor states of the former Soviet Union, e.g. North-Rhine/Westphalia for the Russian Federation and Bavaria for Ukraine.

93. - Partnerships between towns, e.g. Cologne and Volgograd.

94. - *Uzbekistan*: Establishment of a study and expert fund. Long-term and short-term secondment of experts for specific tasks. Focal areas: assistance in drafting reform legislation, counselling economic enterprises and the administration.

## **3.2 The Russian Federation**

### **3.2.1 Legal basis**

95. - 26.04.1991: Russian Rehabilitation Act. The Supreme Soviet adopted legislation on the rehabilitation of repressed peoples. This act, inter alia, provided for the restitution of the Autonomous Republics and Regions. The Council of Ministers was instructed to prepare legislation by the end of 1991 aiming at "the restitution of the territorial integrity of the national governmental bodies and the administrative and territorial borders as they existed before their violent unconstitutional abolition", and at legal, political, social and cultural rehabilitation.

96. - 22.11.1991: Joint declaration by Chancellor Kohl and President Yeltsin (see 3.1.1).

97. - 21.02.1992: Decree issued by President Yeltsin on the establishment of a German national "rayon" in the Saratov region and a German national "okrug" in the Volgograd region.

98. - 21.05.1992: President Yeltsin issues a decree to establish settlements of ethnic Germans in the Volga region on the basis of agricultural complexes, and to ensure their social and economic development. The chief administrative officers of the regions of Volgograd, Samara and Saratov have to ensure the unhindered allocation of land to citizens, which is to become their property.

99. - 10.07.1992: Protocol on cooperation for the gradual restitution of national status for the Russian Germans (see 3.1.1).

100. - 15.12.1992: Decree by President Yeltsin announcing support for the initiative of the Germans in Russia to set up the national fund "Germans in Russia" which is to guarantee the social, economic and cultural development of the Russian Germans.

101. - 16.12.1992: German-Russian Cultural Agreement.

102. - 24.03.1992: Entry into force of the protocol of 10.07.1992 (see 3.1.1).

### **3.2.2 Economic and other assistance**

103. - Provision and allocation of land property for the Russian Germans in the regions of Volgograd, Samara and Saratov.

104. - Provision of budget funds for the implementation of the governmental programme for the establishment of settlements for Germans in Russia.

105. - Support by the Russian regional administration and the local authorities for the projects launched by the Federal Republic of Germany for the Germans in Russia.

106. - The central Siberian city of Novosibirsk with over a million inhabitants will establish a residential area for Russian Germans living in this region. A programme to this effect has been commissioned by the city administration.

107. - Since March 1993 the Saratov broadcasting corporation has relayed satellite TV programmes from Deutsche Welle in Cologne.

### 3.3 The Republic of Kazakhstan

108. The Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev, on a visit to Bonn in 1992, raised the prospect of the conclusion "in principle" of an equal rights agreement for the benefit of about 1 million Russian Germans in Kazakhstan.

109. The essential aspects are:

- more broadcasting time for German TV in Almaty;
- more German language teaching in public schools;
- authorisation of German as official language in the compact settlement areas of the Russian Germans.

## 4. PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY INITIATIVES IN THIS FIELD

### 4.1 Assembly texts

110. Before 1989, the fate of the German minority in the Soviet Union was debated on several occasions in the Parliamentary Assembly. Obviously, the context of those debates changed with the end of the Cold War and the disappearance of the Iron Curtain. Accordingly, the first two texts adopted on the subject, viz **Recommendation 982 (1983)** and **Recommendation 1040 (1986) on the situation of the German ethnic minority in the Soviet Union**, voiced democratic Europe's concern over violations of the German minority's rights by the totalitarian regime. They called for compliance with international undertakings entered into by the Soviet Union in relation to minorities, particularly including the right to leave the country.

111. **Recommendation 1106 (1989) on the reception and resettlement in the Federal Republic of Germany of refugees and resettlers of German origin coming from countries in Central and Eastern Europe** was adopted on the eve of the democratic revolutions in those countries, at a time when the number of people of German origin coming from there had considerably increased in the Council of Europe member states. Consequently, the Recommendation emphasised resettlement measures to be taken by the states concerned, particularly Germany, and called upon the East European states to afford the minorities living conditions which would enable them to stay where they were.

112. Lastly **Resolution 996 (1993) on population movements between the states of the former Soviet Union** and the corresponding **Recommendation 1207 (1993)** describe the consequences of the collapse of the Soviet Union on the various minorities and nations living within its territory. The Resolution advocates that the ethnic groups forcibly compelled to leave their territory, including the German minority, should be entitled to return to their former homes.

### 4.2 Rapporteur's visit to Omsk and Asovo

113. From 30 August to 1 September 1994 your Rapporteur visited the City of Omsk and the autonomous "rayon" of Asovo (Siberia) together with the Parliamentary Secretary of State of the Interior of Germany, Dr Horst Waffenschmidt, who is especially responsible for all questions concerning migrants of German origin ("Aussiedlerfragen"). The purpose of the visit was to meet with leaders of the German ethnic community in Asovo (at about an hour's drive from Omsk in Siberia) and to see reconstruction projects aimed at creating employment opportunities and improving the living conditions of the ethnic Germans residing there.

114. The party also included the Parliamentary Secretary of State of the Finance Ministry, Mr Jürgen Echternach, and, from Moscow, the Deputy Minister for Nationalities and Regional Policy of the Russian Federation, Mr Valery Shamshurov, representatives from non-governmental organisations providing aid to the ethnic Germans in the former Soviet Union, church dignitaries, leaders of the ethnic Germans in Russia, representatives from various Federal and Länder ministries, private companies and the press.

115. During the visit, the party attended the inauguration of a Lutheran church in Omsk which had been built with the support of the German church organisations. This event drew a large number of participants from Omsk and neighbouring regions. Representatives from all major religious communities attended the inauguration and took part in the ceremony. The group then visited the "rayon" of Asovo, created following a referendum held in the region. The German government is implementing a cooperation programme aimed at self-help for the largely ethnic German population. Support is directed towards the financing of small businesses, housing, roads, electricity grids, telephone networks, heating and water supplies, etc. Non-Germans also benefit from the programme. Your Rapporteur saw attractive houses being completed or under construction and attended the opening of a brand new road. He also visited a new saw-mill and an exhibition of manufactures produced by newly created small businesses.

116. In his contacts with the German and Russian authorities, your Rapporteur drew their attention to the Council of Europe's essential work on the protection of minorities. He also informed them that the Social Development Fund could provide loans if these were guaranteed by a member State.

117. The visit of your Rapporteur was an enriching experience and enabled him to gain a much better insight into the situation of the German ethnic minority living in Russia and the policies required to improve the conditions for the reconstruction and development of the regions which they inhabit. He particularly appreciated the efforts of the Russian and German authorities and non-governmental organisations to cooperate in a constructive spirit to this end. They deserve the unstinting support of the European institutions.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

118. The German ethnic minority, after being persecuted under the totalitarian Soviet regime, is now facing different problems, notably in the economic sphere, which result from the disintegration of the Soviet Union. However, the commitment of most of the former Soviet republics to democratic reform offers a glimpse of hope for this, and other minorities.

119. Despite the many ethnic Germans who have opted for repatriation, most have decided to stay, or to settle elsewhere in the former Soviet Union. Consequently, improvement of their living conditions will depend mainly on the general improvement in the economic and social situation in the former Soviet republics and on growing respect for human rights for all. However that may be, specific rights related to the status of minorities must also be safeguarded.

120. To conclude, your Rapporteur wishes to pay well-deserved tribute to the efforts of the Federal Republic of Germany, in collaboration with certain states of the former Soviet Union, to provide fair living conditions for members of the ethnic German minority in the former Soviet Union. Similarly, he would emphasise the size of the financial contribution Germany has made towards the integration of those who have chosen repatriation.

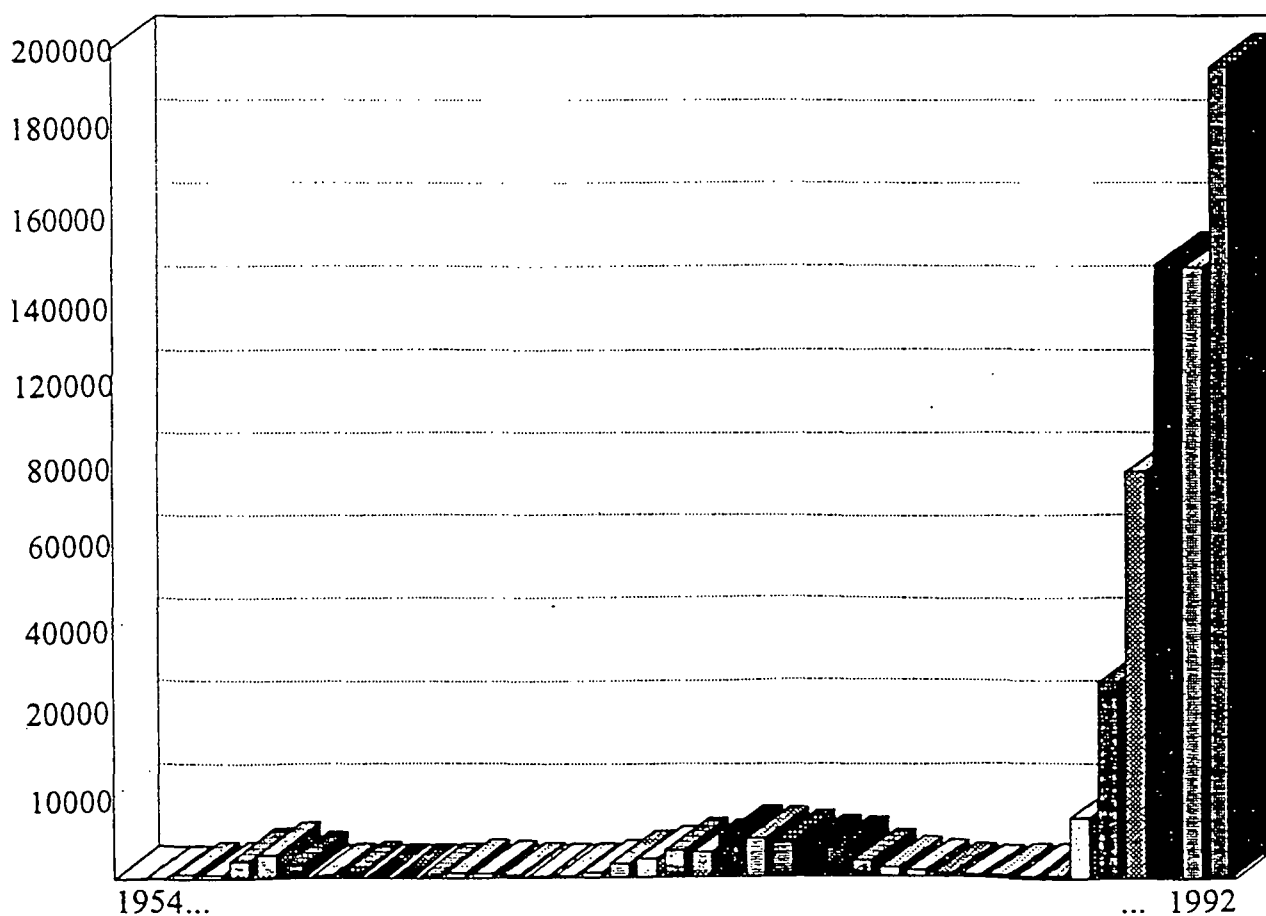
121. Your Rapporteur also wishes to appeal to the governments of all the successor States of the former Soviet Union to cooperate as actively as possible - both among themselves and with the European institutions - with a view to improving the situation of all minorities, in conformity with the norms and standards of the Council of Europe.

## APPENDIX I

### *Number of repatriates from the former Soviet Union in the Federal Republic of Germany (1954 - 1993)\**

Year	Number	Year	Number	Year	Number	Year	Number
1954 :	18	1964 :	234	1974 :	6.541	1984 :	913
1955 :	154	1965 :	366	1975 :	5.985	1985 :	460
1956 :	1.016	1966 :	1.245	1976 :	9.704	1986 :	753
1957 :	923	1967 :	1.092	1977 :	9.274	1987 :	14.488
1958 :	4.122	1968 :	598	1978 :	8.455	1988 :	47.572
1959 :	5.563	1969 :	316	1979 :	7.226	1989 :	98.134
1960 :	3.272	1970 :	342	1980 :	6.954	1990 :	147.950
1961 :	345	1971 :	1.145	1981 :	3.773	1991 :	147.320
1962 :	894	1972 :	3.426	1982 :	2.071	1992 :	195.576
1963 :	209	1973 :	4.494	1983 :	1.447	1993 :	120.305 * <sup>2</sup>

(\* these figures are based on the numbers of the Bundesausgleichsamt, Az.: I/2 Vt 6838, 06.12. 1991). (\*<sup>2</sup> until the end of august '93).



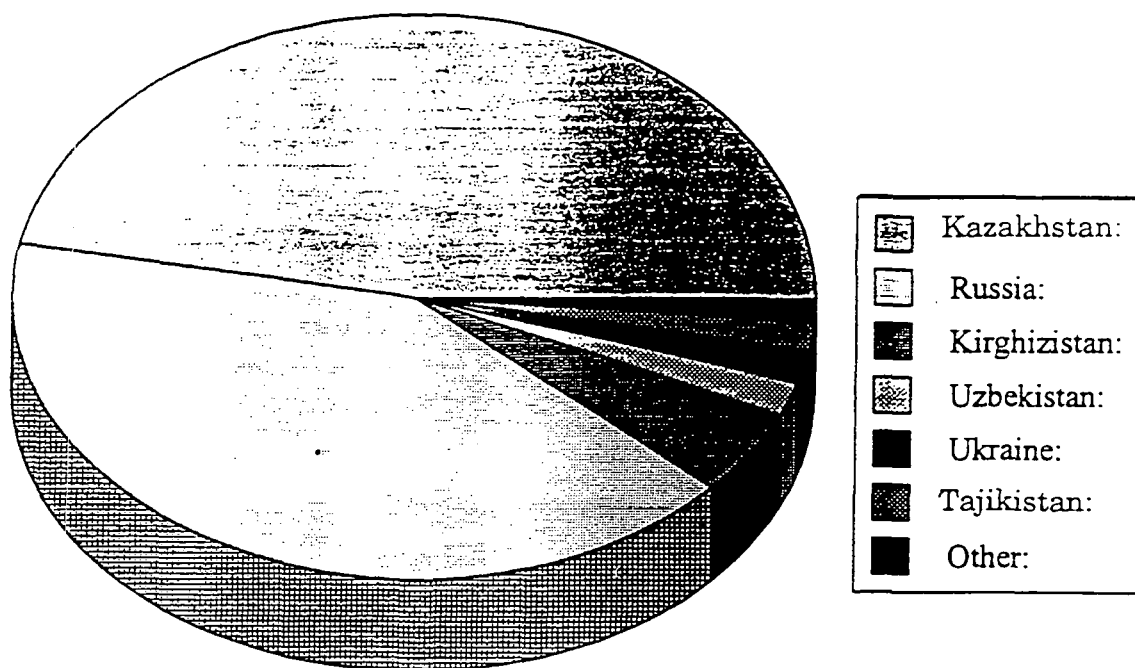


## APPENDIX II

*The distribution of the German minorities among  
the successor states of the Soviet Union*

Kazakhstan:	957,518	Latvia:	3,783
Russia:	842,295	White-Russia:	3,517
Kirghizistan:	101,309	Estonia:	3,466
Uzbekistan:	39,809	Lithuania:	2,058
Ukraine:	37,849	Georgia:	1,546
Tajikistan:	32,671	Azerbaijan:	748
Moldavia:	7,335	Armenia:	265
Turkmenistan:	4,434	USSR total:	2,038,603*

(\* these figures are based on the official census of 1989 in the former Soviet Union).





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