CHAPTER XV

POST MORTEM ON THE EXPULSION

In searching for the major strands of meaning in the expulsion we must keep in mind the fact that the dislocation of the Swabians from Hungary was not an isolated affair, but part of the great German exodus which took place at the end of World War II. As indicated earlier, during the closing phase of the war and the first years afterwards nearly fifteen million Germans of a total of over sixteen million were uprooted from their domiciles in that sector of Europe which in 1954 was made a part of the Soviet orbit.

At first the collapse of the Nazi war machine and the advance of the Red Army forced millions of Germans to leave their homes in a painful, ever-westward flight. There was no return for these

1 The total number of Germans who lived before World War II in regions from which they fled or were expelled was 16,652,300. Of these persons 9,600,000 lived as German citizens in eastern Germany (now under Soviet and Polish authority) and 380,000 in Danzig, as citizens of the Free City of Danzig. The rest were Volksdeutsche who lived as national minorities: in the Baltic States and Memel Territory (249,500); in Poland (1,000,000); in Czechoslovakia (3,477,000); in Hungary (623,000); in Yugoslavia (536,800); and in Rumania (786,000). Federal Office of Statistics, Wiesbaden, Die deutschen Vertreibungsverluste (Stuttgart: Verlag Kohlhammer, 1958), pp. 38, 45, 46. The total number of all German refugees and expellees who entered German territories, i.e., West and East Germany, West and East Berlin, the Saar Territory and Austria was 12,894,000. G. Reichling, Die Heimatsvertriebenen im Spiegel der Statistik (Berlin: Verlag von Duncker Humblot, 1958), p. 14. In addition, a much smaller number, less than a couple of thousand, found immediate refuge in Switzerland, France and overseas. Adding to this the some two million who perished during the process of the flight and deportation, we arrive at a total figure of nearly fifteen million refugees and expellees. It must be noted, however, that German statistics on this matter are strongly debated by those countries from which Germans fled and/or were expelled. The estimates of these countries (as to this date there are no detailed statistics available) present much lower figures on German population losses. For details on the flight, expulsion, the Potsdam Agreement, etc., see: Paikert, op. cit.
people after the end of the hostilities because the areas in which millions of them lived became annexed by Poland and the Soviet Union and the new masters wanted no German population under their authority. Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania and Yugoslavia, countries which had considerable German minorities and which were now within the Soviet sphere of interest, followed this policy of wholesale de-Germanization. Most of those millions of Germans in all these areas, who had not fled with the rest but stayed at home and tried to ride out the storm, were expelled in time. The expulsion, as was pointed out earlier, was a part of Allied policy and it became legalized by the Big Three in the Potsdam Agreement of 1945.

The principal question is, of course, why the Germans were removed from all these places. The basic answer to this might well be that the nations in these areas, which in some way or other suffered immense hardships and losses under Nazi-Germany, considered the Germans in their jurisdiction as dangerous fifth columnists who helped the Nazi enemy. They were regarded as unabsorbable, dissident people, with a negative position toward the state in which they lived and loyal really to Germany, constantly upsetting efforts at national unity and solidarity. A long list of extremely serious charges and evidence accumulated against them, ranging from subversion and treason to murder and other atrocities. In addition, Moscow came to consider the Germans as an element which, because of different background, incompatible with Soviet ideals and standards, would prove only disruptive of Communist conformity. Finally, the traditional role of the industrious and economical Germans in east-central and eastern Europe, somewhat similar to that of the Jews, was to provide the society of that once primarily agrarian part of the

1 The governments of Rumania and Yugoslavia, though actively removing their German minorities (a total of 300,000 expellees from these countries were counted by the census of October, 1946), did not ask the Potsdam Conference for prior approval. Cf. Schechtman, Postwar Population Transfers, Chapter 12.

2 John Flourney Montgomery, the United States Minister (envoy) to Hungary from 1933 to 1941, comments interestingly on the matter. "The Germans had a large fifth column in the country [Hungary]; but the statement that the fifth column was identical with the German minority is not true. Germans should forever hate and despise Hitler for his destruction of what had always been the best element of the German race, namely, the German minorities in eastern Europe .... Hitler succeeded in terrorizing the German minorities for whom he claimed special privileges, a kind of extra-territorial rights within the countries whose subjects they were. This was the origin of a real tragedy." John F. Montgomery, Hungary The Unwilling Satellite, (New York: The Devin-Adair Co., 1947), pp. 168, 169.