# Elisabeth Fendl

Having to go-the moved history of a family from the Bohemian "Erzgebirge"

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### Germans in the Lands of the Bohemian Crown

lives of the "expelled generation". > Fig. 1

According to a 1910 census, the population of the Lands of the Bohemian Crown included over 3 million Germans whose ancestors had partly lived there since the 12th and 13th century, most of all in the peripheries of Bohemia and Moravia. While the accord between German and Czech cultural elements had still been characteristic of the Lands of the Bohemian Crown in the first decades of the 19th century, national self-awareness grew on both sides in the time to follow. The late 19th century was marked by escalating conflicts between nationalities. Following the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk declared Czechoslovakia an independent state on 18 October 1918 in Philadelphia (USA). Many Germans felt unable to identify with this new state. On March 4, 1919, various Bohemian and Moravian towns witnessed demonstrations by Germans for self-determination and against their exclusion from the



Fig. 1 Porcelain from Kaffee Schütz in Bergstadt Platten saved in the escape luggage, 1930s | Sudetendeutsche Stiftung-Sudetendeutsches Museum, Munich 1

elections for the German-Austrian National Assembly. These were crushed by the Czech military.

German activism involving the *Deutsche Christlich-Soziale Partei* (German Christian Social Party), the *Sozialdemokratische Partei* (Social Democratic Party) and the *Bund der Landwirte* (Agrarian League), started up in the mid-1920s. Most "Sudeten Germans" supported it because it promised to represent their interests in Parliament.

After Adolf Hitler's appointment as Reichskanzler (Reich Chancellor) in January 1933, National Socialist propaganda also gained heft in the Lands of the Bohemian Crown. The global economic crisis had a particularly strong impact on the border regions. Radical parties such as the Deutsche Nationalsozialistische Arbeiterpartei (DNSAP) (German National Socialist Workers' Party) were gaining influence. Konrad Henlein, director of the Deutscher Turnverband (Gymnastics Federation) in Czechoslovakia since 1931, established the Sudetendeutsche Heimatfront (SHF) (Sudeten German Home Front) in Eger/Cheb, initially assuring the Czechoslovakian state of his loyalty. The SHF was renamed Sudetendeutsche Partei (SdP) (Sudeten German Party) and permitted to stand for election on May 19th, 1935. Its elaborate election campaign, co-financed by the Reich, made an impact. The SdP emerged from the elections with the greatest number of votes. Faced with the threats emanating from the "Third Reich", large parts of the Jewish population took flight in the late 1930s. Many Czech and Sudeten German anti-fascists also left the country. Driven by ever greater national demands and fuelled by Goebbels' National Socialist propaganda machine, the tensions continued to rise until September 1938. The Western Powers were increasing the pressure on Czechoslovakia to agree to a surrender of the "Sudeten German" regions. On September 29th, 1938, Germany, Italy (Mussolini), France (Daladier) and Great Britain (Chamberlain) signed the Munich Agreement. In this treaty, the Allied Forces gave in to Adolf Hitler's demand that the German-speaking "Sudetenland" be surrendered to the neighbouring German Reich. The invading Wehrmacht was enthusiastically welcomed by the Germans in October 1938. There were attacks on local Jews, Czechs and active opponents of National Socialism. Jewish property was "aryanized", important Czech banks and major companies came under German ownership.

The Wehrmacht took Prague in March 1939. Breaking his promises in the Munich Agreement, Adolf Hitler enforced the establishment of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, which was autonomously governed by a president and its own government under strict supervision by the Reich Protector. Karl Hermann Frank became Secretary of State in the Protectorate. In 1940 he drafted a memorandum concerning its Germanization.

At the Potsdam Conference held at Cecilienhof Palace from July 17th to August 2nd, 1945, the heads of state of the three victorious allies, the Soviet Union, USA and Great Britain, negotiated about the reorganization of Europe and Germany's future fate. This is where Josef Stalin, Harry S. Truman and Winston Churchill

The Germans were exposed to various reprisals immediately after the end of the war. Many were transported to camps and/or forced labour camps. Many places witnessed retaliatory acts against Germans, starting with the Prague Uprising in May 1945. Die *Wilde Vertreibung* (Rampant expulsion) concerned around 600,000 Germans from the former Czechoslovakia's regions. These acts were not uncommonly attended by massive abuses, such as in the Brno death march, which began on May 30th, 1945. Germans and Hungarians were expropriated by a decree dated May 19th, 1945.

Constitutional Decrees of the President of the Republic (the Beneš decrees) served to strip "persons of German and Magyar nationality" of their citizenship in Czechoslovakia and to prepare their expulsion. This Zwangsaussiedlung (forced migration) took place over the years 1946 and 1947 in railroad cars under the aegis of the power occupying the respective destination territory. Recognised anti-fascist Germans were resettled under special conditions and for example allowed to take more luggage with them. Skilled German workers were initially retained. Around 200,000 Germans still lived in Czechoslovakia in 1947 (see also: Seibt 1995; Prinz 2002; Brandes 2005; Beer 2012).

## Homeland: Bergstadt Platten/Horní Blatná

In the second half of the 15th century, the discovery of large ore deposits had sparked a major settlement movement to the western Erzgebirge (Ore Mountains), most of all from Saxony. A whole string of mining towns came into being. Joachimsthal/Jáchymov (1517), Abertham/Abertamy (1525) and Bärringen/Pernink (1532) on the Bohemian side, and Schneeberg (1470), Annaberg (1492), Marienberg (1521) and Platten (1532) on the Saxon side.<sup>3</sup> Platten had fallen to the Bohemian crown in 1556 as a consequence of the Schmalkaldic War, and had been attached to St. Joachimsthal in mining terms. But the yields of tin, silver and cobalt already started to dwindle at the end of the 16th century. Mining was in a crisis, also as a consequence of the Thirty Years' War, and virtually ground to a halt in the 19th century. The town of Platten, situated at the foot of the 1,040 m Plattenberg Mountain, became impoverished. Its connection to the Karlsbad-Johanngeorgenstadt railway line brought a slight recovery. Another improvement of the economic conditions was accomplished by the development of a small-scale metal ware industry and the professionalisation of home industries (bobbin lace and gloves). But the town and region tumbled into another crisis in the 1930s. By the end of 1931, the community had 306 people out of work already.4 An effort to attract tourism to the town on any larger scale also failed.

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According to the census of April 1911, Platten had 2,748 residents at the time, 2 percent of whom were Czechs. Of the 1,288 male and 1,460 female Platteners, 2,680 were of the Roman Catholic faith and 68 were Protestants. In its quatercentenary year 1932 the town, renamed Bergstadt Platten since 1918, numbered 2,341 residents, 2,311 of them German and 29 (1.2 percent) Czechoslovakian, with 2,242 Roman Catholics, 83 Protestants and 16 irreligious.

In the parliamentary elections on October 27th, 1929, far more than a third of the 1,308 voters (548) voted for the *Deutsche Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei* (German Social Democratic Workers Party), 280 for the *Christlichsoziale und Gewerbepartei* (Christian Social and Tradesmen's Party), 148 for the *Bund der Landwirte* (Agrarian League), and 116 for the *Nationalpartei* (National Party). The National Socialists were only able to win 49 votes. The distribution was similar in the senate elections held the same day. Only six years later, the political circumstances had drastically changed, amongst other factors also owing to the abovementioned economic situation. 1,486 voters were registered for the elections on May 5th, 1935. The strongest party now was the Sudetendeutsche Partei (Sudeten German Party) led by Konrad Henlein with 739, i.e. half the votes, followed by the Sozialdemokraten (Social Democrats) with 424 and the Christlichsoziale Partei (Christian Social Party) with 97 votes.

Approximately 85 percent of the German population were expelled from Bergstadt Platten after the Second World War. Horní Blatná has circa 400 residents today. More than a hundred buildings of the original Renaissance town have been pulled down. The place is waiting for another upturn to this day.

## The example of the Schütz family

In September 1931, Franz Schütz (\*1883) and his wife Anna bought the Bergstadt Platten property no.14 from his parents, while also taking over his father's bakery already in existence there. The patisserie of their son Josef Schütz (\*1911) was also accommodated in the building, in 1934. After finishing school in Platten and Neudek/Nejdek, the latter served his apprenticeship as a confectioner and passed his journeyman's examination in Karlsbad/Karlovy Vary, in June 1930. He gained initial practical experience as an assistant confectioner and waiter at the Atlantis Hotel in Franzensbad/Františkový Lázně during the bathing season of 1930. Afterwards he started his apprenticeship as a baker (black & white bread) at his father's business, in Bergstadt Platten in August 1931, in addition to his training as a confectioner. Fig. 2

Franz and Josef Schütz had been trying to get a license for "dispensing coffee, cocoa, chocolate, tea and other non-alcoholic beverages" since the end of the 1920s<sup>8</sup>. While the application by the father who, as a well-known skier, put great effort into boosting local tourism, had still been turned down in 1930, his son Josef Schütz was issued with this licence by the Czech district authority at the beginning of August 1938. The district authority in Neudek/Nejdek had enquired



Fig. 2 Journeyman's certificate for Josef Schütz, issued in Karlsbad on June 3rd, 1930 | Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Sudetendeutsches Archiv 9

about him at the police in Bergstadt Platten before that, however. This showed that Josef Schütz, although a member of the Sudeten German Party which had exhibited "Greater-German" leanings, could not be proven to have engaged in any anti-Czechoslovakian activities or employed dangerous persons, or to entertain suspicious contacts abroad. The decision could never be put into practice, alas, because the political circumstances had changed in the meantime. In another application dated December 7th, 1938, the confectioner asked the now German local authority in Neudek to confirm the licence already issued by the Czech side. 11

Josef and Franz Schütz were only able to run their cafe in Bergstadt Platten for a few years. The latter, now referred to as František Schütz in the employment record, was expropriated after the end of the war and compelled to work for the "Osvobození konsumní, výrobní a úsporné družstvo Karlovy Vary" (the Consumption, Production and Economizing Cooperative "Liberation") as a labourer, as was the case with his daughter-in-law, Theresia Schütz. 12

## Having to go

The lists for transport no. 33193 setting out from the collection point in Neudek/Nejdek on June 24th, 1946 to deport 1,204 "Sudetogermans" – 380 men, 691 women and 133 children – across the border to Bavaria also included three members of Josef Schütz's family: his wife Theresia Schütz and his parents Franz and Anna Schütz. The report documenting the transport describes the physical

condition of the passengers as "dobrý" ("in good order") and confirms that every person was permitted to take 50 kg of luggage and three days' worth of provisions along. The train left Neudek at 10 p.m. under the command of the Czech officer Antonín Konopásek—so the report tells us—and arrived in Eger/Cheb at 4:20 a.m. the next day. It was headed for the Wiesau border transit camp in the Oberpfalz (Upper Palatinate).<sup>13</sup>

Josef Schütz is not to be found on the lists. He was a prisoner of war in Russia at the time. Like many men, he found himself unable to return to his home town after the war. He had been drafted in April 1940. At first he was stationed with the 72nd Infantry Division at Karlsbad-Meierhöfen / Karlovy Vary-Dvory for five months. On August 29th, 1940 he married Theresia Entian, born in Bergstadt Platten (June 16th, 1912) and raised in Vienna. She moved back to Bergstadt Platten in September 1940 to support her parents-in-law in the bakery and patisserie there. 14

Knowing what Germans had to expect, Theresia Schütz contacted the Austrian Federal Ministry for Home Affairs after the expropriation in 1945 with a request "for conferral and/or re-conferral of Austrian citizenship". She wrote: "As a German-speaker, I must not remain in Bergstadt Platten any longer, but I am compelled to leave the town and Czech territory in general. ... I would like to already request an entry permit for joining my parents [in Vienna, E.F.] now because I am currently without livelihood and employment opportunity in Bergstadt Platten and will need to leave it as soon as possible." As the transport lists show, this wish was not granted.

## Separation

Josef Schütz remained in Russian captivity from May 10th, 1945 to the beginning of December 1949, which he experienced in various camps in Russia and the Ukraine. To reunite with his family is recurring wish in the cards that he sent to his wife and his mother. He knew about his family's situation in his home town and the path they had taken. On January 2nd, 1949, he wrote to his wife from the Jarzewo camp: "... No smaller is my wish that we will be reunited again soon, because I, too, suffer great commiseration, as I know what we had and what we own now, and what the parents in particular were forced to give up in heritable and saved-up belongings. It is also hard on us two, that we should be separated for such a long time. ... I am quite unable to put the great wishes and questions and yearning to paper as I am forced to endure it all in body and soul, with heavy labour every day. And when comes the hour of freedom with a return to you?"17 A letter to his mother from July 10th, 1949 contains the passage: "So you are together and I hope that yours and father's health will hold up for a long time, yet until I will also be able to meet up with you again. ... But don't worry too much about your Pep, he's been away from father and mother for long enough now and has seen the great wide world! I have, therefore, already suffered all evils

and weathered everything reasonably well so far! Have grown a few days older, to be sure, the humour a bit less, but otherwise still the same old Pep!! And once I have regained everything after years of doing without your good cooking, I will make every effort to bring you nothing but joy, as before ..."18

What comes across from Josef Schütz's postcards and letters besides the wish for his eagerly awaited release from Russian captivity and the worry that his parents might no longer be alive by then, is the longing for his wife and anxiety that the long separation could prove too much for her. He usually hints only at his own condition, perhaps to spare his relatives the worry.

### Tangible and intangible luggage

On July 10th, 1947, Josef Schütz wrote to his mother from Voroshilovgrad in the Ukraine: "Dear mother. Luck and happiness on your name day. You, father, stay alive, so that we children also live. Greet Annl. Resi recipes? References at your's? Pepi."<sup>19</sup>

What we can recognize in these few lines on the one hand is his above mentioned worry about his parents—he wishes his ill father the strength to recuperate—and on the other that about his future existence as a confectioner. Particularly as enquiries about the survival of recipes and references, the foundations of his career, are not only included in this card, but turn up again and again, highlighting the importance of the intangible escape luggage. Josef Schütz could only imagine his life after captivity as that of a baker/confectioner—for which he required his references and recipes, besides his skills.

### Reunited

Having been separated from her husband for almost five years, Theresia/Resi Schütz received a long-awaited telegram on December 6th, 1949. It was sent from Frankfurt/Oder and contained the following four words: "Reunion/telegram follows/Peppi."20 The telegram had been written by Josef Schütz on the day of his release from a Heimkehrer (homecomer) camp in Gronenfelde, 21 near Frankfurt / Oder, to the transit camp in Hof-Moschendorf.<sup>22</sup> He stayed in this Upper Franconian transit camp for four days. A health pass issued there attests to his being "free from contagious diseases and vermin"23. Equipped with a modest release benefit and the most essential pieces of clothing<sup>24</sup>, he arrived in Deiningen near Nördlingen, the town where his wife and parents were living, on December 10th, 1949. "The native hosts of his relatives ... gave the Heimkehrer a warm and loving welcome"25, as a newspaper put it. As a former prisoner of war, Schütz benefitted from the "Heimkehrer Amnesty". A notification from the tribunal / main chamber in Munich, dated December 28th, 1949, reads: "Based on the information in your registration form, you do not come under the Law for Liberation from National Socialism and Militarism dated March 5th, 1945."26

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Fig. 3 Image commemorating the parental home in Bergstadt Platten/Horní Blatná. Watercolour, 1955/60 | Sudetendeutsche Stiftung-Sudetendeutsches Museum, Munich<sup>29</sup>



**Fig. 4** Josef Schütz posing as an Erzgebirge singer in front of a relief portrait of Anton Günther (these homeland mementos were produced by a displaced person from the Erzgebirge in Gersthofen and advertised in the "Neudeker Heimatbrief", a publication for former natives now living in Germany, 1980s

| Sudetendeutsche Stiftung-Sudetendeutsches Museum, Munich

In 1950, Josef Schütz and his wife moved to Ichenhausen in the Günzburg district. In the beginning, the only job he could find was as a factory worker (labourer); not until 1956 would he be able to work in his chosen profession again and to lease a patisserie. He took his master's examination before the Augsburg Chamber of Trade in November 1961. A year later he found a job in the patisserie of Arthur Michl.

The lines he had written to his wife from the Voroshilovgrad camp in the Donets basin on January 13th, 1949, had become a reality: "... And joy will one day come to us with the great reunion when we can fall into each other's arms. Then we want to start a new life!"<sup>27</sup>

### Homesickness

Included with Franz Schütz's "application for assessment of displacement losses" at the *Lastenausgleichsarchiv* (archive for the equalisation of burdens) in Bayreuth is a photo-postcard showing the family home of Josef Schütz. It was sent on May 12th, 1954, by "A. Behr/Stara Rohle [Altrohlau near Karlsbad, E.F.]" to "Rosie Schütz, Ichenhausen, Mühlgasse 8, U.S.A [sic] Zone Allemagne". The text provides information about the miserable situation of the Germans to remain in Czechoslovakia: "Dear Rosie! First of all, how are you all doing? Let the new home be home. I would breathe deeply if Bayreuth were my home. What's your son and heir doing? We were on the Platt over Easter. Your grounds./ Closing now with best regards ..."<sup>28</sup>

Josef Schütz never forgot the Erzgebirge (Ore Mountains), for as long as he lived. Photographs show his apartment as a kind of private shrine to his homeland. Mementos of this former home filled walls and cupboards. One picture, in

particular, sticks out. A watercolour, created by Walter Heinz from Zwickau in Bohemia, shows the Bergstadt Platten property no.14 that several generations of the Schütz family had called their home. Three people are shown conversing in front of the two-storey building, which, as a sign informs us, houses a "Patisserie Cafe Bakery". The picture is captioned "Here I lived / here I worked – / Here is my homeland / Here I'm at home!", illustrating Josef Schütz's concept of "home" in the Erzgebirge-dialect. The house of his parents was as much his home as was his work. Fig. 3

His adoration for Anton Günther, a folk singer from the Erzgebirge, was shared by many of his compatriots. But Josef Schütz also was a musical talent and made music at home from an early age on. Having been a member of the Lyra music society and of a large brass band in his "old" hometown, he now became involved with the "Ichenhausen Town Orchestra" in his "new" hometown. In the late 1980s, Josef Schütz established the "Erzgebirge" singing group, which is one of the reasons why he was awarded an honorary medal "for special contributions to keeping homeland remembrance alive" (Herold 1986, 8) in 1997 at the 16th Homeland Day of the "Glück auf" homelands society in Augsburg. As cultural advisor of the Sudeten-German Association in Ichenhausen, he sought to promote the culture of his home region in the Erzgebirge. His private *Erzgebirgs*-style living room attests to this dedication, which can also be interpreted as a strategy for coping with the loss of his home and for fighting his homesickness.





Fig. 5 View of the private *Erzgebirgs-style* parlour in the apartment of Josef and Theresia Schütz in Ichenhausen, 1991 | Sudetendeutsche Stiftung-Sudetendeutsches Museum, Munich

In May 1985, Josef Schütz added a supplement to his CV written some years before. It is not without bitterness that he writes: "My time as a soldier on all fronts and the five years of heavy captivity in Russia have heedlessly robbed me of my formative and teenage years, while I also lost my parental home and, hence, my livelihood from my own cafe-patisserie-wine tavern business as a consequence of being driven from my homeland." The fact that he was none-theless able to work as a confectioner again, after his belated examination for the master's certificate, may have helped him to take this loss more lightly. But the loss of his independence, as symbolized by the saved porcelain from the cafe, would never cease to disturb him for the rest of his life.

- 1 Inv. Nr. 3587/1-4.
- 2 Final Protocol of the Potsdam Conference, quoted from: http://www.documentarchiv.de/ in/1945/potsdamer-abkommen/ (accessed on 07/06/2016).
- 3 For more information on the history of Platten: Mikšíček 2006; Bahlcke et al. 1998; Pohl 1956; Thiel 1953.
- 4 Chronik 3, 63r.
- 5 Chronik 3, 42r.
- 6 Chronik 3, 59v.
- 7 Chronik 3, 74v.
- 8 BayHStA, SDA, Kleinstnachlässe 396: Letter by Franz Schütz to Neudek District Authority, 10/11/1929.
- 9 Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv München (hereafter BayHStA), Sudetendeutsches Archiv (hereafter SDA), Kleinstnachlässe 396.
- 10 BayHStA, SDA, Kleinstnachlässe 396: Reply by Bergstadt Platten police dated 03/07/1938 to an enquiry by Neudek District Authority.
- 11 BayHStA, SDA, Kleinstnachlässe 396: Josef Schütz to the local authority in Neudek, 07/12/1938.
- 12 BayHStA, SDA, Kleinstnachlässe 396: Replacement card for the employment record HB/374.
- 13 The transport lists are mostly made out in Czech and English and record the name, age, gender, nationality, address and occupation of the persons to be resettled, adding a con-

- secutive number and a column with the cynical comment "Kam by si přál/Desires to go to/Wünscht zu gehen nach". Every transport is accompanied by a Protokol/Receipt/Protokoll. - The lists quoted here were viewed at the Sudetendeutsche Institut in Munich in the form of copies of the originals kept in various archives in Prague. - The refugee and immigrant transit camp Wiesau featured 54 wooden barracks and was built in 1946. It served to receive trains from Czechoslovakia and distribute their passengers from 25/02/1946 to 30/10/1946. A sum total of 587,000 displaced persons passed through the camp. See also Busl 2015.
- 14 BayHStA, SDA, Kleinstnachlässe 397: Letter by Theresia Schütz to the Austrian Federal Ministry for Home Affairs, Vienna. – Josef Schütz was given leave from military service from 08/10/1940 to 11/11/1941 because of his business.
- **15** ibid.
- 16 ibid
- 17 BayHStA, SDA, Kleinstnachlässe 397: Postcard by Josef Schütz from Jarzewo camp to Theresia Schütz, 02/01/1949.
- 18 BayHStA, SDA, Kleinstnachlässe 397: Letter by Josef Schütz to his mother, no location information, 10/07/1949.
- 19 BayHStA, SDA, Kleinstnachlässe 397: Postcard by Josef

- Schütz from Voroshilovgrad camp to his mother, 10/07/1947.
- 20 BayHStA, SDA, Kleinstnachlässe 397: Telegram by Josef Schütz to Theresia Schütz.
- 21 1,125,508 POWs from the "East" passed through the Gronenfelde homecomer camp between 27/07/1946 and 03/05/ 1950. See also Hirthe 1998.
- 22 Hof-Moschendorf featured Bavaria's largest transit camp, originally built as a satellite of the Dachau and Flossenbürg concentration camps. It was turned into a transit camp for expellees and returning soldiers after the war and continued to exist until April 1957.

  See also Menke / Kastner 2014.
- 23 BayHStA, SDA, Kleinstnachlässe 397: Health pass by the border official for refugees in Hof-Bayaria.
- 24 BayHStA, SDA, Kleinstnachlässe 397: Care pass no. 41634.
- 25 BayHStA, SDA, Kleinstnachlässe 397: Newspaper clipping, no location or date information
- 26 BayHStA, SDA, Kleinstnachlässe 397: Notification from the tribunal / main chamber in Munich dated 28/12/1949. – The Bavarian Heimkehrer Amnesty passed on 20/04/1948 only benefitted men not classed as Hauptschuldige [main culprits] or Belastete [charged].
- 27 BayHStA, SDA, Kleinstnachlässe 397: Postcard by Josef Schütz from Voroshilovgrad

- camp to Theresia Schütz, 13/01/1949.
- 28 Bundesarchiv-Lastenausgleichsarchiv: Application by Franz Schütz in Deiningen
- Nr. 69 for assessment of displacement losses based on the assessment law dated 21 April 1952.
- 29 Inv. no. 3590.
- 30 BayHStA, SDA, Kleinstnachlässe 395: Supplement to the curriculum vitae of Josef Schütz, May 1985.

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Kleinstnachlässe 396: Berufsleben, Arbeit, Gewerbe, Konzession, Josef und Franz Schütz [Professional life, work, business, concession, Josef and Franz Schütz]. Kleinstnachlässe 397: Feldpostbriefe, Spruchkammer, Entschädigung, Josef und Theresia Schütz [Field post letters, tribunal, compensation, Josef and Theresia Schütz].

Bundesarchiv: Lastenausgleichsarchiv: Antrog von Franz Schütz auf Feststellung von Vertreibungsschäden [Application by Franz Schütz for the assessment of displacement losses], 1961. Regierung von Schwaben-Ausgleichsamt Nr. 233, Aktenzeichen F 2673. Signatur: ME2/68/4/1/.

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