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DOCTORAL (PhD) DISSERTATION THESES

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THE EXPULSION OF THE PEST COUNTY GERMANS  
AND ITS ANTECEDENTS

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## **I. Choosing a topic<sup>1</sup>**

We selected the case of Germans of Pest County as our research topic. The main reason in this decision was that in chronological terms, their expulsion is the most recent event in our history. According to the data of the 1941 census, one fifth of the country's German population lived in the historical county (comitat) of Pest-Pilis-Solt-Kiskun and regarding the situation from the perspective of the expulsion's execution, the areas adjacent to the capital also bear symbolic meaning. In our paper when we speak of Pest County we refer to the area enclosed in today's administrative borders and not to areas confined within the historical borders of the county. Our reason for this is that the Germanic settlements in the historical county's southern part were more defined by their unique Diaspora and their scattered position rather than by the proximity of the capital. However, our choice was also influenced by (and thanks to) Ferenc Eiler, Ágnes Tóth and Gizella T. Molnár who had already analyzed thoroughly these scattered settlements. On the other hand, archives from the Public Records and contemporary press articles prove that during the time of impeachment the "swabian ring around Pest", to a certain extent, appeared in political and societal discourse as a separate entity. In reality this "swabian ring" referred to the people living on the Buda side of the capital and not to those living on the Pest side. This is proven by the districts found around Buda and Szentendre where 12% of the country's contemporary native German speaking population lived while at the same time in numerical terms the district of Buda had the highest native German speaking population.<sup>2</sup>

The subject of our empirical study are six chosen settlements. We did not strive to include as many settlements as possible, we opted to deliver a thorough and complete depiction of events instead. Through different perspectives we chose the following clinching settlements: Budaörs, Csobánka, Dunabogdány, Nagykovácsi, Pilisszentiván and Vecsés. Budaörs was not only the symbol of the expulsions around the capital, but also the symbol of all expulsions throughout the country. The first train with expellees departed from here and after 1946, in 1947, another expulsion also took place. We chose Csobánka because we wanted to examine how different the expulsion was, compared to others, from the perspective of a multi-ethnic (German, Serb,

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<sup>1</sup> The hungarian text was translated by Máté Bikfalvi and Balázs Kalmár.

<sup>2</sup> District of Buda: 40 475 native German speakers, District of Szentendre: 12 674 native German Speakers – See: *Az 1941. évi népszámlálás... 1947.*

Slovak, Hungarian, Gypsy) settlement. Dunabogdány is included in our research because the expulsion took place here only in 1947 and through the discourse we get an answer for an important question, namely: what this prolonged and ambiguous situation meant for the population. We could not leave out Nagykovácsi from our research because here the expulsion affected nearly 100% of the population and even the settlement's parish priest, Ferenc Greszl, the only cleric in the area that had been expelled before the believers. The mining village of Pilisszentiván was chosen for the opposite reason: its population became exempt from expulsion. We analyze Vecsés because it is not found in the vicinity of Buda, but in the vicinity of Pest and the German population (in contrast with the other settlements) was in minority. These six settlements represent the tendencies of expulsion in Pest county and the country alike. In four of the six settlements, the expulsion took place in 1946; while one of them features another one a second time in 1947 and we investigate another settlement where there were no expulsions. So we can state that the huge wave of the first expulsion affected the majority of the German population.

## **II. Literature**

The results of Hungarian historical studies give us a solid foundation for advancement. Above all we have to mention three summaries from historiography. The work of Kathrin Sitzler and Gerhard Seewann examines the results of the Hungarian and German historical studies in a broader context aligning these results in parallel with the creation of gentilital-politics through which at the same time they analyze the meaning of a number of conceptual frames. The book of Norbert Spannenberger also takes into account the results of both historical fields. The third explicitly historiographical study was written by Ágnes Tóth in 2010. The author confers which thematical and methodological white spots still exist in the disquisition of the expulsion.

The topic first came into discussion in German historical studies a in the early 1950's by the commission of Chancellor Konrad Adenauer. Since the creation of the volumes was controlled by political interests, the work became tendential. The research was led by Theodor Schieder and the volume discussing the situation of Germans in Hungary was published in 1956. Even then, the work sparked protests in the midst of a group of expelled Germans. Johann

Weidlein compiled an anti-documentation which again with its tendential selection of sources highlighted the accountability of the Hungarian government and society.

Up until the 1970's not only the expulsion, but also the history of Hungarian ethnic Germans (and other nationalities) were considered taboo. In 1963 the consolidation of the Kádár-administration has concluded spectacularly, the tension the Cold War created started to enter remission, the FRG (Federal Republic of Germany) continued on its new road of Eastern politics, and the Hungarian-German connections became even tighter. Not only in Hungary, but throughout Europe, the renaissance of gentilic research was about to begin. The shackles of direct ideological expectations loosened around historical studies. The studies of Béla Bellér, József Komanovics and Loránt Tilkovszky laid the foundation for a more realistic recognition of the Horthy-regime's gentilitial-politics. The highly useful books of Loránt Tilkovszky about the Volksbund and the SS recruitments provide us with a rich evidence base featuring sources from the Public Records of Germany as well as of Hungary.

The first to explore the background of external and internal politics of the expulsion of Hungarian ethnic Germans was Sándor Balogh, in one work published in 1982. However, both Sándor Balogh and Lajos Izsák in their jointly written volume, during presentation of the coalition period of the parties and their programs also take a look at the question of forced migration. Mihály Korom also helped to draw out the dimension of international forced migration through his analysis of the temporary national government and the armistice agreement.

György Aczél during his 1983 speech, which represented the official stance of the MszMP (Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party), unequivocally denounced the charge of collective culpability. From a professional perspective the milestone arrived in 1987 when the German colleagues were given the right to speak at a historian conference.

The authors of the discussed contributions were categorized by Norbert Spannenberger into three groups: those who had lived through the events (Paul Flach, Johann Weidlein), scholarly authors (Kühl Joachim alias Hans Beyer, Friedrich-Spiegel Schmidt, Matthias Annabring) and ethnic German historians from Germany (Günther Schödl, Gernot Seide, Gerhard Seewann, Johann Böhm). Both thematically and methodologically the work of Gerhard Seewann stands out, since he analyzes the events in a broader context and his socio-historical

and sociological viewpoints are omnipresent throughout his career. However, the monographic processing of the expulsion of Hungarian ethnic Germans is still missing from German historical studies.

The first analysis in our country associated with the monographic processing of the Hungarian ethnic Germans is thanks to the labor of István Fehér (1988). The tendency of the researches that started from the 1980's (in the aforementioned favorable political climate) and that started to focus on localism, is strongly perceptible in his volume.

In 1990 the processing of the topic expanded with a new aspect. Thanks to Gyula Erdmann and György Zielbauer the deportation into the Soviet Union also received a place in the discourse.

In 1993 Ágnes Tóth's work detailing settlements came to being, stepping over but not transcending political history. She was the first to analyze the expulsion of domestic German settlements highlighting how much the relationship-system of these settlements and the processes within were interconnected.

For the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the expulsions both the vocation and the victims started to make preparations. The results of this were numerous works by Loránt Tilkovszky, the cuttings of press by György Zielbauer and István Fehér's book about Baranya County. An exceptional accomplishment is the jointly edited bibliographical handbook by Gerhard Seewann and Péter Dippold, which focuses not only on the Germans, but on all the national minorities in Southeastern Europe. In 1999 the documentation of the Basch-case edited by Gerhard Seewann and Norbert Spannenberger was published which became an invaluable resource for the researches in that field.

After 2000 the discourse was yet again expanded to include a new perspective. Thanks to Krisztina Kaltenecker and Nóra Rutsch the question of how the expelled Germans managed to integrate into society came into the foreground. In the mean time political history also maintained its relevance. From the work of Béla Bellér we received the most complete picture on the history of the Magyarországi Német Népművelődési Egyesület (Native Hungarian German's Cultural Association) between 1933–1938. Tibor Zinner's work published in 2004 is also useful because it presents the expulsion of the Hungarian ethnic Germans in a broader international context. The important politic-historical work of Norbert Spannenberger about the Volksbund

was also published in 2005 in Hungarian. Ágnes Tóth's book entitled "Hazatértek" introduces a new methodology called oral history based on the people who came back home after expulsion.

On the basis of the studies published in recent years we can create a more complete picture on the Volksbund than ever before firstly based on the works of Ferenc Eiler, Gábor Gonda, András Grósz and Péter Somlai. Likewise it is now clear that according to recently completed and ongoing studies focusing on the expulsion of the Hungarian ethnic Germans we cannot confine the event to the years between 1945–1948. We have to pay attention to period of 1920–1944, as well. In my consideration, as the author of this dissertation, it is irremissibly important to analyze the events of the period between 1918–1944.

Compared to the wealth of studies on national level, the number of local studies fulfilling scientific requirements is rather small. We only managed to conduct scientific research relevant to the topic in only three cases from the list of our selected settlements: Dunabogdány, Vecsés – and recently – Budaörs. From Dunabogdány we have to highlight Györgyi Bindorffer's work focusing on dual identity and András Liebhardt's OTDK research paper. The history of the deported and expelled Germans from Vecsés is in the focus of Rita Pável's thesis, respectively the history of the deportation can also be read from the work entitled "Ember az embertelenségben". The events at Budaörs are related in the bilingual omnibus entitled "Jogfosztások Budaörsön (1944–1948)".

The other group formed by the local researches that fulfill scientific requirements are comprised of the works that do not necessarily focus on the situation of the domestic Germans, but to focus on the history of the community as a whole. Under this category we can name the books of József Hauser's "Budaörs krónikája", Lajos Horváth's "Csobánka története" and "Vecsés története" edited by Ernő Lakatos. These three tomes take three different approaches to the native Hungarian German movement and to expulsion. József Hauser's work focuses on both topics, however, even though he uses sources from the Public Records, the brunt of his work is based on his personal recollection of the events. Lajos Horváth's volume uses sources from the Public Records, however it only depicts the relocations in a schematic manner. The book edited by Ernő Lakatos is written similarly detailed as the archives from the Public Records themselves; however the predicament of the Germans from Vecsés after 1945 was only mentioned in half a page, but on the contrary, he acknowledges far greater room to the preceding German movement.

Two books have to be mentioned as useful source materials. One is Ferenc Greszl's "The diary of the minister of Nagykovácsi" and relevant parts from the settlement's "Historia Domus", which were collected into a volume and published in 2003. The other work which we have to mention was not intended to be used as reference material and was conceived for the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the settling of Vecsés written by János Bilkei Gorzó in 1938. This work houses monographic passages and contemporary descriptive elements. We can primarily use the book as a relevant source in the discourse of the development of societal life in the interwar period.

The common trait of works produced by amateur local-historians is that they discuss the recollections on the level of historical reconstruction, consecutively from a professional point of view this is inefficient, however significant role may they take in the local community.

### **III. Methodology and sources**

From a politic-historical point of view the situation of the Hungarian ethnic Germans has already been documented and studied thoroughly. However, looking at it from a socio-historical perspective we can see that these aspect can be analyzed more precisely. I myself and some of my colleagues, who are studying this topic, think that in order to get a full picture, it is essential to study the local relationships and only after doing that work can we create a new dimensional monograph on a national level that takes into consideration the socio-political aspects. The aim of our discourse is to try to help us accomplish this task.

Macro- and micro-history cannot be separated from each other, localism, regionalism are parts of globalism and these local events can only be interpreted if we consider them as a part of globalism and not as standalone entities. Thus we present our topic in such a way that it can be considered imbedded in our common history. We strived to include three historical events into a single unit. Obviously the emphasis in each segment is different: much details from common history have already been explored. On the contrary, very little exploration has been done in micro-history – because of this, we will only present common history in a few brief words and will present micro-history based on the results of our research instead. However, the discourse includes such sources through which we could speak about common history from our perspective.

Our goal is the combined cultivation of political, social and church history. Despite the available material on the subject, the intertwining of church history and the history of the Hungarian ethnic Germans is still considered to be in its infancy. Since the population of the settlements from our research were Roman-Catholic and since these six settlements belonged to three different dioceses we were obliged to use research material from the Primatial Records of Esztergom, the Bishopric Records of Székesfehérvár and the Bishopric Records of Vác. Naturally we also used as reference material contemporary articles found in the weekly entitled “Az Új Ember”.

However, the majority of our resources were made up from the archives found in the Archives of Pest County. The archives detailing the period of 1918–1948 were analyzed based on how close or far we were from the date of the expulsion at the given point in our essay. Thus, for the period of 1918–1940 we combed through the archives of the prefect and the sub-prefect; for the period of 1940–1944, apart from the previously mentioned ones, the documents of the magistrate (however, in some murky cases we also dwelled into the communal documents); for the period of 1945–1948, again apart from the previously mentioned ones, we looked into the communal documents and the documents of local and county committees.

Alongside these we also use relevant sources from the archives of the Magyar Országos Levéltár/Hungarian National Archives (mainly focusing on the records of the Office of the Prime Minister, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of External Affairs and the Ministry of Agriculture) and the records of the Institute of Political History. Apart from these we were given access to the records of the Magyar Államvasutak Zrt/ Hungarian Railways, the archives of the Roman-Catholic Parishes from Budaörs and Nagykovácsi, the archives of the 1. számú Általános Iskola/Primary School Nr 1 from Budaörs, and the exceptionally valuable materials held in the private archives of Mihály Frühwirth – the president of the Kulturverein from Vecsés – to whom we would like to express our most sincerest gratitude.

Alongside the source materials found in the archives we also based our research on contemporary press articles, first and foremost on the daily papers of the national party together with the aforementioned “Új Ember”. We also combed through the daily and weekly papers of the “Volksbund”, the “Deutsche Zeitung” and the “Deutscher Volksbote”. Out of spatial



concerns the articles that had been published by us were only reused in cases when justified and in only a controlled conservative manner.

Supplementing the previously mentioned sources we also had at our disposal a good number of published source materials. To briefly mention them, these include: protocols of the Council of Ministers, protocols of inter-party meetings, and protocols of the Allied Control Commission alongside census publications.

#### **IV. Structure**

In the construction of our essay we use a mixture of chronologic and thematic organizing principals. The main chapters follow each other in a chronological order; however, the sub-chapters are based on the topic they discuss.

The first chapter encompasses the period between the two World Wars. Its first sub-chapter talks about social relations: we try to form a picture about the contemporary local society based on different demographic and occupational statistics. The economical statistics provide us with a guide about economic potential. We address associations, respectively the forms of civic self-organization separately. Using different demographic data we try to approach the issues of assimilation-dissimilation. In the second sub-chapter we present the founding of the local German movement and the formation of the political processes involved. We also examine the relationship of the local German settlers with their own nationalistic movement, how this changed through time and how the development of politics affected the local society. We examine separately the education issue, as one strong bastion of gentilital identity preservation, the „German issue” played the role of the perfect indicator.

In the next chapter we present the period during the Second World War. The structure of this enormous chapter is purely chronological. In our case the division date of the two main chapters is at 31 August 1940. As our dividing line we chose the date of the Ethnic Group Treaty of Vienna which coincided with the Second Vienna Award. At that time the events were concentrated around three pillars: the Ethnic Group Treaty, the census and the recruitment/enrollment into the SS. Thus these three make up the topic of this chapter. The main question of our chapter (using the words of Archbishop Jusztinián Serédi) is, in what way was the Volksbund a “societas necessaria” or a “societas voluntaria”? The fleeing and evacuation in

the seasons of autumn-winter of 1944 is also part of this chapter because historical studies managed to analyze this topic only in brief detail.

The third chapter bears the title of “Felelősségre vonás” (“Impeachment”) and is made up of four thematically complex sub-chapters: the forced labor of Hungarians in the Soviet Union (malenkij robot), the development of local government, land reform and internment. The goal of this chapter is to present the measures, used to deprave and limit peoples’ rights, which lead up to the expulsions.

Naturally the longest chapter is about the expulsions. Its structure follows the different stages in the events of the expulsions: the Potsdam decision, the decree and reception of the expulsion, the first wave of the expulsion, its temporary stagnation and its second wave. Its historical aspects are thoroughly analyzed, however, we believe that the new sources used regarding the Potsdam decision can enrich the professional results and we hope that through this we can convincingly refute the common conception known as the “Potsdam-legend”. Apart from this we try to expand our viewpoint on the wider spectrum of international politics in order to interpret and explain the development of the expulsion from June 1946 onwards. Although – as we previously mentioned – the structure is linear, we use comparison and contrast to try to present the events.

Our essay’s longest and most important chapter is followed by a much shorter but just as important one about immigration. Both historical and social aspects make an appearance in this section as well. We analyze the process of immigration, on what basis they were conducted, what the motivations were and why the migration-politics did have a serious effect on the national economy.

Finally we close our discourse with another socio-historical chapter. Our goal is here to revise from where we started and to where we arrived and to verify that we can understand the events embedded into this frame.

In the summary of our dissertation we collect together the results of our research.

## V. Results

Looking at the period of 1918–1948 we can conclude that even though, on the basis of a political and ideological level, there was a cause and effect connection with the pre and post 1945 events. However, on the level of execution, some individuals, their political past, their loyalty to the Hungarian state did not make a perceptible difference. The expulsions were driven by political, economical and social interests; on this issue, the interests of the superpowers and the interests of the Hungarians met and thus a nation who had been on the losing side of the war had its requests fulfilled. In the summer of 1945 the superpowers were hard at work trying to reach an agreement with each other and despite their different conception about the process of the expulsion, they did not burden the (at the time still existing) balance between them. After 1946, however, it became apparent that Western powers and the Soviet Union will face each other and this halted the expulsion as well.

The number of expellees (around 117 000 people) was the highest in the first wave (January-June 1946) and most of them (41 303 people) were expelled from our studied county. One reason for this was its strategic relevance, the other its symbolic meaning. Strategic because being close to the capital they represented a potential political risk by supporting right wing parties – naturally there were some exceptions: see Pilisszentiván. Through the relocated Hungarian families that came in their place the left wing parties managed to get a big force behind them. Obviously this relocation brought a minor, but not insignificant shift in the denominational distribution of the settlements. They managed to get rid of a huge number of catholic believers and thus of the influence of the “rightist” cardinal Mindszenty in region.

Its symbolic significance manifests in that they begun the “clean-up of the fascist remains” in the country’s third most densely populated settlements by Germans, Budaörs. This was an important milestone in the government’s aspiration to legitimize the expulsion and thus gain a favorable position during peace talks. The legislation for the expulsion only provided a frame for the process; the way it was executed was completely shaped by and in the hands of different political party interests and these forced relocations were viewed as a display of power of these different political parties.

There were two important causes for the stagnation of the expulsion and the final suspension of relocation into the American region: the upcoming change in the political field of

the super powers pointing towards the Cold War; and the overpopulation of the accepting region along with problems and hardships related to accommodation of the new population. According to our view the former was the more serious issue.

During the second phase of the expulsion, the question of fortunes was more motivating because of the Czechoslovak-Hungarian population exchange, and the preparation for a communist takeover instead of impeachment was a motivational factor too. It was not a coincidence that a new expulsion took place in August 1947. They wanted to get rid of as many Germans as possible before the upcoming parliamentary elections. This statement is supported by the fact that the most intensive part of the second expulsion wave conveniently happened in August. This political intent also became evident during the exemption campaigns because every political party was trying to save their own voting mass. In reality a legal background for a new expulsion did not exist, yet they did it anyway. From the perspective of foreign policy a major change was that expulsion into the Soviet area was conducted without the permission of the Potsdam decision, instead it depended completely on the stance of the Soviet Union.

The expulsions and the relocations completely redrew the whole social structure of the country and within that the structure of some settlements. Significant changes occurred in the ratio between majority and minority, the division of religion and the occupational structure. A new local society and its system of customs only managed to develop after many long years.

## **I. My publications on the topic:**

*A magyarországi németek kitelepítése a Népszava és a Világ korabeli számaiban (1945–1948).* In: Fejezetek a tegnap világából. Tanulmányok a 19–20. század történelméből. Szerk.: Gergely Jenő, Budapest, ELTE BTK, 2009. 280–295.

*A Pest megyei németek kitelepítése a kitelepítési névjegyzékek alapján.* In: Vázlatok két évszázad magyar történelméből. Tanulmányok. Szerk.: Gergely Jenő, Budapest, ELTE BTK, 2010. 171–187.

*Ki- és betelepítések Budaörsön (1945–1948).* In: Jogfosztások Budaörsön (1944–1948). Szerk.: Grósz András. Budaörs, Bleyer Jakab Helytörténeti Gyűjtemény, 2010. 111–168.

*Aus- und Einsiedlungen in Budaörs (1945–1948).* In: Entrechtungen in Budaörs (1944–1948). Szerk.: Grósz András. Budaörs, Bleyer Jakab Helytörténeti Gyűjtemény, 2010. 169–234.

*Potsdam – kényszer vagy lehetőség? Korabeli értelmezések.* In: Visszatekintés a 19–20. századra – Tanulmányok. Szerk.: Erdődy Gábor. Budapest, ELTE BTK, 2011. 190–203.

*Pest megyei németek a második világháború idején.* In: Mából a tegnapról. Szerk.: Erdődy Gábor. Budapest, ELTE BTK, 2012. 211–224.