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# THE DEPORTATION OF ROMANIAN GERMANS TO THE SOVIET UNION AND ITS PLACE WITHIN TRANSYLVANIAN SAXON MEMORY DISCOURSES IN GERMANY IN THE 1950S AND THE 1960S

## Introduction

In January 1945, following Soviet orders, between 70,000 and 80,000 Romanian citizens of German ethnicity were deported to the Soviet Union, for forced labour, a situation that lasted in most cases until 1950/51.<sup>1</sup> A geographical breakdown of the deported looks roughly as follows: about 60,000 were Germans from Transylvania and Banat (30,000 Transylvanian Saxons and 30,000 Banat Swabians), while 10,000 were from the Sathmar region (5,000 Sathmar Swabians) and from the so-called 'Old Kingdom'.<sup>2</sup> The exact numbers are subject to debate, yet the higher percentage of Banat Swabians and Transylvanian Saxons mirrors the fact that from a numerical point of view these were the most significant German-speaking groups in Romania. The great part of the deported, men between 17 and 45 and women between 18 and 30 years old, were sent to the Donetsk region and to the Urals.<sup>3</sup>

The deportation to the Soviet Union can be historically integrated within the larger and more far-reaching process of flight and expulsion of Germans from Central and Eastern Europe at the end of the Second World War.<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, the phenomenon displays significant differences when compared to the much better known expulsions of ethnic Germans from Poland or Czechoslovakia. Most importantly, it was a case of temporary deportation, in view of a precise purpose, and not of permanent resettlement. Furthermore, unlike in the Polish, Czech, or the Hungarian and Yugoslav cases, the Romanian government and other political actors tried, albeit unsuccessfully, to oppose the measure.<sup>5</sup>

At the same time, it must also be emphasised that Romanian Germans were not the only group of Germans from Central and Eastern Europe deported to Soviet labour camps. A similar fate afflicted Germans from Hungary, Yugoslavia and even from what is nowadays Western Poland. All in all, about 450.000 Germans from the said countries (Romania included) were deported.<sup>6</sup>

Nowadays, the deportation is undoubtedly a crucial element to Romanian German memory and, henceforth, to Romanian German identity and identification discourses. Salient evidence include processes of memorialisation that have taken place in the last two to three decades in both Romania and Germany: exhibitions, commemorations, inauguration of monuments and memorials, often in the presence of important political actors.<sup>7</sup> In the same context, the growing presence of academic and non-academic literature on the topic should be noticed. Nobel Prize winner Herta Müller's novel, *The Hunger Angel* (the original title is *Der Atemschaukel*),<sup>8</sup> is the best known literary work dealing with the deportation.

Questions surrounding the deportation of Romanian Germans and its consequences have been addressed on a scholarly level. The most comprehensive academic work on the topic is the three-volumes project, authored by Georg Weber et al., dealing with the deportation as a historical event, as a biographical event and as a topic handled in literature.<sup>9</sup> Other works looking at questions related to the deportation and its memory make extensive use of an oral history methodology, thus emphasising the perspective of the survivors and, in some cases, of their offspring, and aiming mainly to reconstruct experiences in the past.<sup>10</sup> Official documents and other primary sources have also been edited.<sup>11</sup>

Recently, Annemarie Weber analysed the representation of the deportation in *Neuer Weg*, the main German-language newspaper in Communist Romania, focusing on the same period as my own study (the 1950s and the 1960s).<sup>12</sup> She showed that in reality the deportation was not totally tabooed by Communist authorities in Romania and that at least in the 1950s a "valorisation of the reconstruction work" was present in the pages of *Neuer Weg*, in accordance with the ideological desiderata of the period. The ideological loading notwithstanding, Weber argues, this represented the "first and the most important integration offer for Romanian Germans".<sup>13</sup>

Nevertheless, in spite of this growing interest for questions regarding the Romanian German deportation to the Soviet Union, what is undoubtedly

lacking is a study of the politics of memory associated with the deportation, charting the various top-down memory discourses about the phenomenon, their uses and their significance for the actors disseminating them, from the 1950s onwards. Worded differently, there is no analysis of the place and of the relevance of the deportation *after* the deportation, of its afterlife in the various conceptualisations of Transylvanian Saxon (and Romanian German) memory and identity. The present paper intends to partly fill in this gap, by looking mostly at discourses disseminated by Transylvanian Saxon elites in Germany in the 1950s and 1960s.

In the Transylvanian Saxon case, the two main Germany-based institutions aiming to speak on behalf of the community and thus shaping politics of identity and politics of memory were the Homeland Association (*Landsmannschaft*) of Transylvanian Saxons and the Aid Committee (*Hilfskomitee*) of Transylvanian Saxons and Evangelical Banat Swabians. Tightly interlinked, yet with partially different interests and with distinct approaches as regards Transylvanian Saxon future, both organisations were doing ethnic politics.

It is something of an obvious truth that, “the construction of memory is infused by politics”.<sup>14</sup> Consequently, I grant attention to particular instantiations of what Lebow called “institutional memory”, i.e. “efforts by political elites, their supporters, and their opponents to construct meanings of the past and propagate them more widely or impose them on other members of society.”<sup>15</sup> Considering the fact that the main sources used for this research are press sources, I focus on top-down discourses and statements directly or indirectly related to the deportation. Furthermore, taking into account that the local component of memory plays a key role in the shaping of identity discourses and of self-representations and that the analysis of the local dimension facilitates the understanding of particular processes and tensions within larger social groups,<sup>16</sup> I also look at discourses about the deportation originating from more eccentric “ethnopolitical entrepreneurs”. More concretely, I refer on the one hand to discourses promoted by elites within the two above-mentioned institutions (Homeland Association and Evangelical Aid Committee), and on the other hand to discourses disseminated from the margins of Transylvanian Saxon ethnic politics in Germany.

Furthermore, I connect the meanings of such discursive acts of memorialisation, coming from the centre or from the margins of Transylvanian Saxon ethnic politics, to broader Transylvanian Saxon self-representations and to the wider historical and socio-political contexts in

which discourses about the deportation ensued. In this context, the present paper is fundamentally a study of textual discourses and of transmitted discursive knowledge, aiming to shed light upon what specific utterances stood for in particular contexts.

My own methodological approach has been informed by two studies on the memory of the expulsion of Germans from Silesia and of the loss of the region in favour of Poland, both of them much broader in scope than the present paper.<sup>17</sup> Christian Lotz analysed the stances of the most important organisational actors in the two German states, with respect to the memory of the expulsion and of the territorial loss, whereas Andreas Demshuk investigated the interpretative cleavage between the Silesian elites in Germany and the grassroots level, i.e. the ordinary expellees, members or non-members of the respective organisations. They both emphasised the conflicts regarding the interpretation of the expulsion, the various meanings such conflicts held, tightly linked with the politics pursued by and the interactions between the said institutions. For his research, Lotz used mostly archival material, found in several archives in Germany, whereas Demshuk also looked at press articles.

At the same time, it has to be emphasised that the landscape of memory discourses related to the Romanian German deportation has been and is undoubtedly broader than sketched in this paper, as a multitude of “memory workers” or “memory activists”<sup>18</sup> were directly or indirectly interested in the memorialisation of the event, representing various stances and acting in multiple ways. These actors can also be conceptualised as Transylvanian Saxon “ethnopolitical entrepreneurs”, i.e. “specialists in ethnicity”, who “may well live ‘off’ as well as ‘for’ ethnicity”. One of the instruments they use is that of “reifying ethnic groups”, through their management of ethnic politics on the one hand and through the fundamental role they play in the production and reproduction of ethnic identity discourses on the other hand.<sup>19</sup>

In order to delineate the memory discourses about the deportation and their role within the contemporary contexts they were part of, I resort to a number of sources inconsistently analysed until now. I refer mainly to the several postwar press publications of Transylvanian Saxons in Germany, such as *Siebenbürgische Zeitung*, *Licht der Heimat*, or *Siebenbürgisch-sächsischer Hauskalender*. The first one was the official organ of the Homeland Association, whereas the latter two were published under the aegis of the Aid Committee. To these I added two *Heimatblätter*, *Zeidner Gruß* and *Wir Heldsdörfer*, i.e. periodical bulletins published under the



aegis of former local Transylvanian Saxon communities for their members who had settled down in Germany. The attention I grant to press sources is based on the one hand on the close links between print media products and the shaping of collective memory,<sup>20</sup> and on the other hand on the fact that the analysis of Transylvanian Saxon publications in Germany offers the possibility to grasp and deconstruct the identity discourses and the related conflicts and tensions taking place within the institutions aiming to represent Transylvanian Saxons. Such publications were part of the so-called “expellee press”.<sup>21</sup> They provide a valuable and insightful source on numerous aspects related to Transylvanian Saxon life and conflicts in Germany after the Second World War.

Through looking at these sources, this paper intends to provide answers, be they only partial, to a number of questions. The Homeland Association and the Aid Committee had very different perspectives as regards the future prospects of the Romanian German communities, but was this in any way linked with different interpretations of the deportation to the Soviet Union in the first postwar decades? What role did these interpretations play in the larger narratives promoted by these groups? Did Transylvanian Saxon elites within the Homeland Association insert the deportation in the wider context of the victimhood discourses promoted by the umbrella-association Federation of Expellees (*Bund der Vertriebenen*) and if yes, how?

By researching the particular case of Transylvanian Saxon elites in Germany in the first postwar decades, this paper sheds light upon some of the relevant actors in a very broad picture. Thus, it should be read and taken first and foremost as a starting point of an attempt to comprehensively chart the multitude of memory discourses on to the deportation, and the related conflicts. On the one hand, my intention is to shed light upon particular instantiations of the “Germans as victims” discourse and to see how discourses on the deportation stand in relationship to this broader discursive paradigm.<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, looking at the Transylvanian Saxon memorialisation of the deportation in the first postwar decades definitely opens the way for future elaborations on the transformations of Romanian German identity discourses from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards.

## Transylvanian Saxons at the End of the Second World War

Saxon presence in Transylvania dates all the way back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century, with Saxon identity being maintained up to the 18<sup>th</sup> century by means of a certain degree of jurisdictional, religious, and cultural autonomy.<sup>23</sup> Following the First World War and the Paris Peace Treaties from 1919, Transylvania, until then part of the Habsburg Empire, was incorporated into Romania and henceforth Transylvanian Saxons became part of the German minority in Romania, which also included other German-speaking groups such as Banat Swabians, Sathmar Swabians, Bukovina Germans, Bessarabia Germans, or Dobruja Germans. In 1930 figures showed around 237,000 Germans in the region.<sup>24</sup> The relationships with Germany and with the German-speaking world had always been an important aspect of Transylvanian Saxon cultural and social life,<sup>25</sup> yet they gained political momentum especially after 1933, National Socialist ideology exerting a very powerful attraction upon Transylvanian Saxons.<sup>26</sup>

Romania entered the Second World War in 1941, siding with the Axis. In 1943, Romanian authorities officially allowed Romanian Germans to join German troops, yet the phenomenon had already started beforehand.<sup>27</sup> Romania's sudden change of sides, on 23 August 1944, abruptly placed Germans in Romania into a totally new situation: from a privileged minority during Romania's alliance with Hitler, they suddenly became enemies. Furthermore, the presence of Soviet troops on Romanian territory, *de facto* acting in many ways like an occupation army, was already rightfully perceived as omenous. In this context, following Soviet orders, the deportation of Romanian Germans (women between 18 and 30 years old, men between 17 and 45 years old) to the Soviet Union, 'for the reconstruction of the country' took place. Given the fact that many Romanian German men were at the time still serving in the Wehrmacht or in the SS, there was a gender imbalance within Romanian German communities. This also led to a situation in which more than half of the deported were women. Most of the deported were released by the end of the 1940s. About 15% of the deportees did not survive the harsh conditions.<sup>28</sup>

Practically, the Second World War led to the seemingly irreversible displacement of a significant number of Transylvanian Saxons. The massive enrolment of young Transylvanian Saxon men in the German Army and in the SS made it impossible, or at least extremely difficult, for them to come back to Romania.<sup>29</sup> According to Hans-Werner Schuster, most of the about

20.000 men in this situation were discharged in Germany.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, during the war Transylvania was divided between Romania and Hungary, the northern part of the region falling under the administration of the latter country. Unlike most of their fellow Saxons in southern Transylvania, many Saxons in northern Transylvania fled from the advancement of the Soviet armies, ending in Austria and in southern Germany. Their evacuation practically started the chain of events better known as “flight and expulsion of Germans from Eastern Europe”.<sup>31</sup> Figures are far from being irrelevant: this was probably the largest group of Transylvanian Saxons in Germany, numbering about 50.000 individuals.<sup>32</sup> To these two groups one should add the relatively small number of intellectuals and other people who had moved to Germany before or during the war. Last, but definitely not least, of those deported from Romania to the Soviet Union, around 15.000 Transylvanian Saxons were sent back in the second half of the 1940s not to their home country, but to the Soviet Occupation Zone, in Frankfurt (Oder). Most of them then moved to the Federal Republic.<sup>33</sup> They completed the structure of the Transylvanian Saxon community in Germany in the first postwar decades.<sup>34</sup>

Just like in the case of all Germans from Central- and Eastern Europe who were expelled at the end of the Second World War, German legislation granted Transylvanian Saxons from the start relatively easy access to citizenship.<sup>35</sup> This also led to a situation in which the Transylvanian Saxon community was caught on the two sides of the Iron Curtain, communicating with difficulty, if at all: the greatest part of it was in Romania, whereas a smaller, albeit very active part, was in the Federal Republic of Germany. Moreover, this was conducive to increasing difficulties and conflicts regarding the prospects for the future of the Transylvanian Saxon community, conflicts placed and displayed in both Romania and Germany.

In the immediate postwar years, Germany being occupied by the Allies, the German expellees from Central- and Eastern Europe were prohibited from forming political organisations.<sup>36</sup> In this context, the very first expellee institutions to be created were the religious ones, “organised primarily to help alleviate individual hardships”.<sup>37</sup> This was also valid in the Transylvanian Saxon case, most surely also on the basis of the traditionally political role of the Lutheran Church in Transylvania, the so-called *Volkskirche* (national church).<sup>38</sup> On 6 February 1947 the Aid Committee of Transylvanian Saxons and Evangelical Banat Swabians was founded.<sup>39</sup> Only later, in 1949, was the Homeland Association set

up.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, the close interdependence of the two organisations was visible from the very start, on both a personal and institutional level. Fritz Heinz Reimesch, a Transylvanian Saxon writer settled in Germany since the interwar period and having made a career during Nazi rule, was in the early 1950s president of both institutions.

One of the key figures within the Homeland Association, and undoubtedly its main ideologue during the greatest part of the post-war period was Heinrich Zillich (1898-1988), writer and former Nazi enthusiast. Zillich had been a fervent admirer of Hitler and one of the so-called cultural renewers (*Erneuerer*) in the interwar period.<sup>41</sup> In effect, the Homeland Association was practically dominated by individuals who previously contributed directly to the success of National Socialism within the Transylvanian Saxon community in Romania.<sup>42</sup>

In time, the Homeland Association and the Aid Committee started to have divergent points regarding the future of Transylvanian Saxons. On the one hand, the lay/political elites within the Homeland Association pushed for migration of Saxons from Romania to Germany, considering that there can be no proper future for the community in the former homeland. On the other hand, the religious elites gathered under the aegis of the Aid Committee and fundamentally close to the Lutheran Church in Romania were very critical towards this approach. They were aiming rather towards creating the necessary conditions in order for a significant Transylvanian Saxon community to continue to exist in Romania, despite the hardships imposed by the Communist regime in the country.<sup>43</sup>

### **Integrating Romanian German Memory and Identity in the West German Context. The Deportation to the Soviet Union versus the Evacuation of Saxons from Northern Transylvania**

Münz and Ohliger argue that the construction of Germans as a “nation of victims” was hegemonic in the first two postwar decades and one of the main elements of this scaffolding was connected with the suffering and the plights of the expellees.<sup>44</sup> Consequently, it is hardly a surprise that in the first two postwar decades (especially in the 1950s) the predominant discourse disseminated by Transylvanian Saxon elites was focusing on victimhood. As such, it could easily be acknowledged within the German public opinion and also within the circle of German “expellees” from

Central- and Eastern Europe, dominated by the Homeland Associations of Sudeten and Silesian Germans.<sup>45</sup>

Within this general setting, one could expect discourses on Romanian German deportation to the Soviet Union to be present in the foreground of Transylvanian Saxon public space, as displayed in *Siebenbürgische Zeitung*, *Licht der Heimat* or *Siebenbürgisch-sächsischer Hauskalender*, the three main publications of Saxons in Germany. The deportation of around 30,000 Transylvanian Saxons to the Soviet Union for forced labour was undoubtedly fit to enter a paradigm of victimhood. Nevertheless, looking for materials on the deportation in the issues of the said publications appearing in the anniversary months and years (January 1955, January 1960, January 1965, January 1970) proved to be a largely futile endeavour. Only in February 1970 did *Siebenbürgische Zeitung* publish an account about the deportation, on the page dedicated to women(!). Furthermore, the title of the article was "12 Januar 1965 - Erinnerungen" (12 January 1965 - memories), suggesting that it had to wait five years in order to be published.<sup>46</sup> What is even more striking is that roughly in the same period of time, the anniversaries of the evacuation of Saxons from northern Transylvania were marked through several articles, in all three publications.<sup>47</sup> Thus, an implicit memory conflict can be detected, between two sets of traumatic group experiences.<sup>48</sup>

The question regarding the reasons for the profuse interest for the evacuation of Saxons from northern Transylvania and the comparatively smaller attention granted to the deportation to the Soviet Union can be explained by several factors. Firstly, the discourse on evacuation could be easily integrated within the larger paradigm of 'flight and expulsion', prevalent within German public space in the first postwar decades. There are a number of important differences between the fate of Germans in the northern part of Transylvania, who were evacuated by and together with the retreating German army, and that of Germans in western Poland or from the Sudeten region, who were expelled by the local governments of the time. The former could more easily be presented as part of the 'flight and expulsion', an argument in favour of the institutional and political integration of the Transylvanian Saxon Homeland Association within larger expellee organisations.

Secondly, the evacuation of Saxons from northern Transylvania also brought forth consequences in many ways similar to those ensued from the expulsions from Poland and Czechoslovakia, such as the loss of property, and was thus legally addressed by the German state, through the Law on

the Equalisation of Burdens (*Lastenausgleichsgesetz*).<sup>49</sup> In 1951, Heinrich Zillich argued for the integration of Transylvanian Saxons in the community of expellees, on the basis of the „common destiny“, thus suggesting that this was not taken for granted and that debates in this respect were present either within the circles of Transylvanian Saxon leadership or within the wider expellee movement: “It must be said, that we have a common destiny, that we construct the block of 9 million expellees. We also belong to it from an organisational point of view and we are fully entitled. We have no reason to step out of line.”<sup>50</sup>

Saxon self-identification discourses emphasising the flight from Transylvania were thus part and parcel of attempts to integrate within the broader expellee community, politically acknowledged by the West German state and active under the aegis of several institutions, out of which the Federation of Expellees emerged in December 1958 as the sole representative body.<sup>51</sup> The efforts of the Homeland Association to construct Transylvanian Saxons as ‘expellees’ reached their pinnacle in a different context, much later, in 1985, when the paradoxical expression “expelled, yet held back in the expelling country”, was coined by journalist Hans Hartl.<sup>52</sup> The political connotations and goals related to the use of such an expression are linked with the perceived recognition granted in West Germany to German expellees from Central and Eastern Europe. The typescript bearing as motto the aforementioned locution was handed over to German politicians and policy-makers, in view of supporting Romanian German migration to Germany in the second half of the 1980s.<sup>53</sup>

It would go beyond the scope of the present paper to analyse in depth the ways in which the Saxon integration into the larger expellee community was construed, yet it is worth emphasising that in the first two postwar decades placing the experiences of Saxons from northern Transylvania under spotlight came hand in hand with an apparent lack of centrally-steered commemorative interest for the deportation to the Soviet Union.

Moreover, avoiding memory talk about the deportation could also be connected with the question of guilt and responsibility. Many of those involved in the politics of the Homeland Association had been, in the interwar period, fervent National Socialists.<sup>54</sup> Thus, they were practically the ones who made possible the equation of ‘German’ with ‘Hitlerite’, one of its consequences being the deportation of their fellow Saxons from Romania to the Soviet Union. Not transforming the deportation into an institutionally sanctioned part of official memory could also be a way in which sensitive questions regarding one’s own responsibility for

the phenomenon were avoided. Nevertheless, this hypothesis should be verified by recurring to archival sources, such as internal documents of the Homeland Association, correspondence etc. At the same time, despite the existence of animosities and tensions between the Homeland Association and the Aid Committee, often also regarding the Nazi past, such conflicts were rarely made public in the first postwar decades.<sup>55</sup>

Last but not least, one of the main differences between northern Transylvanian Saxons and deported Saxons settled in Germany was their degree of 'groupness'. Not only that the former were undoubtedly more numerous in the 1950s and the 1960s, but their evacuation often led to a situation in which villages and groups practically migrated *in toto*. This facilitated the reconstruction or the reinstatement of social institutions, that could then impose the collective remembrance of the recent past.

Nevertheless, the deportation seems to have been commemorated in the 1960s under the aegis of newly created *Heimatortsgemeinschaften*, i.e. communities gathering the former inhabitants of villages and localities in Transylvania, now living in Germany. In this context, the *Zeidner Gruß*, i.e. the news bulletin of the Zeiden/Codlea/Feketehalom community in Germany, offers relevant information about the twentieth anniversary of the deportation with extensive material on the event, thus showing a difference between the central indifference and the local need for commemoration of the deportation. Zeiden is a locality in southern Transylvania. Therefrom, around 500 Germans were deported in January 1945 to the Soviet Union. The total number of Germans in Zeiden was somewhere around 3,000 (around 400 Germans from Zeiden served in the Wehrmacht and in the SS during the Second World War). About 300 of the deportees returned to Zeiden, while around 100 were discharged in Germany, and about 100 died in the deportation.<sup>56</sup>

The commemoration of the deportation took place at the fifth edition of the Zeiden neighbourhood day (*Nachbarschaftstag*), celebrated in Bischofshohen, a locality close to Salzburg. The young *Nachbarvater* (neighbourhood elder), Balduin Harter, gave a lengthy speech on this occasion, published in the pages of the *Zeidner Gruß*.<sup>57</sup> Maria Bucur's claim that memory is always local appears to be borne out in this case.<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, even before this anniversary, one could read in *Zeidner Gruß* about various other local attempts to memorialise the deportation, such as religious services in the Transylvanian homeland for those who were deported to the Soviet Union, or even the composition of songs dedicated to the deported.<sup>59</sup>

Herter's intervention in 1965 is based upon his own memories of the event, as he was one of the deportees, but also on memories of other deportees, whom he asked and encouraged to write down their own experiences.<sup>60</sup> As thus, he fits in the paradigm promoted in the 1950s and 1960s by means of the large, eight volumes documentation project on the expulsion of Germans from Central- and Eastern Europe.<sup>61</sup> As Robert G. Moeller noticed, the documentation implied moving away from "a historiographical tradition that had focused all but exclusively on the stories of great men and nation states" and moving towards the grassroots level and the stories of ordinary people, accounts of eye-witnesses.<sup>62</sup> In the same vein, Herter's main objectives seemed to be the collection of firsthand material about the deportations from those directly hit by the phenomenon and the commemoration of those who died, whose names were read out loud in front of a standing audience.<sup>63</sup>

## The Responsibility for the Deportation

*Zeidner Gruß*, in effect the first *Heimatblatt* published by Transylvanian Saxons in Germany,<sup>64</sup> offers thus important insights into the local aspects of memorialisation and remembrance of the deportation. Another similar publication appearing during the same period of time,<sup>65</sup> *Wir Heldsdörfer*, the *Heimatblatt* of the Heldsdorf/Hälchiu/Höltövény community, partially confirms that the need to commemorate the deportation was bigger on the local level. Nevertheless, unlike in *Zeidner Gruß*, no reference was made to the organisation of commemorative events related to the deportation. Yet accounts of those deported or literary pieces inspired by the deportation were published.<sup>66</sup> More importantly, in 1970 six pages were dedicated to the forced labour in the Soviet Union.<sup>67</sup>

The latter material leads us to another relevant question regarding the deportation as a historical event and its afterlife, i.e. its memory and its interpretations within Romanian German circles in Germany during the Cold War. In a text published initially in *Südostdeutsche Vierteljahresblätter*,<sup>68</sup> and then in *Wir Heldsdörfer*, Bernard Ohsam, in effect one of the very first authors of a novel about the deportation, inspired from his own experiences,<sup>69</sup> touches upon the question of responsibility for the fate of Romanian Germans at the end of the Second World War.<sup>70</sup> In Ohsam's view, Romanian authorities were the main culprits for the deportation, as they had decided to deport the German population,



although Stalin and the Soviet Union had simply requested qualified labour force for the reconstruction of the country.<sup>71</sup>

Ohsam's intervention from 1970 was not the first one addressing the issue of guilt and responsibility for the deportation. At one point, in 1951-1952, the question had already elicited a short-lived debate, not within the small circle of Transylvanian Saxon elites, but rather between such elites and members of the Romanian exile, close to the Rădescu government, under whose administration the deportation took place. The reasons for contention were related to the responsibility for the deportations, ascribed by Heinrich Zillich and by others not only to the Soviet occupiers, but also to a large extent to the Romanian authorities.<sup>72</sup>

In January 1952, on the occasion of the seventh anniversary of the deportation, a certain Cornelius (a pseudonym) published a harsh attack against the Romanian government: "When in late autumn 1944, the Soviets requested workforce from Romania, on treaty basis, the Romanian politicians in charge agreed to offer them first the human fair game of that time: the German-speaking population."<sup>73</sup> An exchange of opinions ensued. The Romanian answer to the allegations came from Constantin Vișoianu, Minister of Foreign Affairs during the deportation and president of the Romanian National Committee in Exile in the 1950s, who represented the today commonly held, historically based view that the Romanian government officially opposed the deportation.<sup>74</sup> Yet later on, in April, A.H. (most probably, Alfred Hönig) reinforced the view that Germans were targeted not only by Romanian Communists, but also by the bourgeois parties and, moreover, that they had been victims even under Antonescu: "We *Volksdeutschen* were not beneficiaries, but playthings of the alliance between National Socialist Germany and Antonescu's Romania... [...] Under Antonescu, some of the regulations of the Romanian legislation directed against Jews were also utilised against us *Volksdeutsche*."<sup>75</sup>

The exchange is undoubtedly telling of the lack of information about the deportation and also of the rumours and opinions circulating as common currency within the Transylvanian Saxon community at the time, regarding who was accountable for the phenomenon. Yet the question that arises is whether ascribing the guilt not only to the Soviets, but also to the Romanian pre-Communist authorities had any meaning beyond the simple lack of knowledge on a very recent phenomenon. In 1995, Georg Weber et al. showed that with the exception of the Communists, members of all Romanian political parties tried, in different ways, to protest against

the measure.<sup>76</sup> Although in the context of the early 1950s it was hard, if not impossible, for Transylvanian Saxon elites in Germany to be aware of what had happened on a political level behind closed doors in Romania, their initial stance regarding the accountability for the deportation can be integrated within the policy they developed towards mid-1950s, that of pushing for migration of Germans from Romania to Germany.

Furthermore, dissenting views within the community were not properly taken into account. For example, Herwart Scheiner argued that the deportation was a Soviet order.<sup>77</sup> He had been a member of the Romanian German leadership in Romania during the period of the deportation, trying to convince General Rădescu, the leader of the government, to cancel the order.<sup>78</sup> Henceforth, he probably had first-hand knowledge that the deportation was actually to blame on the Soviets. Nevertheless, his view was not properly taken into account by the elites within the Homeland Association.

Interestingly, this alternative stance with regard to the responsibility for the deportation came from one of the early opponents of the ethnic politics promoted by the Homeland Association. Pierre de Trégomain showed that in 1947 Scheiner was a supporter of the *in toto* migration of Transylvanian Saxons to Germany,<sup>79</sup> whereas the migration solution was embraced definitively by the Homeland Association only towards the mid-1950s.<sup>80</sup> However, in 1949, Scheiner set up an organisation aiming to represent all Romanian Germans in Germany, thus straightforwardly threatening to compete with the Homeland Association(s) for the top-down production and reproduction of Romanian German identities. Yet this time he was distinctly pleading for a Romanian German return to Romania.<sup>81</sup> This change of attitude might prove that Scheiner was looking for various ways to enter into confrontation with the established leaders of Transylvanian Saxons in Germany, i.e. the Homeland Association. Eventually, little came out of this dispute. Nevertheless, the fact that it was precisely Scheiner whose stance regarding the deportation was at odds with the prevalent one shows that one has plenty to gain, research-wise, from connecting the interpretations of the deportation with the broader political and cultural contexts they were part of. The uses and instrumentalizations of the deportation can thus be better comprehended.

Portraying both Communists and non-Communists in Romania as ready to offer Germans as labour force to the Soviets implied that the fate of the German minority in Romania was practically sealed, no matter who was in charge in Romania. In conclusion, Romania was a country Transylvanian

Saxons could not properly go back to. This vision fitted the policy of the Homeland Association, pleading for Transylvanian Saxon migration from Romania to Germany since the mid-1950s onwards.

## **The Deportation to the Soviet Union and the Second World War**

Although the deportation was not often directly addressed and although it was not institutionally sanctioned within centrally-steered Transylvanian Saxon memory discourses in the 1950s and the 1960s, texts about Transylvanian Saxon (recent) history did include references to the deportation. For example, in his 1951 discourse at the Transylvanian Saxon homeland meeting (*Heimattag*) in Dinkelsbühl, Reimesch asked for a German recognition of Saxon deportation in the Soviet Union, thus suggesting that within the larger discourse on expulsion, the deportation did not have a place of its own:

Tens of thousands of German lads and girls, men and women were deported as forced labourers to Russia and there they had to do penance for a guilt that was not theirs, but which they carried with spiritual greatness, without having won until now recognition amidst the German people! How many amongst them are lying now at the margins of Asia, in foreign lands!<sup>82</sup>

One finds here in a nutshell the constant Transylvanian Saxon quest for German recognition, sign of a fundamentally asymmetrical relationship. Furthermore, considering the entirety of Reimesch's text and the prevalent self-identification discourses promoted by Heinrich Zillich, and also by expellee associations in general, the reference to "Asia" can also be comprehended.<sup>83</sup> The historical narratives disseminated by Zillich and Reimesch can be summarised as follows: in the past, Germans were sent as colonisers to Eastern Europe, thus being the main contributors to the advancement and progress of the region and properly inscribing it onto the European map. Endowed with positive connotations, Saxon colonisation in the region is seen as a 'mission', abruptly brought to an end by the loss of the war and by the advancement of Soviet armies. Such discourses practically stand for a continuation of National Socialist discourses from before and during the war. Consequently, the deportation is practically

addressed as part of the war, with the deportees being often placed next to war prisoners or war victims.<sup>84</sup>

Sometimes, this led to a *de facto* equation of deportees with war prisoners. For example, on the occasion of the 1951 homeland meeting, Alfred Coulin pleaded for remembering those Saxons who lost their homeland: „...some fled on long treks, others came to Germany, where the black market was blossoming, through Russia, where they were in war captivity.”<sup>85</sup> At first glance, the deportation is absent from Coulin's speech. Nevertheless, Coulin had been himself deported to the Soviet Union for forced labour, so it would be hard to think he did not intend at least to allude to a suffering that he was personally very much aware of, in a discourse on Transylvanian Saxon victimhood and loss of *Heimat*. He was one of those discharged in Germany after the deportation, so his loss of *Heimat* was a direct consequence of the deportation.<sup>86</sup> More probably, he perceived the deportation under the broader umbrella-term *Kriegsgefangenschaft* (war captivity), a phenomenon that was not so peculiar if we take into account that the deportation took place during the war or that in the early 1950s *Russlandheimkehrer* (returnees from Russia) were in the German public opinion the prisoners of war.<sup>87</sup> Furthermore, this can also be linked with the fact that according to German legislation, deportees were assimilated to war prisoners.<sup>88</sup>

*Wir Heldsdörfer* also listed war victims and victims of the deportation, under the heading “Unsere Kriegsopfer” (Our war victims). The four pages material ended with the list of the inhabitants of Heldsdorf who died in the Soviet work camps and with some considerations regarding the putatively small death rate of the Heldsdörfer as compared to Transylvanian Saxons from other localities.<sup>89</sup>

The erection, in 1967, of a memorial in Dinkelsbühl “for our dead in the entire world” (*unsere Toten in aller Welt*) can be interpreted in the same reading key. The memorial stands for a “bequest” (*Vermächtnis*), with the text on the plaque reading as follows: “We commemorate all sons and daughters of Transylvania, who fell in fight, obeying their duty, and who, defenseless, were torn away from us, on evacuation routes, in captivity and in work camps.”<sup>90</sup> In so-called memorial books (*Gedenkbücher*) those who died in the two world wars, in the evacuation, in the work camps or in captivity were supposed to be listed.<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, instead of listing actual names of battlefields, prison and work camps, the choice was to append inscriptions with general denominations. Thus, the deportation to the Soviet Union was referred to on the one hand under the inscription “im

Osten" (in the East) and on the other hand under the inscription "hinter Stacheldraht" (behind barbed wire),<sup>92</sup> an expression commonly used at the time, which merged together war captivity and forced labour in Soviet work camps, also related to Holocaust imagery.

## **The Deportation to the Soviet Union and the Question of the Family Reunification**

Family reunification (*Familienzusammenführung*) has become one of the key elements of the politics of the Homeland Association starting with the mid-1950s. This was also the key element of contention between the Homeland Association and the Evangelical Aid Committee.<sup>93</sup> The Cold War migration of Romanian Germans from Communist Romania to West Germany took place under the aegis of family reunification; secret negotiations between representatives of the two countries were also often recurring to this buzzword.<sup>94</sup>

The question of family reunification leads us to another way of addressing the deportation by Transylvanian Saxon elites in the 1950s and in the 1960s, which connects the latter phenomenon to the former issue. Thus, the deportation became part of an argumentative framework meant to prove that the family reunification, hence migration from Romania to Germany, is the only solution for the community. This approach can be noticed especially from the mid-1950s onwards. Consequently, it was concurrent with the development and stabilisation of the pro-migration policy and lobby of the Homeland Association.<sup>95</sup> Texts and articles on Transylvanian Saxon present refer to the deportation as a cause of the existence of families on both sides of the Iron Curtain, which in its turn is seen as a problem that thoroughly needs to be solved:

Then, in 1944, Romania's decline follows. The Germans in North Transylvania are evacuated to Germany and Austria, the South Transylvanians stay behind. All Germans able to work amongst them are deported in January 1945 for forced labour in the Soviet Union - very many of those who came back from the war, from captivity or from the Russian forced labour in Germany and Austria, are separated ever since from their closest relatives, children, parents. Only when these families will be reunited will a hard human injustice be repaired.<sup>96</sup>

This and other texts connect the deportation and the subsequent discharge of some of the deportees in Germany, among other phenomena, with the fact that the Transylvanian Saxon community was divided between the two sides of the Iron Curtain.

Furthermore, there were cases in which the deportation was raised to the status of main reason for the phenomenon of family separation. For example, in 1957, A.H. (presumably Alfred Hönig) wrote an extensive piece pleading for “humanity” and asking rhetorically whether authorities in Bucharest were aiming to refuse family reunification. The author depicts the deportation, emphasising the fact that it touched upon all Germans, irrespective of political affiliation or of any other criteria. Then, A.H. critically argued, the same regime having conducted the deportations is not allowing those once persecuted and deprived of their rights to reunite with those deported or expelled.<sup>97</sup> Heinrich Zillich was also extremely active and vocal in drawing connections between the deportation and the issue of family reunification, the former arguing for the latter: “Dozens of thousands from us were shipped like cattle in sealed wagons to the Donetsk region, for forced labour which lasted for years, and an eighth of them died. Our families were separated and only you, a small part of our tribe, could knock at Germany’s doors.”<sup>98</sup> His use of the deportation as a historical process in order to argue for the policy supported by the Homeland Association, albeit based on a real situation, shows that the phenomenon had not gained a proper place of its own in Transylvanian Saxon collective memory and identity discourses in the first postwar decades.

The fact that the question of family reunification occupied a central place in Transylvanian Saxon discourses and preoccupations in the said period of time is also showed by Balduin Herter’s addressing of it, in the already cited discourse on the occasion of the twentieth commemoration of the Zeiden deportation.<sup>99</sup> In the second part of his text, Herter addressed more contemporary topics, also relating the family separation, constituting the crux of the preoccupations of the Homeland Association, with the deportation. However, unlike the elites in the Homeland Association, he did not place that into an argumentation pleading for family reunification in Germany as the only solution for the Transylvanian Saxons, but rather offered a more nuanced account of Romanian-German relationships. He criticised Romanian policies towards Romanian Germans and the difficulties Germans still in Romania encountered when it came to travelling abroad, yet he was much more open towards the situation in

Romania as compared to the position of the Homeland Association in the same period of time. Thus, Herter's stance shows that the position of the Homeland Association was not necessarily reiterated at all levels of the organisation, despite its pretense of speaking on behalf of the entire community.<sup>100</sup> The most severe critique came from the Aid Committee, yet with no consequences upon the memorialisation of the deportation. Deviations from the official Homeland Association position, albeit small, were visible in other places as well. Addressing the deportation and its meaning was one of the triggers making such deviations visible, as the case of *Zeidner Gruß* shows.

### **Memorialistic and Literary Accounts on the Deportation**

Nevertheless, it also has to be underlined that Transylvanian Saxon publications, especially *Siebenbürgische Zeitung*, published at times memorialistic or literary accounts of the deportation. Usually, such texts were published as such, without any kind of additional explanations, contextualisations or interpretations. A significant part of them were found on the pages dedicated to women, thus mirroring the gender imbalance of the deportation, but also the fact that the deportation was not seen as a phenomenon of relevance for the entire community.

The fact that the deportation was rather marginal within top-down Transylvanian Saxon identity and memory discourses and attempts is also shown by the peculiar reception (or absence of it) of several literary and memorialistic sources. The first such book was actually published in French, by Rainer Biemel, himself deported to the Soviet Union, under the pseudonym Jean Rounault, as early as 1949.<sup>101</sup> I have not managed to track down any references to it in the pages of the Transylvanian Saxon publications I looked at. This is even more peculiar if one takes into account that in January 1950 an article dedicated to *Mon ami Vassia* appeared in *Der Spiegel*.<sup>102</sup> Furthermore, the German translation of the book was published only in 1995.<sup>103</sup>

The profusion of memorialistic accounts turned into books about the Romanian German deportation is a phenomenon of the past two decades. From the 86 entries under the keyword 'deportation' in the catalogue of the Institute for German Culture and History in South-Eastern Europe in Munich (Institut für deutsche Kultur und Geschichte Südosteuropas - IKGS), formerly Südostdeutsches Kulturwerk, the oldest memorialistic

publication related to the deportation to the Soviet Union dates from 1977. 69 entries (not all of them related to the deportation of Romanian Germans to the Soviet Union) are more recent than 1990.<sup>104</sup> The database of the IKGS might not include all books about the deportation, but the figures are definitely telling. On the same note: Liane Weniger, active in the Homeland Association and many years responsible for the women's page in *Siebenbürgische Zeitung*, published in the 1950s some of her memorialistic accounts from the deportation,<sup>105</sup> yet only in 1994 did she publish a full-fledged book on her experience in the coal mines.<sup>106</sup>

The first and only book on the deportation published between 1950 and 1970 in German was Bernard Ohsam's novel, *Eine Handvoll Machorka* (A Handful of Machorka),<sup>107</sup> a rather unrepresentative semi-biographical account, since it tells the story of an escape from the Soviet labour camps. Notes on its publication were present in *Siebenbürgische Zeitung*.<sup>108</sup> Heinrich Zillich's review of the first edition of the book (1958) focused extensively on the language used by the author, arguing that Ohsam's characters use a jargon that was never used in Transylvania and offering some suggestions for an improvement in this respect.<sup>109</sup>

## Conclusions

The position of Transylvanian Saxon elites in Germany cannot be fully comprehended without a thorough analysis of the other actors with interests at stake in the memorialisation of the deportation (e.g. Lutheran Church in Romania, other Romanian German Homeland Associations, various institutions within the West German and the Romanian states etc.). Nevertheless, some conclusions can undoubtedly be drawn on the basis of the material I have researched and whose analysis I have undertaken in this article.

In the 1950s and the 1960s the deportation was not acknowledged as a key moment for Transylvanian Saxon identity. The conflicts between the lay leadership of the Homeland Association and the religious elites grouped within the Aid Committee do not seem to be mirrored by conflicts regarding the interpretation of the deportation. Furthermore, both *Siebenbürgische Zeitung* and *Licht der Heimat* gave more importance to the evacuation and expulsion of Saxons from Northern Transylvania, marking its twentieth anniversary, whereas the same cannot be said about the twentieth commemoration of the deportation. Although at least at the



beginning of the 1950s, Transylvanian Saxon elites settled in Germany continued to nurture thoughts of returning to Romania,<sup>110</sup> the new geographical and political context obliged them to adjust self-identification and memory discourses to the new setting and thus to construct Saxons as 'expellees'.<sup>111</sup> Merging together the deportation and the war captivity can be understood by recurring to the same reading key.

Furthermore, as the case of discourses on family reunification shows, the deportation was prone to be used as an argumentative piece in a larger scaffolding. Thus, the deportation was not necessarily relevant as such, but rather it was important in view of supporting the argumentative thread proposed by the *Landsmannschaft* elites, related to the migration of the German community from Romania to Germany as the only solution for the survival of Romanian Germans. This can also be read as connected to the symbolic geographies proposed by Heinrich Zillich and by other members of the Transylvanian Saxon elites in Germany, according to which Saxons were a bastion of Occidental civilisation at the Western borders. Yet in the context of the Cold War and of the existence of the Iron Curtain, the East had moved, incorporating Romania under the Soviet (read: 'Asian') influence. Thus, Saxons were supposed to move from the East to the West they putatively belonged to, the trauma of the deportation standing as another piece of argumentation in this respect.

Last, but not least, the case of the Zeiden community in Germany and of its commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the deportation, together with the nuances present in the speech held by Balduin Herter on this occasion, show that there were differences between the 'national' (*landsmannschaftlich*) level and the 'local' levels. The interpretation and the attention granted to the deportation made visible such differences, which in their turn should be further analysed in order to detect processes of identity and memory building in the Transylvanian Saxon case after the Second World War. Linking investigations on the centrally steered activities of institutions such as the Homeland Association and the Evangelical Aid Committee with research on what was happening on more 'local' levels and in private or semi-official settings should be the path to follow for future research. Thus, it will be possible to delineate the transformation of the deportation of Transylvanian Saxons to the Soviet Union from a historical event among others to a key element within Transylvanian Saxon and Romanian German memory cultures.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Mathias Beer, "Rumänien. Regionale Spezifika des Umgangs mit deutschen Minderheiten", in *Deutschsein als Grenzerfahrung. Minderheitenpolitik in Europa zwischen 1914 und 1950*, ed. Mathias Beer, Dietrich Beyrau, Cornelia Rauh (Essen: Klartext, 2009), 294; see also Theodor Schieder et al. (eds.), *Das Schicksal der Deutschen in Rumänien* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 2004), 75-80 (the 2004 edition is a republication of the initial edition, from 1957); Pavel Polian, *Against Their Will. The History and Geography of Forced Migrations in the USSR*, trans. Anna Yastrzhemska (Budapest: CEU Press, 2004), 285-297.
- <sup>2</sup> D. M. [Dietmar Müller], "Deutsche aus Rumänien: Deportation in die Sowjetunion", in *Deportation, Zwangsaussiedlung und ethnische Säuberung im Europa des 20. Jahrhunderts*, eds. Detlef Brandes, Holm Sundhausen, Stefan Troebst (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2010), 166.
- <sup>3</sup> Georg Weber et al., *Die Deportation von Siebenbürger Sachsen in die Sowjetunion 1945-1949. I: Die Deportation als historisches Geschehen* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 1995), 404.
- <sup>4</sup> Mathias Beer, *Flucht und Vertreibung der Deutschen. Voraussetzungen, Verlauf, Folgen* (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 2011), 15.
- <sup>5</sup> Weber et al., *Die Deportation*, 154-169. Academic literature arguing differently is nowadays rarely to be found. One exception is Dallas Michelbacher, "The Deportation of Ethnic Minorities to the USSR and the Romanian National Idea", in *History of Communism in Europe* 3 (2012), 43-57. Nevertheless, Michelbacher manages to write about the deportation without any reference to Weber's groundbreaking work, which questions from the very start his credentials. His argument that the deportations (and "massacres", in his wording) of Romanian Germans were tightly connected with Romanian interwar nationalist discourses and policies does not stand if closely scrutinised.
- <sup>6</sup> M. R. [Małgorzata Ruchniewicz], "Deutsche und Polen aus den ehemaligen deutschen Ostgebieten: Deportation in die Sowjetunion", in *Deportation, Zwangsaussiedlung und ethnische Säuberung*, 164.
- <sup>7</sup> Hans-Werner Schuster, Walther Konschitzky (eds.), *Deportation der Südostdeutschen in die Sowjetunion, 1945-1949* (Munich: Haus des Deutschen Ostens, 1999); also Paul Philippi, "Zum 50. Jahrestag der Deportation in die Sowjetunion [12. Januar 1995]", "Zum 55. Jahrestag der Verschleppung in die Sowjetunion. Grußwort am 15. Januar 2000 in Temeswar", "Deportationsgedenken heute - und auch übermorgen? Referat bei der zentralen Gedenkveranstaltung am 22. Januar 2005 in Reschitza", in *Kirche und Politik. Siebenbürgische Anamnesen und Diagnosen aus fünf Jahrzehnten. Teil II: Zwischen 1992 und 2005* (Sibiu: hora Verlag, 2006), 97-104, 253-7, 393-400.

- <sup>8</sup> Herta Müller, *Der Atemschaukel* (Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 2009). For the English version see Herta Müller, *The Hunger Angel*, trans. Philip Boehm (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2012).
- <sup>9</sup> Weber et al., *Die Deportation*, 3 vol.
- <sup>10</sup> In the last two to three decades, numerous first-hand accounts of the deportation have been published. Just two examples: Helmut Berner, Doru Radosav (eds.), *und keiner weiß warum. Donbaß. Eine deportierte Geschichte* (Ravensburg: Landsmannschaft der Sathmarer Schwaben, 1996) and Lavinia Betea, Cristina Diac, Florin-Răzvan Mihai, Ilarion Țiu (eds.), *Lungul drum spre nicăieri. Germanii din România deportați în URSS* (Târgoviște: Ed. Cetatea de Scaun, 2012). Yet the very first scientifically-oriented memorialistic account of the deportation was funded by the West German state: see Schieder et al. (eds.), *Das Schicksal*.
- <sup>11</sup> Hannelore Baier (ed.), *Deportarea etnicilor germani din România în Uniunea Sovietică. 1945. Culegere de documente de arhivă* (Sibiu: Forumul Democrat al Germanilor din România, 1994); Hannelore Baier (ed.), *Departe, în Rusia, la Stalino. Amintiri și documente cu privire la deportarea în Uniunea Sovietică a etnicilor germani din România (1945-1950)* (Reșița: InterGraf, 2003); Weber et al., *Die Deportation*, vol. 3.
- <sup>12</sup> Annemarie Weber, *Rumäniendeutsche? Diskurse zur Gruppenidentität einer Minderheit (1944-1971)* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2010), 108-123.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 123. All translations from languages other than English belong to the author of this article.
- <sup>14</sup> Richard Ned Lebow, "The Memory of Politics in Postwar Europe", in *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe*, eds. Richard Ned Lebow, Wulf Kansteiner and Claudio Fogu (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 4.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.
- <sup>16</sup> Maria Bucur, *Heroes and Victims: Remembering War in Twentieth Century Romania* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010).
- <sup>17</sup> Christian Lotz, *Die Deutung des Verlusts. Erinnerungspolitische Kontroversen im geteilten Deutschland um Flucht, Vertreibung und die Ostgebiete (1948-1972)* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2007); Andrew Demshuk, *The Lost German East: Forced Migration and the Politics of Memory, 1945-1970* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
- <sup>18</sup> The former term is borrowed from Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, *Frames of Remembrance: The Dynamics of Collective Memory* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1994). The latter is taken from Wulf Kansteiner, "Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies," in *In Pursuit of German Memory: History, Television, and Politics after Auschwitz* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2006), 11-27.
- <sup>19</sup> Rogers Brubaker, "Ethnicity without Groups", in *Ethnicity without Groups* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 10.

- 20 A classical study in this respect: Barbie Zelizer, *Covering the Body: The Kennedy Assassination, the Media, and the Shaping of Collective Memory* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992); see also Eyal Zandberg, "The Right to Tell the (Right) Story: Journalism, Authority and Memory", *Media, Culture & Society* 32:1 (2010), 5-24.
- 21 On expellee press in general see Hans-Jürgen Gaida, *Die offiziellen Organe der ostdeutschen Landsmannschaften. Ein Beitrag zur Publizistik der Heimatvertriebenen in Deutschland* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1973).
- 22 Bill Niven (ed.), *Germans as Victims: Remembering the Past in Contemporary Germany* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006).
- 23 For a good overview of Transylvanian Saxon history, see Konrad Gündisch, in collaboration with Mathias Beer, *Siebenbürgen und die Siebenbürger Sachsen* (Munich: Langen Müller, 1998).
- 24 Schieder et al. (eds.), *Das Schicksal*, 6; Beer, "Rumänien. Regionale Spezifika", 284.
- 25 Glynn Custred, "Dual Ethnic Identity of Transylvanian Saxons", *East European Quarterly* 25:4 (1991), 483-491.
- 26 On the relationship between Germany and Romanian Germans, see Wolfgang Miede, *Das Dritte Reich und die Deutsche Volksgruppe in Rumänien. Ein Beitrag zur nationalsozialistischen Volkstumspolitik* (Bern: Herbert & Peter Lang, 1972) and the works by Johann Böhm: *Die Deutschen in Rumänien und das Dritte Reich 1933-1940* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1999); *Das Nationalsozialistische Deutschland und die Deutsche Volksgruppe in Rumänien 1936-1944* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1985); *Nationalsozialistische Indoktrination der Deutschen in Rumänien 1932-1944* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2008).
- 27 Paul Milata, *Zwischen Hitler, Stalin und Antonescu: Rumäniendeutsche in der Waffen-SS* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2007).
- 28 Beer, "Rumänien", 294.
- 29 *Ibid.*
- 30 Hans-Werner Schuster, "Grundzüge der Entwicklung der Landsmannschaft der Siebenbürger Sachsen in Deutschland," in *60 Jahre Verband der Siebenbürger Sachsen in Deutschland. Grundzüge seiner Geschichte*, ed. Hans-Werner Schuster (Munich: Verband der Siebenbürger Sachsen in Deutschland e.V., 2009), 9.
- 31 Dagmar Kift, "Neither Here nor There? Memorialization of the Expulsion of Ethnic Germans," in *Memorialization in Germany since 1945*, eds. Bill Niven, Chloe Paver (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 78.
- 32 Schuster, "Grundzüge", 9.
- 33 *Ibid.*, 10.
- 34 *Ibid.*, 10.

- 35 Georg Weber et al., *Emigration der Siebenbürger Sachsen. Studien zu Ost-West-Wanderungen im 20. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag, 2002), 156-157.
- 36 Pertti Ahonen, *After the Expulsion: West Germany and Eastern Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 25-26.
- 37 Hans W. Schoenberg, *Germans from the East: A Study of Their Migration, Resettlement, and Subsequent Group History since 1945* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970), 72.
- 38 For a detailed explanation of the meaning of the term *Volkskirche* (national church), see Krista Zach, "Religiöse Toleranz und Stereotypenbildung in einer multikulturellen Region. Volkskirchen in Siebenbürgen," in *Das Bild des Anderen in Siebenbürgen. Stereotype in einer multiethnischen Region*, eds. Konrad Gündisch, Wolfgang Höpken, Michael Markel (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 1998), 109-153.
- 39 Schuster, "Grundzüge", 15-16.
- 40 *Ibid.*, 16-18.
- 41 Johann Böhm, *Hitlers Vasallen der Deutschen Volksgruppe in Rumänien vor und nach 1945* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2006), 60-76.
- 42 *Ibid.*
- 43 Weber et al., *Emigration*, 517-625.
- 44 Rainer Münz, Rainer Ohliger, "Auslandsdeutsche", in *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte I*, eds. Etienne François, Hagen Schulze (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2001), 384-385; see also Robert G. Moeller, *War Stories. The Search for a Usable Past in the Federal Republic of Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).
- 45 Ahonen, *After the Expulsion*.
- 46 E. P., "12. Januar 1965 - Erinnerungen", *Siebenbürgische Zeitung*, 15 February 1970.
- 47 See for example: "Heuer werden es zehn Jahre...", *Siebenbürgische Zeitung*, 17 January 1955; "Tage des Gedenkens. Von 20 Jahren langten die siebenbürgischen Trecks in Österreich ein", *Siebenbürgische Zeitung*, 15 October 1964; "Maniersch bei Schäßburg: Zur Erinnerung an den 8. September 1944", *Licht der Heimat*, August 1964; "Siebenbürgisches Tagebuch 1944/45", *Siebenbürgisch-sächsischer Hauskalender*, 1959, 92-96; Elfriede Csallner, "Bald zwanzig Jahre", *Siebenbürgisch-sächsischer Hauskalender*, 1964, 111-114.
- 48 This statement can be better comprehended if one takes into account the fact that more recently the commemorations of the deportation always get to the foreground of Romanian German public space, unlike the largely forgotten evacuation of Saxons from Northern Transylvania.
- 49 On the Law on the Equalisation of Burdens, see Michael Hughes, *Shouldering the Burdens of Defeat. West Germany and the Reconstruction of Social Justice* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

- 50 "Unsere Lage in Deutschland und Österreich. Die Ansprache Dr. Zillichs", *Siebenbürgische Zeitung*, Mai 1951. In original: "Da muß gesagt werden, daß wir ein gemeinsames Schicksal haben, daß wir den Block der 9 Millionen Vertriebenen mitbilden. Wir gehören auch organisatorisch ihm an und sind in ihm vollberechtigt. Wir haben keine Veranlassung, aus der Reihe herauszutanzten."
- 51 Ahonen, *After the Expulsion*, 137.
- 52 Hans Hartl, *Die Deutschen in Rumänien: 1918-1940, 1945-1985. Zur Geschichte ihres Niedergangs als Volksgruppe*, typescript, 1985. In original: "vertrieben, aber im Vertreibungsland zurückgehalten"
- 53 "Zum Besuch des rumänischen Außenministers in Bonn", *Siebenbürgische Zeitung*, 30 April 1986.
- 54 Böhm, *Hitlers Vasallen*.
- 55 An example of an internal conflict on the National Socialist past that was not displayed in public space: Brigitte Möckel-Csaki, "Brief an Hans Philippi zum Thema Wilhelm Staedel", in *Versuche des Widerstehens. Stationen meines Lebens* (Sibiu: hora Verlag, 2008), 100-104.
- 56 Rainer Lehni, *Zeiden im Burzenland* (available at <http://www.zeiden.de/Startseite.htm>, last accessed 21 March, 2013).
- 57 "20 Jahre nach der Verschleppung. Ansprache des Jüngeren Nachbarvaters Baldi Herter am 5. Nachbarschaftstag in Bischofshohen (Salzburg)", *Zeidner Gruß. Heimatbrief der Zeidner Nachbarschaft*, nr. 23, 1965.
- 58 Bucur, *Heroes and Victims*, 3.
- 59 See for example the first piece of news under the heading "Aus Zeiden", *Zeidner Gruß. Heimatbrief der Zeidner Nachbarschaft*, nr. 2, 1955. It refers to a commemorative service for those who returned home (*Wiederheimgekehrten*) held in January 1955 by the Zeiden pastor, Richard Bell. Furthermore, in 1958, in a text dedicated to the activity of teacher Hans Mild, the author refers to the fact that pastor Richard Bell and the latter dedicated a song to the "brothers and sisters" deported to the Soviet Union. See Hans Mieskes, "Danksagung an Lehrer Hans Mild", *Zeidner Gruß. Heimatbrief der Zeidner Nachbarschaft*, nr. 8, 1957. Consequently, it appears that despite the putatively imposed tabooisation of the topic in Communist Romania following, there were niches in which addressing the deportation was possible.
- 60 "20 Jahre nach der Verschleppung".
- 61 On the history of the said project, see Mathias Beer, "Im Spannungsfeld von Politik und Zeitgeschichte. Das Großforschungsprojekt 'Dokumentation der Vertreibung der Deutschen aus Ost-Mitteleuropa'", *Vierteljahresshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 46(1998), 345-389.
- 62 Moeller, *War Stories*, 60.
- 63 "20 Jahre nach der Verschleppung".
- 64 Its first issue appeared in 1954.

- <sup>65</sup> The first issue of *Wir Heldsdörfer* appeared in 1959.
- <sup>66</sup> See for example Richard Jacobi, "Heimatlied eines 1945 nach Rußland Verschleppten", *Wir Heldsdörfer. Brief unserer Heimatgemeinschaft*, nr. 11, 1964; "Vor zwanzig Jahren", *Wir Heldsdörfer. Brief unserer Heimatgemeinschaft*, nr. 15, 1966.
- <sup>67</sup> (Autor unbekannt), "Das Schicksal der Siebenbürger Sachsen. Aus den Jahren der Zwangsverschleppung 1945-1950"; Bernhard Ohsam, "Zwangsarbeit im Donezbecken. Vor 25 Jahren: Verschleppung von 80 000 Rumäniendeutschen", *Wir Heldsdörfer. Brief unserer Heimatgemeinschaft*, nr. 22, 1970.
- <sup>68</sup> *Südostdeutsche Vierteljahresblätter* was a more academic journal published by Südostdeutsches Kulturwerk, a Munich-based research institution. Heinrich Zillich and other right-wing oriented personalities, with former National Socialist credentials, such as Fritz Valjavec, were among its editors.
- <sup>69</sup> Bernard Ohsam, *Eine Handvoll Machorka. Roman aus Russland*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (Munich: Verlag Hans Meschendorfer, 1970). The first edition was published in 1958.
- <sup>70</sup> Ohsam, "Zwangsarbeit im Donezbecken".
- <sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>72</sup> See for example Heinrich Zillich, "Eine zumindest befremdende Haltung," *Siebenbürgische Zeitung*, September 1951.
- <sup>73</sup> Cornelius, "Sie fuhren singend in die Nacht. Die Deportation der Siebenbürger Sachsen vor sieben Jahren," *Siebenbürgische Zeitung*, Januar 1952. In original: "Als die Sowjets im Spätherbst 1944 von Rumänien auf Grund des Vertrages Arbeitskräfte forderten, waren sich die ans Ruder gelangten rumänischen Politiker darin einig, ihnen zunächst das menschliche Freiwild jener Zeit: die deutschsprachige Bevölkerung anzubieten."
- <sup>74</sup> "Für eine Rückkehr der Deutschen", *Siebenbürgische Zeitung*, März 1952.
- <sup>75</sup> A.H. - "Schicksalsgenossen," *Siebenbürgische Zeitung*, April 1952. In original: „...wir Volksdeutschen nicht Nutznießer, sondern Spielbälle des Bündnisses zwischen dem nationalsozialistischen Deutschland und dem Rumänien Antonescus waren... [...] ...unter Antonescu manche Bestimmung der gegen die Juden gerichteten rumänischen Gesetzgebung auch gegen uns Volksdeutsche angewendet wurde....“
- <sup>76</sup> Weber et al., *Die Deportation*.
- <sup>77</sup> See for example "Bericht des Journalisten Herwart Scheiner aus Hermannstadt (Sibiu) in Süd-Siebenbürgen." in Schieder et al. (ed.), *Das Schicksal*, 230.
- <sup>78</sup> Michael Kroner, "Deportation vor 60 Jahren war völkerrechtliches Kriegsverbrechen", *Siebenbürgische Zeitung*, 12 January 2005 (available at <http://www.siebenbuenger.de/zeitung/artikel/alteartikel/3860-deportation-vor-60-jahren-war.html>, last accessed 8 November, 2013).
- <sup>79</sup> Pierre Aubert de TrégoMAIN, "Les frontières du dicible. Les Saxons de Transylvanie et la seconde guerre mondiale", PhD dissertation, University Paris III - Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2006, 157-158.

- 80 Pertti Ahonen noted that “the organisations of the *Volksdeutsche* from areas non-contiguous with the former Reich, particularly south-eastern Europe” acknowledged by the mid-1950s “that a return to their older homelands was neither possible nor desirable”. See Ahonen, *After the Expulsion*, 41. In the Transylvanian Saxon case, this change of approach came together with growing internal conflicts regarding the future of the community, with the Homeland Association pleading for migration to the Federal Republic of Germany of the fellow Saxons still in Transylvania, while those involved in the Aid Committee considered that Transylvanian Saxon life as such can only take place in Transylvania: see Weber et al., *Emigration*, 517-625.
- 81 de TrégoMAIN, “Les frontières du dicible”,
- 82 Fritz Heinz Reimesch, “Sich bewähren”, *Siebenbürgische Zeitung*, 1 April 1951. In original: “Zehntausende deutscher Burschen und Mädchen, Männer und Frauen wurden als Zwangsarbeiter nach Rußland verschleppt und mußten dort eine Schuld sühnen, die nicht ihre Schuld war, die sie aber mit einer seelischen Größe trügen ohne bisher im deutschen Volke Anerkennung gefunden zu haben! Wieviele von ihnen liegen irgendwo am Rande Asiens in fremder Erde!”.
- 83 Ahonen, *After the Expulsion*, 40.
- 84 On Transylvanian Saxon memory of the Second World War, see de TrégoMAIN, “Les frontières du dicible.”; On Romanian German and Transylvanian Saxon identity discourses after the Second World War, see James Koranyi, “Between East and West. Romanian German Identities since 1945”, PhD dissertation, University of Exeter, 2008.
- 85 “Die Heimat und wir. Die Rede Alfred Coulins”, *Siebenbürgische Zeitung*, 1 Mai 1951. In original: “...die einen auf langen Trecks geflohen andere über Rußland über die Kriegsgefangenschaft nach Deutschland gekommen sind, in dem der Schwarzmarkt blühte.”
- 86 A short biographical note on Coulin in *Die Siebenbürger Sachsen. Lexikon. Geschichte. Kultur. Zivilisation. Wirtschaft. Lebensraum Siebenbürgen (Transsilvanien)*, ed. Walter Myß (Thaur bei Innsbruck: Wort und Welt Verlag, 1993), 91.
- 87 Elke Scherstjanoi (ed.), *Russlandheimkehrer: die sowjetische Kriegsgefangenschaft im Gedächtnis der Deutschen* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2012).
- 88 Dr. Krauss, “Leistungen nach dem Häftlingshilfegesetz”, *Siebenbürgische Zeitung*, 15 December 1962. Explaining to the readers of *Siebenbürgische Zeitung* the provisions of the new Law for the Help of Detainees (*Häftlingshilfegesetz*), the author also argues: “The claims of our fellow countrymen who had to suffer the horrible fate of the deportees to the Soviet Union are already regulated through the Compensation Law for War Prisoners.” In original: “Die Ansprüche jener Landsleute, die das schreckliche



Schicksal von Verschleppten in der Sowjetunion erleiden mußten, sind bereits durch das Kriegsgefangenenentschädigungsgesetz geregelt.“

89 „Unsere Kriegsofoper“, *Wir Heldsdörfer. Brief unserer Heimatgemeinschaft*, nr. 8, 1963.

90 „Eine Gedenkstätte in Dinkelsbühl für unsere Toten. Unseren Toten in aller Welt“, *Siebenbürgische Zeitung*, 31 Juli 1966. In original (original emphasis): **„Wir gedenken aller Söhne und Töchter Siebenbürgens, die in der Heimat und in der Fremde der Pflicht gehorchend, kämpfend fielen, und wehrlos, auf Flüchtlingsstrassen, in Gefangenschaft und Zwangsarbeitslagern von uns gerissen wurden.“**

91 „Die Gedenkstätte der Siebenbürger Sachsen. Zur Verwirklichung unseres Anliegens in Dinkelsbühl“, *Siebenbürgische Zeitung*, 15 January 1967.

92 Hans Wolfram Theil, „Unsere siebenbürgische Gedenkstätte im Werden“, *Siebenbürgische Zeitung*, 31 January 1967. In original: „...entschied man sich nun für allgemeine, alle Einzelfälle umfassende Bezeichnungen.“

93 Weber et al., *Emigration*, 517-625.

94 See also Florica Dobre, Florian Banu, Luminița Banu, Laura Stancu (eds.), *Ațiunea „Recuperarea”. Securitatea și emigrarea germanilor din România (1962-1989)* (Bucharest: Ed. Enciclopedică, 2011).

95 Weber et al., *Emigration*, 517-625.

96 Dr. Wilhelm Bruckner, „Aus der Geschichte der Siebenbürger Sachsen“, *Siebenbürgische Zeitung*, 25 August 1959. In original: „Dann folgt 1944 der Abfall Rumäniens. Die Deutschen Nordsiebenbürgens werden nach Deutschland und Österreich evakuiert, die Südsiebenbürger bleiben zurück. Und von ihnen werden alle arbeitsfähigen Deutschen im Januar 1945 zur Zwangsarbeit in die UdSSR verschleppt - sehr viele sind nicht mehr wiedergekommen. Viele der nach Deutschland und Österreich aus dem Krieg, aus der Gefangenschaft und aus russischer Zwangsarbeit zurückgekehrten Siebenbürger Sachsen sind seither von ihren nächsten Angehörigen, Frauen, Kindern, Eltern, getrennt. Erst wenn diese Familien wieder vereint sind, wird ein schweres menschliches Unrecht gutgemacht sein.“

97 A.H., „Wir fordern Menschlichkeit! Will Bukarest allein die Familienzusammenführung verweigern?“, *Siebenbürgische Zeitung*, 29 September 1957.

98 Dr. Heinrich Zillich, „Wir sind Deutsche und Europäer“, *Siebenbürgische Zeitung*, 1 July 1954. In original: „Zehntausende von uns wurden wie Vieh in plombierten Wagen ins Donezgebiet verfrachtet, zu jahrelanger Zwangsarbeit, bei der ein Achtel von ihnen starb. Unsere Familien wurden auseinandergerissen und nur Ihr, ein kleiner Teil des Stammes, konntet an Deutschlands Tore klopfen.“

99 „20 Jahre nach der Verschleppung“.

100 *Ibid.*

- 101 Jean Rounault, *Mon ami Vassia* (Paris: Sulliver, 1949). For the English language version, see Jean Rounault, *My Friend Vassia*, trans. Vera Traill (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1952).
- 102 “Dem Russen tat es leid”, *Der Spiegel* 2/1950, 12 January 1950 (available at <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-44445888.html>, last accessed 8 November 2013).
- 103 Rainer Biemel, *Mein Freund Wassja*, trans. Claudia Brink (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 1995)
- 104 [http://katalog.bib-bvb.de/cgi-bin/avanti/iks/detailsuche.pl?register1=PER&suchwert1=&trunkiert1=%3F&logik=AND&register2=TIT&suchwert2=deportation+&trunkiert2=%3F&idprefix=i&idwert=&idtrunk=%3F&eingrenzung=PYP&eingrenzungsmodus=%3E&eingrenzungswert=&db=iksopac&printapr=DEFAULT&searchmode=normal&max\\_dsp=200&index\\_zeilen=15](http://katalog.bib-bvb.de/cgi-bin/avanti/iks/detailsuche.pl?register1=PER&suchwert1=&trunkiert1=%3F&logik=AND&register2=TIT&suchwert2=deportation+&trunkiert2=%3F&idprefix=i&idwert=&idtrunk=%3F&eingrenzung=PYP&eingrenzungsmodus=%3E&eingrenzungswert=&db=iksopac&printapr=DEFAULT&searchmode=normal&max_dsp=200&index_zeilen=15) (last accessed, 8 November 2013).
- 105 Liane Weniger, “Tagebuchblätter aus Rußland”, *Siebenbürgische Zeitung*, 28 March 1957, 29 June 1959,
- 106 Liane Weniger, *Schatten am Don. Als Zwangsdeportierte aus Siebenbürgen in Kohlebergwerken in Russland, 1945-1946* (Dortmund: Forschungsstelle Ostmitteleuropa, 1994).
- 107 Ohsam, *Eine Handvoll Machorka*.
- 108 “Das Buch von der Deportation”, *Siebenbürgische Zeitung*, 25 November 1958.
- 109 Heinrich Zillich, “Bernard Ohsam, Eine handvoll Machorka”, *Südostdeutsche Vierteljahresblätter* 8:1 (1959), 56-57.
- 110 For example, in 1950 Heinrich Zillich was stating: “We have no idea, how long this existence far away from home will last: we do not know when what was taken away from us will fall again in our hands. Henceforth we are compelled, if we do not want to be childish and blind, to make the best out of our situation enforced upon us by fate”. See Heinrich Zillich, “Wir brauchen eine Auswahl”, *Siebenbürgische Zeitung*, 15 July 1950. In original: “Wir haben keine Ahnung, wie lange dieses Dasein fern von Zuhause dauert: wir wissen nicht, wann das uns daheim Genommene wieder in unsere Hand zurückfällt. Wir sind daher genötigt, wenn wir nicht kindisch und blind sein wollen, hier das Beste aus unserer durch das Geschick erzwungenen Lage zu machen.” The approach will change fundamentally by mid-1950s. In the 1960s the support for migration of Transylvanian Saxons still in Romania to the Federal Republic of Germany had become obvious.
- 111 On the adjustment of Transylvanian Saxon discourses for a West German audience see Pierre de Trégomain, “Constructing Authenticity. Commemorative Strategy of the Transylvanian Saxons in West Germany’s Early Years”, in *Enlarging European Memory. Migration Movements in Historical Perspective*, ed. Mareike König, Rainer Ohliger (Ostfildern: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 2006), 99-111; also de Trégomain, *Les frontières du dicible*.

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