



# Post-WWII Migration in the V4 Countries

Propaganda Analysis  
of Central European Migration Flows

Lucia Heldáková (ed.)





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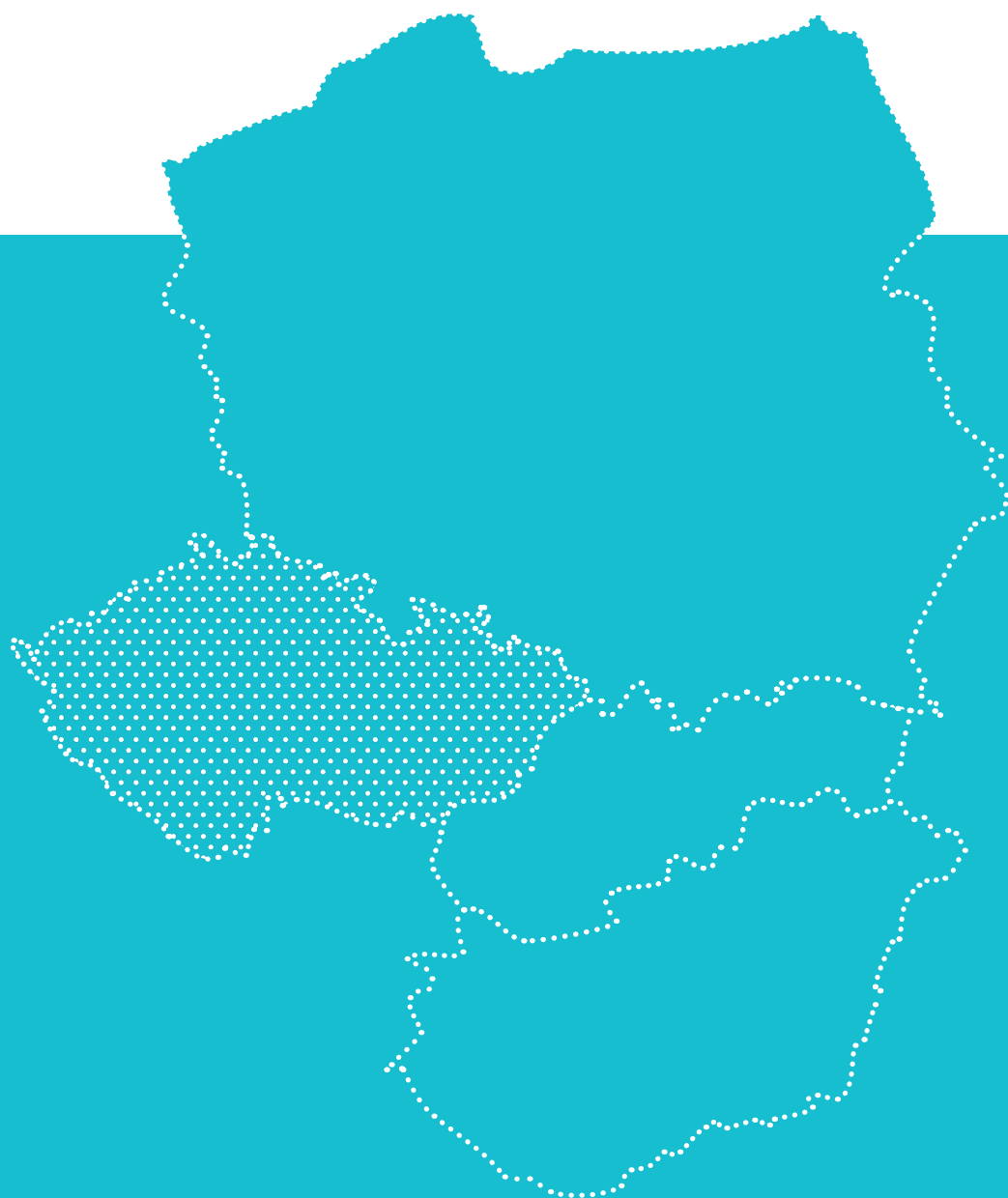
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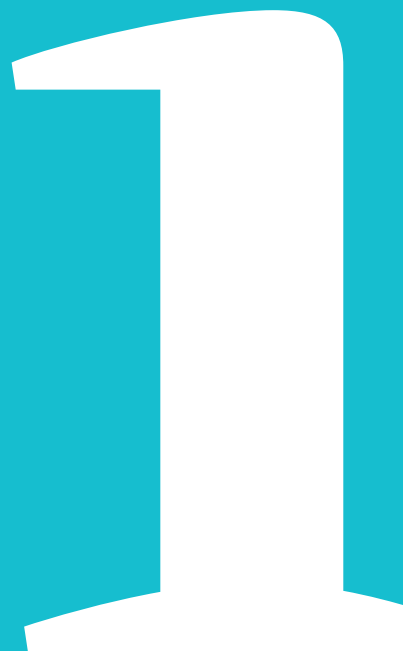
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# Post-WWII Immigration to Czechoslovak Borderland with Regard to Silesia and North Moravia

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## **Abstract**

The chapter focuses on consequences of political and demographic changes in the western part of Czechoslovak Silesia and North Moravia in 1945 – 1960. It aims to compare the approaches of state and regional authorities towards the residual German population of the territory, as well as towards different ethnic and social groups of new-settlers, who came to the borderland, such as Czechs and Slovaks, remigrants from Volhynia and Romania, Polish workers or Greek and Roma minorities. The research will describe and analyse, how the policies towards the newcomers were determined by the changing political orientation of post-war Czechoslovakia, but also by the needs of the local economy of the examined region. It also focuses on the process of constructing a new identity of “bordermen” amongst the newcomers by the means of official propaganda, but also through popular narratives.

**Keywords:** Czechoslovakia, Silesia, North Moravia, communism, propaganda, ethnic minorities

## Introduction

After 1945, the territory of Czech Silesia and surrounding areas of North Moravia, became probably the most multiethnic part of the Czech Lands (respectively today's Czech Republic). The region witnessed enormous demographic changes, due to two factors. The first was extensively supported immigration of workers and miners to the Ostrava coal basin (in eastern and central part of the region),<sup>1</sup> but even more important was the expulsion of the German population from western part of the region in question. This territory alongside historical Silesian-Moravian border, which formally ceased to exist in 1928, could be defined as the present-day districts of Opava, Bruntál, Jeseník and Šumperk.<sup>2</sup> Local Germans, forced to leave soon after the war, were supposed to be replaced by heterogeneous newcomers from various regions of Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>3</sup> This paper examines the approach of state authorities and official propaganda towards different groups of new-settlers, as well as specific characteristics of these groups. It also analyses how the new identity of the region was constructed within the community of the first-generation newcomers during the 1940s and 1950s.

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1 See KOCÍCH, Miroslav. Úloha a místo expozitury ZNV v Ostravě. In *Slezský sborník*, 1967, vol. 65, No. 3, pp. 325–343; *Ostravská průmyslová oblast v 1. polovině 20. století*. Ostrava : Profil, 1973, 205 p.

2 For further definition and description of Czechoslovak Silesia and North Moravia see JANÁK, Dušan – HLAVIENKA, Lubomír – KOLÁŘ, Ondřej. *Atlas národnostních a náboženských menšin v Českém Slezsku a na severní Moravě*. Opava : Slezská univerzita v Opavě, 2021, 147 p.

3 SPURNÝ, Matěj. *Nejsou jako my. Česká společnost a menšiny v pohraničí (1945 – 1960)*. Praha : Antikomplex, 2011, 373 p.; STANĚK, Tomáš. Vysídlení Němců z československé části Slezska 1945 – 1948. In *Střední Evropa* 1993, vol. 8, No. 27, pp. 85–91.

## Migration from Czech Lands

The examined region can be described as mainly agricultural and partly mountainous. District capitals Krnov and Šumperk<sup>4</sup> belonged to important centres of textile industry. In more remote regions, lumbering provided a living to most of the locals. The Jeseníky mountains gained reputation as popular tourist and spa destination already before the war.<sup>5</sup> The scattered economy of the region was undermined by a complicated and insufficient traffic structure, moreover damaged due to military operations during the Spring 1945.<sup>6</sup> In 1945, the region was originally governed by the Branch of Moravian-Silesian Provincial National Committee (Expozitura Moravskoslezského zemského národního výboru) in Ostrava. Later in 1949, the new communist administration divided the territory between newly founded administrative formations with seats in Ostrava and Olomouc, each of which consisted of several smaller districts.<sup>7</sup>

Immediately after the war, Germans living in Czechoslovakia lost both citizenship and properties.<sup>8</sup> Even before the vast majority of Germans were expelled, the first Czech and Slovaks started to come to the region. Amongst the first of them were state employees, such as policemen, postmen, or railwaymen, many of whom returned spontaneously to their pre-war positions, without waiting for official orders or instructions. Those people played a significant role in restoring Czechoslovak administration in the region and also belonged to influential figures in the civil administration, as well as cultural life. While in pre-war Czechoslovakia, political and free-time activities of state

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4 Names of all municipalities are used in modern Czech form. During the examined periods, some of towns and villages were renamed.

5 GLONEK, Jiří. *Na Jeseníky! O putování jesenickými horami, turistických bedekrech a mapách do roku 1945*. Olomouc : Vědecká knihovna v Olomouci, 2019, 575 p.

6 Zemský archiv v Opavě, pobočka Olomouc (hereinafter only as ZAO-OL), fund (f.) Krajský národní výbor (KNV) Olomouc, carton (c.) 20, (number (No.) 20–40, Zápisy rady KNV.

7 The English word district is commonly used as equivalent for the types of Czechoslovak administrative units, *okres* and *kraj* (bigger unit composed of several *okres*). If not said otherwise, the term district usually means *okres* in this text.

8 STANĚK, T. *Odsun Němců z Československa 1945 – 1947*. Praha : Academia, 1991, 536 p.; KREISSLOVÁ, Sandra – NOVOTNÝ, Lukáš. *Kulturní život německé menšiny v České republice*. Praha: Univerzita Karlova v Praze, 2015, 170 p.

officials were severely restricted, in 1945 they could be freely involved in communal and local politics or entrepreneurship. Their social position and experience predestined such people to take leading role in the life of the region.<sup>9</sup>

However, the role of state employees was limited by their fluctuation. Post-war lack of personnel led to frequent moving of officials to other destinations. Many people had to leave state service due to accusations of being Nazi collaborators, or due to communist purges after 1948.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, difficult service conditions in the borderland showed to be demotivating for many. Officials often asked for transfer due to personal reasons, mainly in order to reunite with their families, who did not manage to find jobs and housing in the borderland. Lack of supervision in remote locations led some officials to drinking, gambling or even criminal activities.<sup>11</sup>

Except state employees, so-called “gold-diggers” belonged to first Czechoslovaks to come to the region. People hoping to earn a fortune plundered German houses and factories, but most of them did not stay for long. State and local administrations soon took measures to prevent such cases. Ongoing centralisation and bureaucratisation of the settlement process paralysed the “gold-digging” activities during the Summer and Autumn of 1945.<sup>12</sup>

Czechoslovaks, who decided to settle permanently in the region, consisted mainly of farmers and workers in agriculture. They often came from the neighbouring agricultural regions of Opava and Haná. (North-western part of Jeseník district even became known as “Little Haná” or “New Haná” in late 1940s.) Such people hoped to gain their own land and to become independent farmers. Compared to other groups of newcomers, they benefited from the proximity of their original homes and were therefore able to use

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9 KOLÁŘ, O. Bezpečnostní poměry na Těšínsku v období třetí republiky ve světle pamětních knih stanic Sboru národní bezpečnosti. In *Těšínsko*, 2015, vol. 48, No. 1, pp. 173–191; MRŇKA, Jaromír. *Svéhlavá periferie: každodennost diktatury KSČ na příkladu Šumperska a Zábřežska v letech 1945 – 1960*. Praha : Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů, 2015, 216 p.

10 KOLÁŘ, O. *Mimořádný lidový soud a „velká“ retribuce v západním Slezsku 1945 – 1948*. Opava : Slezské zemské muzeum, 2021, 154 p.

11 KOLÁŘ, O. K činnosti Okresního soudu Jeseník 1945 – 1945. In *Historica Olomucensia*, 2019, vol. 56, pp. 215–233.

12 GERLACH, David. *The Economy of Ethnic Cleansing: The Transformation of the German-Czech Borderlands after World War II*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017, pp. 119–220; WIEDEMANN, Andreas. *„Pojd' s námi budovat pohraničí!“. Osídlování a proměna obyvatelstva bývalých Sudet 1945 – 1952*. Praha : Prostor, 2016, 471 p.

their political and social connections in Opava, Olomouc, and other administrative centres. This sort of new-settler kept ties to their places of origin and maintained their traditional identity.<sup>13</sup>

New Czech farmers had to face various problems. First of all, they lacked manpower to run their businesses. Very few newcomers wanted to work as non-qualified labour forces in agriculture. Such jobs were not a sufficient motivation to move to the borderland. Therefore some of the remaining Germans had to be forcibly employed. Simultaneously, industrial firms and coal mines from the nearby Ostrava agglomeration had to send groups of apprentices and even officials to help to run farms in order to grant necessary food supplies.<sup>14</sup> Later during the end of the 1940s and at the beginning of following decade, the state administration attempted to solve the shortage of labourers by employing remigrants, refugees, or forcibly resettled persons.

Unlike agriculture, local industry showed not to be very attractive for the newcomers. Low wages in lumbering and textile companies did not grant a “better future” for the employees. Skilled workers preferred better-paid positions in the Ostrava agglomeration, which also provided better housing, transportation connections, and free-time facilities.<sup>15</sup>

Nevertheless, some skilled specialists applied for positions as so-called national administrators of confiscated German firms, such as sawmills, tailoring shops, etc. Those “administrators” were allowed to act as independent owners and state propaganda promised them they should soon get the firms into their possession.<sup>16</sup> Before the communist centralisation of economy in late 1940s, state authorities tried to maintain the structure of the local economy and to keep small companies running under the “national administrators”. However, post-war demographic changes in the region led to lack of demand and to the decline of many firms, mainly those producing consumable goods.<sup>17</sup> Other entrepreneurs were soon demotivated by (proto)communist interventions of state and regional authorities and decided (or were forced to) leave the region.

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<sup>13</sup> KOLÁŘ, O. *K činnosti Okresního soudu*, p. 216; MRŇKA, M. *Svéhlavá periferie*, pp. 31–36.

<sup>14</sup> Státní okresní archiv (hereinafter only as SOkA) Bruntál, f. Místní národní výbor (MNV) Holčovice, c. 13–14.

<sup>15</sup> JIŘÍK, Karel (Ed.). *Dějiny Ostravy*. Ostrava : Sfinga, 1993, 811 p.

<sup>16</sup> WIEDEMANN, A. „*Pojď s námi budovat pohraničí!*“, pp. 101–105, 127–142.

<sup>17</sup> MRŇKA, M. *Svéhlavá periferie*, pp. 74–75.

In late 1946, transports of Germans ended, because the Allied administration in occupied Germany refused to accept any more expellees.<sup>18</sup> Germans, who stayed in Czechoslovakia, were often forcibly re-settled in order to destroy local ties and disable any resistance. Specialists, who were continually needed in the region, had to move to neighbouring towns and villages.<sup>19</sup> The rest of the Germans, who were not necessary for local economy, were sent to Southern Moravia or to Jihlava region and employed in agriculture. However, many farmers refused to accept the German labour force, offered by state, because they could not provide sufficient housing for workers and their families. In early 1950s, authorities allowed the Germans to move freely on the territory of the republic, as they regained Czechoslovak citizenship. However, due to language and cultural barrier, the real possibilities of German minority were quite limited. Many decided to return to their original homes or at least to proximity of their places of origin. Some Germans found their villages alongside Czechoslovak-Polish border demolished by the army due to “cleansing” of the strategic area.<sup>20</sup> Some Germans decided to buy their former houses, confiscated in 1945.<sup>21</sup> Others opted for legal emigration to Western Germany to reunite with their expelled families.

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<sup>18</sup> PRAUSER, Steffen – REES, Arfon (Eds.). *The Expulsion of the ‘German’ Communities from Eastern Europe at the End of the Second World War*. San Domenico : European University Institute, 2004, 94 p.

<sup>19</sup> SOKA Bruntál, f. MNV Holčovice, c. 13.

<sup>20</sup> LUCUK, Vít. *Vzpomínky zůstaly: osudy lidí z Jesenicka, Javornicka, Vidnavska, Žulovska a Šumperska 1938 – 1989*. Štítý : Veduta 2016, 252 p.; MACHÁČEK, Petr. *Zmizelé Jesenicko – 2. díl: téměř zaniklé osady*. Jeseník : Hnutí Brontosaurus Jeseníky, 2020, pp. 80–87.

<sup>21</sup> MACHÁČEK, P. *Zmizelé Jesenicko*, p. 83.

## Migration from Slovakia and Abroad

While at the beginning most of the settlers came spontaneously and voluntarily, from 1946 onwards a significant number of newcomers were settled in the borderland by administrative decision. This group of people included Roma, moved from Slovakia and also from Hungary on the basis of Czechoslovak-Hungarian agreement about the “population exchange”, as well as Greek refugees. Also Czech and Slovak remigrants from Ukraine and Rumania were given no choice of where to settle.<sup>22</sup> In late 1947 – 1949, the residual Germans, who could not be expelled due to the changing approach of the Allies, were often relocated within the borderland in order to weaken local ties and to prevent any form of German resistance.<sup>23</sup> Later in the 1950s, ex-convicts or various people labelled as “enemies of the working class” were often forcibly settled in the region.

Different approaches of state institutions towards various groups of new-settlers could be seen. Official propaganda aimed to encourage Slovaks and remigrants to settle in the borderland. Greek refugees were officially welcomed and celebrated as “anti-imperialist” fighters, but originally they were expected not to stay permanently. Other ethnic groups, such as Roma or Carpatho-Russians, often felt “unwanted”. To explain these striking differences, a deeper analysis is necessary.

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Lot of settlers, coming from Volhynia in Ukraine and from Carpathean-Ruthenia, had previously served in the Czechoslovak exile army on the Eastern front. However, both groups were treated very differently. Czechoslovak propaganda depicted the “Volhynians” (descendants of Czech emigrants to tsarist Russia) as heroes, who had fought Nazism and who came “back” home (although most of them never visited Czechoslovakia before the war) to help building a new, socialist country and to replace the “treacherous” Germans. A serious reason for remigration of many Volhynian Czechs – an effort to avoid Soviet persecution – was regularly ignored.<sup>24</sup>

Contrary, majority of the Carpatho-Russians, coming to the borderland, were former citizens of pre-war Czechoslovakia. Despite this fact, propaganda referred to them just rarely and authorities attempted to reduce their migration to the borderland. After Soviet annexation of Carpathean Ruthenia in 1945, Czechoslovakia respected the soviet narrative, according to which the Carpatho-Russians were basically Soviets, despite

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22 VACULÍK, Jaroslav. *Reemigrace a usídlování volyňských Čechů v letech 1945 – 1948*. Brno : Ústav marxismu-leninismu Univerzity J. E. Purkyně, 1984, 233 p.

23 SPURNÝ, M. Nejsou jako my, pp. 174–177.

24 VACULÍK, J. *Poválečná reemigrace a usídlování zahraničních krajanů*. Brno : Masarykova univerzita, 2002, 228 p.

their former Czechoslovak background. In order to avoid any friction with the USSR, Czechoslovakia did very little to help and support the Carpatho-Russian immigration. Moreover, many Czech and Slovaks were still influenced by older prejudices, depicting the Carpatho-Russians as underdeveloped and illiterate people.<sup>25</sup> While Volhynian remigrants were allowed to create their own settlements – such as a village Nový Malín, named after a municipality in Volhynia destroyed by Nazis during the war – no such colonies of Carpatho-Russians appeared. Carpatho-Russians came to the region only as individuals and had to rely on themselves.<sup>26</sup>

Remigrants from Romania consisted primarily of Czechs from Banat region and Slovaks from the Red mountains, whose ancestors left during the 19th Century.<sup>27</sup> Their “return” to Czechoslovakia was intensely supported by Czechoslovak propaganda. The post-WWII harsh reality in Romania led many Czechs and Slovaks to the decision to answer the call of their “old homeland”. Not everybody was enthusiastic about this idea. According to oral testimonies, older people often considered the remigration to be too risky and warned their children and grandchildren. One of the Slovak remigrants later recalled what she was told: “It took us three generation to create a prosperous farm here in the Red mountains, it would be silly to leave it now”.<sup>28</sup>

Those who left for Czechoslovakia faced a complicated reality and had to deal with prejudice of the “majority” society. Unlike the “Volhynians”, remigrants from Romania lacked the reputation of distinguished anti-Nazi combatants. Most of them had no special skills and preferred employment in agriculture. Some of the Czech farmers who settled immediately after the war, saw the remigrants as competition. Small communities of “Romanian” Czechs and Slovaks never created a concentrated settlement or own organisations. Unlike other groups of new-settlers, the remigrants from Romania did not form any group or association until the present day.<sup>29</sup>

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25 POP, Ivan. *Podkarpatská Rus*. Praha : Libri, 2005, pp. 152–167.

26 KOLÁŘ, O. – JANÁK, D. (Eds.). *Lidé z východu. Ukrajinci v českých zemích od roku 1918*. Opava: Slezská univerzita v Opavě – Slezské zemské muzeum, 2019, 119 p.; ZILYNSKYJ, Bohdan. *Ukrajinci v českých zemích v letech 1945 – 1948*. Praha : Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR, 2000, 97 p.

27 BITTNEROVÁ, Dana. Slovenští reemigranti z rumunského Rudohoří. In *K problémům minorit*. Praha : Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR, 1999 p 45–104.

28 Interview of author with narrator A. B., March 30 2019.

29 Only communication platform of this community is a Facebook group.



In the late 1940s, families of left-winged refugees from Greece started to settle in the region.<sup>30</sup> Originally, their presence was seen only as temporary, however the political development in their homeland led many Greeks to the decision to stay in Czechoslovakia. Although the authorities, as well as the Greeks themselves, symbolically benefited from the narrative of “Czechoslovak solidarity with Greek people”, in fact the refugees were under permanent control of police forces. The Greeks were well organised and many of them had combat experience in World War II and the civil war, therefore they were seen as possible threat. Even the Greek cultural activities were suppressed, simply because they were organised spontaneously and independently on “official” state-supported cultural associations.

Similarly, the Roma population was commonly regarded with suspicion and prejudice. Formally, the official narrative recognised and criticised the mistreatment of pre-war “bourgeois” institutions against the minority and stressed the role of Roma in anti-Nazi resistance. Nevertheless, very little was done to improve the situation of Roma population, which still struggled with dismissive approach of Czech society and with police surveillance. Roma people were not officially seen as ethnic group, but just as a “social” group.<sup>31</sup>

Due to the consolidation of Czechoslovak-Polish relations in late 1940s,<sup>32</sup> Polish female workers started to migrate to the region to find jobs in textile factories. Despite complicated bureaucracy, many of them later married and stayed in Czechoslovakia.<sup>33</sup>

In addition to the migration to (and from) the borderland, an important migration through the borderland significantly determined local conditions. During the first post-war years, thousands of foreigners came through the region, returning from con-

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<sup>30</sup> ATANASIADIS, Dimitris – JIRÁSEK, Zdeněk. *Místo kultury ve vývoji řecké minority v českých zemích (s ohledem na vývoj v regionu Jesenicka)*. Slezský sborník 2019, vol. 67, No. 1, pp. 107–120; KRÁLOVÁ, Kateřina. *Otázka loajality řecké emigrace v Československu v letech 1948 až 1968*. In: *Slovanský přehled. Review for Central, Eastern and Southeastern European History*, 2009, vol. 95, No. 3, pp. 337–350.

<sup>31</sup> HLAVIENKA, L. Národnostní problematika na území okresů Bruntál, Krnov a Rýmařov v letech 1948 – 1960. In *Slezský sborník*, 2020, vol. 118, No. 1, pp. 40–71; SOkA Bruntál, Okresní národní výbor (ONV) Bruntál, c. 536, No. 594.

<sup>32</sup> JANÁK, D. Neklidná hranice I–II. (Spor o slezské pohraničí v letech 1945 – 1947). In *Časopis Slezského zemského muzea, série B*, 1993, vol. 42, No. 1, pp. 63–75, No. 2, pp. 147–168; FRIEDL, Jiří. *Češi a Poláci na Těšínsku 1945 – 1949*. Praha – Brno : Conditio humana, 2012, 341 p.

<sup>33</sup> KLÍPA, Ondřej. *Majstr a Małgorzata: Polky v továrnách ČSSR*. Praha : Karolinom, 2021, 170 p.

centration or POW camps, or fleeing from communist-ruled zones of Eastern and Central Europe.<sup>34</sup> The presence of strangers, some of whom got involved in criminal activities, even further destabilised the security situation of the region and increased the tensions. It also enabled the authorities to simply accuse Germans or through-coming Polish or Ukrainian refugees of various problems the region dealt with.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> FRIEDL, J. Repatriace polských a československých občanů po druhé světové válce v polské a české historiografii. In *Český časopis historický* 2018, vol. 116, No. 2, pp. 426–446.

<sup>35</sup> Archiv bezpečnostních složek (hereinafter only as ABS), f. 304, No. 304-48-1.

## Rise of Communism and “Rebuilding” of Borderland

In February 1948, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia technically took control over the country. Remains of opposition were completely paralysed. The “victory of the working class” enabled several changes. Except for the above-mentioned revision of policy towards residual German population, the most important measure of the new government, regarding to the examined region, was the centralisation of the economy in the spheres of both industry and agriculture.<sup>36</sup>

The new regime introduced a new legislation including compulsory employment, which had a crucial impact on farmers and small craftsmen. Before 1948, farms and small firms were often formally owned and run by one person, while the family occasionally helped the owner to run the firm without being officially employed. Families who came to borderland to run such business were therefore forced to reconsider their plans.<sup>37</sup>

In the whole territory of Czechoslovakia, a network of so-called United Agricultural Associations (Jednotná zemědělská družstva, JZD) were established to coordinate farming activities. The members were formally independent farmers, who still owned their land and who elected the head of their JZD. Despite this seemingly “volunteer” basis, in fact farmers were commonly forced to join the JZD. Those who refused faced bureaucratic obstacles and the “die-hard” opponents of communist agricultural policy could be even arrested or forcibly re-settled, usually to the borderland.<sup>38</sup> By irony, the presence of such people complicated the effort of local authorities to push through the idea of JZD amongst inhomogeneous population.

The creation of JZD in the borderland faced many complications. Leaders of the associations often lacked experience and had to deal with mistrust of common members, as well as with insufficient transportation connections or fluctuation of personnel. Moreover, JZD was not able to take care of all agricultural land, which remained uncultivated after the expulsion of German population.

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<sup>36</sup> JIRÁSEK, Zdeněk – KREMPL, Aleš. Průběh osídlování Bruntálska a Krnovska v letech 1948–1960. In *Slezský sborník* 2016, vol. 114, No. 2, pp. 57–79.

<sup>37</sup> WIEDEMANN, A. „Pojď s námi budovat pohraničí!“, pp. 317–320, 396–403.

<sup>38</sup> JECH, Karel. *Kolektivizace a vyhánění sedláků z půdy*. Praha : Vyšehrad, 2008, 331 p.

Therefore the regime introduced a system of State Farms (Státní statky). Unlike JZD, these farms were owned and run directly by state. In Silesia and North Moravia, this method was applied mainly in submontane areas of Krnov, Bruntál and Rýmařov districts. Those farms were expected to provide food supplies for the Ostrava coal basin. Many Slovaks, Greeks and Roma found jobs there. The pledge of work in a state farm led some members of the Greek community in mountainous Jeseník and Šumperk districts to move to submontane territories around Bruntál and Rýmařov. Compared to the JZD, personnel of State Farms benefited from the status of state employees with regular monthly salaries. However, low wages did not attract many qualified workers and the administration of State Farms repeatedly complained about incompetence and low motivation of personnel.<sup>39</sup>

The controversial reorganisation of agriculture was accompanied by centralisation of industry. Many smaller firms ceased to exist, or were incorporated into state-owned companies. Textile production concentrated mainly in district capitals (Krnov, Šumperk, Jeseník, Rýmařov), while local branches often vanished.<sup>40</sup> In case of the lumber industry, centralisation was complicated by the mountainous character of the regions in question. Because elevated areas were not very suitable for agricultural and industrial activities and populating the territories continued quite slowly (compared to the numbers and structure of pre-war German settlement),<sup>41</sup> the forests distinctively broadened and forestry (together with tourism) became the primary means of subsistence for the locals. In addition to Czechoslovaks and residual Germans, Greeks could be found amongst the lumberjacks in 1950s. Both Germans and Greeks were limited by insufficient knowledge of Czech language and therefore had no opportunity but to stay in the region and accept an unqualified and poorly paid job.

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<sup>39</sup> LAMBEINOVÁ, Ludmila. Životní podmínky zvířat a lidí v národním podniku Státní statek Jablonec nad Nisou. In *Porta Bohemica: sborník prací historických* 10. Litoměřice : Státní okresní archive v Litoměřicích, 2021, pp. 198–210.

<sup>40</sup> RYŠKOVÁ, Michaela. *Sdílné město: krnovské textilky v pohledu památkové péče*. Ostrava : Národní památkový ústav, 2008, 114 p.

<sup>41</sup> JANÁK, D. – HLAVIENKA, L. – KOLÁŘ, O. Atlas, pp. 37–44; JANÁK, D. et al. JANÁK, Dušan. *Národnostní menšiny a migrace v Českém Slezsku a na severní Moravě ve 20. a 21. století*. Opava : Slezská univerzita v Opavě, 2021, pp. 88–91.

Due to the effort to centralise industry, authorities significantly regulated investments in housing and transportation infrastructure in “unprofitable” remote areas. In the mid-1950s, the army demolished many abandoned German houses as part of an initiative called “For a Beautiful and Safe Borderland” (Za krásné a bezpečné pohraničí). Only in localities with “strategic” industrial or agricultural facilities, new houses were built. However, despite many propagandistic proclamations, the infrastructure and quality of living was improving only slowly, as district administration repeatedly pointed out during 1950s.<sup>42</sup> It should be noted that construction companies were overloaded by building of new housing estates in Ostrava agglomeration.<sup>43</sup>

The centralisation of the economy naturally affected the demographic structure of the region and led many villagers from mountainous areas to move closer to industrial centres or to the State farms. Mountains became primarily a zone for tourism, which significantly changed under communist rule. “Traditional” middle-class tourists were replaced by organised groups of workers, for whom recreational facilities were constructed.<sup>44</sup> Later during 1960s and 1970s, people from Ostrava and Olomouc agglomerations started to buy weekend cabins in the region. For many Greeks, Carpatho-Russians or remigrants living in the borderland, the presence of tourists comprised an important form of contact with “mainstream” Czechoslovak identity and culture.

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<sup>42</sup> JIRÁSEK, Z. – KREML, A. *Průběh osídlování*, pp. 63–68.

<sup>43</sup> SIKULA, Petr. *Haviřov: socialistické město*. Ostrava : Profil, 1974, 157 p.

<sup>44</sup> MUSIL, Jiří (Ed.). *Holčovice 1377 – 1977*. Holčovice : Místní národní výbor v Holčovicích, 1977, 90 p.

## Propaganda and Reality

Czechoslovak propaganda often described the borderland as a “melting pot” or “laboratory”, where the people got a chance to “start a new life” and to “create a new, just society”. This narrative combined both nationalist and socialist rhetoric. After the expulsion of Germans, the “Slavic” newcomers (numbers of foreigners amongst the settlers was commonly neglected or at least underestimated) were expected to live without the burden of alleged pre-war “bourgeois oppression”. Such topoi were widespread across all Czechoslovak political parties already before the communist coup.<sup>45</sup>

The new settlers were often referred to as “bordermen” (hraničáři). Propagandistic usage of this term dated back to late 19th Century, when the word served as description of Czechs living not necessarily close to the real state border, but close to “cultural border” between Czech and German regions of Austro-Hungarian Empire.<sup>46</sup> While the original meaning changed after 1945, the narrative was continually based on the presumption the “bordermen” should be the best members of the nation, because they were permanently endangered by the “outer enemy”.

On the contrary, the residual German population was still seen as potential threat. Overestimated rumours about Nazi terrorist organisation were widespread amongst the population. However, the Germans themselves often disseminated improbable hearsay about returning German prisoners of war, who will “restore the order” in the region, or about the alliance between the Americans and the Habsburg dynasty, aimed against USSR and Czechoslovakia.<sup>47</sup> Although some defiant tendencies obviously existed amongst the Germans, the possibility of “Nazi revenge” was highly exaggerated. The residue of German minority was definitely not in a position to organise any effective resistance.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> MRŇKA, M. *Svéhlavá periferie*, pp. 53–55; WIEDEMANN, A. „Pojď s námi budovat pohraničí!“, pp. 106–110, 335–346.

<sup>46</sup> GRISA, Jan. *Deutschböhmen v životě a díle Františka Cajthamla-Liberté*. In *Rok 1919 a Československo: postavenie a premeny periférií nového štátu v procese jeho konštituovania*. Prešov : Prešovská univerzita v Prešove, 2020, pp. 145–160.

<sup>47</sup> HLAVIENKA, L. *Národnostní problematika*, pp. 44–46.

<sup>48</sup> SPURNÝ, M. *Nejsou jako my*, pp. 174–180.

Speaking about Germans and collaborators, the word “Nazi” was commonly replaced by “Fascist” or “far right” in official narratives. Czechoslovakia was seen as a socialist state and propaganda tried to avoid any connection between socialism and German Nazism (= National Socialism).<sup>49</sup>

In many aspects, the narrative of “bordermen” resembled to the popular image of the American Far West in the 19th Century. The borderland was imagined as a location, where enthusiastic pioneers are trying to create a new, “better” place for living, despite numerous dangers and threats. In both cases, the “civilising” mission of the settlers was pointed out. The fact Germans had already developed a functioning civilisation in the territory during many centuries, was usually neglected.<sup>50</sup> After the war, the singular form of the word “borderman” (“hraničář”) was frequently used to name local sport clubs, squads of firefighters or even branches of JZD. A journal, published in Jeseník in 1945 – 1948, was also called “Hraničář”, with a characteristic subtitle “Antifascist paper of Jeseník district”.

In the borderland, the “cleansing” of public space played an important role for Czechoslovak propagandistic efforts. The overwhelming majority of German statues and monuments disappeared soon after the end of the war, some of them used as construction material.<sup>51</sup> The “luckier” monuments were newly rededicated to WWII victims or to Czechoslovaks killed during the pro-Nazi uprising of local Germans in 1938. In several cases, even German cemeteries were destroyed or significantly damaged. On a few rare occasion, like in Vidnava in Jeseník district, local administrations decided to remove German inscriptions, but preserve the gravestones. Such attitude was more common in the Polish “redeemed territories” in Silesia.

The new “Slavic” and “socialist” identity of the borderland should be underlined by new local names. Three main types of new toponymic terms can be seen: First of them were names of Czech history, usually connected to Hussite movement of the 15th Century (which was misinterpreted as nationalist and socialist, not as religious initia-

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49 KOVAŘÍK, David. Němečtí antifašisté v československých právních normách po roce 1945. In *Právněhistorické studie*, 2012, vol. 42, pp. 223–238.

50 WIEDEMANN, A. „Pojď s námi budovat pohraničí!“, pp. 106–110, 335–346.

51 KOLÁŘ, O. K typologii, symbolice a identitotvorné roli pomníků a památníků obětí první světové války v českém Slezsku 1918 – 1938. In *Marginalia Historica: časopis pro dějiny vzdělanosti a kultury*, 2018, Vol. 9, No. 2, pp. 53–74; TINZOVÁ, Bohumila. Pomníky obětem 1. světové války na okrese Jeseník. Opava – Jeseník : Zemský archiv v Opavě – Státní okresní archiv Jeseník, 2018, 73 p.

tive),<sup>52</sup> or to the era of Czech political and cultural struggle against Habsburg monarchy in the 19th and early 20th Centuries. The second form reflected the just finished war. Streets and squares were named after Czechoslovak, Soviet or Allied political and military leaders, battlefields of Czechoslovak exile army, but also concentration camps or simply after “Heroes”, “Red Army” or “Prisoners of Fascism”.

While the two above-mentioned methods could be described as quite universalist, the third one was based on local memory. This form appeared mainly in Šumperk and Opava regions, which were ethnically mixed before the war. These territories already had their own Czech identity and memory and also “own” martyrs of WWII, after whom places could be named. It was also a case of František Hoza, an Opava-based teacher murdered by Nazis. Soon after the war, his name appeared in public spaces of both Opava and Ostrava.

A specific case from Jeseník deserves mention: In late 1946, the local association of war veterans proposed to name a park after Josef Mašín, one of leading personalities of anti-Nazi resistance, executed in 1942.<sup>53</sup> Although Mašín had no connection to the region, his brother-in-law settled in Jeseník as a state official and got involved in regional politics. The proposition was probably his private initiative.<sup>54</sup>

Amongst many names and symbols, only one reached enormous success. Petr Bezruč (Vladimír Vašek by civil name) became an iconic poet already in his young age at the end of the 19th Century thanks to his book of poems *Slezské písně* (Silesian Songs). Despite doubts about his authorship and despite the fact that he spent much of his life outside Silesia trying to avoid public attention, Bezruč (aged 77 at the end of the war) was highly celebrated by post-WWII society due to nationalist and socialist narratives of his poems.<sup>55</sup> Many towns and villages in borderland (even outside the region of Silesia and North Moravia) named various places after him.

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<sup>52</sup> MACURA, Vladimír. *Český sen*. Praha : Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 1998, pp. 14–26.

<sup>53</sup> NĚMEČEK, Jan. *Mašínové: zpráva o dvou generacích*. Praha : Torst, 1998, 315 p.

<sup>54</sup> *Hraničář: protifašistický list okresu Frývaldova*, 1946, Vol. 2, No.6, February 8 1946, p.2.

<sup>55</sup> URBANEC, Jiří (Ed.). *Petr Bezruč – Vladimír Vašek. 1904 – 1928. Základní životopisná fakta*. Ostrava : Profil, 1989, 179 p; ŠOPÁK, Pavel. *Město muzeí (Opava 1814 – 1989)*. Opava: Slezské zemské muzeum, 2016, pp. 107–116.



In addition to streets or squares, whole towns and villages had to be renamed. Some Czech names, used before WWII, were simply based on simplified pronunciation of the German originals (eg. Frývaldov for German word Freiwaldau, Frýdberk for Friedberg, Krutvald for Krautenwalde etc.). Anti-German tendencies of Czechoslovak society after 1945 led to a social demand to find new Czech names. Newspapers even organised competitions and soldiers or collectives of workers sent proposals for how to rename certain localities. Like in the case of street names, many proposals used the symbolism of anti-Nazi struggle. For example, Frývaldov (now Jeseník) should become Svobodovo.<sup>56</sup> The unrealised plan consisted of three symbols: First of all, it was inspired by the name of Ludvík Svoboda, one of Czechoslovak wartime commanders.<sup>57</sup> The word Svoboda means “Liberty”, in Czech. Moreover, the ending -ovo implicated Russian language and symbolised the alliance with Soviet Union. However, such “ideological” proposals were usually refused and most of municipalities got new Czech names, either based on translation of original German name, or inspired by specifics of local landscape, such as Travná (Tráva = grass) or Žulová (Žula = Granite).

In general, propaganda described the borderland as a “land of opportunities”, where diligent people were able to get a job or a land easily. In fact, the truth was much more complicated – not just because numerous new settlers were not diligent. Lot of smaller factories, farms or companies, even if run by competent people, fought to survive due to lack of capable employers and mainly due to lack of demand within population, impoverished by the war. The expulsion of Germans significantly changed the structure of local economy.<sup>58</sup>

While in the first post-war months it was quite easy to get a house in the borderland previously owned by a German family (which often still lived in the building, when the new-settlers came), later housing appeared to be a serious problem. Many

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<sup>56</sup> *Hraničář: protifašistický list okresu Frývaldova*, 1946, Vol. 2, No 12, March 22 1946, p. 2.

<sup>57</sup> SVOBODA, Ludvík. *Cestami života*. Praha : Ottovo nakladatelství, 2009, 359 p.

<sup>58</sup> JANÁK, D. *Neklidná hranice*; ABS, f. 304, No. 304-215-17.

empty houses were either looted, demolished, or seriously damaged due to weather conditions. Due to changing economic and traffic infrastructure some localities, previously inhabited by Germans, were not repopulated. On the other hand, partial centralisation of administration and industry to certain regions (such as textile industry in Krnov and Šumperk or woodworking industry in Vrbno pod Pradědem) led to an increasing demand for housing in such localities. Families of newcomers commonly had to live in shared houses, before centralised construction of housing estates started in the mid-1950s.<sup>59</sup>

New settlers also had to deal with bureaucracy, complicated by post-war purges in administrative apparatuses and also by the fluctuation of state officials, many of whom were not really eager to serve in the borderland.<sup>60</sup> In many cases, the “national administrators” of small farms were forcibly relocated by district administrations on vague grounds.<sup>61</sup> In such circumstances, a lot of Czech and Slovak settlers decided to return to their homes. For thousands of remigrants and Greek or Carpatho-Russians refugees or Roma from Hungary, coming back was not an option. However, some of them chose to move to Ostrava or other industrial cities.

Therefore, simultaneously with the “official” identity of “new, Slavic and socialist” borderland, several popular counter-narratives developed. Most of the new-settlers probably shared the anti-German ideas of official propaganda, but not everybody was so enthusiastic about the economic and political situation in the borderland. Many locals felt mistrust and aversion against central authorities. The “popular” version of the “bordermen” identity commonly used the narrative of “hard-working”, but “poor” or “abandoned” periphery, which deserved more support and understanding of the state.<sup>62</sup>

An important aspect of the “identity-making” process of the first post-war years, which was not systematically analysed yet, was religion. Roman Catholics decidedly dominated amongst both local Germans and the new-settlers, except Greeks. Although the role of the Church gradually declined, Catholic identity still remained strong amongst

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<sup>59</sup> JIRÁSEK, Z. – KREMPL, A. *Průběh osídlování*, pp. 63–68.

<sup>60</sup> KOLÁŘ, O. *K činnosti Okresního soudu*, p. 218–221.

<sup>61</sup> SOKA Liberec, f. ONV Frýdlant, c. 16.

<sup>62</sup> MRŇKA, M. *Svéhlavá periferie; ŠRAJEROVÁ, Oľga. Historické a aktuálne otázky vývoja národnostných vzťahov, kultúr a identít v národnostne zmiešanej oblasti Sliezska a severnej Moravy*. Opava: Slezské zemské muzeum, 2015, 183 p.

farmers coming from Opava or Haná regions, as well as from Slovakia. Believers could meet an heterogeneous variety of clergymen, including pre-war German parish priests, Czech and Polish churchmen, who just returned from concentration camps, or even former military chaplains of the Wehrmacht.<sup>63</sup> Diversity of both priests and their parishioners could be partly overcome by the integration potential of Catholic faith. However, communist policy after 1948 undermined the position of the Church.

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<sup>63</sup> SOkA Jeseník, f. Místní národní výbor Zlaté Hory, c. 135, No. 443.

## Conclusion

Between the end of WWII and the late 1950s, the territory of Silesian and North Moravian borderland underwent enormous demographic changes. Although the Czechoslovak administration generally supported the immigration to the borderland, very different approaches were applied towards various ethnic groups of newcomers. While Czechs, Slovaks, and remigrants from Volhynia were usually welcomed and celebrated by state propaganda, others found themselves in much more complicated positions. Even if the official narrative declared solidarity with Greek and Roma minorities, in fact those groups of new-settlers often faced many suspicions and prejudices. Simultaneously, Carpatho-Russians were marginalised in order to preserve the pro-Soviet narrative. Later during 1950s and following decades, immigration of Polish workers was supported and medialized as an example of “cooperation of Slavic socialist countries”.

The settlement process was significantly determined by changing economic structures. The first phase of settlement after the end of the war was characterised by an effort of newcomers to become “administrators” or owners of farms or small. From the beginning, authorities struggled with a lack of labour force in textile factories and forestry. Wages in those professions were similar in other regions, so very few people felt any motivation to move to the borderland and apply for such a job. The lack of workers had to be compensated by employing residual Germans and later immigrants or seasonal workers from Poland. During the 1950s, the communist regime centralised the structure of both agriculture and industry. As a result, more people concentrated in growing economic centres of the region and many distant villages depopulated. State-supported tourism helped local economy and also contributed to “cultural exchange” between Czechoslovak population and foreigners settled in the borderland.

In order to integrate ethnically and culturally mixed populations of the region, state authorities used both progressivist narratives, depicting the borderland as a laboratory, where the better future could be constructed, as well as traditionalist narratives, stressing the alleged continuity of Czechoslovak political and cultural struggle for determination, dating back to the Hussite period.

In general, a striking disproportion between propagandistic narrative and reality of living in the borderland could be witnessed. Despite this fact, the Czechoslovak administration was quite successful in its effort to integrate disparate groups of newcomers. Although some remote parts of the examined region dealt with serious economic issues due to post-war demographic changes, the regime did not have to deal with any serious cases of social unrest or ethnic conflicts. Ironically, the “new” collective identity which most of the newcomers adopted, was quite different from what the state authorities imagined. The widespread understanding of the identity of a “new borderman” was based on a narrative of a “poor”, “hard-working” and “abandoned” periphery, overlooked by the central authorities.

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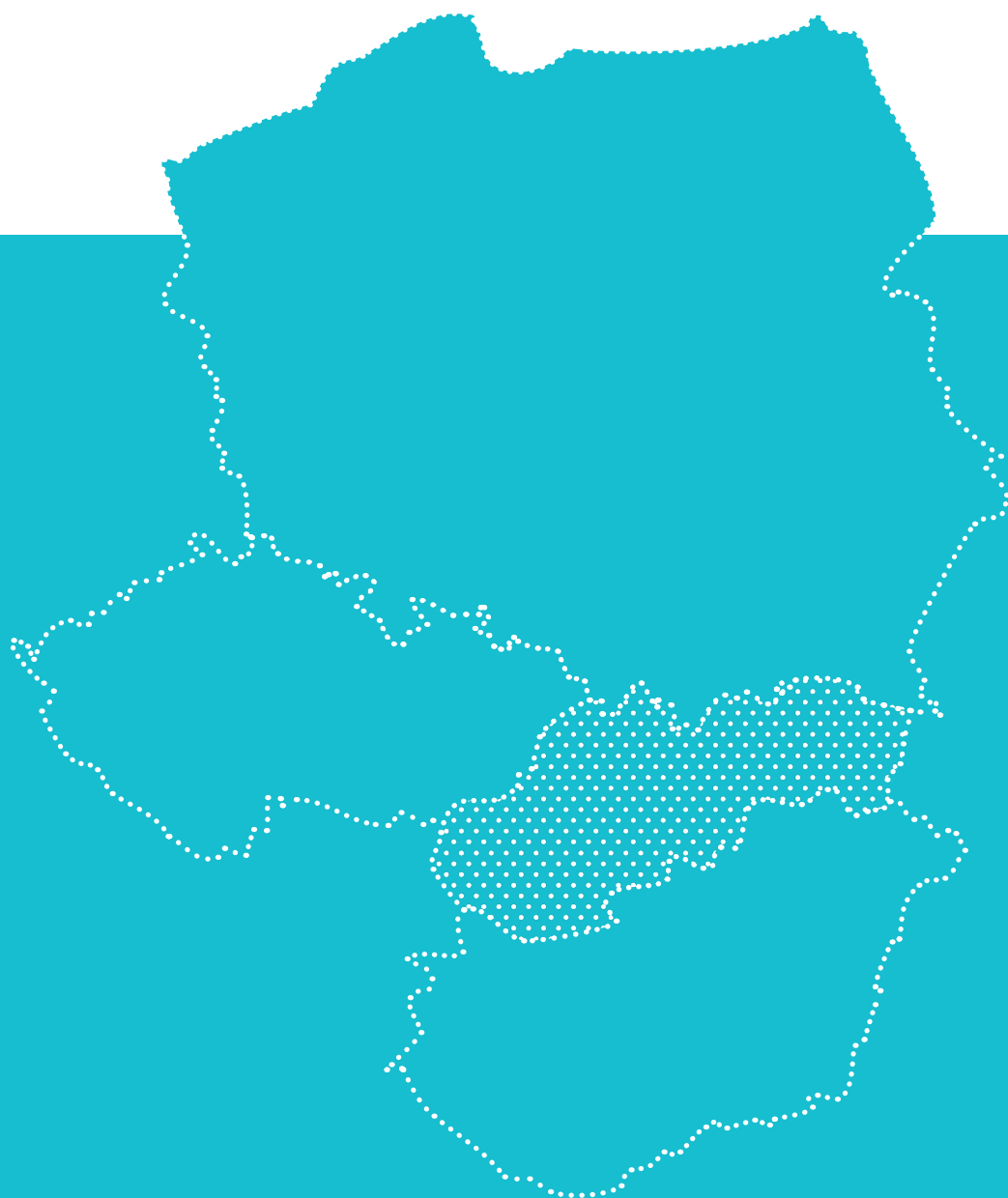
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**Building the national state of the Czechs and Slovaks.  
The return of Hungarian Slovaks to their  
“homeland” propaganda**

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## Abstract

The formation of post-war Europe after the end of the Second World War was related to efforts to minimize the number of national minorities. For this reason, the German minority was expelled from Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland between 1945 and 1946. The former Czechoslovak politicians sought the same transfer of the Hungarian minority. This Czechoslovak-Hungarian tension was to end through the population exchange agreement between Czechoslovakia and Hungary. The principle of exchange was anchored in the agreement on a reciprocal basis, but the way of leaving was very different. While Slovaks in Hungary could freely decide for the exchange, Hungarians from Slovakia were registered by the competent authorities without a choice. However, the number of registered Slovaks was crucial for the Czechoslovak success of the exchange, because the same number of Hungarians should subsequently be resettled from Czechoslovakia. Was the promoting of population exchange for Slovaks in Hungary merely an advertisement of a better future, or was it a propaganda effort to manipulate their decision to (not) sign up for an exchange?

**Keywords:** propaganda, population exchange, Czechoslovakia, Hungary

## Introduction

After the expulsion of the German minority from the territory of Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland, the further expulsion demanded by Czechoslovak politicians after the Second World War for the Hungarian minority from Czechoslovakia was rejected by the representatives of the victorious powers. The Population Exchange Agreement was signed on 27 February in Budapest by Vladimír Clementis, State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czechoslovak Republic and János Gyöngyösi, Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs.<sup>2</sup> The principle of reciprocity enshrined in Article V of the Population Exchange Agreement practically meant that as many Slovaks applied for the population exchange, that many Hungarians would be resettled from the territory of Czechoslovakia. However, the form of applying for the exchange was different. While Slovaks from Hungary volunteered for the exchange, the Hungarians who were to be evicted from the territory of Czechoslovakia were determined by the state authorities. This fact resulted in the Czechoslovak representatives' desire to have as many Slovaks as possible sign up for the exchange (as this was to guarantee as many evicted Hungarians as possible), and therefore the propaganda process carried out by the Czechoslovak authorities on Hungarian territory was a key element determining the success of the whole population exchange.

In the scientific as well as lay public dealing with the issue of population exchange, there is still no clear confirmation that in the case of population exchange we can speak of a propaganda (and not a promotion) process. Nicolas O'Shaughnessy, Professor of Communication at the University of London, likened the attempt to define propaganda unambiguously to walking through a minefield. It is not possible, because the pitfall of leaving out a certain aspect lurks everywhere. However, the examination of propaganda must be as precisely defined as possible, despite the danger that it is unlikely to encompass the whole 'minefield'.<sup>3</sup> In the case of the propaganda we have

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2 VADKERTY, Katalin. *Maďarská otázka v Československu 1945 – 1948*. Bratislava : Kalligram, 2002, p. 264–268.; Dohoda o výmene obyvateľstva medzi Československom a Maďarskom available in: Dohoda medzi Československom a Maďarskom o výmene obyvateľstva. In *Sbírka zákonů a nařízení republiky Československé*. vol. 1946, part 60, published 27 June 1946, p. 1027–1035. [online] Available online: <http://ftp.aspi.cz/opispdf/1946/060-1946.pdf> [cit. 13. 09. 2019].

3 "To attempt to define propaganda is to tread lightly upon a conceptual minefield." O'SHAUGHNESSY, Nicholas. *Politics and Propaganda : Weapons of Mass Seduction*. Manchester : Manchester University Press, 2004, p. 14.

been examining on a selected historical event (the population exchange), this paper will attempt to determine, by applying the procedure proposed by authors Garth Jowett – Victoria O'Donnell<sup>4</sup> consisting of a ten-point analysis of the propaganda process, whether in the case of the population exchange we can speak of a propaganda process. The authors' analysis includes the basic attributes which, if applicable to an action, can be classified as propaganda.

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<sup>4</sup> Upon study of the literature, the approach proposed by these authors seemed to us to be the most appropriate starting point for our analysis of propaganda and our attempt to interpret the political and social discourse of the time. Further analysis will include the procedures of other authors announced in the first chapter, which are already partially used in the thesis in the concrete analysis of propaganda material. JOWETT, S. Garth – O'DONNELL, Victoria. *Propaganda and Persuasion* : fifth edition. Los Angeles – London – New Delhi – Singapore – Washington DC : SAGE, 2012, p. 289–306.

## Analysis of population exchange propaganda

### 1. Ideology and intention of the propaganda campaign.<sup>5</sup>

The primary emphasis in the definition of propaganda by Jowett – O'Donnell is on ideology, expanded by propaganda through a sophisticated strategy and methodology, which is why the authors also assigned it the first number in the list. The ideological framework of the population exchange propaganda is the theory of the nation state of Czechs and Slovaks, to which the minority measures, including the population exchange, were supposed to lead the post-war Czechoslovak Republic. The theory was part of the European tendency to homogenise Eastern and Central Europe. In the context of Czechoslovakia, this theory is linked to reminiscences of the Czechoslovakist views of the Czechoslovak political leaders represented during and after the Second World War by President Edvard Beneš. The means of achieving the most homogeneous state of Czechs and Slovaks was to be the above-mentioned minority measures, with the aim of reducing the number of the German and Hungarian minorities. The return of foreign Slovaks was to contribute to this as well. The propaganda object, personified in this paper by the Slovak minority in Hungary, was confronted with the aims of this ideology and at the same time was constantly called upon to help fulfil the vision by registering for a population exchange. Ideally, the result was to be as many Slovaks as possible register for the exchange in order to ensure the eviction of as many Hungarians as possible from the territory of Czechoslovakia.

Myth-making was an integral part of the ideological basis of the population exchange propaganda campaign.<sup>6</sup> At times, the historical myth consisted of an exaggerated portrayal of the past of the Slovaks in Hungary as martyrs who resisted the long-term Hungarian oppression and also created a myth of the future, in the form of a negative prognosis of the Slovak population in Hungary if they did not register for the exchange.

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<sup>5</sup> The socio-political situation is closely related to a particular ideology. Ideology shapes the given society, constitutes a part of the social order and sets the rules to be followed in the social, economic and political structures of the society. It also assigns roles to particular gender, racial, religious and social groups. The intention of propaganda is to influence people's attitudes and opinions in accordance with the propaganda demagoguery so as to direct them towards the desired change of behaviour. At the same time, the aim of propaganda is to legitimize both its activities and the organization or institution that manages the whole process.

<sup>6</sup> HEMELÍK, Martin. De propagando. In *E – LOGOS Electronic Journal for Philosophy*. vol. XV, 2008, p. 24. [online] Available online: [https://nb.vse.cz/kfil/elogos/ethics/hemelik\\_marek\\_prop.pdf](https://nb.vse.cz/kfil/elogos/ethics/hemelik_marek_prop.pdf) [cit. 13. 05. 2019].



## 2. The context in which the propaganda campaign takes place.<sup>7</sup>

The socio-political situation at the time before and during the exchange corresponded to the post-war situation. Hungary, as a defeated country, expected peaceful measures. *"Hungary's post-war reality was grim...The war claimed the lives of over 1 million Hungarian citizens, about half of whom were victims of the Holocaust."*<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, the Czechoslovak Republic was being re-established, the government was gradually being centralised in Prague, and the first leftist tendencies were emerging. Both countries, however, faced difficult peace and bilateral negotiations, in an attempt to achieve their vision of how the country should be arranged. Economically, the countries were exhausted, devastated and many of the inhabitants suffered from a lack of basic food and life necessities. The situation of the Slovak minority in Hungary was difficult, with problems persisting from previous Hungarianisation pressures and, on the other hand, Hungarians in the territory of the Czechoslovakia were anxiously awaiting what the post-war agreements would bring. The cultural life of the minorities gradually began to recover, and the appropriate timing of propaganda actions was related to this. The activities of Slovak cultural institutions in Hungary were gradually directed towards helping the propaganda action.

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The differentiation of the German displacement from the promoted population exchange also played an important role. Propagandists needed to eliminate the connection between the two actions in order to prevent Hungarian Slovaks from fearing that they would suffer a similar fate as members of the German minority. The propagandists' reasoning in this case can be illustrated, for example, by a short excerpt in the magazine *Sloboda* *"There are propagandists who claim that the removal of Slovaks from Hungary is the same policy as the removal of Germans. We can tell such people that the difference between Slovaks and Germans is so obvious that only the blind cannot see it. The Slovaks are being called home from Hungary, while the Germans are being expelled."*<sup>9</sup>

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7 Successful propaganda responds to the mood of society. An important part of this point is propagandistic reflection on current social events and historical context. In this case, the authors borrow the motto that propaganda is like a bag of seeds thrown on fertile soil. To understand the process of the seed's growth, it is necessary to understand the analysis of the soil (what is happening), the timing, and the events (what needs to happen).

8 KMEŤ, Miroslav. *Krátké dejiny Dolnozemsých Slovákov* 2. Nadlak : Ivan Krasko, 2017, p. 13.

9 *Sloboda*. 1946, vol. II, iss. 21, p. 6, Dobré heslo proti propagande.

### 3. Identification of the propagandist.<sup>10</sup>

In the case of the population exchange, the propagandist is not exclusively one person or leader; the Czechoslovak people, or rather Czechoslovakia, acted in the apparent position of the propagandist as a country that strives for the good of all Czechoslovak citizens in accordance with the predetermined theory of the nation state and at the same time in accordance with the then direction of European policy. This defined apparent source of propaganda is evidenced by a number of texts, for example, on the pages of *Sloboda* we find many articles written in the name of the entire Czechoslovak Republic. On 24 March 1946, this periodical published an article entitled “Slovakia expecting the Slovaks”, where, in addition to a comparative description of Czechoslovakia and Hungary, which resulted in a more positive assessment of the Czechoslovak Republic, the author mentions two questions that plague Slovak people in the Czechoslovak Republic: *“First: How our brothers and sisters in Hungary make decisions. And the second question: what should they do to feel the magic of home as fully as possible as soon as they arrive?”*<sup>11</sup>

42 However, the Czechoslovak people or rather the Czechoslovak Republic as a source of propaganda was (in accordance with Jowett and O’Donell’s definition of a propaganda source) only a legitimizing source. The main propaganda source in the case of the population exchange was the Czechoslovak political leaders, whose aim was to create a national state of Czechs and Slovaks.<sup>12</sup> The propaganda of the population exchange

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<sup>10</sup> A propagandist can be an institution, an organization or a particular leader. We can also encounter a transparent approach in identifying the propagandist, but concealment is more often the case. Therefore, when analysing propaganda, it is important to know all the facts in order to successfully identify the source of the propaganda process. In general, if a particular leader or head of an institution is behind the whole process, the identification process is easier. Such a leader or leading person is typically characterised by so-called verbal coercion – distinguished by the fact that he or she most often speaks publicly. In this paper we use the term “propagandist” to refer not only to the Czechoslovak political leaders, but also to the leaders of the aforementioned organizations, because they were involved in leading the propaganda action.

<sup>11</sup> *Sloboda*. 1946, vol. II, iss. 17, p. 1, 3, Slovensko v očekávání Slovákov.

<sup>12</sup> *Sloboda*. 1946, vol. II, iss. 53, p. 1, Mier bude zaistený len odstránením menšín.

corresponds to the second model according to Jowett and O'Donell<sup>13</sup> (the so-called “legitimizing source model”) and its application to the historical event we are researching is illustrated in Diagram 1 (*Structure of the population exchange propaganda*), where it is clear that the propagandist (P), represented by the leaders of the Czechoslovakia, who were also the real propagandists, placed the source of the propaganda in the so-called legitimizing source (the Czechoslovak people/CSR). The need for as many Hungarian Slovaks as possible to register for the exchange propagated by the propagandists appears in the diagram M<sub>1</sub>.

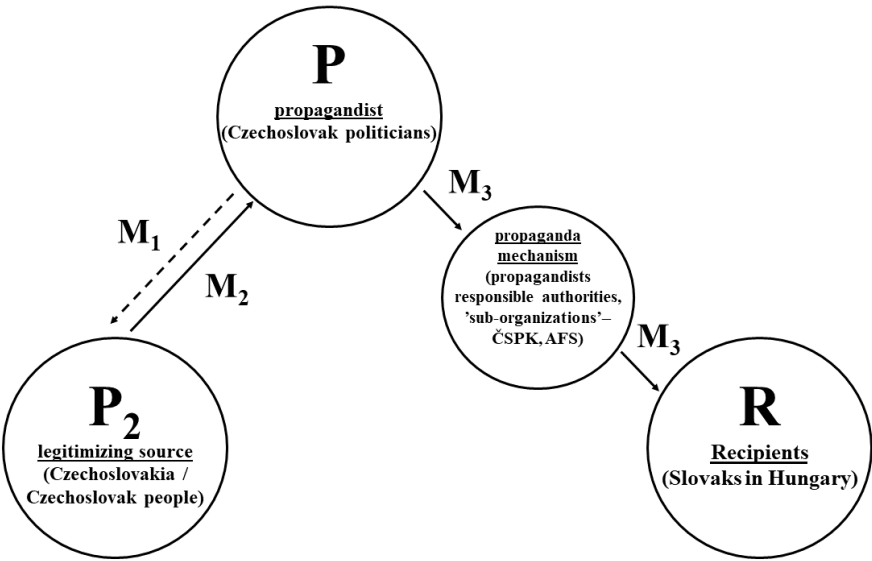


Diagram No. 1 – The Structure of the Population Exchange Propaganda<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> The second model proposed by the authors defines the so-called legitimizing source. The basis of the first model, the so-called “deflective source model” is that the propagandist here creates a deflected source through which the information passes on to the recipient, who does not consider the propagandist as the original source of the information, but the deflected source. JOWETT, S. Garth – O'DONNELL, Victoria. *Propaganda and Persuasion...*, p. 25–26.

<sup>14</sup> For population exchange between Czechoslovakia and Hungary it was made by the author according to propaganda models of authors JOWETT, S. Garth – O'DONNELL, Victoria. *Propaganda and Persuasion* : fifth edition. Los Angeles – London – New Delhi – Singapore – Washington DC : SAGE, 2012, p. 25.

In the legitimizing source ( $P_2$ ), the information  $M_1$  was encoded as the Czechoslovak Republic's concern for the welfare of all citizens and the Czechoslovak people's interest in the return of Slovaks from abroad to their homeland, to their roots ( $M_2$ ).  $M_3$ , and thus a message identical in content to  $M_2$ , but with the assumption that its source is the propagandist himself ( $P$ ), reaches the recipients ( $R$ ), who in the propaganda process under analysis are the Slovaks in Hungary.

Organisations such as the Czechoslovak Resettlement Commission (ČSPK) and the Antifascist Front of Slavs (AFS) can be considered "sub-organisations" or mechanisms that actually participated in propaganda in the field and consequently in the population exchange. These organisations created a specific structure of the propaganda campaign, which included well-known political, cultural, educational and religious personalities, who, on behalf of either the propagandists directly or the leaders in various positions within the sub-organisations, carried out the aforementioned verbal pressure through speeches, participation in radio broadcasts, various confessions, etc. These structures did not even conceal the title of propagandists from the public, therefore we can deduce that the propaganda of the population exchange was open (although the legitimization of the source of the propaganda was manipulated). Therefore, in addition to the real propagandist ( $P$ ), the term propagandists will be used later in the paper to refer to the active actors in the dissemination of propaganda among the population, and thus to the AFS and ČSPK officials involved in the whole action.

The ČSPK as a "sub-organization" of the propaganda of the population exchange was established on the basis of the Population Exchange Agreement. The activities of the Commission can be divided into three periods, where the first period, dated from 5 March 1946 to 4 April of the same year, was reserved for propaganda and agitation purposes (the other two periods were from 15 April – 27 June 1946 – the registration period; 28 June 1946 – 31 December 1948 – the preparation and implementation of the exchange). The aforementioned AFS, an organization uniting Hungarian and Yugoslav Slavs with its original headquarters in Békéscsaba was in charge of the basis of the promotional and propaganda action. In January 1946, at a meeting of the leadership of the Slovak section of the AFS, the leaders of the organisation agreed to relocate the headquarters from Békéscsaba to the capital, Budapest (while district secretariats were established in Békéscsaba, Tótkomlós and Szarvas). The gradual establishment of the branch offices went hand in hand with the parallel establishment of the ČSPK offices.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> KMEŤ, Miroslav. *Krátké dejiny Dolnozemských Slovákov 2*. Nadlak : Ivan Krasko, 2017, p. 53.

#### 4. Structure of the propaganda organisation.<sup>16</sup>

The organisational structure of the propaganda action consisted of the different levels of the ČSPK and AFS.<sup>17</sup> However, AFS as an organization additionally affiliated to the propaganda (it had been established earlier) was not presented among the population as the primary leading organization. This role fell to the ČSPK, whose very existence was limited by the exchange process. The principles analysed by Leonard Doob in the history of J. Goebbels'<sup>18</sup> most famous propaganda process included, among others, the point that the success of propaganda was conditioned by the existence of a single leading body. This condition was fulfilled in the form of the existence of the ČSPK in the case of the population exchange propaganda. The procedure of the ČSPK and the AFS was uniform and, thanks to the immanent position of the AFS in the awareness of the Hungarian Slovaks (on the basis of the organisation's previous activities), the actions carried out within the propaganda were credible to them. After several decades of disinterest on the part of the Hungarian authorities and the Czechoslovak political representation, someone began to take an intense interest in them and their future fate, which inspired a feeling of importance and confidence in the well-intentioned purpose of this action. Within the ČSPK, the recruitment and propaganda of the exchange was primarily the responsibility of the cultural department and the sectors established and authorized by the Commission for this purpose – "... *press, book, radio, theatre, concert.*"<sup>19</sup> The propaganda

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<sup>16</sup> A successful propaganda campaign is characterized by a strong, centralized, decision-making authority that consistently directs the entire propaganda structure in the spirit of the demagoguery presented. An important part of this point is finding out how the leader came to power and how they earned the loyalty and support of others. For example, the leadership position may include mythical elements supporting the ideology, the charisma of the personality and/or even the degree of identification with the society. The analysis also focuses on the leader's or leading organisation's connection with the media as a means of propaganda.

<sup>17</sup> Lower structures such as the AFS district secretariats and the ČSPK regional offices have often helped each other out. In Békéscsaba, the ČSPK regional office was established in the premises of the AFS. The various conditions for the use of this space were regulated in a signed lease agreement. Munkácsy Mihály Múzeum Békéscsaba. f. AFS – Szekerka-Hagyaták, inv. č. Hd.89. 31. 56. *Prenájomná smlúva.*

<sup>18</sup> A number of theorists analysed the methods, tools, and procedure of propaganda and sought criteria for its effectiveness based on the propaganda led by J. Goebbels. For this reason, the thesis occasionally refers to theorists who described the functioning of propaganda under the leadership of J. Goebbels.

<sup>19</sup> GREŽĐOVÁ, Helena. Činnosť Československej presídľovacej komisie v Budapešti. In SÁPOSOVÁ, Zlatica – ŠUTAJ, Štefan (Eds.). *Povoynové migrácie a výmena obyvateľstva medzi Československom a Maďarskom*. Prešov : Universum, 2010, p. 167.

action became a complex mechanism that involved a 700-strong team.<sup>20</sup> Permission for recruitment by Czechoslovak organisations on Hungarian territory was obtained on the basis of previous Czechoslovak-Hungarian agreements. And the Settlement Office was responsible for the actual placement of the inhabitants on Czechoslovak territory.

The structure of propaganda (according to Douglas Walton) was to be set up in such a way that it should always be directed towards the set goal (Goal-Directed Structure) in all circumstances.<sup>21</sup> As the author himself defined, this goal is often a particular state interest. Also in the case of the population exchange propaganda structure, the structure was designed with the final goal in mind (successful population exchange). The individual officials of the ČSPK and AFS were assured of the correctness of the propaganda action through reports and memos from their headquarters. *“You are like shepherds of a flock that has been scattered among other, strange flocks. Our duty is to convince everyone. We must not allow even one sheep to be lost to us in a strange sea....our country and nation will never forget you.”*<sup>22</sup> Higher-ranking officials received such information directly from government officials.

## 5. Target audience.<sup>23</sup>

We have identified the target audience/object of the propaganda action we are studying as the Slovak minority on the territory of Hungary in the time after the Second World War. However, it is important to realize that this part of the population was very heterogeneous. We are not only referring to the representation of all age categories and their different perception of reality, but due to the specificity of individual regions, we also note differences in cultural practices, different levels of national/Slovak consciousness, closely related to the different levels of knowledge of the Slovak language, etc. For this reason, it was extremely important to think through, plan and correctly time individual propaganda actions. In general, it can be noted that the older generation of the Slovak minority was addressed by propagandists with emotional propaganda using national

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20 GREŽĐOVÁ, Helena. Činnosť Československej presídľovacej... p. 166–167.

21 WALTON, Douglas. What is propaganda, and what exactly is wrong with it? In *Public Affairs Quarterly*. vol. 11, iss. 4, 1997, p. 397.

22 SNA, f. AFSM, š. 17, inv. č. 86. Obežník obvodovým tajomníkom č. 3. p. 1.

23 Traditionally, the target audience of propaganda is the mass society, but it can also be smaller groups, interest groups, groups of political and cultural elites, a selected group of the population, etc.

and revivalist elements, and the younger Slovak population was appealed to with rational propaganda using Hungary's status as a defeated country, and Czechoslovakia highlighted as a victorious state, better prepared to take care of its inhabitants, with better, more modern economic opportunities. The detailed planning of the propaganda process is evidenced by the preserved instructions to the ČSPK staff in Hungary, who were trained in the history of the Slovak settlements in Hungary, the individual specifics of these villages and diasporas in this territory (characteristics of occupations and speech, identification of their nationality, determination of their numbers based on statistical data), and finally their categorization, also for the purposes of propaganda, into individual districts.<sup>24</sup>

## 6. Media techniques used.<sup>25</sup>

The guarantee of the success of the propaganda action is getting hold of all available media and the repetition of the agitation slogans at planned regular intervals, so that they reach the people in an intensive degree literally at every step in everyday reality.<sup>26</sup> The propaganda action of the population exchange on Hungarian territory fulfilled this objective. The principle of clarity and accessibility of information was also used by J. Goebbels, and, on the basis of its use, L. Doob defined it in his propaganda theory as one of the key components of the success of propaganda. Thus, all information was available almost everywhere and its form was simple and clear, so that it could be understood without any problems by every citizen, regardless of education, intelligence, or Slovak language skills. In the same way, the media effects of the population exchange propaganda are measurable also on the basis of selected points outlined by J. Ftorek – Agenda Setting (topics were raised in accordance with the current propaganda stage and its goals), Gate-keeping (messages that reached the media were selected

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24 Archív Matice slovenskej (hereinafter AMS). depozit (hereinafter d.) Krajanské múzeum Matice slovenskej (hereinafter KM MS), škatuľa (hereinafter š.). Presídľovanie Slovákov z Maďarska. Inštrukcie pre pracovníkov Československej presídľovacej komisie v Maďarsku vyslanej podľa československo-maďarskej dohody o výmene obyvateľstva. 1946, 47 p.

25 Modern propaganda involves the use of all modern technological means. The analysis of how the propaganda works through the media, the visual analysis of the conveyed images, symbols, graphs, newspapers, pamphlets, etc. is important. Verbal speeches and slogans must also be analysed as techniques for influencing people's emotional experience.

26 Repetition was also used by J. Goebbels in his propaganda and was confirmed by his statement 'A lie repeated a hundred times becomes the truth'. FTOREK, Jozef. *Public relations a politika* : Kdo a jak řídí naše osudy s naším souhlasem. Praha : Grada, 2010, p. 51.

and adapted to propaganda goals) and Bandwagon Effect, which was also addressed by E. Bernays (it was the conforming behaviour of the population, which directed its behaviour according to the reactions of the majority).<sup>27</sup> In addition to the daily newspaper *Sloboda*, regular radio broadcasts, leaflets, posters, mobile cinemas, and public meetings were used as propaganda channels. A specific form of propaganda in this process was the sending of delegations verifying the Czechoslovak promises of fertile land, vineyards, modern farming and the beauty of Slovakia, and the recreation of the children of Hungarian Slovaks on the territory of the Czechoslovak Republic, where they would receive exceptional care.<sup>28</sup> “There were 118,100 posters and forms put up and published, 790,000 issues of newspapers and 46,353 books 540 leaflets and 490,000 brochures distributed, 277 meetings held in 133 villages. Trustees’ trips to Slovakia were organised, as well as holiday events for 823 children at resorts in Slovakia.”<sup>29</sup>

## 7. Special techniques to maximize the effect.

a/ Creating resonance.<sup>30</sup> As we indicated above, propagandists tailored the ideas presented to the target group and their interests. On the one hand, it was an emotional appeal to return to the homeland, whose interest is their welfare, and at the same time the readiness of the Slovak economy to take good care of them. The resonance among Slovaks in Hungary was also supported by the use of engaging propaganda means of communication. A whole spectrum of them was used, hence more and more arguments were used, first as the exchange gradually approached, and later as the date of its completion drew nearer. Tensions were also escalating among the Slovaks in Hungary, so the resonance was constantly increasing. The resonance was also increased by the use

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<sup>27</sup> FTOREK, Jozef. *Public relations a politika...*, p. 114–117; VERNER, Pavel. *Propaganda a manipulace*. Praha : Univerzita J. A. Komenského, 2011, p. 45–46.

<sup>28</sup> The maximum possible resources, means and channels through which propaganda could be disseminated at the time were used to propagandise the population exchange. The propaganda studied by us encompassed all and even more of the propaganda channels defined by H. Lasswell and D. Blumenstock, which are rallies/demonstrations, press/publications, organizations, media. LASSWELL, D. Harold – BLUMENSTOCK, Dorothy. *World revolutionary propaganda*. New York – Londýn : Alfred A. Knopf, 1939, p. 43–81.

<sup>29</sup> PARÍKOVÁ, Magdaléna. *Reemigrácia Slovákov z Maďarska v rokoch 1946 – 48 : Etnokultúrne a sociálne procesy*. Bratislava : Stimul, 2001, p. 62.

<sup>30</sup> For the purpose of a successful propaganda action, the information must build on the interest of the future recipient, who, if they subsequently react to it, then the information has appealed to their interest, values, and attitudes, caused a buzz in society, and thus aroused attention.



of the preferred reading defined by S. Hall, an important part of which are the so-called orientators. In the exchange propaganda text we can find them in the form of pronouns such as “our, ours”, “homeland, son, daughter, mother”. The use of these orientators was based on an emotional appeal that left a deeper impression on the recipients. According to F. A. Biocca, from the perspective of theoretical characteristics of the activity of the propaganda object who is the addressee of the propaganda, we can classify the object in exchange propaganda into the first and second categories - the object selecting which media messages it pays more/less attention to and guided by experience and need, in which the messages are selected on the basis of satisfying its own needs.<sup>31</sup>

b/ Source credibility.<sup>32</sup> The credibility of the propaganda source was ensured by the AFS name and the resulting credibility of the information provided to the readers in their daily newspaper, *Sloboda*, but at the same time, the belief in the falsity of the propaganda action was also supported by the regular involvement of well-known personalities whose name gave respect, esteem, importance and credibility to the action. The very credibility of the newly established ČSPK was ensured by the involvement of these well-known personalities, as well as by sending delegations.

c/ The views of society leaders.<sup>33</sup> The views of society leaders were presented exactly through the aforementioned public speeches, statements in newspapers, radio programmes, etc.

d/ Face-to-face contact.<sup>34</sup> Face-to-face contact was maintained to the maximum extent, but in spite of the propagandists' efforts to visit Slovaks in Hungary in their homes, such contacts included mainly the organisation of public meetings. The actual visits of propagandists to Slovak households in Hungary is a difficult phenomenon to capture, as it can only be documented by testimonies and is mentioned to a lesser extent in publicly available materials.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> JIRÁK, Ján – KÖPPLOVÁ, Barbara. *Médiá a spoločnosť*. Praha : Portál, 2007, p. 108–109, 110–111.

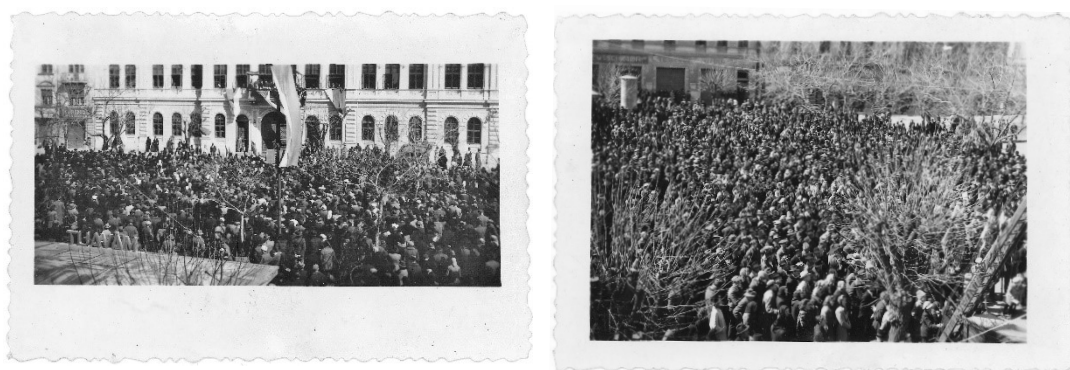
<sup>32</sup> The credibility of a source or the presumption of its credibility in society is one of the conditions for successful propaganda.

<sup>33</sup> The possibility of how to address the masses is also to use individual leaders who are respected and admired and can thus guide public opinion.

<sup>34</sup> Establishing direct contact with society through speeches, creating public space through leaflets and posters, handing out gifts, etc.

<sup>35</sup> We came across information about such visits, for example, in the following materials: SNA, f. AFMS, šk. č. 5, inv. č. 36, *Zápisnica z porady obvodných tajomníkov*. p. 8.; SNA, f. AFMS, š. 9, inv. č. 79, *Obežník tajomníkom AFS č. 5*.

e/ Group norms.<sup>36</sup> Social influence or the influence of one person or group strongly influences the actions of an individual, and in the propaganda process this social determination was ensured by personal contact of propagandists who visited Slovaks in Hungary directly in their homes, then it was public speeches, and as a final example we can mention the membership of important local personalities represented by intellectuals, editors, priests, etc. in the AFS, which resulted in the conforming behaviour of members of the Slovak minority to whom the propaganda action was addressed. The dimensions of such public gatherings are shown, for example, by the first ever assembly of the ČSPK on 24 March 1946 in Békéscsaba. (See Figures 1 and 2 Images from the public assembly in Békéscsaba).



Figures 1 and 2 – Shots from the public assembly in Békéscsaba.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>36</sup> This includes trust, values and behaviours derived from membership of a particular group. The fact is that if a group chooses to act in a certain way that one or a few of its members do not share, they will eventually conform their actions to the majority of the group. We call this the herd instinct or collective responsibility, which the propagandist equally exploits to achieve their aim, e.g. by holding mass gatherings in smaller spaces, etc.

<sup>37</sup> Munkácsy Mihály Museum Békéscsaba. Inv. č. Hd.90. 1. 17; Hd.90. 1. 15.

Another such gathering was held in Budapest on 14 April 1946<sup>38</sup> and gradually in many other cities (e.g. Salgotarján).<sup>39</sup> The speeches and texts used to address the Slovaks in Hungary influenced their thinking and, ultimately, their actions. Norman Fairclough's theory linking textual structures and social context, where the textual structure in the form of speeches, posters and other propaganda techniques used is the carrier of meaning appealing to individuals, has been confirmed (based on the number of Slovaks registered for the exchange).

f/ Rewards and punishments.<sup>40</sup> In the propaganda action, the element of rewards and punishments was noticeable in promises and threats. The propagandists promised the population registered for the exchange a better future, the possibility of taking their property with them, the possibility of arranging the return of family members from military captivity, etc. However, one of the principles of the propaganda process is also to induce an optimal level of anxiety. The propagandists succeeded in creating this precisely by means of possible punishments, which were addressed to the inhabitants who did not register for the exchange, in the form of assimilation with the Hungarian population and the threat that if they did not take advantage of the exchange, the Hungarian authorities would themselves later deport them to the USSR, but without the possibility of taking their property, etc. The anxiety that the propagandists were supposed to create was therefore not about possible defeat in the case of a population exchange (as was the case, for example, with the propaganda of J. Goebbels), but was related to the threat of the exchange not succeeding, or so few Slovaks from Hungary registering that the whole exchange action would be meaningless. This argumentative technique is understood in modern terms as a "winner's deck", where the immanent desire of people to be on the side of the winners is exploited.<sup>41</sup>

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38 Sloboda. 1946, vol. II, iss. 22, p. 2. Slováci, Slovenky! Druhé verejné zhromaždenie.

39 SNK. LA. inv. č. 184 BD 24. p. 165. KULÍK, Ondrej: *Presídlenie Slovákov na Dolnú zem a späť z Maďarska do Československa*. Rukopis, bez vročenia, p. 171.

40 The system of rewards and punishments is another method of pushing people to publicly accept the propaganda ideas being declared.

41 FTOREK, Jozef. *Public relations a politika...*, p. 51.

g/ Monopoly of the communication source.<sup>42</sup> In the case of population exchange propaganda, the link to the medium is absolute. In particular, the monopoly was created by the AFS magazine *Sloboda*, which became the central press organ of the ČSPK. From the beginning of its publication, on 3 June 1945, *Sloboda* was part of the life of Slovaks in Hungary, and through its main readers, teachers and intellectuals, information from the newspaper was passed on to the population. *Sloboda*'s direct involvement in the propaganda process ensured, in the words of Ondrej Kulík,<sup>43</sup> the incitement of "...every Slovak to national consciousness. Slovaks found good ground on its pages, because the Hungarian government made no effort to accommodate the material and cultural interests of Slovaks and minorities in general."<sup>44</sup> In the first (agitational) phase of the ČSPK's activity, *Sloboda* was published twice a week with a circulation of 40,000 copies. By controlling this source of communication, the propagandists managed to control and edit the news, distort it, at the same time diverting attention, but also gaining the attention of the population. In the same way, they were able to carry out the constant repetition of information feeds necessary for propaganda and dramatization, vital for propaganda.<sup>45</sup> The "mass"<sup>46</sup> distribution of *Sloboda* to each village was the responsibility of the AFS district secretaries. The large number of copies is evidenced, for example, by the report of the local AFS branch in Tóthkomlos, which took 12,825 copies of *Sloboda* from the consignment.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> If the propagandist is the monopoly owner of the means of communication media (newspapers, magazines, radio, etc.) they can easily ensure that the information conveyed is consistent and constantly repeated only in different forms.

<sup>43</sup> Ondrej Kulík was a member of the AFS, a secretary for Tótkomlos, a poet, amateur theatre performer who moved to Czechoslovakia as part of the population exchange. O. Kulík wrote manuscripts where he preserved his memoirs of the exchange. SNA BA. f. AFSM, š. 5, inv. č. 38, *Stručný referát o dvoj ročnej činnosti odbočky A.F.S Slovenský Komlôš*. p. 1.

<sup>44</sup> SNK. LA. inv. č. 184 BD 24. s. 146. KULÍK, Ondrej: *Presídlenie Slovákov na Dolnú zem a späť z Maďarska do Československa*. Rukopis, bez vročenia, p. 171.

<sup>45</sup> HEMELÍK, Martin. De propagando. In E – LOGOS *Electronic Journal for Philosophy*. roč. XV, 2008, s. 12–17. [online] Available online: [https://nb.vse.cz/kfil/elogos/ethics/hemelik\\_marek\\_prop.pdf](https://nb.vse.cz/kfil/elogos/ethics/hemelik_marek_prop.pdf). [cit. 13. 05. 2019].

<sup>46</sup> SNA BA. f. AFSM, š. 5, inv. č. 36, *Zápisnica z porady obvodných tajomníkov*. p. 1.

<sup>47</sup> SNA BA. f. AFSM, š. 5, inv. č. 37, *Hlásenie o priebehu kontroly vo veci odberania časopisu „Sloboda“*. p. 1.

h/ The power of visual symbols.<sup>48</sup> The power of individual iconographic propaganda means was supported by typical Slovak elements – folklore symbols, national symbols, elements of folklore (proverbs, sayings), etc.

ch/ Use of language.<sup>49</sup> The slogans and mottos of the propaganda action used words appealing to emotions (e.g. father, mother, son, homeland, home...).

i/ Music as propaganda.<sup>50</sup> Musical motifs in the population exchange propaganda action were appearing in radio broadcasts, in the published lyrics of the national anthem and other folk songs published in *Sloboda*, in the lyrics referring to folk songs published on posters and leaflets, and in the composition of songs directly for the needs of the population exchange.<sup>51</sup>

j/ Emotional excitement.<sup>52</sup> All propaganda would be ineffective without emotional sensitization. Unless the propaganda means appeal to people's emotions, they do not affect them and the success of the action is compromised. Slogans, pictures, speeches, letters, etc. were emotional. The importance of emotional appeal is also emphasised by F. Marko when he defines the psychological foundations of the population exchange propaganda and justifies its use by the fact that the effect of emotions on mind and will is greatly amplified. The aim of such psychological-emotional propaganda was to induce the relief and satisfaction that came from registering for the exchange.

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48 The use of posters, leaflets, familiar images and portraits has a great iconographic significance presenting the power of propaganda slogans.

49 Verbal symbolism is of great importance. The way language and linguistic signifiers are used in association with important figures in society (leader, political authority, religious leaders, teachers, etc.) strongly serves propaganda purposes. The choice of words evoking emotional memories in people, for example, homeland, home, mother, father, has an impact on the formation of ideas and opinions.

50 The use of melodies, tones and sounds is also important in the propaganda process. A French proverb says "A man is like a rabbit, you catch him by the ears." The importance of the use of musical components is considerable; anthems, patriotic songs, musical slogans, and others are a powerful stimulus in rousing the people. They influence their experience and result in rousing, motivational responses.

51 The lyrics of the song *Vlast' nás volá* (Motherland is Calling Us): „Každý Slovák dnes vie, že tu je znamenie, čo začalo dávno hľadať naše pokolenie. Vlast' nás volá, do matkinho lona, do Československa. My pôjdeme, krivdiť si nedáme, zdravíme ťa vlast slovenská.“ (Every Slovak today knows that there is a sign that our generation began to look for long ago. Motherland is calling us, to our mother's womb, to Czechoslovakia. We will go, we will not blame ourselves, we salute you, Slovak homeland) (*Sloboda*. 1946, vol. II, iss. 11, p. 4).

52 It is related to the whole process of propaganda, it is present in the use of language, slogans, in speeches, on posters.

## 8. Audience's reaction to various techniques.<sup>53</sup>

The reactions of the target audience to the population exchange propaganda were varied.<sup>54</sup> We encountered reactions when the population (mostly the younger part of the Slovak population in Hungary) was in favour of it, or also sceptical, even some Slovaks rejected the exchange with the argument of their long history of residence on Hungarian territory. Apart from the individual feeling of belonging to Czechoslovakia, the reactions were subject to, for example, social class (the motivation for resettlement differed on this basis).

The structure of the propaganda campaign was set in accordance with the aim of the population exchange propaganda (to encourage as many Slovaks from Hungary as possible to register for the exchange). According to L. Doob, the need for immediate action (registering for the exchange) could only be realised through coordinated influence, through which the boundary between the real and the fictitious, the true and the false was blurred. In the case of population exchange propaganda, the gradual influence also succeeded in creating, as W. Lippmann defined it, a mental reality, a kind of pseudo-environment in each individual, which subsequently participated also in this propaganda process in the creation of stereotypes important for the continuation of the propaganda process and for the application for the exchange itself. The psychological means used by propaganda, such as projection, identification, rationalization, generalization, suggestion, etc., assisted in the formation of mental images.<sup>55</sup> The stereotyping (proposed by W. Lippmann) within the exchange propaganda that prompted individuals to register is illustrated in Diagram 2 (*Stereotyping within Population Exchange Propaganda*).

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<sup>53</sup> The behaviour of the target group, of society, is an important step in the analysis of propaganda. The reactions elicited may take an active form in the form of sending letters, joining an organization, participating in propaganda actions, buying products supporting the propaganda campaign, forming sub-organizations, influencing the crowd, demonstrating, etc. The passive form consists of, for example, the adaptation and acceptance by the individual of the propaganda slogans declared.

<sup>54</sup> KRUPA, Ondrej. Slováci v Maďarsku a výmena obyvateľstva v zrkadle ich vlastných výpovedí. In *Národopis Slovákov v Maďarsku*. Budapešť : Maďarská národopisná spoločnosť, 2000, p. 173.

<sup>55</sup> The individual psychological tools of propaganda are analysed in the following part of the text using specific examples of population exchange propaganda. HEMELÍK, Martin. *De propagando...*, p. 9–12.

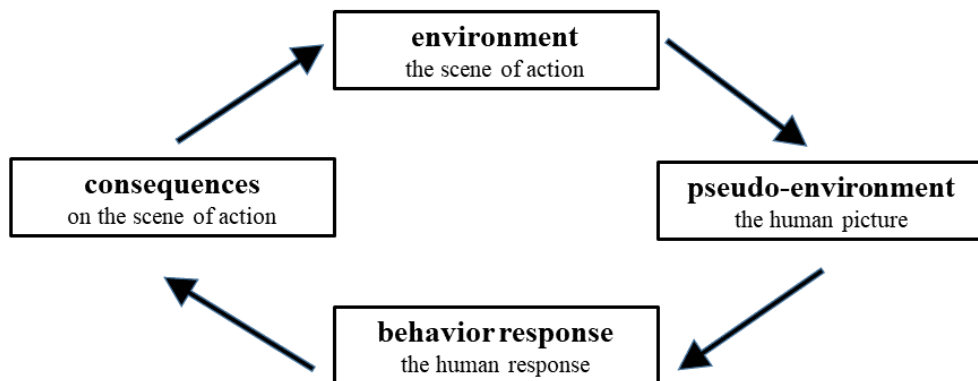


Diagram No. 2 – Stereotyping within Population Exchange Propaganda.<sup>56</sup>

The environment in this case corresponds to the enclaves of Slovaks on Hungarian territory with all their specificities, and the pseudo-environment to the “propaganda noise” created in this Slovak community and the individuals’ views on the exchange, on the basis of which specific behaviour and its consequences were then based. For individuals, stereotypes are of paramount importance in decision-making, so the implementation of delegations through which propagandists manipulated the emergence of stereotypes was significant to the propaganda process. On the basis of the delegations and the published reports of their progress, it was declared that if an individual decided to register for the exchange, the propagandist promises would be fulfilled and they would receive the announced benefits. Within the propaganda process, the references to values important for the target group of Slovak inhabitants in Hungary (such as the need for national education, the need to ensure a quality economic life, etc.), which were the main themes of the propaganda we studied, mean that the overall communication of the propagandists with the subject of propaganda was guided by a cultural model. The communication took into account the cultural specificities of the Slovak communities in Hungary. The catalyst for stimulating the need for action among Slovaks in Hungary was the involvement of feelings and emotions in the propaganda process.

<sup>56</sup> Lasswell & Lippmann on Propaganda. In *Cultural Apparatus*. [online] Available online: <https://culturalapparatus.files.wordpress.com/2010/06/lip.jpg>. [cit. 13. 05. 2019].

## 9. Counterpropaganda (if present).<sup>57</sup>

“The Hungarians also exerted fierce counterpropaganda.”<sup>58</sup> The representation of counterpropaganda can be found, for example, in the Hungarian press, where counterpropaganda slogans were published in order to discourage Slovaks in Hungary from registering for the exchange.<sup>59</sup> In Tóthkomlós, 8 issues of the magazine *Slobodný hlas* (Free Voice) were published as a reaction to the publication of *Sloboda*, published by Slovaks with a rejectionist attitude towards the exchange (the publisher was O. Sobek).<sup>60</sup> As another example of counterpropaganda, an article in *Sloboda* from the end of 1946, which described how a beggar came to Tardos on 22 August and said the following words: “Oh good woman, please give me something to eat, I am so hungry. You know, I’m coming from that Slovakia. I was in Handlova, you know, from our place in Sarisáp we left there on 2 June. I worked there for two weeks, very hard. Then I got kidney disease and I was in the hospital for 60 days. But those gentlemen in Slovakia didn’t take care of me or cure me, so I had to run away from there. You know, a worker is very bad off there and when he gets sick, nobody even looks at him and he can even drop dead, nobody will help him. And the food in Handlova, oh my, I can’t even talk about that. It’s just the gentlemen from Slovakia talking, but then when you go there, they don’t even look at you. They won’t give you rations, they won’t even give you proper housing. That’s how it is for a working man there. They just deceive him everywhere, take advantage of him, and when he can’t work, then they don’t need him anymore, and then he can even drop dead.”<sup>61</sup> Another manifestation of counterpropaganda was the interviews conducted by a British editor with members of the resettlement commission on

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<sup>57</sup> The phenomenon of counterpropaganda can be direct and concealed. Direct counterpropaganda lies in the competitiveness of media that present different and mutually contradictory opinions, ideas, and attitudes. Conversely, counterpropaganda must be concealed if its activity is officially prohibited and the media’s activities are strictly controlled. Such propaganda operates in the underground.

<sup>58</sup> SNK. LA. inv. č. 184 BD 24. s. 171. KULÍK, Ondrej: *Presídlenie Slovákov na Dolnú zem...*, p. 171.

<sup>59</sup> Counterpropaganda statements can be found in the Hungarian newspapers *Világosság*, *Szabadság*, *Szabad Szó*, *Szabad Nép*, *Viharsarok*, but as an example we can quote the headline of the first issue of the Budapest daily *Magyar Nemzet*, where on the first page was the second public meeting of the ČSPK in Budapest entitled “Fascist Slovak demonstration in Budapest”. “Hungarian propaganda spread the news that Hungarian soldiers would occupy Felvidék anyway and Slovakia would be torn away from the Czechoslovak Republic and annexed to the Soviet Union, that there was Bolshevism in Slovakia and that Slovak displaced persons were being robbed of their property at the border and transported to Russia to Siberia, etc.” *Magyar Nemzet* provokuje novú polemiku. In *Sloboda*. 1946, vol. II, iss. 24, p. 2.; *Sloboda*. 1946, vol. II, iss. 52, p. 1.; GREŽĐOVÁ, Helena. Činnosť Československej presídľovacej komisie..., p. 168–169; PARÍKOVÁ, Magdaléna. *Reemigrácia Slovákov z Maďarska...*, p. 67.

<sup>60</sup> KMEŤ, Miroslav. *Krátke dejiny Dolnozemsých Slovákov 2...*, p. 52–53.



the subject of Hungarian counterpropaganda. The answer was: “...the Hungarians are discouraging the Slovaks in the border regions not to apply for resettlement because, after all, the whole region in which they have lived so far will belong to Czechoslovakia anyway. Other propagandists say that it is a pity to move to Žitný ostrov, because it will be annexed to Hungary after the peace conference anyway.”<sup>62</sup> Another form of counterpropaganda was the direct obstruction of the recruitment action (the Hungarian authorities prevented the free movement of ČSPK members and access to the necessary documents) or indirect discrimination against the Slovak inhabitants registered for the exchange.<sup>63</sup> O. Kulík compared the intensity of Hungarian counterpropaganda to bullfight, where he compares the Hungarian party to the anger of a bull when it sees the red colour of a rag (a comparison to Czechoslovak propaganda) and its only aim is to tear it apart and destroy it.<sup>64</sup>

## 10. Resulting effect and evaluation.<sup>65</sup>

The evaluation of the population exchange propaganda campaign varies. First of all, the perception of the individual resettled people is different, but we also see differences in the Slovak and Hungarian interpretations (differences in national narratives). The results of the exchange and similar minority measures cannot be summarised in a generally valid statement; it is a sensitive and individual issue.

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<sup>61</sup> *Sloboda*. vol. II, iss. 60, 1946, p. 8. Žobrák robí propagandu.

<sup>62</sup> *Sloboda*. 1946, vol. II, iss. 16, p. 1. Maďarská protipropaganda.

<sup>63</sup> There were cases of police officers having their badges taken away, people having to move out of their official flats, being fired from their jobs without any reason, etc. VADKERTY, Katalin. *Maďarská otázka v Československu 1945 – 1948*. Bratislava : Kalligram, 2002, p. 285.

<sup>64</sup> SNK. LA. inv. č. 184 BD 24. p. 175. KULÍK, Ondrej: *Presídlenie Slovákov na Dolnú zem...*, p. 171.

<sup>65</sup> The success of achieving the propaganda goal depended on several factors. The goal may not be fulfilled in its entirety; only selected points may be successful. The effect of success when analysing a propaganda action with hindsight is apparent in the mainstream behaviour of society – the degree of acceptance, identification and action according to the declared propaganda demagoguery.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, we can say that the agitation process in Hungary after the Second World War, carried out in order to motivate Slovaks to register for the population exchange, fulfilled the characteristic features of propaganda. Propaganda was carried out in the spirit of the ideology of the nation-state theory, and adapted its mechanism in the light of the socio-political situation at the time, both nationally and internationally, and in the context of the circumstances in which Slovaks in Hungary found themselves. The forms and instruments of propaganda sought to encompass all the media possibilities of the time and to recall the required propaganda information at daily intervals. Suggestive slogans and mottos were created, songs and poems were composed, and recruitment actions with emotional appeals were organised. The propaganda of population exchange was total in nature and fell into the category of grey propaganda.<sup>66</sup>

The propagandists were the then Czechoslovak political leaders, politicians who, in line with the European trend, sought to build the foundations of the newly established Czechoslovakia on the national principle without the presence of national minorities, to whom the then European society attributed the collective guilt for the outbreak of the Second World War. However, in order to make propaganda more effective, the real propagandist and source of propaganda was hidden in the legitimizing source personified by the people of Czechoslovakia. The disguise of the real propaganda source pursued several goals. First, it ensured the redistribution of responsibility for the population exchange, which thus became the action of all Czechoslovak people with all its consequences. At the same time, by speaking on behalf of the Czechoslovak people, the propagandists sought to provide greater motivation for the resettlement of Slovaks from Hungary and to demonstrate the unity and strength of the Czechoslovak people, which the Slovaks in Hungary were to become members of.

By identifying the agitation prior to the population exchange as a process of propaganda and analysing it, we tried to present the individual propaganda actors, characteristics and tools of the propaganda process. We sought to demonstrate the way in which propagandists motivated Slovaks in Hungary to register for the exchange and thus contributed to the implementation of a large-scale population exchange action.

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<sup>66</sup> Grey propaganda is referred to as a disinformation campaign, or a cross between black and white propaganda. While black propaganda represents falsified information, the secret source, unethical practices. The white propaganda, on the other hand, is characterized by openness, non-concealment, transparency of the source, goals, mechanisms and non-transgression of ethical principles.  
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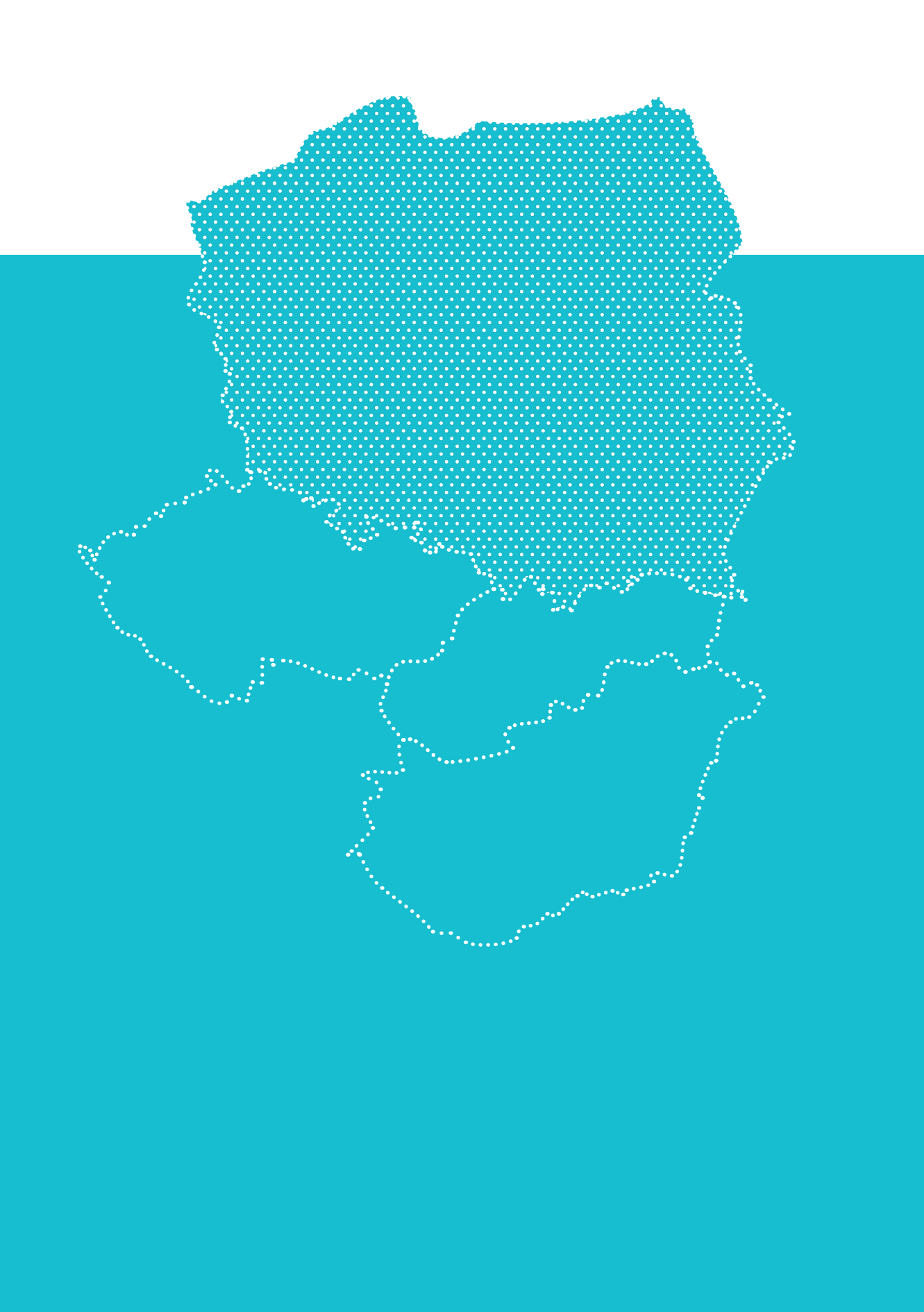
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**Framing post-war migration flows  
in the Polish propaganda.  
Towards the utopia of ethnic homogeneity**

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## Abstract

The article examines how the post-World War 2 migration flows from and to Poland were portrayed in the official communist press in the 1940s. Poland experienced several important migration flows in the post-war period, including out-migration of Ukrainians, Germans, and Jews; as well as mobility of the ethnic Poles resettled from the Eastern territories incorporated to the new Soviet republics of Ukraine, Belarus, and Lithuania after the war. The analysis will focus on the “Nowe Drogi” (“New Ways”) journal – the official journal of the Polish Worker’s Party. The content analysis encompasses articles published in the first phase of existence of this periodical (1947-1948). The migration flows were depicted as a one-off process which would be limited in time and should result in ethnic homogeneity of Central-Eastern European countries: the ethno-national groups residing in their separate territories. These expectations reflected the political attempts to avoid the ethnic conflicts which had been a significant element of the two world wars. The approach presented in “Nowe Drogi” demonstrates the important post-war political assumptions about migration, understandings of collective belonging, images of the future society, and conditions of the social cohesion. These assumptions shaped the public policies in the communist Poland for several decades after the war.

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**Keywords:** Polish propaganda, communist press, post-war migration, population transfers

## Introduction

Media representations reflect social imageries and attitudes, but also shape and create them. The topic of this article will be how the Post-WW2 migration to and from Poland was depicted in the main communist journal “*Nowe Drogi*” in the late 1940s. Under the communist regime, where freedom of expression was limited, the official press propaganda provided the dominant narratives on historical and contemporary political events, and therefore had a unique influence on the collective understanding of the past and present. Narratives and portrayals of migration in the official regime press also constitute a dimension of the politics of memory: official discourses which make use of mythologized interpretations of the past to validate the current power relations and structures (Verovšek 2016). The management of collective memory by stakeholders legitimizes the existing order, create group identity and sense of community (Klementowski 2018: 280). But the images of the past also serve the aim of justifying certain directions for the future. Media representations contribute to the creation of the founding myth of a nation, producing the national narrative together with other tools of the politics of memory such as commemorative events, school curricula and broadly understood education. In this sense, narrating the migration flows in the post-WW2 period allowed to build a certain understanding of the national community, its role and content.

The conceptual tool used to demonstrate the role of propaganda in post-war migration is framing theory (Goffman 1974). In his classic work, Goffman observed that social phenomena are defined by putting them in certain schemes of interpretation. Framing theory examines the interactions and communication activities by referring to their background and social context of messages, putting emphasis on “relational dimensions of meaning” (Berger 1986: XIII). The study of frames of a propaganda discourse is particularly useful for understanding the mechanisms of the reproduction of social structures, forms of domination, and their underlying ideologies (see van Dijk 2008: 192). In this sense, frame analysis and discourse analysis can be complementary: they analyse how the power and authority is established and perpetuated by reinforcing schemes of interpretation and knowledge structures. Both framing analysis and critical discourse analysis enable the study of communicative events in relation to various frameworks, such as social, political, historical, and cultural (van Dijk 2008: 192). While discourse can be seen as a way of articulating power, the framing explains how this discourse is organized in terms of wording and sense-making, how it is constructed and negotiated (Zhongdang, Kosicki 1993: 70). In a sense, every public discourse has propaganda characteristics, as it distorts the social reality according to the subjective interpretation of the author of the message in order to shape certain attitudes and beliefs in the audience. Propaganda, however, is distinguished by the ‘zero-sum’ black-and-white nature of the

message and the tailoring of content to current political needs. The propaganda activities of state actors concerning the understanding of migration processes are also important because they affect the commemorative practices of the past, collective memory as well as the political demands of minorities and their symbolic resources (Jasiewicz 2015).

## Main post-WW2 migration flows to and from Poland

Various organized actions of expulsion of settled inhabitants have appeared in Europe since the Middle Ages (Rieber 2000). Repressive population transfers of the first half of the 20th century were not the first movements of this type in Europe but they became increasingly important instruments of national policies (ibidem). Over 20 million people were 'uprooted' in the 1940s because of repatriations, territorial readjustments and other post-WW2 migrations (Gattrell 2011: 7). For the Soviet Union, population transfers played a key role in attracting client states into a relationship of dependency with the communist regime (Frank 2011: 42).

There were periods in communist Poland when the possibility of foreign migration was severely restricted and minimal, but there were also periods of increased international mobility (Stola 2010; Kochanowski 2016). The main migration flows to Poland and from Poland after WW2 happened between 1945 and 1949. Some of them started as early as in 1944, before the official end of the war. An important context for these movements were the changes of Polish territory. New territories in the West acquired at the expense of German, so-called Recovered Territories, as well as Eastern territories lost to Ukrainian and Belarussian Soviet republics. In order to adjust to the new political order, population movements were initiated. In 1944, the Polish Committee of National Liberation (PKWN) signed Agreements on the mutual evacuation of the population with the Soviet republics of Ukraine, Belarus, and Lithuania. In the same year, State Repatriation Office (Państwowy Urząd Repatriacyjny) was established with the aim of taking care of the organizational aspect of the resettlements (Kochanowski 2016).

These top-down political actions demonstrate that the post-war mobility in Central-Eastern Europe was mostly of forced and collective character (Stola 2010). It encompassed several main population flows which have been thoroughly described in the literature (Eberhard 2011; Stola 2010; Gousseff 2011; Halicka 2015; Kochanowski 2016; Hryciuk, Ruchniewicz, Szaynok, Żbikowski 2008; Drozd 1997; Kersten 1963; Litterer 1955). Ukrainians, Lithuanians, and Belarussians residing within the Polish borders were resettled to the territories of the respective Soviet Republics. Moreover, the Ukrainians were also resettled from Eastern Poland to Western „Recovered Territories” as a result of Vistula Operation initiated in 1947. At the same time, in line with the decisions made at the Potsdam Conference (1945), Germans were resettled from Western Poland, as well as from Czechoslovakia and Hungary, to the German states. Poles residing in the territories annexed by Ukrainian and Belarussian Soviet Republics were resettled to the „Recovered Territories”. Some groups of settlers on those territories of Western Poland were also coming from central parts of Poland. Jews living in Poland migrated to Palestine (after 1948 to Israel). Some movements concerned migration from outside the CEE region:

Polish soldiers and prisoners (including those from forced labour camps) returned to Poland from Western European countries. Simultaneously with the post-war migration flows, the structure of ownership of Polish lands changed, enabling the newcomers to integrate more efficiently into the host environment. New Polish Agrarian Reform Law (1944) allowed migrants resettled to Western Poland to take into possession of agricultural farms formed from the lands left by the displaced German occupation.

## Nowe Drogi journal as a source of propaganda discourse

Media were important channels of communist propaganda: they played a role in the production of knowledge about the sociopolitical order and interpretation of political actions. A new political structure cannot be successful without social support. Propaganda, in its most basic meaning, denotes dissemination and promotion of particular ideas, and often takes the form of organized persuasion (Jowett, O'Donnell 2012: 2-3, citing DeVito 1986). Communication about the political actions and its effects, and convincing the general public about the rationality of these endeavours constitutes a key element of governance. As M. Zalewska pointed out, the persuasiveness of propaganda was particularly efficient in the situation of monopoly of the communist regime over national mass media, and the lack of easily available information channels which could challenge the official representations. The arbitrary and judgmental language used in mass media sustained the dichotomous vision of social reality (Zalewska 1990). Researchers studying the history of communist Poland provide an increasing number of analyses of state propaganda, examining its role in promoting the political ideology of the Polish People's Republic, indicating the diversity of propagandist forms and actions and studying the language of propaganda (Krawczyk 1994; Domke 1995, 2010; Śleziak 2016; Klementowski 2018; Bralczyk 2002, 1986). Particular attention was paid by state propaganda to the issues of Polish settlement on the newly added Western territories (ibidem), however, other aspects of migration addressed by propaganda remain under-examined. This analysis of "Nowe Drogi" magazine contributes to the growing body of literature, by an in-depth analysis of migration discourse in one of the key journals of the communist Poland.

Nowe Drogi was established in 1947 as the official journal of the Polish Workers' Party that operated between 1942 and 1948. After its merger with the Polish Socialist Party in 1948, a new party was established, the Polish United People's Party (PZPR). Nowe Drogi remained the official journal of this governing party until the collapse of communist system in 1989. In the period under study (1947-1948), it was published bimonthly, although later it became a monthly journal. Its main aim was to explain and justify the party's ideological line. It was one of the most important press titles of the Party in 1940s; other significant journals included "Głos Ludu", "Trybuna Wolności", "Trybuna Robotnicza" (PWN 2020). The development of Nowe Drogi reflected the growing importance attributed by the communist party to the dissemination and propagation of the communist ideas in the post-war society. In 1947, the Department of Propaganda and Press assumed control over managing the press distribution, defining the concept and outreach of journals, planning the publishing strategies, and coordinating the work of propaganda press (Adamczyk 1987).

Nowe Drogi contained i.a. reprints of important public speeches of various party officials, voices of social scientists regarding the urgent social problems, reviews of academic books. The journal covered a broad range of topics concerning the social, political, and economic situation in Poland, Soviet bloc, and worldwide including Western capitalist countries. The authors of the texts were communist Party officials, as well as academics, especially those representing social sciences. The recipients of the journal were party members of higher, medium, and lower grades. The journal's message was disseminated among new political elites and therefore had a crucial influence on community building.

## Research method

My research method was content analysis of the journal volumes from 1947 and 1948. *Nowe Drogi* published six issues in 1947 and six in 1948. Each issue contained approximately 250 pages of text. I searched and analysed the content containing selected keywords (in Polish): 1) migration/ migrants; 2) evacuation/ evacuated; 3) Recovered [Territories] (*Odzysk-, Ziemie Odzyskane*); 4) resettlement, 5) repatriation, 6) deportation/ deported, 7) Ukrainian/ Ukraine, 8) Jewish/ Jew, 9) Germany/ German. Since Polish language diversifies between a word's stem and affixes, in each case the search was conducted for words' stems which provided the opportunity to find a word with different affixes (for example: **migr-** *acja*, **migr-** *anci*, *e -migr-* *acja* etc.). Content analysis of official discourse is a valuable source of knowledge about the perception of migration processes, how the stakeholders and policymakers understood their causes and consequences, opportunities and challenges. The official discourse shaped how one could speak about migrations. Representation, framing, and explanation contained in the official journals legitimized the new social order and validated the top-down initiatives concerning population movements.

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On the basis of this research, three main types of frames are distinguished which are used to inform about and explain migration processes. One of them refers to the language of propaganda, while the others refer to the substantive content of propaganda messages: (1) terminological frame refers to the terms and notions which are introduced in communicating migration; (2) nation building frame as the primary substantive context in which migration events are examined; (3) ethnicity frame as the second substantive context in which migration events are examined. The excerpts from the articles quoted below illustrate the main findings.



## Results of analysis

### **Linguistic framing of migration in Nowe Drogi**

Language is a part of social process: it constitutes social meanings, perpetuates or challenges social structures, and controls social practices (Fowler, Hodge, Kress, Trew 2018). Intentional and unintentional linguistic manipulation produces and consolidates the image of post-war migration in Nowe Drogi. Discourse about migration is reproduced in new terms, notions, and names appearing in the public sphere. Naming the processes of migration and rebordering is a part of their interpretation and ideologization.

From the perspective of migration discourse, an important propaganda topic was Western territories added to Poland after the Second World War: the destination for Polish migrants leaving the new Soviet Republics (and to a lesser extent for Ukrainians), and at the same time an area left by German inhabitants. The Western territories were continuously referred to in the journal as “Recovered Territories”, reiterating the widespread public discourse. This name was supposed to emphasize the traditional and long-term attachment of these lands to the Polish state. Its aim was to legitimize the new shape of borders in Central Eastern Europe.

In the academic literature about post-war population transfers, terminology remains an important part of evaluation (e.g. Kamusella 2004, Borodziej 2002). This mechanism was even more visible in the propaganda press of the communist period, due to its inclination to provide the dichotomous vision of political world. In the 1940s particular notions used to describe post-war mobilities had even stronger ideological connotations: “expulsion” was used by Germans demanding the reimbursement of western territories of Poland, moreover the Polish People’s Republic distanced itself from the term which could indicate that German civil population were victims of violence in the post-war period (Borodziej 2002: 104). In the communist discourse of Nowe Drogi migration of ethnic groups was referred to as “repatriation”, indicating the return to homeland as the main aim of population movements. Another typical notion was “evacuation” – used to describe migrations of Ukrainians and Belarussians from the territory of the Polish state to Soviet republics. The notions used in the journal reflect perceptions of migration as a process of reestablishing permanent order in the region. Ethnic Poles arriving in the Recovered Territories are named as “settlers” (“osadnicy”), which emphasized the permanent character of their stay. In Nowe Drogi, the notion of “resettlement” is used to describe processes of migrations forced by the Germans during the Second World War, but not in reference to the processes of mobility to Poland or from Poland during the first years of the communist rule. This terminology reflects the perception and interpretation of post-war migrations in the public discourse.

In addition to massive population movements, the process of giving Polish names to towns and other locations was also an important aspect of taking over the narrative about the new territorial borders of Poland. Right after the war, the Commission Determining the Names of Places was established at the Ministry of Public Administration. New names in Western Poland as well as in Masuria reflected the polonization and repolonization of those lands (Utracki 2011). Names of towns, streets, and other locations often serve as means of disseminating the national discourse (Kaşikçi 2019). In this sense, the language of the public sphere allowed for taking a symbolic possession of the territories. Renaming the geographical locations and shaping the language of media discourse about migration were parallel and complementary forms of this process.

### **Frame of nation building and migration discourse in Nowe Drogi**

The press discourse reflected the governing party's attempt to achieve a country which would be homogeneous in terms of ethnicities and nations. According to the prevailing beliefs of that time, such homogeneity was a condition for social cohesion, prerequisite for social, economic, and political efficiency. It was assumed that ethnically homogeneous societies would achieve common goals more easily and efficiently. For political elites of Central-Eastern Europe after the Second World War, ethnic homogeneity was a "geo-strategic concern" and a sine qua non of nation-state viability, emerging as a counterpoint for the failure of post-1919 order (Frank 2011: 27). The new social situation was opposed to the pre-second World War multiculturalism in Poland, which was considered problematic. The authors of Nowe Drogi presented a very critical attitude to multicultural Poland of the interwar period. This approach was reiterated several times by different authors, which demonstrates the common, widespread character of this take on ethnic divisions among representatives of the communist regime:

*"Through the wise international agreements we ensured evacuation of Ukrainians and Germans from the Polish territories. We reached almost full ethnic homogeneity of the nation. There is no need to prove how significant it is. The Polish nation became a unity, completely cohesive in terms of politics and society. How to compare this to the pre-war divisions? How different is the current alive fighting tool governed by the Polish strategy?" ("Obronność Polski a granice zachodnie", Nowe Drogi vol. 2/1947, p. 40)*

*"Our plan of economic restoration encompasses in particular one unique task. It is a task of economic unification of the Recovered Territories with the rest of Poland. This task is the result of the huge upheaval that is the transformation of Poland from a multinational state into a mononational state, adding the old Polish territories, which had been germanized for centuries, and basing Poland upon the borders of the Baltic Sea, Odra and Nysa. This task re-*

*quires solving several technical, economic, and demographic problems.*" (Stefan Jędrychowski, "Plan odbudowy gospodarczej", *Nowe Drogi* vol. 1/1947, p. 72)

The propagandist portrayal of migration reflected the political attempts to build monoethnic states, driven by the essentialist vision of nations. *Nowe Drogi* referred to migration as a single occurrence redressing the ethno-national balance in the region, and not as an incessant demographic process. Migrations were treated as a one-off event, restoring the ethnic order and social justice in Europe. Post-war migration was imagined as a process of building ethnically homogeneous nations.

*"The time is coming when the worst wounds will be healed (...) when massive migration and repatriation flows will stop, when a new countryside will lift us massively to a new level of life"* [*Nowe Drogi* vol. 4/1947, „Zagadnienie demokratycznej przebudowy szkolnictwa”, p. 39–40]

At the same time, authors of *Nowe Drogi* appreciated the positive role of emigration in educating, broadening horizons, and social capital building of many earlier generations of Poles. One may say, using a language of contemporary migrantology, that they underlined the significance of “brain gain” and “brain circulation”, social, and cultural remittances resulting from migration experience. Still, the journal authors treated migration as a transitory stage on the way to the overarching aim of ethnic unity within the borders of a nation state. The discourse of “*Nowe Drogi*” demonstrates certain presumptions and expectations connected with a particular understanding of human mobility. The experience of migration was implicitly associated with the aim of returning to one’s own homeland, which in this imagery was supposed to end migration (“exile”) for good.

*"Emigrant dispersion, frequent and massive in the history of our nation, allowed us to collect various experiences of the world during the bitter hardships of exile. Polish emigration groups starting from post-resurrection ones through socialist, and economic migration, until the dispersion during the first and second world wars, was always characterized with great nostalgia for the country and great cultural activity. Polish school faithfully followed the trace of exile, and while it existed for years and decades in exotic and alien environments, it drew generously from the schooling experience of other countries and nations. One can say, that in this regard the Polish school really lied in the centre of Europe, and today this cultural circle has even broadened"* [*Nowe Drogi* vol. 4/1947, „Zagadnienie demokratycznej przebudowy szkolnictwa”, p. 22].

Such representations of migration were in line with the traditional vision of a diaspora as a community residing far from *patria*, striving to either create their own country or return to the idealized homeland of the ancestors. This framing of migration was connected with the naturalization of a nation as an eternal, indispensable, and unchanging entity. As CDA approach emphasizes, *"Discourse usually does not express ideol-*

ogies directly, but via specific group attitudes about social issues and personal opinions about specific events, and under the influence of the communicative situation as subjectively defined by the speakers or writers, that is, by their personal context models" (van Dijk 2008: 194). The ideological discourse of Nowe Drogi expressed and reproduced the ideology of a nation based on an ethnic identity, and the organization of information concerning migration processes provides the opportunity to present the fundamental norms and values in this regard. The vision of a nation was a static one, with an emphasis on the continuity and persistence of homogeneous and historically embedded ethnic groups, separate from one another. Essentialist thinking about a nation also had the potential to enhance inter-group antagonisms. This may be opposed to the current understanding of demographic processes as dynamic ones. However, that traditional vision of migration as a one-off event is echoed, to a certain extent, in contemporary discourses and policies focusing around return migration.

Nowe Drogi reflected a post-war communist emphasis of modernization intertwined with nation-building based on common history, ancestors, primordial cultural space, and territorial hegemony. In addition to the issues of renaming, the Polishness of these territories was validated by a historical perspective: it indicated that these lands have been inhabited by Slavonic tribes for many centuries. This argumentation dated back to analyses of Polish historians working in Western Europe in the 19th century and was strengthened in the academic works published before the Second World War (Sarna 2018: 125-126). Memory, including public memory, is always selective. The focus of public memory articulated in Nowe Drogi was on those historical periods when the territories of Silesia, Pomerania, and Masuria belonged to Poland:

*"The question of Slavonic genealogy and their place of origin has long been debated in the science of prehistory. Under the influence of German scholars, whose suggestions were sometimes taken even our writers, the Slavonic indigenes in the basins of Elbe and Neisse rivers, and even in the basin of the Vistula river, was questioned. The concept of Asian origin of the Slavs was developed. (...) The indigenes of Slavonic tribes in the nowadays Recovered Territories is, according to the most recent research, uncontested, not only in the Polish, but also Soviet science."* („Geneza i kolebka Słowian" Nowe Drogi, vol. (9)3 / 1948; review of Tadeusz Lehr-Spławiński: O pochodzeniu i prakolebce Słowian. Instytut Zachodni, Poznań 1946, p. 264)

In the public discourse of Polish People's Republic, ethnically homogeneous states and each nation's right to sovereignty was considered a value per se. Nowe Drogi perpetuated this discourse of modern utopias: a monoethnic nation was perceived as an ideal community. It was understood as a socially desired state which should be politi-

cally supported and sought for. Not only were separate states of the Soviet bloc (Poland, Czechoslovakia) treated as such sovereign units; Soviet republics such as Ukraine and Belarus were also defined as political units of sovereign nations. Resettlement of ethnic populations to the territories considered as their own was treated as an important dimension of social justice. The overarching aim of all post-war resettlements was stabilization, preventing potential future tensions and wars.

### **Frame of ethnicity and migration discourse in Nowe Drogi**

While the frame of nation building focused on unity and historical continuity, the frame of ethnicities was based on the emphasis of differences, and discontinuity of historical oppressions. Both frames are complementary in their role of legitimizing post-war population transfers. Migration was strictly intertwined with ethnicity: population transfers were aimed to remove ethnic and national minorities to the territories where they can constitute a majority group. Ethnic resettlement was framed as an opportunity. The communist discourse put emphasis on the freedom of ethnic groups to build their own sovereign countries (Ukrainian & Belarussian Soviet Republics). The overlap of ethnic divisions and class divisions were emphasised: while Poles in Ukraine and Belarussia represented the higher social classes, ethnic Ukrainians and Belarussians were mostly poor workers in agriculture. The nations' right to self-determination was seen as an aspect of building the international socialist community.

*„Poland was not democratic at that time [1924], so [injustice] was not Poland's fault, but the reactive forces are to blame for the fact that the Ukrainian and Belarussian farmworkers who hated capitalists and land owners, projected this hatred onto the Polish state. (...) Today's Polish people's democracy acknowledges the unification of Eastern lands with their Soviet homeland, as the just and right thing”* [Ideologiczne koncepcje reakcji, Nowe Drogi vol. 1/ 1947, page 59]

*(...) the national liberation fight of Ukrainians has historical and class roots. Post-Versailles Poland was not capable, in any case, of solving this within own state. [There were] national antagonisms which were splitting Poland from the inside. Therefore, independently of all fluctuations of international politics, the development of the situation would lead to the exacerbation of fight of Ukrainian and Belarussian people for liberation from social and national oppression. Nowadays, these disputes are of a purely historic nature. The fact is, there has been already the unification of Ukrainians and of Belarussians, and new Poland transformed into a nationally homogeneous state”* [S. Kowalczyk, Podzwonne starych orientacji, s. 165, Nowe Drogi vol. 1/1947]

Migration was portrayed as a dimension of new identity politics, allowing for a detachment of the vision of Polish nation from the conservative aristocratic narrative. Population transfers and establishing ethno-national unity were aimed at counteracting the social fragmentation experienced on Polish territories in the 19th and early 20th century. Shaping and preserving the public memory about historical social divisions allowed the new elites to redefine the nation's heritage:

*Nationalism in Poland has its roots in the conquests of Ukrainian and Belarussian lands in the old times of "With Fire and Sword" [famous Polish historical novel written by a Nobel prize winner Henryk Sienkiewicz – K.A.], and in the later times, in selfish deeds of the Polish bourgeoisie and aristocracy, in the double oppression of workers by the three invaders. It has been particularly fatal for the second independency and, up until today, the past destruction of workers' class has consequences.*" [Nowe Drogi vol. 4(10) / 1948, special issue devoted to the plenary of the Central Committee of the Polish Workers' Party, 6–7 July 1948, p. 36]

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Within a broader discourse of social justice, migration flows of various groups were treated somewhat differently. The discourse of Nowe Drogi demonstrated a contradiction of the German ethnic group on the one hand and Ukrainian and Belarussian groups on the other. This resulted from their different positions in the hierarchy of socio-political dominance and oppression.

*„The fight with Germans has always been the fight with the German pressure onto the eternally Polish territories, the fight for our national, ethnographic state of possession, the fight for the existence of the Polish state and nation. The fight with Moscow, with Russia, was until the partitions [of Poland] mainly the fight for dominance of Polish aristocracy over non-Polish territories of Ukraine and Belarussia. (...) This expansion onto the East, fight for dominance in Lithuania, Ukraine, and Belarus, drew away the attention and power of Poland from solving the problem let alone of those ethnographic Polish territories in the West, from ensuring safety there.”* (S. Jędrychowski, „Reakcyjna teoria dwóch wrogów”, Nowe Drogi vol. 2/1947, pages 46–47 and 51)

Not surprisingly, the journal's representations of ethnic groups in Nowe Drogi was hugely affected by the events and conflicts of the Second World War. In Nowe Drogi, Germans were described as a threat to regional stability and peace. The Marshall Plan and the development of the Federal Republic of Germany was mentioned many times in the journal and continuously framed as a danger of revoking German imperialism. Resettlement of Germans from Western Poland was not frequently referred to, and definitely not portrayed as an individual drama or suffering. It was framed as a dimension of necessary social justice. This approach was in line with the dominant public attitudes.

Polish citizens expected retaliative actions, compensation, and apology from Germans: they wanted the German minority to be displaced from the territory of Poland (Kacprzak 2008: 31; Sakson 1993). In the Polish post-war discourse, the remnants of German culture on the Western territories of Poland were treated as a reminder of German occupation (Ćwiek-Rogalska 2021: 29).

*„In the past, Germans had much better diet than Poles, their living conditions were more comfortable and spacious, they wore better and warmer clothes. Their social income per capita was three times as high as in Poland. The attempt to retain this inequality at the expense of German territories of Poland can only be explained by the intention of growing a strong ally to direct their aggression to the East, and in the first place to Poland (...) The attempts to challenge the Western borders of Poland come from the intention to undermine peace among the nations. War instigators would like to organize as many sources of conflict as possible. Because of this fact, and for this aim, they question Poland's right to the Recovered Territories” (Józef Dubiel – Ekonomiczne „argumenty” obrońców Niemiec, Nowe Drogi 47/2, p. 236)*

*Expropriation and nationalization of monopolistic enterprises are a key step towards building the economic fundamentals of democracy in Germany. They will deprive of power of the most reactive and aggressive elements of the German capital, which shaped the German life and which are mostly responsible for participating in Hitlerite crimes” (J. Kowalewski “Likwidacja niemieckiego kapitału finansowego w sowieckiej strefie okupacyjnej”, Nowe Drogi vol. 3/1947, p. 162–167)*

The Nowe Drogi journal represented an ambiguous attitude to Jewish migration. Migration of Jews was framed as a result of failed pedagogical efforts of Polish propaganda. Many authors and members of the editorial board were of Jewish ethnicity. On the one hand, the journal supported the establishment of a new state, Israel. On the other hand, the authors were critical about the Polish Jews leaving Poland for Israel. It was perceived as abandoning an important task, in a sense betraying the workers' case and communist ideals which were supposed to be achieved in Poland, in the process of international communist cooperation.

*“Folks-Sztyme [Jewish newspaper published in Poland] did not sufficiently fight Zionism, the reactive concept of “exodus” from Poland, and all aspects of nationalism. Jewish working class was not sufficiently mobilized to fight against capitalist-speculative forces. (...) [There was] insufficient pedagogic work among Jewish people strengthening their attachment to People's Poland” (Nowe Drogi vol. 1948 (6), page 295–296)*

*“The main carrier of resistance was Jewish proletariat, and the main fighters and ideologists of resistance – workers' organizations. The history of resistance is strongly connected with the issue of Polish-Jewish cohabitation. Taking into account various facts, one has to*

*conclude that the brotherhood was articulated in the resistance movement, mainly through progressive ideologies. This brotherhood, forged in the fire of fight, passed the exams and should be both the proof as well as the indicator for the future. Whenever the national unity was expressed, Jewish people – even in the catastrophic times – had the courage to take effort and action”* (Józef Wulf, “Publikacje Żydowskiej Komisji Historycznej”, *Nowe Drogi* vol. 2/ 1947, p. 228)

The thematic scope of the journal was not limited to the problems of Central – Eastern Europe, even though these topics were the main focus of the majority of articles. The communists’ political emphasis on fighting social inequalities was reflected in a critical attitude to racist divisions in capitalist economies. In this regard, *Nowe Drogi* presented a courageous and progressive approach to the 20th century issue of racism. The journal repeatedly condemned American racism and indicated that capitalist development in the USA is embedded in discrimination, exploitation, and abuse of the Afroamerican minority. The authors of *Nowe Drogi* noticed the analogy between treatment of Afroamerican minority and practices towards labour migrants from Central-Eastern Europe in the US.

*“A lot of jobs in the steel industry are particularly hard (dirt, high temperature) and performed in dangerous conditions. These particularly hard tasks used to be “reserved” for emigrants from Eastern Europe before the World War One, and currently are performed by the outcasts of the American society – the black people [Murzyni]. By this, entrepreneurs reach a double aim: they ensure workforce for these tasks, which are avoided by white workers, and they counteract the social advancement of black workers towards tasks which are higher in the hierarchy of a factory, thus creating a division between the black and white workers”* („Przegląd zagranicznej prasy marksistowskiej”, *Nowe Drogi* vol. 1(7)/ 48)

*“How can one bring together democracy and formal discrimination of the black people, factual discrimination of the Americans of Slavonic, Latin, or Jewish descent, which appears in the majority of the States?”* (Werfel, „O wyjaśnienie zasadniczych zagadnień”, *Nowe Drogi* vol. 1(7)/ 48, p. 132)

This criticism demonstrates a differentiated approach to migration, depending on whether it served the aim of ethnic homogeneity of particular territories (Soviet bloc), or led to increasing cultural diversity within a state (America). It was argued that ethnic differences intensified the economic and social divisions in communities.



## Conclusion

The Nowe Drogi journal uncovers the ways the communist decision makers perceived migration in the post-WW2 period, demonstrating the political paradigms of that time and underlying patterns of thinking about community life. Their opinions and perceptions were hugely influenced by the multiplicity of violent ethnic conflicts in Europe in the first half of the 20th century. This socio-political backdrop led to a particular perception of ethnic homogeneity as an element of a utopian model state, identified with social cohesion and historical justice.

Representations of migrations in the Nowe Drogi journal demonstrate a conservative, essentialist vision of a nation and nationhood. Despite the regime's declarations about the Communist International, the traditional ethnic group and nationhood were deemed as the crucial sources of solidarity, and basic fundamentals of a community. A nation state was perceived as a key pillar of political order, ensuring equality and redistribution. The discourse about mitigating class divisions and equalizing social inequalities was accompanied by imageries referring to a nation understood as an ethnic unity. The post-WW2 migration flows were intended to form such a nation, and subsequently to extinguish class division. Migration flows post-WW2 were perceived by stakeholders and policymakers as a one-off event which would ensure stabilization in the region, and peace. After the ethnic groups migrated to their respective territories and settled there, the migration processes were expected to stop. This anticipation hugely affected the policy of migration in the later years of the communist regime. The phase of mass migration flows (1946 – 1949) was followed by the period of restricted mobility in 1950s and continuing obstacles to international mobility in the following periods of the communist state.

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# The Expulsion of Ethnic Germans from Hungary Considering International Politics



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## Abstract

In the period between 1946 and 1948 approximately half of the Germans of Hungary (220,000 people) were settled to the American and Soviet occupation zones of post-war Germany. These events were part of a larger international process in which millions of Germans were forced to flee their homes in Northern and Eastern Europe, as well as Poland and Czechoslovakia. Post-war Hungary, as one of the countries on the losing side of the war, after 1945 was in a ceasefire status, so was not a sovereign state. As a result, also the deportation of the Germans from Hungary could take place only with an international mandate under the supervision of the Allied Control Commission. The international politics played a key role first of all in the preparation and the authorization of the deportations, but also in the summer of 1946, during the execution of the deportations. Furthermore, it was decisive also in the context of the tense relations between the United States and the Soviet Union, when the deportations have been temporarily retarded. Finally, international politics had influence on the deportations also in the summer of 1947, when forced migration to the Soviet occupation zone of Germany began without the consent of the Western Allied Powers. The aim of the study is to present and analyze these complex processes.

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**Keywords:** expulsion, German minority, post-war Hungary, international politics, Potsdam Conference

## Introduction

It is well known that the forced migration of Germans in the territory of Central and Eastern Europe was carried out in the name of post-war retribution. The great powers had been planning to solve the issue of minorities this way since the outbreak of World War II.<sup>1</sup> In a 1943 report on the peace negotiation attempts of Kállay's Hungarian government, the British Foreign Secretary praised Hungary for striking a blow against the German minority in Hungary by depriving SS-volunteers of their Hungarian citizenship, and thus shifting them to Germany.<sup>2</sup> However, the expulsion of Sudeten Germans and Silesian Germans was already discussed in particular and supported by both the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom. In this context, it is clear that – considering the post-war expulsion of the Germans – this occurred both in victorious and defeated states. The main concern was revenge and the prevention of future problems.

During the war, it was the Soviet Union that suffered the greatest financial and human losses. As outlined from 1943 onwards and stipulated in the Percentages Agreement of October 1944,<sup>3</sup> this area would inevitably become part the Soviet sphere of influence. In the autumn of 1944, as Soviet troops advanced massively, the post-war fate of the Germans was clarified: at the political rally of the Small Farmers' Party (Kisgazdapárt) held in Pécs, Hungary on 28 November 1944, Ferenc Nagy was the first of the party leaders to raise the issue of the expulsion of the Germans.<sup>4</sup>

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1 On this see: SEEWANN, Gerhard – Britische Quellen zum Vertreibungsprozeß vor und nach Potsdam. [British sources on the expulsion process before and after Potsdam]. In SEEWANN, Gerhard: Ungarndeutsche und Ethnopolitik Ausgewählte Aufsätze [Germans of Hungary and Ethnopolitics. Selected works]. Budapest: Osiris 2000, pp. 183–198.

2 Memorandum by the Head of the Department for Central Europe of the British Foreign Office on the principles of British policy in terms of Hungary (London, 22 September 1943). – See: JUHÁSZ, Gyula (Ed.). *Magyar-brit titkos tárgyalások 1943-ban* [Secret Hungarian-British negotiations in 1943]. Budapest: Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1978, document no. 71 and GECSÉNYI, Lajos – MÁTHÉ, Gábor (Eds.). *Sub clausula 1920 – 1947*. Budapest: Közlöny Kiadó, 2008, document no. 92

3 In October 1944, Churchill met the Soviets in Moscow and proposed a division of control over Eastern European countries, dividing them into spheres of influence. Churchill and Stalin agreed that there would be a 90% British influence in Greece, a 90% Soviet influence in Romania and an 80% Soviet influence in Hungary and Bulgaria. For Yugoslavia, they agreed on 50-50%. – CHURCHILL, Winston. *A második világháború* [The Second World War] Budapest: Európa, 1989. Volume II, pp. 476–477.

4 *Ki kell telepíteni a hazai svábságot* [Swabians have to be expelled from Hungary]. In: *Kis Újság*, 18 April 1945., no. 3 See ZIELBAUER, György: A magyarországi németek elhurcolása és elűzése. Válogatott szemelvények a korabeli magyar sajtóból 1944 – 1948. [The deportation and expulsion of the Germans in Hungary. Selected excerpts from the contemporary Hungarian press 1944–1948.] Budapest: *Országos Német Önkormányzat* [National German Self-Government], 1996. p. 154.

## The way until the Potsdam Conference

However, this issue only came to the foreground in the spring of 1945, after German troops had been driven out of the country. It was mainly in the press that the parties demanded a radical solution to the German issue, namely expulsion. At the time of the first mediatisation of these statements, the Department for Ethnicities and Minorities of the Hungarian Prime Minister's Office warned that such press releases should be banned, as they could be very damaging to the foreign affairs of the country. *"The issue of expelling an ethnic group living in a particular country is never an issue to be solved by the host country alone. Unilateral expulsion or even population exchange – a possibility and even a necessity in Hungarian-German relations – is only possible with the consensus of the two countries involved; moreover, the issue of expelling the Germans is possible only with the prior consent of the victorious great powers. It is possible that the removal of the Germans from the Carpathian basin is also on the political agenda of the victorious great powers. Therefore, before implementing the Hungarian initiative, it would be useful to find out the relevant intentions of the great powers in advance and wait for them to take the lead, or at least if the Hungarians could act together with the other interested states in the Danube Basin in this very important matter and submit a joint request to the great powers."*<sup>5</sup>

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The issue of the expulsion of Germans from Hungary was discussed at the inter-party meeting on 14 May. Minister of Foreign Affairs János Gyöngyösi explained that it was absolutely necessary to know whether the great powers regarded the issue of the liability of the Germans to be an international issue or an internal matter of the affected countries. Gyöngyösi hoped that a resolution of the great powers would shift the liability away from the Hungarian government. Following the inter-party conference, the Hungarian government appealed to the great powers for the expulsion of the Germans; however, according to a British report of 9 July, back on 12 May, Foreign Minister János Gyöngyösi had already asked Sir Alvary Gascoigne, the British diplomat then serving in Budapest, about his government's opinion on the expulsion of some 200,000 Swabians. Back then, London had not yet made a statement on the issue. Gyöngyösi also contacted

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<sup>5</sup> Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára [National Archives of Hungary] (hereinafter: MNL OL) XIX-A-1-n Miniszterelnökség Nemzetiségi és Kisebbségi Osztályának iratai [Documents of the Nationality and Minority Department of the Prime Minister's Office], box 1, 530/1945.

Arthur Schoenfeld, the US representative in Hungary, who told Gyöngyösi that although he did not know the US government's position, it would certainly not agree with any mass deportation, only with the punishment of war criminals.<sup>6</sup>

After the meeting, Minister of Foreign Affairs Gyöngyösi raised the issue of expulsion to the Allied Control Authority orally and later in writing; he called for the expulsion of 200,000 to 300,000 Germans to the Soviet occupation zone of Germany.<sup>7</sup> On 24 May, the British Government expressed the view that the expulsion of Germans from Hungary was less urgent than that from Poland and Czechoslovakia. Then, on 14 June, Gascoigne reported in a telegram that, although some members of the Hungarian government would have wished to expel the whole German population of Hungary, still, only the fascist Germans were to be expelled.<sup>8</sup>

From the head of the US political mission in Budapest, Gyöngyösi had received a memorandum of the US Government on the issue of the expulsion of Germans from Czechoslovakia. In it, the Americans stated that any expulsion of any group of people could only be carried out on the basis of international conventions and that Washington disapproved any expulsion based on collective guilt.<sup>9</sup> In its reply to the memorandum, the Hungarian government opposed the collective persecution of Hungarians in Slovakia, while stressing the need to severely punish war criminals.<sup>10</sup>

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6 *Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik* [Documents on German politics] Series II, Volume 1/1-3. *Die Konferenz von Potsdam* [The Potsdam Conference.] Ed: Gisela Biewer. Frankfurt am Main: Bundesminister des Innern [German Federal Minister of the Interior] 1992, pp. 983–993.

7 MNL OL XIX-J-1-j Külügyminisztérium Békeelőkészítő Osztályának iratai [Documents of the Peace Preparatory Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs] II/28. In: Sándor BALOGH: *A népi demokratikus Magyarország külpolitikája 1945 – 1947.* [Foreign Policy of People's Democratic Hungary 1945-1947.] Budapest: Kossuth, 1982, p. 85.

8 *Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik...* 1991. op. cit., pp. 983–993.

9 MNL OL XIX-J-1-n Külügyminisztérium Gyöngyösi János irathagyatéka [Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Archive of János Gyöngyösi]

10 *Ibid.*

On 9 July, Gyöngyösi negotiated with Soviet Ambassador Georgi Maximovich Pushkin in Budapest – the latter claimed that the expulsion of the Germans was a difficult task because Germany was in a difficult economic and demographic situation. Gyöngyösi was surprised by the hesitation of Soviet Union, because, as he said, it contradicted the Soviet suggestions presented until then.<sup>11</sup> In his 1953 memoirs,<sup>12</sup> István Kertész, then head of the Peace Preparatory Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Hungary, also referred to the strong Soviet pressure, tangible in the first months of 1945; however, no reference was made to this in the sources published after the Potsdam Conference, as if there had been any pressure, it would certainly have served as a reference to the Hungarian government. Even if there was no coercion or pressure, there must have been a suggestion, as we have a number of other sources suggesting this fact.<sup>13</sup> The aforementioned British report of 9 July stated that according to the position of the Soviet government, the expulsion should be as broad as possible. In one of his notes, Geoffrey Wedgwood Harrison, a member of the German Department of the British Foreign Office, wrote that the Soviet Union considered the expulsion of the Germans to be its historic mission. As Harrison wrote, *The Anglo-Saxon position was quite different, “however, we must admit that we are not in a position to prevent it. The best we can do is to try to ensure that it [i.e. the expulsion – author’s note] is well organized and as humane as possible, without imposing an intolerable burden on the occupying authorities in Germany.”*<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> MNL OL XIX-J-1-j SZU Tük. [Confidential documents of the Soviet Union] 1945 – IV-100.2 – Published in BARÁTH Magdolna – CSEH Gergő Bendegúz: A SZEB és Magyarország 1945 nyarán. [The Allied Control Commission and Hungary in the summer of 1945.] In *Társadalmi Szemle* [Social Review], 1996, No. 5, p. 86.; and *Dálnoki Miklós kormányának (Ideiglenes Nemzeti Kormány) minisztertanácsi jegyzőkönyvei* [Minutes of the Council of Ministers of the government of Miklós Dálnoki (Provisional National Government)], 23 December 1944 – 15 November 1945. Volume B, Budapest: MOL, 1997, pp. 58–74.

<sup>12</sup> KERTÉSZ István. Die Vertreibung der deutschen aus Ungarn. Eine Studie zur Nachkriegsdiplomatie. [Expulsion of the Germans from Hungary. A study of post-war diplomacy.] In *Südost-Stimmen* [Southeastern Voices] III (1953). No. 5, p. 8.

<sup>13</sup> British report of 9 July 1945. In: *Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik ...* 1991. pp. 983–993.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., pp. 1003–1004. The quotation is the author's translation from German.

## The issue of German minorities at the Potsdam Conference

The positions of the great powers made it clear that they were the only ones to decide about the expulsion of the Germans. Then, in Potsdam, the issue of the Germans from Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary was indeed discussed together. The expulsion of the Germans was opened by Churchill at the ninth meeting. Naturally, the issues the Germans in Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary were given a different priority. The main focus of the negotiations was on Czechoslovakia and Poland, discussing Hungary only additionally, as there *“the matter was obviously less urgent.”*<sup>15</sup> According to the minutes of the conference, the expulsion of Germans from Hungary was clearly negotiated upon request of the Hungarian government. In Germany, the refugees and those expelled from Czechoslovakia and Poland were already creating a difficult situation, mainly due to supply problems, so the Anglo-Saxons were not interested in forcing Hungary to the expulsion. According to the minutes written by the Soviet delegation, Sir Alexander Cadogan, British Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, made the following statement on the issue of Germans in Hungary: *“There is another issue of minor importance: the issue of the expulsion of a certain number of Germans from Hungary. I understand that the Hungarian Government wishes to relocate a certain number of Germans living in Hungary to Germany.”*<sup>16</sup> So, the British acknowledged the legitimacy of the Hungarian request; however, they themselves did not force the expulsion.

On 28 July, the American delegation raised the issue of the expulsion of Germans from Czechoslovakia. The British delegation indicated that the question was not only the expulsion of Germans from Czechoslovakia, but also from western Poland and Hungary. The Soviet delegation proposed to present the issue to the three ministers after its pre-processing by a preparatory committee. In accordance with this proposal, a corresponding committee was formed, with the participation of George F. Kennan (United States of America), Harrison (United Kingdom), Arkady Sobolev and Vladimir Semyonov (Soviet Union).

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<sup>15</sup> British report of 9 July 1945. In: *Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik ...* 1991, pp. 979–982.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1729.



On the third staff meeting of 31 July, the UK was represented by Prime Minister Clement Attlee and Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin. The sixth item on the agenda was the expulsion. The attendees agreed to try to get the British proposal accepted by the Soviets at the Foreign Ministers' meeting in the afternoon. Thus, the part of the document on the expulsion of Germans was drafted by the English-speaking countries and this is what they wanted to get approved by the Soviets. Initially, the Soviets objected to the British proposal, which would have imposed an expulsion moratorium until the German Allied Control Council would examine the situation. Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs Vyacheslav Mikhailovich Molotov pointed out that the document could easily be misunderstood by the governments concerned and that the issue could not be decided without these. Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin also expressed his doubts concerning the proposal, saying that it was not enforceable. The Anglo-Saxons, on the other hand, insisted that the expulsions had to be halted until the German Allied Control Council discussed it.<sup>17</sup> After a lengthy debate, the proposal was adopted on the same day. On the following day, Harrison wrote about the negotiations to the Foreign Office: "*The negotiations were not easy – negotiations with the Russians are never easy.*"<sup>18</sup> He also reported that Sobolev had called the expulsion of the Germans from Czechoslovakia and Poland a historic mission, which the Soviet Union did not wish to prevent at all. Cannon and Harrison rejected this, stating that since they could not prevent mass expulsions [in German terminology: "*wilde Vertreibung*" – author's note], they sought to make sure it would be carried out in an organised and humane manner.

It is clear from the wording that – though the resolution does not stipulate collective evaluation – it does allow both individual and collective evaluation. This decision was obviously adopted in this form because there was no consensus among the great powers on this issue, and there was a great tension between the Soviet and Anglo-Saxon positions.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid. pp. 1948–1992.

<sup>18</sup> Public Record Office London FO 371/46811. Published in ZAYAS, Alfred-Maurice de: *Anmerkungen zur Vertreibung der Deutschen aus dem Osten*. [Notes on the Expulsion of the Germans from the East]. 2nd edition, Stuttgart – Berlin – Köln – Mainz: W. Kohlhammer GmbH, 1987, pp. 126–127.

## The interpretation of the Potsdam Agreement

Considering the interpretation of the tripartite pact, to Hungary, its coercive or permissive nature was unclear. One question was whether the expulsion was the implementation of the Potsdam decisions or rather an act requested by the Hungarian government, approved by the great powers. The other question was whether the resolution forced a collective judgement. The answer to both questions was crucial in terms of both interior and foreign affairs.

Deciding whether the Convention was coercive or permissive was a problem only for Hungary. In Czechoslovakia and Poland, this was not a matter of discussion, as in both countries, the expulsion of the Germans had already begun long before the Potsdam Conference. Being victorious countries, both could act as judges, while Hungary, as a defeated country subject to ceasefire, could take foreign affairs decisions only with the consent of the allied great powers. An essential provision of the Potsdam Agreement was that, while in Czechoslovakia and Poland the national governments were in charge of the expulsion, in Hungary it was the Allied Control Commission. The Allied Control Commission of Hungary was established by the armistice agreement of 20 January 1945 and guaranteed Soviet hegemony by stipulating that its chairman could only be a Soviet (as Hungary was at war directly with the Soviet Union), thus Moscow had the final word in important political issues. This is why, following the Potsdam mandate, the Allied Control Commission did not even negotiate with the Minister of Foreign Affairs – the competent authority, given the international nature of the issue – but with Ferenc Erdei, Minister of the Interior.

Two days after the Potsdam decision, the British Foreign Office sent a telegram to the embassy in Budapest stating that, though it had been agreed at the Potsdam Conference that the expulsion of the Germans from Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary had to be carried out, the Czechoslovak government, the Polish Provisional Government, and the Allied Control Commission in Hungary should be requested to cease any further expulsions until an appropriate notice from the German Allied Control Council to the governments concerned. The wording of the agreement had to be officially handed over by General Oliver Pearce Edgcumbe.<sup>19</sup>

As stated in the aforementioned memoirs of István Kertész, the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs received the wording of the Potsdam Agreement only much later, we do not know exactly when.<sup>20</sup> All we know is that the exact final wording was not known

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<sup>19</sup> Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik... 1992. 1012.

<sup>20</sup> KERTÉSZ 1953. op. cit., p. 11.

at the session of the Council of Ministers held on 13 August, which obviously made the adoption of the agreement considerably more difficult. The first official notification was received by the Hungarian government on 9 August from Marshal Kliment Yefremovich Voroshilov, through the intermediary of the Chairman of the Allied Control Commission, Lieutenant-General Sviridov.<sup>21</sup> The fact that the first information came from the Soviets clearly showed that Hungary was under the rule of the Soviet Union and not the US or the UK. Voroshilov said that 400,000-450,000 Germans were to be expelled from Hungary and that the Hungarian government had to present an appropriate schedule within 2-3 days.<sup>22</sup> The Marshal also said that though selecting the individuals to be expelled was at the sole discretion of the Hungarian government, the Soviet government called for a rigorous procedure. Evidently, this instruction was very ambiguous. Considering the fact that the government did not know the exact wording of the Agreement, the weight of the decisions made by the Council of Ministers is obvious. While before the Potsdam Agreement, the Hungarian negotiator was Foreign Affairs Minister Gyöngyösi, after its ratification, the Soviets negotiated on the matter of the expulsion only with Erdei. On 10 August, Erdei drafted a proposal to the Council of Ministers, stating: *"In accordance with the decisions made at the Potsdam Conference and, more specifically, considering Marshal Voroshilov's message, the possibility of a more rapid and radical procedure has arisen. Hungary has now an opportunity to get rid of the ethnic group – which has played an important role in bringing the country to its present state – more thoroughly and faster."*<sup>23</sup> So Erdei was talking about an opportunity. The preparatory material for Minister Gyöngyösi was written by István Kertész. In his note, Kertész called for caution. He pointed out that the position of the great powers was unclear. If the decision insisted on collective retribution, the great powers were to communicate this in writing,

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21 MNL OL XIX-A-1-n Miniszterelnökség Nemzetiségi és Kisebbségi Osztályának iratai [Documents of the Department of Ethnicities and Minorities of the Prime Minister's Office] box 2, 970/1945.

22 Ibid. See also: TÓTH, Ágnes: *Telepítések Magyarországon 1945 – 1948 között. A németek kitelepítése, a belső népmozgások és a szlovák-magyar lakosságcsere összefüggései*. [Relocations in Hungary between 1945 and 1948. The correlations of the expulsion of Germans, internal population movements and the Slovak-Hungarian population exchange] Kecskemét: Bács-Kiskun Megyei Levéltár [Bács-Kiskun County Archives], 1993, p. 21.; ZINNER, Tibor: *A magyarországi németek kitelepítése – Die Aussiedlung der Ungarndeutschen*. [Expulsion of Germans from Hungary]. Budapest: Magyar Hivatalos Közlönykiadó [Hungarian Gazette Publishing Co.], 2004, p. 62.

23 MNL OL XIX-A-1-n Miniszterelnökség Nemzetiségi és Kisebbségi Osztályának iratai [Documents of the Department of Ethnicities and Minorities of the Prime Minister's Office] box 2, 970/1945.

in a reference document.<sup>24</sup> Kertész's arguments were very similar to those of Gyöngyösi, proclaimed at the 14 May inter-party meeting, i.e. the Hungarian government was not in a position to take liability. Of course, this did not mean that the government did not want the expulsion, just that it did not want to take sole liability for it. This was also the view of the Minister for Reconstruction, Ferenc Nagy: *"It is our long-standing wish to get rid of the harmful masses of Swabians and Germans as soon as possible and I am glad that we now have this opportunity at an international level."*<sup>25</sup> Back in May, Prime Minister Mátyás Rákosi stated that the expulsion of the Germans from Hungary could not be brought into line with the fate of the Hungarian minority in the neighbouring countries. Later, at the August session of the Council of Ministers, he called attention to the need to avoid such a connection. As everyone but him had claimed the same thing back in May, we can conclude that this connection had always been a great fear of all realistic Hungarians – not without any reason. Although at the Potsdam Conference, the great powers did not discuss the possibility of expelling Hungarians from Czechoslovakia, after the conference, the Czechoslovak government claimed that after the expulsion of the Germans from Hungary, there would be space enough for ethnic Hungarians designated to be expelled from Czechoslovakia. Czechoslovak Minister of Foreign Affairs, Vladimír Clementis told Soviet Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Andrei Vyshinsky: *"The Hungarian government claims that Hungary is technically unable to find a place for 200,000 Hungarians from Czechoslovakia. We find this argument incomprehensible. [...] According to the Potsdam Agreement, Hungary can expel 400,000 Germans to Germany without paying reparations for their property."*<sup>26</sup> Vyshinsky replied: *"Will there be enough space for 200,000 Hungarians from Czechoslovakia in Hungary if they expel 500,000 to Germany? I think so."*<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Minutes of the Council of Ministers, 13 August 1945. In: Dálnoki Miklós kormányának minisztertanácsi jegyzőkönyvei... 1997. op. cit. pp. 58–74.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> BORSODY, István. Potsdam és a magyarországi németek kitelepítése. [Potsdam and the expulsion of the Germans from Hungary.] In Új Látóhatár [New Horizon] 1981. p. 104.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

The decision of the Council of Ministers of 13 August was that the Hungarian government considered the expulsion of the Germans to be necessary of its own free will. However, in his notes, István Kertész wrote that the Hungarian government would carry out the expulsion of the Germans upon Soviet request. The headcount reported by Voroshilov – 400,000–450,000 – was interpreted as a ukase.

On 18 August, Interior Minister Erdei and State Secretary Mihály Farkas met Sviridov, who complained that the Hungarian cabinet had attributed the need for the expulsion to Voroshilov and he tried to shift the liability to the Hungarians. In Sviridov's opinion, the expulsion of the Swabians was a Hungarian issue, its method and extent were to serve the benefit or the detriment of Hungary. As he stated, all those claiming to be German had to be expelled, irrespective of what party they belonged to – previously or at the time. *“Do not show any mercy in this issue! They must be swept out with a steel broom!”* – said Sviridov.<sup>28</sup> The lieutenant-general demanded a strong-arm policy from Erdei and put him in charge of the implementation. He also let Erdei understand that they would negotiate in the future only with him: *“The expulsion of the Swabians is the task of the interior minister; ultimately, the interior minister cannot solve too many issues by listening to all opinions, but must indeed consistently follow his own political agenda; thus, the Ministry of Interior is not a democratic body, but a revolutionary and dictatorial one.”* Lt. Gen. Sviridov also noted that *“too much discussion will not lead to an end, as the more you discuss an issue, the less you decide”*.<sup>29</sup> The lieutenant-general also assured Erdei that the expulsion of the Germans would not entail the expulsion of the Hungarians from the Uplands, i.e. Czechoslovakia.

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<sup>28</sup> MNL OL XIX-B-1-n 1945 -6 – 20290 – Published in: BARÁTH-CSEH 1996. op. cit. 88–92.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

## The decision of the German Allied Control Council and the expulsion decree

However, the forthcoming elections overshadowed the expulsion of the Germans. The next significant step was the decision of the German Allied Control Council of 20 November 1945, setting the number of people to be expelled from Hungary to the US occupation zone of Germany to 500,000. Note that both Hungarian politicians and Hungarian historiographers refer to a resolution or decision, whereas German historiographers use the term ‘plan’ or ‘draft’. This high headcount meant an upper limit of the Germans to be expelled, so the great powers did not take a clear position on collective retribution this time either, but rather left the possibility open.

On 30 November, the Hungarian Allied Control Commission informed the Hungarian government of the German Allied Control Council’s decision. At the meeting of the Allied Control Commission held two days earlier, Voroshilov had said that the Hungarians would probably expel 500,000 Germans. The representatives of the Anglo-Saxon powers – notably Lieutenant-General William Key and General Edgcumbe – did not object to this at all.<sup>30</sup> In his note to the great powers of 30 November, Foreign Affairs Minister Gyöngyösi stressed that in Hungary, the principle of individual assessment was to be applied and that they were to expel only just over 200,000 Germans. The note from the foreign affairs minister stated that *“it would be against the convictions of the government of democratic Hungary to expel Hungarian citizens purely on ethnic grounds. It deplores this as well as any and all forms of collective punishment”*.<sup>31</sup> However, the foreign affairs minister’s position was not shared unanimously by all Hungarian decision-makers. On 10 December, the Allied Control Commission met to discuss the practical steps of the expulsion. On the next day, Voroshilov handed over Key’s letter to the Hungarian government, in which the headcount of the expelled was set to 300–400,000.<sup>32</sup> Some representatives of the Hungarian government understood this figure as the number of those to be expelled to the American zone, while the rest of the Germans had to be transferred to the other occupation zones. Obviously, this idea was wrong, because the November draft clearly stated that all Germans from Hungary would be transferred to the US occupation zone of Germany.

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<sup>30</sup> Minutes, 28 November 1945. In: FEITL István (Ed.). *A magyarországi Szövetséges Ellenőrző Bizottság jegyzőkönyvei* [Minutes of the Allied Control Commission in Hungary] 1945–1947. Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó, 2003, pp. 111–112.

<sup>31</sup> MNL OL XIX-A-1-n Miniszterelnökség Nemzetiségi és Kisebbségi Osztályának iratai [Documents of the Department of Ethnicities and Minorities of the Prime Minister’s Office] box 2, 970/1945.

<sup>32</sup> Minutes, 10 December 1945. In: SZEB jegyzőkönyvei... 2003. op. cit. pp. 116–117.

At the government session of 22 December 1945, the advocates of collective retribution prevailed, and thus, on the basis of collective assessment, decree No. 12.330/1945 M.E., the expulsion decree was issued. Its preamble included the following: *“In its capacity stipulated in Art. 15 of Act 1945:XI, the Ministry, in implementation of the decision of the Allied Control Council of 20 November 1945 on the resettlement of the German population of Hungary to Germany, has issued the following decree: [...]”*<sup>33</sup> Thus, the Hungarian government issued the decree referring to the decision of the German Allied Control Council.

The US government protested immediately after the publication of the decree. This protest was accepted by Voroshilov and the government was ordered to amend the preamble. However, without any effect. On 30 August 1946, the Hungarian government was forced to issue a government statement, claiming the following: *“The Potsdam Agreement gave the Hungarian government the opportunity to resettle the German population to Germany. The Hungarian government, wishing to use the opportunity, has reached an agreement with the interested American military government, under which the resettlement will be carried out in an organized and humane manner.”*<sup>34</sup>

So, the Hungarian government’s intention to expel the Germans from Hungary met the will of the allied great powers, and after the Potsdam Agreement, the question was “only” who should bear the liability. It would have been embarrassing for the Hungarian government to take the liability for the expulsion openly, mainly because it could have served as a real precedent for the fate of the ethnic Hungarians of Czechoslovakia. The country’s leaders had no choice but to emphasise the coercive nature of the great powers’ decisions. They had to cling to these arguments to spare the Hungarians living abroad from collective punishment. Looking back over the past decades, from a historian’s view it is evident that the Potsdam Agreement was not binding, but the then Hungarian politicians could not publicly acknowledge this. The Potsdam Agreement was an opportunity to expel the Germans preserving the ambiguous nature of the positions of the great powers.

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<sup>33</sup> Decree No. 12.330/1945.M.E. of the Provisional National Government on the resettlement of the German population of Hungary to Germany. In: *Magyar Közlöny* [Hungarian Gazette] (29 December 1945) No 211.

<sup>34</sup> *Szabad Szó*, 30 August 1946.

International politics played an important role not only in the preparation of the expulsion, but also in its implementation. The expulsion of the Germans from Hungary is usually divided into two phases: the first phase lasted from January 1946 to June 1947, when the Germans were expelled to the American zone of Germany; the second phase took place from August 1947 to June 1948, when the expulsions targeted the Soviet occupation zone of Germany. These two waves of expulsions were not simply the results of interior affairs, but were shaped rather by the international political forces and processes.



## The change in the atmosphere of international politics

In Potsdam, in the summer of 1945, the great powers considered cooperation to be important and did not risk its existence. By early 1946, the momentum for wartime cooperation had been broken in a growing atmosphere of antagonism. This was clearly expressed in Churchill's speech held in Fulton on 5 March of the same year, in which he made clear that the Iron Curtain was coming down in Europe. In the international situation of the second half of 1946, the issue of minorities was no longer being discussed, due to conflicting interests. This situation served as a background for stopping the expulsion of the Germans from Hungary to the American zone.

In June 1946, a Hungarian delegation led by Ferenc Nagy visited Washington. Of Germany's former allies in Central and Eastern Europe, the United States' government received only the Hungarian delegation. Why? Because the communist takeover had already happened everywhere in the region, but not in Hungary. On 22 August, the Hungarian government could still reach an agreement with the Americans on the continued expulsion. However, the speech by US Secretary of State James F. Byrnes in Stuttgart (6 September 1946) marked a turning point in Washington's attitude to Germany, in which he restated the aims of the US occupation of Germany. In his speech he declared that the American occupation would last as long as it was necessary.<sup>35</sup> Then, the 76-page Clifford-Elsey report of 24 September 1946 stated that the maintenance of the alliance with the Soviet Union was impossible and outlined the possibility of a third world war.<sup>36</sup> This report had a great impact on Truman. Knowing this, it is fully understandable that the Americans refused to accept further Germans from Hungary, a part of the Soviet sphere of influence.

Three days after issuing the Clifford-Elsey report, Soviet Ambassador to the United States Nikolai Novikov telegraphed Molotov that the United States was preparing for war, and that the possibility of war against the Soviet Union had been raised.<sup>37</sup> By the autumn of 1946, the idea of taking united action against the Germans, conceived during

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<sup>35</sup> HORVÁTH, Jenő – PARAGI, Beáta – CSICSMANN, László: *Nemzetközi kapcsolatok története [History of International Relations] 1941 – 1991. Budapest: Antall József Tudásközpont [József Antall Knowledge Centre], 2013, pp. 50–51.*

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/search?keys=clifford-elsey+report&op=Search> (Downloaded on 4 January 2022)

<sup>37</sup> <http://ludeman.edublogs.org/files/2010/12/novikov-telegram-lj6xp8f.pdf> (Downloaded: 4 January 2022)

World War II, had radically changed. By then, Washington had abandoned its isolationist foreign policy, which was most evident in the German issue.<sup>38</sup> The point was not accepting the “guilty” Germans any more, but rather maintaining the dividing line, the Iron Curtain, as Churchill had put it. Even –though the agreement of 2 December 1946 to create the Bizone was still conceived in the spirit of the Potsdam Conference, in fact, it was the first step in the process of dividing Germany into two parts. Thus, concerning economics, the American zone, to which the German Allied Control Council allowed the expulsion of Germans from Hungary in November 1945, ceased to exist on 1 January 1947. Nevertheless, the views of the Hungarian political elite on foreign affairs were insufficient to understand the altered state of international affairs. This explains why, even in the spring of 1947, the Potsdam Agreement and the agreement of August 1946 were still the main reference points for the negotiations of the Hungarian government with the US.

Important reasons for the suspension of the expulsion were, in addition to the changes in large-scale politics, the difficult economic and social situation of Germany – results of the war losses and the forced migration of millions of Germans. In 1946, the US government commissioned former US President Herbert Hoover to assess the pressing economic problems. Hoover produced dozens of reports, mainly on famine and serious agricultural problems. He pointed out that millions of Germans were dying of malnutrition.<sup>39</sup> These reports justified the economic unification of the British and American zones and served also as a preparatory material for the Marshall Plan, announced in mid-1947. Just as the suspension of the expulsion of the Germans from Hungary should not be seen as a mere decision of the participants of large-scale politics, neither is it sufficient to consider the Marshall Plan to be a result of an economic decision. Obviously, its direct antecedent was the Truman Doctrine, announced on 12 March 1947, which aimed to strengthen Washington’s position in Europe by means of an aid programme for Greece and Turkey, in order to limit the influence of the Soviet Union.

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<sup>38</sup> BORHI, László: *Magyarország a hidegháborúban. A Szovjetunió és az Egyesült Államok között*, [Hungary in the Cold War. Between the Soviet Union and the United States] 1945 – 1956. Budapest: Corvina Kiadó, 2005, pp. 87–88.

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/hover/documents.php?page=2> (Downloaded on 4 January 2022)

All the aforementioned political and economic reasons led to the suspension of the expulsion of the Germans. However, the US authorities had always referred only to economic reasons and, in the winter of 1946/1947, even to humanitarian reasons – the latter obviously being a pretext, since in January 1946, they did not feel that starting the expulsion was inhumane at all.

This led to a vast domestic and international political pressure on the Hungarian government. On one hand, the Paris Peace Treaty of 10 February 1947 had confined the country to a territory smaller than that declared in the Treaty of Trianon; on the other hand, the practical implementation of the Czechoslovak-Hungarian population exchange agreement of 27 February 1946 began in the spring of 1947, while internal, land-reform-related resettlement was still underway. Partly due to this and partly due to the expected continuation of the expulsions, the Germans to be expelled were forced to live together, causing a lot of tension in the settlements concerned. Thirdly, the arrest of Béla Kovács, the Secretary General of the Hungarian Small Farmers' Party on 25 February 1947 indicated that the Soviet Union was no longer waiting for Hungary and wanted to Sovietise the country. The government had to prove that it wanted to get rid of the “fascist elements”. It was the combination of these processes that prompted the Hungarian government to apply for the resumption of the expulsion.

Between December 1946 and August 1947, the issue of ethnic Germans in Hungary was discussed six times at the sessions of the Allied Control Commission.<sup>40</sup> Contrary to large-scale politics, there was an Anglo-Soviet agreement on this issue that prevailed over the American position. With the exception of the session of 15 August, Edgcumbe very sharply criticized the attitude of the American authorities and repeatedly called on Brigadier General George Weems to lobby his government to continue the expulsion. This was not the only issue in which the British foreign policy did not support the Americans at the Allied Control Commission in Hungary. A notable example of this was the change of government in June 1947. The reason for this was the sympathy of the British Labour government with the Soviet Union. When Britain sent troops to fight the Greek communists, the British public and press protested.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> SZEB jegyzőkönyvei [Minutes of the Allied Control Commission]... 2003. op. cit. 23 December 1946, 10 February 1947, 4 March 1947, 20 March 1947, 16 April 1947, 15 August 1947.

<sup>41</sup> BORHI 2005. *ibid.* 126–127.

On 10 February 1947, Sviridov mediated between the Hungarian government and Weems. When he asked about the resumption date of the expulsion, Weems replied that he had no information on the matter and would check with the American authorities. After doing so, in a letter of 17 February, Weems wrote that the Americans were proposing a Hungarian-American conference on the issue in Berlin.<sup>42</sup> That was a very telling proposal: it showed not only that the Americans considered the government of Ferenc Nagy to be their negotiating partner, but it also showed that the Americans wanted to reach an agreement excluding the Soviets and the British, and that the only way to do this was to hold the conference in Berlin, not in Budapest. Obviously, both the British and the Soviets objected to this and were extremely indignant; as the possibility of a conference was raised, they proposed to hold it in Budapest, with the presence of the British and the Soviets, to which, of course, the Americans did not agree. The issue was not raised only at the session of the Allied Control Commission held on 20 March, but the prime minister also wrote directly to Weems, requesting resumption of the expulsion as soon as possible, as “[the] Potsdam decision gave the Hungarian government the right to expel the native Swabian population to Germany, specifically, to the territory occupied by the USA.” In the letter, Nagy applied for a meeting held in Budapest. On the other hand, General Weems, in his reply to the Allied Control Commission written on the same day and to the Hungarian government on 27 March, rejected the idea of a Budapest conference and considered the resumption of the expulsion to be unfeasible within a year.<sup>43</sup> A day later, the German Allied Control Council informed Sviridov that the expulsion would be halted indefinitely.

The last session of the Allied Control Commission to discuss the issue of the expulsion of Germans to the US zone was held on 16 April 1947. However, no decision was taken – neither at this meeting, nor at the Moscow Conference of the Council of Foreign Affairs Ministers. The United States’ negative position was strongly influenced by the unfolding conspiracy against the political elite of the Small Farmers’ Party of Hungary.

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<sup>42</sup> SZEB jegyzőkönyvei... 2003. op. cit.p. 313. See also ZINNER, Tibor: *A magyarországi németek kitelepítése – Die Aussiedlung der Ungarndeutschen*. [Expulsion of Germans from Hungary]. Budapest: Magyar Hivatalos Közlönykiadó [Hungarian Gazette Publishing Co.], 2004, p. 105

<sup>43</sup> MNL OL XIX-A-1-j Miniszterelnökség iratai [Documents of the Office of the Prime Minister’s Office] box 116., 4223/1947. See also ZINNER 2004. *ibid.* p. 106.

The turning point of the events was the visit of PM Mátyás Rákosi to Moscow on 27 April. The communist leader made a specific request to the Soviet Union to contribute to the expulsion of the Germans to the Soviet zone. Molotov was surprised by the request, but did not decline it.<sup>44</sup>

By May 1947, Ferenc Nagy was naturally no longer interested in the restart of the expulsion, he rather focused on the attack against his party. On 2 June, the prime minister resigned, and so did his Minister of Foreign Affairs János Gyöngyösi. This prevented the resumption of the expulsion to the US-controlled zone.

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<sup>44</sup> ZINNER 2004. *ibid.* pp. 108–110.

## The negotiations with the Soviets

On 10 June, the prime minister of the newly-formed government, Lajos Dinnyés, suggested that his government should file requests concerning the resumption of the expulsion to the authorities of the other German occupation zones. On 11 June, Interior Minister Rajk wrote to the Allied Control Commission requesting the expulsion of the Germans not only to the American zone of Germany, but also to the Soviet zone.<sup>45</sup> At the session of the Council of Ministers held on 12 June 1947, Rajk announced that he had submitted a request to the Soviets to allow the expulsion to the zone occupied by them.<sup>46</sup> The Soviets did not decline the request, but required the Hungarian government to submit a written justification to the Allied Control Commission. This was then written by Prime Minister Lajos Dinnyés. Knowing this, General Edgcumbe's lack of information is completely incomprehensible, as at the meeting of 15 August he was surprised to learn that Hungary was going to expel 45 000-50 000 Swabians to the Soviet occupation zone of Germany and that the Soviet government had agreed to this. The previous united position of the British and the Soviets came to an end. At the meeting, Edgcumbe wished to monitor the implementation of this process, following the practice from the previous expulsion operations. General Sviridov dismissed the request in a single sentence: "[...] *there is no need for the British and American representatives to control the expulsion of the Swabians to the Soviet occupation zone of Germany, as this expulsion is being controlled by the Soviet military authorities*".

Even though the Potsdam Agreement clearly stipulated control by the Allied Control Commission, in August 1947, this was no longer of any importance. Controlling the implementation of the expulsion by the Allied Control Commission was problematic also due to the fact that the Commission was dissolved on 15 September 1947. This raises the interesting question of international law as to whether the expulsion had to be halted after that date or not. Back then, law did not matter any more – it was power that was decisive.

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<sup>45</sup> MNL OL XIX-A-1-j Miniszterelnökség iratai [Documents of the Office of the Prime Minister's Office] box 116., 7384/1947

<sup>46</sup> ZINNER 2004. op. cit., p. 110.

# The Impact of the War and Collective Punishment on Ethnic German Families

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## Abstract

Several consequences of the war – the loss of family members, the lack of a family member who had been imprisoned for a longer period of time – and in some regions the deportation to forced labor affected not only the Germans but also other groups of the Hungarian society. But there is a crucial difference in the measures carried out against the Germans, their abridgement, deprivation of their rights and deportation based on the principle of collective culpability. The Germans were overtaken by several punitive actions in parallel. The deportation to forced labor was hardly over when their mass internment began, nonetheless, their eviction from their homes, then the deprivation of their lands during the implementation of the land reform, the restrictions of their civil rights, and finally, their deportation. These actions that were carried out in parallel or in rapid succession were consecutive, and their effects were mass-produced and had an enormous influence on the lives of several generations. The study presents the life situations that German families had to face during the last period of the war and in the following decades in Hungary. It also touches upon the personal and community strategies that all those who were involved addressed these hopeless situations.

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**Keywords:** war, collective guilt, German families in Hungary, transgenerational effects

## Life situations

Wars severely affect family relationships and personal life circumstances. Even after World War II, the long-lasting absence of men, the separation, the existential insecurity and the loss of the loved ones negatively impacted the lives of families for decades. The situation was particularly difficult for ethnic Germans in Hungary and the Hungarian minority communities abroad, who were, in the post-war period, also subjected to various punitive actions based on the principle of collective guilt – these included forced labour, confiscation of property, deprivation of their civil rights, internment, and deportation. In their case, the consequences of the war and collective punishment combined, impacting them for a prolonged time, influencing the lives and the life chances of several generations. For example, it had an adverse effect on community ties, still evident today.

In my study, I present the life situations of ethnic German families of Hungary in the last period of the war and in the decades that followed. I will also discuss the personal and community strategies they used to cope with these hopeless situations.

At the end of the war, in the spring of 1945, both ethnic German families and the Hungarian majority experienced fragmentation and existential insecurity. Many of the men had not yet returned home from the war, most of them were waiting for release in Soviet prisoner-of-war camps. The German community was also severely affected by the punitive action carried out by the Soviet-Russian army with the assistance of the Hungarian administration between Christmas 1944 and 2 February 1945, during which some 32,000 ethnic Germans from Hungary (20,989 men and 10,934 women) were deported to Soviet forced labour camps.<sup>47</sup>

As a result of the deportations, the already broken German families lost the young women responsible for running the family farms and preserving the families during the war. In the absence of their husbands, many of them had to sustain their families, raise

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<sup>47</sup> For more on the deportation of ethnic Germans to the Soviet Union, see BOGNÁR, Zsolt (ed.). *„Egyetlen bűnünk a származásunk volt...” Német és magyar polgári lakosok deportálása malenkij robot-ra a sztálini lágerbe 1944/45–1950* [„Our only sin was our origin...” Deportation of German and Hungarian civilians to the Stalinist forced labour camps – 1944/45–1950]. Pécs: Magyarországi Németek Pécs-Baranyai Nemzetiségi Köre [Pécs-Baranya Association of Ethnic Germans in Hungary], 2009.; MÁRKUS, Beáta: *„Csak egy csepp német vér”. A német származású civilek Szovjetunióba deportálása Magyarországról 1944/1945* [“Just a drop of German blood.” The 1944/1945 deportation of civilians of German origin to the Soviet Union from Hungary]. Pécs: Kronosz, 2020.; MUSKOVICS, Andrea Anna – RITTER, György: *„Elhurcolva.” Kényszermunka, deportálás és ezek formái a középnyugat-magyarországi régióban, 1944/1945* [“Deported.” Forced labour, deportation and their forms in Central-Western Hungary in 1944/1945]. Budapest: Napkút, 2021.; STARK, Tamás: *Magyar foglyok a Szovjetunióban* [Hungarian prisoners in the Soviet Union]. Budapest: Lucidus, 2006; and ZIELBAUER, György: *A magyarországi németiség nehéz évtizede 1945 – 1955*. [The difficult decade of the German minority in Hungary 1945 – 1955]. Szombathely-Vép: Pannon Műhely Kft., 1990.

their children, and help their elderly parents. After their deportation, these tasks often had to be taken over by their (yet) minor children or relatives, or other members of the communities. A significant number of the deported men were typically those exempted from front-line service due to their age or health. The situation was particularly difficult for families with several deported members.<sup>48</sup>

*“There were two of us taken from our family – my sister was 21 and I was 18. I felt it in my guts and I didn’t want to leave, at any cost. Our mother had already died, our father stayed at home with a 7 and a 9-year-old child, in our house at the end of the village. On the way, I went to our grandmother, she told us: ‘don’t go, come back, I’ll hide you in the bed.’ Nobody from our neighbourhood ever returned. However, my sister didn’t dare to stay, so I went after her. I was afraid something wrong would happen to her.”<sup>49</sup>*

*“Seven of my family were captured at that time, including my father. Five brothers, my sister’s husband and my brother’s fiancée. Three of the 7 died there, 4 returned. My father was among the deceased, he never came home. So, there was my mother, left with 3 small children, as a young widow.”<sup>50</sup>*

*“When I was 18, I was deported to Russia; three of our family were taken, my father died there and I fell ill.”<sup>51</sup>*

*“My wife and I were rounded up on 2 January 1945. (...) My wife arrived home on 26 August 1947, I returned on 29 November the same year. My parents lived with our son, then 5, at my sister’s house. My parents’ house was confiscated, we had to go to work as servants, we took even our son with us.”<sup>52</sup>*

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<sup>48</sup> MÁRKUS, B., 2020.

<sup>49</sup> Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára [National Archives of Hungary] (hereinafter: MNL OL), A Magyarországi Németek Demokratikus Szövetsége iratai 1955 – 1995 [Documents of the Democratic Association of Germans in Hungary 1955 – 1995]. (XXVIII-I-1), Memoirs of Mrs. V. G. née M. J. (from Mérk), undated (s.d.). Box 37

In 1990, when the parliamentary debates on compensations began, the National Association of Ethnic Germans in Hungary surveyed the group of persons entitled to compensation and requested the survivors to write their memoirs. These memoirs are retrospective accounts of the recollectors’ lives. They reflect how and to what extent the life of the particular individual was influenced by his or her forced labour or German ethnicity.

<sup>50</sup> MNL OL XXVIII-I-1, Mrs. F. N. née K. Sch. (from Mérk/Debrecen); 10 March 1989, box 37

<sup>51</sup> MNL OL XXVIII-I-1, Mrs. J. H. (from Nagymányok); s.d. box 46

<sup>52</sup> MNL OL XXVIII-I-1, M. D. (from Nagykozár); 5 September 1989, box 46

*“Physically weak, I was transported home with the sick. With a broken health, I could work only intermittently. (...) A month later, my father and my sister were also torn out of the family, they were also sent to the Soviet Union, to work in a coal mine, just like me. But it was only my father, who returned home – my sister died in the mine at the age of 23.”*<sup>53</sup>

*“My father died on 30 August 1945, in the camp hospital. (...) Back then, his son was still alive. Unfortunately, my brother also died in the same camp on 15 December 1945. (...) I suffered quite a lot from the deportation of my father and brother. I had to work with my mother – at a very young age – to make a living.”*<sup>54</sup>

*“I was 19 when I was taken away. My father was also deported. He was 44, he couldn’t stand the labour, he died there. My 3 sisters were left at home with my mother.”*<sup>55</sup>

In one or two factual, descriptive sentences, the recollectors express how their deportation directly affected their lives at the time. However, looking back from the end of the 1980s, from the moment of recollection, a chain of losses and traumas affecting their entire lives also emerges. These impacts also include the loss of several family members, the deterioration of health in the camp and the difficulties and agonies of starting over after a total existential collapse. It is not possible to draw general conclusions from the hundred or so recollections, applicable to the whole group of people concerned; however, it is striking that there is a large number of families from which several people – siblings, couples, parents and children – were deported together. The vast majority of the deportees were aged between 18 and 45. The exclusion of the young, vigorous age group from the family division of labour meant that the elderly and the minors were left without any support. Originally, it was the generation of the 50-year-olds, who had to look after their still living, 70-80-year-old (grand)parents, to cultivate the family lands, and, in many cases, to foster and raise their grandchildren. In this situation, the only support and help came from the cohesion and solidarity of the extended family and the members of the local community.

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<sup>53</sup> MNL OL XXVIII-I-1, J. V. (from Kompolt); 1 November 1989, box 46

<sup>54</sup> MNL OL XXVIII-I-1, F. K. (from Dombóvár); 8 November 1989, box 47

<sup>55</sup> MNL OL XXVIII-I-1, A. K. (from Bakóca); 25 August 1989, box 47

The fact that, in many cases, women – mothers of small children – were also deported, resulted in particularly dramatic situations. All three generations were left without any emotional support. If their health and circumstances allowed it, the children of the deported were typically left to their maternal grandparents. However, in some cases, the children left back were raised by their paternal grandparents or other members of the extended family. In addition to the absence of their parents and the consequent emotional insecurity, these children also experienced severe existential issues. In peasant families, even young children had to be involved in household chores and in the work in the fields, as in the division of family labour, people counted on the children. Moreover, in this extraordinary situation, they often had to take over tasks previously done by the adults.

*“I got to Russia in January 1945. I left two minor children at home.”<sup>56</sup>*

*“I was taken away – not as a prisoner of war – along with several of my peers, deceived and humiliated, at the age of 30, leaving behind my young wife and my two-month-old and my two-and-a-half-year-old.”<sup>57</sup>*

*„I suffered and starved for two and a half years. I was released emaciated and weighing only 45 kg in July 1947. During this time, my two small children lived with my parents, and when I returned home, they did not even recognise me.”<sup>58</sup>*

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More than four decades after the ordeal, the recollectors wrote tersely, condensing their stories of life and sufferings into simple sentences. They described the inhumane conditions in the camps, the unbearably difficult working conditions and the behaviour of their guards in stark, factual phrases. The fact that the political authorities treated deportations as a taboo until the end of the 1980s, i.e. until the change of the political regime, may have contributed to this. Those involved were forbidden to share their experience with others. Thus, in many ethnic German families, this was the first time when the second and third generations were told that their family members had been deported to the Soviet Union after World War II. Prohibition at the respective levels prevented the traumatic events from being processed by the individuals and remembered by the community.

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<sup>56</sup> MNL OL XXVIII-I-1, Mrs. J. H. (from Bonyhád); 18 August 1989, box 46

<sup>57</sup> MNL OL XXVIII-I-1, J. K. (from Kismányok); 18 August 1989, box 46

<sup>58</sup> MNL OL XXVIII-I-1, Mrs. Gy. L. (from Erdősmecske/Göröcsöny); 16 December 1989, box 46

For the survivors, separation from their families, especially their young children, meant total vulnerability. The constant worries for those left behind and the lack of mutual emotional support caused them the greatest pain, even after so many years. However, the recollectors do not judge, they are mostly unemotional even when talking about those who caused their sufferings.<sup>59</sup>

*"I left my little girl with my 69-year-old mother, I had no idea if they were dead or alive."*<sup>60</sup>

*"I was 26 when I got there. My husband served at the frontline, I had to leave my 8-year-old son at home with my parents, I didn't see them for 5 years."*<sup>61</sup>

*"...I had a two-year-old daughter, raised by my mother-in-law until I came home. My husband died as a hero in Budapest."*<sup>62</sup>

*"At the age of twenty-four, separated from my two children and my family, I was sent to a coal mine in the Soviet Union. There, we spent almost five years – with an exception of a few days – in hard labour, in bitter living and working conditions, to atone for our alleged guilt."*<sup>63</sup>

Naturally, those orphaned as a result of the deportations mentioned in their memoirs the deportation of their parents emphasizing the subsequent loss that determined their entire lives.

*„My mother was among those deported. She died in March 1946 of meningitis in Russia. I was placed in foster care and was often ill, from the age of 9. Then, I could only work intermittently."*<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Bence Ament-Kovács described similar experiences in his adaptation of the stories of four women from the region of Völgység. See: AMENT-KOVÁCS, Bence: Négy völgységi magyarországi német asszony elűzetés-története. [The story of the eviction of four German women from the region of Völgység in Hungary] In: FRAUHAMMER, Krisztina – PAJOR, Katalin (eds.). *Emlékek, szövegek, történetek. Női folklór szövegek.* [Memories, texts, stories. Women's folklore texts.] Budapest: Magyar Néprajzi Társaság [Hungarian Ethnographic Society], 2019. pp. 147–163.

<sup>60</sup> MNL OL XXVIII-I-1, Mrs. M. H. (from Mekényes/Komló); 30 March 1990, box 46

<sup>61</sup> MNL OL XXVIII-I-1, Mrs. J. M. (from Feked); 10 August 1989, box 46

<sup>62</sup> MNL OL XXVIII-I-1, Mrs. J. M. (from Palotabozsok); 10 August 1989, box 46

<sup>63</sup> MNL OL XXVIII-I-1, Mrs. J. H. (from Palotabozsok); 11 August 1989, box 46

<sup>64</sup> MNL OL XXVIII-I-1, Mrs. J. Sch. née E. B. (from Szakadát); 25 August 1989, box 46

*“The Germans were deported from Gyönk on 28 December 1944. My mother and my father were among the deported ones. My mother cried heavily, she hugged me and my two-year-old sister and she told us that they had to go to work for two weeks and then they would come home. My mother died abroad.... When my father returned home, it was a great joy for the whole family, but he and my grandparents cried a lot because many people returned, but not my mother.”*<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> MNL OL XXVIII-I-1, Mrs. J. H. née E.R. (from Szekszárd); July 1989, box 46

## State procedures – individual family reunification strategies

Although the first group of ethnic German civilians deported for atonement were allowed to return to Hungary at the end of 1945, most deportees were only released after two or three years. Some of those deported were not allowed to leave the Soviet Union until the end of 1949.<sup>66</sup>

In the meantime, the Hungarian government, applying the principle of collective guilt, expelled some 200,000 to 220,000 ethnic Germans to Germany between 19 January 1946 and 30 June 1948.<sup>67</sup> Tens of thousands of these people immediately adopted various return strategies. In general, the decision to return was not backed only by a single cause – those concerned justified and confirmed the decision to themselves by providing a variety of reasons. Although they cited several of these, the most important included reuniting with their families, the need, hope and inner command to restore greater family units. Since neither those who stayed, nor the expelled had any information about the release date of their relatives imprisoned in Soviet prisoner-of-war camps or forced-labour camps, their only confidence in the return of their loved ones was the venue/space of their former lives. That is why they (also) insisted on staying at or returning to their original place of living. Between 1946 and 1949 (1950), at least 10,000 to 15,000 deportees returned or (mostly) illegally fled back to Hungary.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Currently, there are no accurate figures on the number of people who died in the camps, but recent research suggests that 20–25% of the deportees died as a result of starvation, poor dwelling and working conditions, as well as epidemics in the camps. – MÁRKUS, B. 2020. pp. 348–350.

<sup>67</sup> For more on this, see: TÓTH, Ágnes: *Telepítések Magyarországon 1945 – 1948 között. A németek kitelepítése, a belső népmozgások és a szlovák-magyar lakosságcsere összefüggései*. [Relocations in Hungary between 1945 and 1948. The correlations of the expulsion of Germans, internal population movements and the Slovak-Hungarian population exchange] Kecskemét: Bács-Kiskun Megyei Levéltár [Bács-Kiskun County Archives], 1993; and MARCHUT, Réka: *Töréspontok. A Budapest környéki németiség második világháborút követő felelősségre vonása és annak következményei (1920 – 1948)*. [Fracture points. The post-World War II prosecution of Germans from the surroundings of Budapest and its consequences (1920 – 1948)]. Budaörs-Budapest: MTA Társadalomtudományi Kutatóközpont [Centre for Social Sciences of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences] – Magyar Történelmi Társulat [Hungarian Historical Society] – Budaörsi Passió Egyesület [Budaörs Passion Society], 2014.

<sup>68</sup> For more information on the history of those who returned to their homeland in the time of the expulsion, the reasons for their return and the justification of their personal decisions, see: TÓTH, Ágnes: *Hazatértek. A németországi kitelepítésből visszatért magyarországi németek megpróbáltatásainak emlékeztete*. [The ones who returned home. A recollection of the ordeals of the ethnic Germans in Hungary who returned from the expulsion to Germany]. Budapest: Gondolat, 2008a. German edition: TÓTH, Ágnes. *Rückkehr nach Ungarn 1946 – 1950. Erlebnisberichte ungarndeutscher Vertriebener*. München: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2012.



Those who wanted to return legally even concealed their being German from the occupying military authorities in Germany and from the delegates of the Office of the Repatriation Commissioner, justifying their return by claiming to be Hungarian. The various authorities did not anticipate the mass return of the deported, so strict checks of returnees were only carried out with a significant delay.<sup>69</sup>

In the large number of individual applications submitted to the Hungarian Embassy in Berlin and to the delegates of the Office of the Repatriation Commissioner, the applicants predominantly justified their application by referring to the illegality of their expulsion, their Hungarian ethnicity and Hungarian citizenship. They also emphasised their loyalty to the Hungarian state. The applications were examined by the Ministry of the Interior, after referral by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In virtually all cases, they were rejected on the basis of identical arguments. The officials argued that the deportations were lawful and that the applicants were “lawfully resettled to Germany”, losing their Hungarian citizenship, “therefore there is no possibility to permit any return”.<sup>70</sup> In a letter sent to Foreign Minister László Rajk on 23 September 1948, Interior Minister János Kádár requested the representatives of the government in Berlin “not to accept any similar applications filed by the resettled Swabians, as this would only overburden my department with unnecessary work”.<sup>71</sup> A similar conflict arose between the Ministry of the Interior and the Office of the Repatriation Commissioner.<sup>72</sup> Government Commissioner

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<sup>69</sup> For more on this, see: TÓTH, Á. 2008a. pp. 32–33.

On the local processing of the data of those returning from expulsion, see: BODROGI, László – SZÁLE, László. *Visszaszököttek*. [The ones who ran back home.] Budapest: Noran Libro, 2016.

<sup>70</sup> MNL OL, Külügyminisztérium Berlini Nagykövetség TÜK iratok [Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Berlin Embassy, Confidential documents] 1948 – 1960. (XIX-J-34-a) 10/res/1948.

<sup>71</sup> MNL OL XIX-J-34-a 10/res/1948.

Since the applications of the returnees were still unanimously rejected by the embassy, the Minister of the Interior returned the applications to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 10 January 1949 without any substantive assessment. – MNL OL, Külügyminisztérium Berlini Nagykövetség Adminisztratív iratok [Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Berlin Embassy, Administrative documents] 1944 – 1961 (XIX-J-34-b) item 16.f., no. 37/1949.

<sup>72</sup> ERDŐS, Kristóf. A Hazahozatali kormánybiztosság a politikai ellenőrzés szolgálatában (1945 – 1947). [The Office of the Repatriation Commissioner in the service of political control (1945 – 1947)]. In: SOÓS, Viktor Attila (Ed.). *Súlypontát helyezés a diplomáciában. A NEB külügyi munkacsoportjának tanulmányai 1.* [Shifting the centre of gravity in diplomacy. Studies of the Foreign Affairs Working Group of the Hungarian Committee of National Remembrance, vol. 1] Budapest: National Memory Committee [Committee of National Remembrance], pp. 171–196.

Sándor Millok<sup>73</sup> complained that “in none of the cases have I received... any reply to my letters containing personal data of one or more persons to determine whether they are to be considered for resettlement or not”.<sup>74</sup>

The Hungarian government clearly did not wish to deal with the requests of the expelled ethnic Germans, wishing to return home. In some cases, it would have had to face the cases of injustice and abuse, committed during the expulsion procedure; moreover, allowing the expelled to return could have raised existential and compensation issues.<sup>75</sup>

The government had troubles enough integrating the 200–220,000 ethnic Germans (who remained in the country after the expulsion process finished in June 1948) into the society. Most of these people had already been designated for expulsion in 1947, i.e. their houses and lands were confiscated; deprived of their citizenship, they were forced to live with other families, denied the freedom to choose their place of residence and denied the right to work. From the spring of 1949 onwards, the issue of the remaining ethnic Germans in Hungary became urgent for the whole society.

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<sup>73</sup> Sándor Millok (1887–1959): Journalist, social-democratic politician. He was a worker and later a clerk of the Hungarian Southern Railway and a member of the Social Democratic Party from 1914. In 1919, he became a leader of the railway workers' union. After the fall of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, he emigrated to Vienna. He returned home at the end of 1924. He was editor of the newspaper *Villamos* [Tram] and editor-in-charge of *Népszava* [Voice of the People] from 1941. In 1944, he was captured by the Germans and taken to the Mauthausen concentration camp. He returned home in May 1945. Then, he became State Secretary of the Prime Minister's Office, Government Commissioner for Repatriation, later the President of the Budapest Capital Transport Company (Beszkárt). In 1948, he retired from politics.  
Source: <http://mek.oszk.hu/00300/00355/html/ABC09732/10582.htm> (Downloaded on 7 April 2015.)

<sup>74</sup> MNL OL, Belügyminisztérium elnöki iratok [Ministry of the Interior, Presidential Documents] 1945 – 1950 (XIX-B-1-r) 1563/1947.  
“Their return to the country is not desirable” – this was the official position even considering those of German origin, captured as prisoners of war in the West, regardless of whether their relatives had already been expelled or not. – MNL OL, XIX-B-1-r 970/1947.

<sup>75</sup> On the integration of ethnic Germans expelled from Hungary to Germany and the personal aspects of the process, see: PROSSER-SCHEL, Michael: Az előzőtt magyarországi németek megérkezésének és integrációjának néhány aspektusa Észak-Badenben és Délnyugat-Németországban 1945 – 1946 után. [Some aspects of the arrival and integration of Germans expelled from Hungary to North Baden and Southwest Germany after 1945 – 1946]. In: *Pro Minoritate*, 2016. Nyár [Summer] pp. 5–18. and SCHELL, Csilla: “férjem naponta kérdezi, hogy megváltam-e már a levelet.” Kitelepített magyarországi német asszonyok levelei. [My husband keeps me asking every day, if I have already answered the letter. Letters of German women deported from Hungary.] In: FRAUHAMMER, Krisztina – PAJOR, Katalin (eds.). *Emlékek, szövegek, történetek. Női folklór szövegek*. [Memories, texts, stories. Women's folklore texts.] Budapest: Magyar Néprajzi Társaság [Hungarian Ethnographic Society], 2019. pp. 147–163.

Therefore, as a first step of integrating the ethnic Germans in Hungary into the society, Decree No. 4274/1949 MT of the Council of Ministers was issued in October 1949, stating that those designated for expulsion but not actually expelled to Germany were to be “*regarded as Hungarian citizens for the purposes of choosing their place of residence (place of stay), employment...*”.<sup>76</sup> However, Decree No. 4364/1949 MT of 16 December 1949 was of even greater importance – this stipulated certain rules on the land reform and the completion of the expulsion.<sup>77</sup> By making registration compulsory for the movable and immovable property left to the non-expelled, the decree finally resolved the constantly changing ownership issues, apparent to the previous half a decade.<sup>78</sup>

Restrictive provisions issued in connection with the expulsion of the ethnic German population of Hungary were repealed by Decree No. 84/1950 MT, stating: “*All those designated for expulsion, who have not been expelled, as well as those expelled but residing in Hungary at the date of entry into force hereof... are Hungarian citizens and citizens of the People’s Republic of Hungary, having equal rights in all respects with the other citizens.*”<sup>79</sup>

The said decree, issued on 25 March 1950 allowed the Minister of the Interior to grant Hungarian citizenship to expelled Germans “*deemed worthy*”. The wording gave new hope to the families torn apart. The relevant application had to be filed within six months of the date of entry into force of the decree, either to the chief official of the territorially competent city with municipal rights or to the Hungarian diplomatic authorities. There were no legally declared formal resettlement requirements. The Hungarian State decided about the applicants on a case-by-case basis.

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<sup>76</sup> Magyar Közlöny [Hungarian Gazette], 11 October 1949, p. 486. (volume 4, issue 213)

The Decree of the Council of Ministers was implemented by Decree of the Ministry of Interior No. 245.900/1949 BM.

<sup>77</sup> Magyar Közlöny [Hungarian Gazette], 31 December 1949, pp. 562–563.

<sup>78</sup> The Hungarian government’s measures were reported in several Western newspapers. The paper *Landpost* published in Vienna issued an article entitled “PM Mátyás Rákosi kept his word”, in which it interpreted the decree lifting the displacement ban and allowing free employment as allowing full equality of citizenship rights to Swabians residing illegally in Hungary. – *Landpost*, 22 October 1949, No. 10; The Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs protested against the interpretation in a note verbale and requested an official correction from the Austrian government, emphasizing that the article „could lead to undesirable illegal border crossing and illegal returns” – MNL OL, Külügyminisztérium Bécsi Nagykövetség TÜK iratok [Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vienna Embassy, Confidential documents] 1946 – 1960. (XIX-J-36-a) 515/Bizalmas/1949.

<sup>79</sup> Törvények, törvényerejű rendeletek 1950 [Acts and legislative decrees 1950]. Budapest: Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó [Economic and Legal Publishing Co.], 1951. pp. 271–272. – The decree was called “Swabian amnesty decree” in the political parlance of the time, with great exaggeration.

As soon as Decree No. 84/1950 MT entered into force, various interpretations of the decree appeared in the German press. The people concerned appealed to the Hungarian Embassy in Berlin and the Allied High Commission (Alliierte Hohe Kommission). Both gave clear responses. In his letter, József Hajdú<sup>80</sup> explained that *“the reports about the repatriation of persons having German as their mother tongue, expelled from Hungary, are not accurate. (...) All those who left the territory of Hungary during the expulsion have lost their Hungarian citizenship, thus their return is not possible”*.<sup>81</sup> The Allied High Commission laconically stated only the following: *“It is all communist propaganda and lacks any legal basis”*.<sup>82</sup> If we only consider the experience of family reunification of those who returned from the Soviet Union, this statement is not an exaggeration at all. In fact, for all ethnic Germans returning from the Soviet Union, the return home (that they longed for so much for several years) meant a new ordeal. The image of one's home and the homeland – a source of strength in captivity, made up of the people (i.e. close and extended family, network of relatives, friends and local communities) and the financial background of their former lives, fell into pieces, disintegrated and became uncertain.

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<sup>80</sup> József Hajdú (1898 – 1966): Iron turner and diplomat. He was a member of the Red Army of the Hungarian Soviet Republic. He lived in Bratislava and Vienna (1919 – 1921), then moved to Yugoslavia (1921 – 1941). He participated in the labour movement. After the World War II, he was vice-chairman and chairman of the Works Committee of the Ganz shipbuilding company (1945 – 1948). Ambassador Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary, Head of the Embassy in Vienna as Chargé d'Affaires in 1949, then Chief Officer of the Embassy in Berlin (1950–1953). In the following years, he continued to hold diplomatic posts. For his behaviour during the Hungarian revolution of 1956, disciplinary measures were taken against him and he was dismissed from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He was a worker of the Archive of the Party History of the Hungarian Socialist Labour Party (MSZMP). – BARÁTH, Magdolna – GECSÉNYI, Lajos (Eds.). *Főkonzulok, követek és nagykövetek 1945 – 1990* [Consuls General, Envoys and Ambassadors 1945 – 1990]. Budapest: MTA Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont Történettudományi Intézet [Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute of History], 2015. 182.

<sup>81</sup> Über Rückkehrmöglichkeiten. Dichtung und Wahrheit [On return possibilities. Rumours and reality.] *Unsere Post*, 1 April 1950, no. 2.

<sup>82</sup> The original: *“Die ganze ist nur eine kommunistische Propaganda und entbehrt jeder ernsten Grundlage”* (Translated by author). *Unsere Post*, 1 April 1950. no. 2.  
The bulletin *Értesítő*, issued by the expelled from Budakeszi, also warned against the rumours. For more on this, see: Dr. G.: Rendelet az egyenjogúsításról [Decree on Equal Rights.] *Értesítő*, 15 October 1949, no. 1; Az egyik badeni napilap téves hírt közölt a magyarországi kiutasítottak hazatérési lehetősége felől. [A daily newspaper in Baden reported incorrectly about the return possibilities of the people relocated from Hungary.] – *Értesítő*, 1 February 1950, no. 4; Dr. G.: Semmi nyoma sincs. [Without a trace.] *Értesítő*, 15 March 1950. no. 1; Dr. G.: Még egyszer a visszatérési lehetőségről. [Once more on the possibility of return.] *Értesítő*, 15 April 1950, nos. 1–2. It is remarkable that the news of the return possibilities had been circulating among the expelled for months before the publication of Decree No. 84/1950 MT, similarly to some articles in the German press.

Deportees and prisoners of war had little to no information about the events in Hungary. Most were aware of the expulsion; however, it was only after returning to Hungary that some were confronted with the fact that their families were no longer in the country.

*“We returned home in 1948, I learned that my poor parents had been taken to Germany. I was so homesick that I wished to see my home once more before setting off again. We hoped to stay at some relative of ours for a while and then to follow our parents. On 5 October 1948, my father wrote me a letter – he told me to wait until I get strong enough....in the morning of 6 October, they both died of gas poisoning. None of the children were allowed to go to their funeral. The villagers took care of everything.”<sup>83</sup>*

*“In 1946, our parents were expelled to Germany. None of our belongings were given back – not even my sewing machine.”<sup>84</sup>*

*“(...) that was the last time I saw my poor dear Mother, because when I returned home in '46, they had already been expelled to Germany on Pentecost, to a place 20 kilometres away from Nuremberg. There, they built another house, at that age.”<sup>85</sup>*

*„On 10 October 1947, they packed us into wagons and we were taken to Debrecen, where we stayed for at least a week. Every day, we were interrogated, molested and questioned whether we wanted to return home or to go abroad. All we wanted was to return home to our parents, but as we found out, we decided wrongly. On 29 October, we were released home; on 30 October, we arrived to Kaposvár, where we met a young man from our village, who told us not only that our father was gone, but also that our mother left us, as she had emigrated in August 1947.”<sup>86</sup>*

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<sup>83</sup> MNL OL XXVIII-I-1, Mrs. J. U. (from Mágocs); s.d. box 46

<sup>84</sup> MNL OL XXVIII-I-1, E. Sz. (from Almáskamarás); 14 November 1989, box 46

<sup>85</sup> MNL OL XXVIII-I-1, Mrs. I. H., a widow – 20 November 1989, box 37

<sup>86</sup> MNL OL XXVIII-I-1, Mrs. J. H. (from Kaposvár); 1989, box 37

At that time, even the non-expelled ethnic Germans were already living on the periphery of society, deprived of their property and livelihood, expelled from their homes and – in many cases – even from their home towns/villages, and forced to live with foreign families. For them, it was particularly painful to see their houses, previously providing a home for several generations, confiscated.<sup>87</sup>

*“By the time we returned home – after 3 years – we had been evicted from the house and all we had were the clothes our mother had hidden away and this cost her life because, as she was locked in a cellar and beaten. She was alone – three of her children were in Russia, the fourth was in captivity and our father was interned. She could not live with this, so she committed suicide. When we got home, no one asked us if we had food to eat or a shelter to stay at or if we had at least a room for the night – we were expelled from our own home like dogs.”<sup>88</sup>*

*„First, we went to the church, because we swore that if Our Lady would help us home, our first way would lead to the church, to thank God. After that I planned to go home, but I had none anymore, I could only go to my neighbour's house, for my mother and my father were evicted in the name of the People's Republic on 12 August 1946 in a mere half an hour. My father was lost on the frontline, we received no news of him. At that time, the expulsion to Germany was still continuing; we were not on the list only because we lived in the outback.”<sup>89</sup>*

Those who had no relatives living in Hungary, had to face even greater difficulties, as the Ministry of Public Welfare set up a temporary camp in Debrecen to provide them with temporary care. For the Hungarian government, these people not only posed a supply problem but also a political risk, and the regime wanted to send them to Germany

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<sup>87</sup> For more on the repurchase of houses and the related state procedure, see TÓTH, Ágnes: *Németek Magyarországon* [Germans in Hungary] 1950 – 1970. Budapest: Argumentum, 2020. pp. 426–432. The relationship of several generations of a family from Ganna, Hungary to their taken house and their strategy to reclaim it is presented by SCHLEICHER, Vera in *Ungarndeutsche Hausgeschichte als Heimatgeschichte. Die Hauslebensstrategie einer Vertriebenen Familie* [History of a house as a history of the homeland of Germans in Hungary. Housing strategy of an expelled family] In RADEK, Tünde – SZILÁGYI Anikó (eds.). *Hausgeschichten. Studien zur ungarndeutschen Kultur in Transdanubien* [House stories. Studies on ethnic German culture in Transdanubian Hungary]. Veszprém: Veszprém Megyei Múzeumi Igazgatóság [Veszprém County Museum Directorate], 2006, pp. 187–206

<sup>88</sup> MNL OL XXVIII-I-1-j, Mrs. J. K. (from Bátaszék); s.d. box 46

<sup>89</sup> MNL OL XXVIII-I-1-j, Mrs. A. V. née M. Á. (from Berkenye); November 1989, box 37

as soon as possible.<sup>90</sup> Nevertheless, the establishment of the two German states led to a number of political and legal implementation issues. Even the negotiations with the German Democratic Republic, a member of the same political bloc, were also protracted for several years and proved to be fruitless. The two countries took an unprincipled position on the reunification of families of ethnic German families from Hungary. They pursued their daily political interests and prestige considerations, which they tried to conceal by constantly reinterpreting basic concepts such as citizenship, re-nationalisation and repatriation. And although the Hungarian government declared the possibility of re-nationalisation anew, this option was not only lacking adequate support, but was even explicitly prevented by the regime, with the exception of some specific cases, i.e. young people with a profession. Moreover, the release of family members to the Federal Republic of Germany was further hampered by bureaucratic obstacles obscure to those concerned.

The family reunification struggles of those expelled to the GDR and those remaining in Hungary provide an insight into the lengthy ordeal of German families.<sup>91</sup>

In the struggle to reunite their families, the creativity and tenacity of these peasants, unversed in legal matters and reluctant to deal with bureaucratic formalities was remarkable, concerning the fact that their previous, decades-long experience failed to help them in the GDR and its dissimilar administrative structures.

Naturally, the applicants sought to reunite with their closest family members – parents with their children and vice versa, husbands with their wives. Often, engaged – not yet married – couples wanted to unite. Less frequently, grandparents would apply for permitting the travel of their grandchildren or siblings wanted to meet each other. In the latter cases, immediate family members were no longer alive or had been lost in the war.

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<sup>90</sup> MNL OL, Külügyminisztérium Általános iratok 1945 – 1992 [Ministry of Foreign Affairs, General documents 1945 – 1992] (XIX-J-1-k-NDK) item 16.d, no. 024247/1950. Feljegyzés a Szovjetunióból repatriált svábok Németországba kiutazásáról 1950. július 21. [Note on the departure of Swabians repatriated from the Soviet Union to Germany, 21 July 1950], and TÓTH, Á. 2020. pp. 85–130.

<sup>91</sup> In the foreign affairs files of the German Democratic Republic I found more than 120 applications of ethnic German from Hungary concerning family reunification. However, the number of applicants could have been many times more.

It is remarkable that I found only two applications for family reunification or re-nationalisation filed in Hungary, whereas a report of 4 October 1950 mentions 8369 applications filed by relatives residing in Hungary. For family reunification applications filed in Hungary, see: MNL OL Miniszterelnökség [Office of the Prime Minister]. Dobi István iratai [István Dobi's papers], unclassified by year. (XIX-A-1-p) 511/1950. and 229/1950. Similarly, there are no available data on the family reunification applicants expelled to the Western occupation zone.

Applications were formulated in a factual manner. As to how they got to the GDR, they used the terms ‘ausweisen’ [evict], ‘vertreiben’ [expel], ‘umsiedeln’ [relocate], ‘umziehen’ [move], ‘kommen’ [come] synonymously. Only one applicant used the term ‘Heimkehr’ [return home], but only in the sense of ‘returning home to his parents’. Only one applicant, Susanne Weisz, calls the GDR her new home when she applied for her granddaughter to be let to her: “*wo ich meine neue Heimat gefunden habe*”.<sup>92</sup>

On 20 February 1950, in a letter to the German Foreign Minister, J. L., expelled from Egyházaskozár with his wife, then renting a room from the Nester family, wrote the following: “*Then we lost our property and the dearest of all, our ‘homeland’. My daughter K. L., a dressmaker, was born on 25 January 1925 in Egyházaskozár. She had been taken to Russia years ago. She returned from Russia on 26 November 1949. She was taken to barracks in Debrecen (Hungary). There are about 200 people held there, who are released one after another to the settlements they wanted to go to. My daughter does have the right to move where she wants to, but only within Hungary. Please help and prove your helpfulness! It is a terrible thing that we have been evicted from our property, deprived of our homeland, prevented from returning home, and now, we even have to give up our own family members*”.<sup>93</sup>

A few days later, the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent a polite but un-specific letter informing the applicant that family reunification negotiations between the two countries were underway and that the outcome and the procedure to be followed would be announced in the press in the near future. Therefore, the family’s problem would soon be resolved and their daughter would be able to move out to live with her parents. Until the conclusion of the Hungarian-German family reunification agreement at the end of June 1950, all the applicants received practically identical letters.

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<sup>92</sup> Politisches Archiv [German Foreign Affairs Archives] (PA) Ministerium für Auswärtige Angelegenheit [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the German Democratic Republic] (MfAA). Repatriierung und Familienzusammenführung aus Ungarn in die DDR 1950–1951. [Repatriation and family reunification from Hungary to the GDR] A 7871 126.

<sup>93</sup> The original: “Wir haben nun Haus und Hof, und das Liebste, »die Heimat« verloren. Meine Tochter, Katharina Lickel, geboren am 25. Januar 1925 in Egyházaskozár, die Damenschneiderin ist, wurde von Jahren nach Russland geschafft. Am 26. November 1949. kehrte sie aus Russland zurück. Sie wurde nach Debrecen (Ungarn) in eine Kaserne gebracht. In dieser befinden sich ca 200 Personen, die nach und nach in die von ihnen angegebenen Orte entlassen werden. Meine Tochter genießt dort zwar Freizügigkeit, die sich aber nur auf das ungarische Territorium erstreckt. [...] Helfen Sie bitte und erweisen Sie sich bitte gefällig! Es ist furchtbar von Haus und Hof vertrieben zu sein, der Heimat beraubt, des Zuzuges in die Heimat verwehrt und den eigenen Angehörigen entsagen zu müssen.” (Translated by author). PA AA MfAA A 7871 27–28. In the last lines of the application, the applicant also emphasizes that the District Council of Flöha, Germany is ready to confirm the accuracy of the claims.



There were also some applicants who contacted the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the GDR directly from the Debrecen camp. On 24 January 1950, H. M. wrote a letter in Hungarian, requesting permission to leave the country: *“Please, kindly allow me to reunite with my relatives in Germany and leave this temporary prisoner-of-war camp in Debrecen, Hungary. I have just returned from a Russian prisoner-of-war camp to Debrecen, Hungary, but my relatives, i.e. my parents have moved to Germany in the meantime”*.<sup>94</sup>

E. L. (née Richter) filed her application a few months later – in Kéty, Hungary, on 9 July 1950: *“I was born on 29 September 1922 in Kéty, Tolna County, Hungary. My father was a peasant, he had some land he worked on. I went to primary school at my birthplace and completed 6 grades. After that, I helped my parents in the household and in the fields. On 20 December 1944 I was called up for labour service and sent to the Soviet Union. I worked in a mine near Rostov for 2 years and was assigned to work on the surface for another 3 years. I returned home from the Soviet Union on 20 October 1949. While I was abroad, my parents and my child were expelled to Germany. (...) So far, I have been staying with my relatives and now that this will be possible, after 6 years of separation, I would like to go to the Russian zone of Germany to live with my small child and my parents”*.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> PA AA MfAA A 7871 20. – M. H. (born in Véménd, 26 June 1924) requested release to go to his parents, M. H. and M. G., living in Friedersdorf, Germany.

<sup>95</sup> The original: *“Ich gebore im Jahre am 29 Sept. 1922 in Kéty, Komitat Tolna in Ungarn. Mein Vater war ein Bauer und wirtschaftete auf seinem kleinen Vermögen. Ich besuchte die 6 Klassen der Volksschule in meinem Geburtsort, dann half ich meinen Eltern im Haus und auf dem Felde mit. Im Jahre 1944 am 20. Dez. hat man mich auf Arbeitsdienst einberufen und wurde nach Russland geliefert. Dort arbeitete ich in der Umgebung von Rostov 2 jahrelang in Kohlengrube, 3 jahrelang bekam ich oberirdische Einteilung. Am 20. Okt. 1949 kehrte ich aus der Sowjetunion heim. Während meines Aufenthalts in der Sowjetunion wurde meine Eltern und mein Kind nach Deutschland umgesiedelt [...] Bis daher hielt ich mich bei meinen Verwandten auf und das es jetzt möglich wird nach 6 jähriger Trennung möchte zu meinem kleinen Kind und den Eltern nach Deutschland in die russische Zone zurückkehren.”* (Translated by author). PA AA MfAA A 7871 19.

In this initial period, there were also numerous cases when the expelled requested to return to Hungary on the grounds of family reunification.

Mr. and Mrs. Tuchardt, who had been expelled to Hetzdorf, Germany, wrote a letter to Prime Minister Otto Grotewohl<sup>96</sup> in the last days of December 1949. They justified their application concerning their return to Hungary claiming that they were no Hitlerites and therefore they considered their expulsion to be unjust. And although they liked living in the GDR, they were homesick, as their parents, daughters and grandchildren had remained in Hungary. Their son, who worked at an agricultural cooperative, learned from a newspaper article that people expelled to the eastern zone of Germany were allowed to return. In fact, they wanted to know what practical steps they had to take to return home. In its reply of 17 February 1950, the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, referring to the Hungarian mission in Berlin, stated that the applicants had been expelled lawfully and thus lost their Hungarian citizenship, therefore it was not possible for them to return.<sup>97</sup>

The terse, linguistically plain CVs and applications, lacking any adjectives and confined to stating facts, condensed the lives of individuals or families into a few lines. From these, the bureaucrats deciding about the fate of these people gained little to no insight into the applicants' emotions and sufferings. The hard facts, the foundations of their lives, and the rest – such as how to restore the existential and emotional unity and cohesion of a family after 4-8 years of separation, in a state of poor health – were private matters.

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<sup>96</sup> Grotewohl, Otto (1894–1964): Originally a printer; he was elected Chairman of the Central Committee of the German Social Democratic Party in 1945. He played a key role in the merger of the two labour parties. In 1946, he became co-chairman of the united German Socialist Unity Party and a member of the political committee and the secretariat of the party. In 1949, he became a member of the People's Chamber. From the establishment of the GDR in 1949, he was Prime Minister of the country, and from 1960 until his death, he was Deputy Chairman of the State Council. – <https://www.hdg.de/lemo/biografie/otto-grotewohl.html> (downloaded on 30 June 2016).

<sup>97</sup> PA AA MfAA A 7871 142–143.

## Conclusion

Many of the consequences of the war – including the loss of family members, the absence of relatives imprisoned at prisoner-of-war camps for longer periods and in some areas even forced labour – affected not only Germans but also other social groups in Hungary. Nevertheless, the crucial difference was that the political authorities implemented first the deprivation and restriction of rights and then the expulsion of Germans based on the principle of collective guilt. Although other political stigmas – being members of the SS, the Volksbund, being Hitlerist or kulak – are also associated with this. It is obvious that the Germans were simultaneously subjected to several punitive measures and deprivation of rights. For example, deportations for forced labour had not even been completed when the mass internment of Germans began,<sup>98</sup> followed by their eviction from their homes, the confiscation of their lands during the implementation of the land reform, the restriction of their civil rights and, finally, their expulsion. All these actions, carried out in parallel or in rapid succession, were built on each other and had a cumulative effect. The respective families first lost their family members and then their livelihoods. It is also evident that they were discriminated even within the group that subjected to punishment. A good example is the case of the prisoners-of-war repatriated from the Soviet Union in December 1950. While the majority of Hungarians were allowed to return to their families, ethnic Germans were – with a few exceptions – automatically interned in Tiszaöld and Kazincbarcika. These people were deprived of any contact with their families for 3 years. Another decisive difference was that many families and communities were permanently divided by the expulsion. More precisely, considering the location of those expelled to (Western and Eastern) Germany, families were split into multiple directions. In many cases, the unity of nuclear families was restored only after a decade and a half of struggle. Geographical distance and the different economic and political context set different directions for the life and history of the larger families and parts of the community in the decades that followed. This resulted in a significant breakdown of the previous cohesion and cross-ties within the community.

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<sup>98</sup> For more on the internment process, see TÓTH, Ágnes. „A népeket kihajcsák a legelőre és ők azt vizsik getoba akit akarnak.” Internálótábor Lengyel községben. [“People are driven out to the pasture and then they take to the ghetto whoever they want to”. Internment camp in the village of Lengyel]. In: *Kisebbségkutatás* [Minority Studies], 2006, vol. XV. No 4. pp. 621–641. and TÓTH, Ágnes. A németek internálása a Dunántúlon 1945 – 1946 [The Internment of Germans in the Transdanubian Region 1945 – 1946]. In SZEDERJESI, Cecília (Ed.). *Megtorlások évszázada. Politikai terror és erőszak a huszadik századi Magyarországon*. [A century of retaliation. Political terror and violence in twentieth-century Hungary.] Salgótarján: 2008b. pp. 37–52.

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