

The situation of Aussiedler youths from the former republics of the Soviet Union in the Federal Republic of Germany

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1. The situation of youth Aussiedler always points to the situation in the countries of origin. It is coined especially by the history and the status of the Russian Germans in the Soviet Union and its former states and the improved chance for emigration to the Federal Republic since the end of the '80s. They are now torn between their homeland in Kazakhstan or Russia and are in Germany searching for their own identity. This confusion between the fundamentally different worlds in the country of origin and Germany reflects the process of integration in the Federal Republic. The causes of problems in Germany are thus frequently tied to the country of origin.

2. Young Russian Germans immigrated mostly involuntarily to the Federal Republic; as a rule they were taken along by their parents and grandparents. In an important phase of their personal development they had to give up their ties and lost their stronghold in their milieu (e.g. friends and acquaintances). The attitude of their parents to emigrate as Russian Germans to the fatherland, the homeland of their ancestors, is often strange to them. Especially youth who grew up in a Streusiedlung (?) see it this way. They view the German Russian culture of their parents and grandparents often indifferently and perceive the emphasis on the German culture and the orientation towards life in Germany as a burden. However, it is not to be forgotten that Russian Germans, contrary to their neighbors in the countries of origin, have the chance to immigrate to the Federal Republic. To be German i.e. to have a German spouse has become more attractive. Many reasons for the emigration of Russian Germans can be given such as the bringing together of families, ethnic tensions especially in Kazakhstan and Central Asia, the bad economic situation in the country of origin and the skepticism toward an improvement of the situation.

3. Conflicts between Aussiedler parents and their children are pre-destined with the emigration to Germany. A new part of life in which they have to orient themselves accordingly begins for both. Frequently parents are overburdened to give their children the necessary stronghold. They have enough problems of their own (looking for an apartment, looking for work, language courses, going to the authorities). Thus it is not surprising that young Aussiedler are increasingly looking for ties to other Aussiedler youths. This group will become even larger through increasing immigration to Germany. Their increase in numbers provides for an increase in self esteem which expresses itself in the formation of groups or gangs. Deviations from the traditional Russian German norm stemming from the traditions of the Soviet era provide often conflicts within families. The adaptation to the west by the children is rejected by parents and grandparents (Aussiedler families often come as a traditional family to Germany). Thus the system with strong ties in the country of origin (?) becomes endangered.

4. The emigration movement of Russian Germans has led to deep separations of families. In increasing numbers part of the family lives in Germany and the rest in the countries of origin. Ties grown for a long period of time are cut also from the view of the youths. The uncertainty of the social situation in the country of origin and the

situation of relatives, friends and acquaintances adds to the geographic distance. This is perceived as a special burden having an effect on all generations.

5. Aussiedler youths discover new freedoms after emigration. The open society of the Federal Republic sanctions less strict than the former Soviet Union deviations from ethics and moral. Significant improvements, from the view point of the youths, have been created there; however, this applies first of all to cities and less to the situation in the country. Life in Germany appears 'free' because the educational system still presents old values by means of outdated methods. It is difficult for the youths to learn the handling of the freedoms because welfare is lacking in the Federal Republic because of deep cuts in funding. Remedies are urgently needed based on increasing conflicts.

6. By mastering the German language a, perhaps the most important, prerequisite for a successful integration in the Federal Republic is met. However, most youths Aussiedler don't know German. Exceptions are sometimes youths from compact Russian German settlements who understand either High German or a dialect or even master it. Normally Aussiedler youths come into the country without knowing the language and lose their 'deafness' only through communication with others when speaking Russian. Those youths who do no longer attend school have special difficulties. They don't have the opportunity to learn German systematically like others because of a lack of offers i.e. due to a lack of funding. Altogether, many Aussiedler youths are too little motivated to learn German. The reason lie with the parents and grandparents. They strived very little to learn the language before their emigration i.e. to pass it on to their children. Instead they relied too much on the language courses in the Federal Republic. Language tests in the countries of origin since 1996 may bring about changes.

7. Aussiedler youths are not uniform but very different according to the country of origin of their parents or grandparents, according to language, denomination and level of education. Prerequisites and their willingness for integration differ. Many can handle the difference in social relationships in the Federal Republic where the individual depends on itself; however, at the same time they miss the close social ties of the country of origin where many deficits were compensated through contact to others. In the last few years there is a trend whereby a chance for a successful integration diminishes with the deterioration of conditions for integration in Germany. Based on the continual immigration life in ghettos will increase in spite of providing apartments, [a measure] in effect since 1996. More are moving in already existing centers for Aussiedler. Ties to the world of native youths outside of school and language courses become difficult. Finally, there is the competition for places in training and at work.

8. Alcoholism and violence are an increasing problem with Aussiedler youths in Germany. The causes are many but are traced back to a lack of success in integration. Often pedagogues and social workers dealing with the welfare of youths face helplessly this problem just stated. Alcoholism and the willingness towards violence can be found increasingly also with native youths but the special quality of a willingness towards violence and its use appear to be a surprise with Aussiedler youths. Overcoming conflicts was often synonymous with use of violence in the countries of origin. Thus the Aussiedler youths are a mirror of Russias or Kazakhstans conditions in society.

9. Education and training in Germany differ widely from that of the Soviet Union and its former states. Even though innovations in schools and colleges or universities have taken place there, they are quite different from region to region. Ideology and traditions play a part also after the collapse of the USSR. Teachers still hold on to outdated instructional models and innovations remain wishful thinking. With this background Aussiedler youths

in Germany first have to learn how to learn. Although many bring with them adequate school records insufficient knowledge of German, however, prevent the access to appropriately successful completion. The abilities of complex thinking and critical analysis are overlapping goals in the Federal Republic and are new to Aussiedler youths. After all, this and appropriate special scientific knowledge are crucial for the access to professional qualification. Cuts in funding in Germany create here an uneven balance. Frequently an especially strict criterion is applied to the question of access to continuous completion in the Federal Republic with Aussiedler youths. The impression arises that is in part intentionally tolerated with fatal results for integration.

10. The portrait of Germany does not correspond in many aspects to that painted by relatives, friends and acquaintances. That's the reason why for many Aussiedler youths the different characteristics of the Federal Republic form a fundamental problem from which other difficulties emerge. Knowledge of the GDR are hardly useful in a place of residence in the old Federal Republic. Moreover, there was often only incomplete information, if any. Deficits can be reduced by the educational system i.e. the offers of education and welfare. Projects for integration in which natives and Aussiedler youths are equally participating lead the way. These long term measures require necessary support. Thus a reversal to cut the financial means is urgently called for.

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