

Donau-Institut Working Papers

Sebastian Sparwasser

Ethnic German expellees from Hungary and their "homecoming"

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Author's address and affiliation:

Sebastian Sparwasser

Doktorand / Andrassy Universität Budapest

E-Mail: bastisparwasser@gmail.com

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1. Introduction*

As a result of planned resettlement operations carried out by Hungarian authorities between 1946 and 1948, up to 180.000 people belonging to the German minority in Hungary had to leave their hometowns.¹ The so-called *svábok* were expelled by the Hungarian administration at the behest of the Allied powers and sent to occupied Germany where the evacuees were placed in temporary camps. The displaced suffered material losses and experienced structural violence in the course of the expulsion, but it was the loss of what is referred to as *Heimat* that was the greatest burden for them. The personal relationships and social structures which existed in the Hungarian homeland were entirely broken. In some towns and communities, more than half the population was displaced. Next to this efforts to return were penalized by the Allied forces and the Hungarian state until the early 1950s. Nevertheless, most of the expelled expressed a desire to return home; ultimately, however, only a small proportion actually did. The Hungarian historian Ágnes Tóth estimates that up to 10,000 people moved back to their home towns in Hungary despite the penalties, prohibitions and other risks they had to face.² When they were once again in Hungary, the returnees developed a variety of strategies for finding their way back into the now altered Hungarian society.³

* This publication was supported by the TÁMOP-4.2.2/B-10/1-2010-0015 grant of the European Union and the Hungarian Government.

¹Beer, Mathias: *Flucht und Vertreibung der Deutschen. Voraussetzungen, Verlauf, Folgen*, München: Beck, 2011, p. 114 f.

²Tóth, Ágnes: *Hazatértek: a németországi kitelepítésből visszatért magyarországi németek megpróbáltatásainak emlékezete*, Budapest: Gondolat 2008, 16. and Tóth, Ágnes: *Rückkehr nach Ungarn 1946–1950. Erlebnisberichte ungarndeutscher Vertriebener*, Schriften des Bundesinstituts für Kultur und Geschichte der Deutschen im östlichen Europa (43), Munich: Oldenbourg, 2012, p. 20.

³This working paper is based on a presentation held at the annual conference of the International Society for Ethnology and Folklore (SIEF), which took place in Tartu/ Estonia in summer 2013. The paper was presented in the panel "Re-migration and circulation: the European experience since 1945" led by Jana Noskova (Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic) and Sarah Scholl-Schneider (University of Mainz, Germany) and discusses the main results of research for my dissertation project. Parts of this paper have been accepted for publication in various conference proceedings („Ungarndeutsche 'Umsiedler' in der Sowjetisch Besetzten Zone und die Heimkehr", in: „Minderheiten in Ungarn und in den Nachbarländern im 20. und 21. Jahrhundert", 21.-22.2.2013, Andrassy University Budapest/ AUB; and „Ungarndeutsche Vertriebene und die Heimkehr nach Ungarn", in: „Bewegtes Mitteleuropa", 15.-16.11.2012, Doctoral College of the Faculty for Central European Studies, AUB). I want to thank the Austrian Academic Exchange Service (OeAD) and TÁMOP for their support, which allowed me to take part at the conference and to work on this paper.

2. Investigation

As part of a field research project that was conducted throughout the years 2010 to 2013, the author of this article has examined the personal lives of the so called *hazatértek*, those ethnic Germans from Hungary who were expelled and then returned to their places of origin in the aftermath of World War II. In the course of the past three years' time witnesses whom were met in towns and villages in the southern Hungarian Counties of Baranya, Somogy and Bács Kiskun had been visited and interviewed.⁴ This article will refer to 14 of those interviews.

The interviewees were born in the 1920's and early 1930's and were able to talk about the expulsions and subsequent returns from their own memory. These interviews provide first-hand information about the personal experiences of expropriation and expulsion, the living conditions of Hungarian-German 'resettlers' in occupied Germany, the circumstances of their return migration and the process of reintegration of the *hazatértek* into the now-socialist Hungarian society. The conversations have been recorded, transcribed and – to facilitate deeper analysis – broken down into specific aspects: motivations for return, strategies for finding a way back in, and perceptions of home, identity and ethnicity. All these research objectives required a comprehensive qualitative approach. Therefore, the interviews were conducted as open conversations where the conversational partners develop their own stories and choose for themselves which topics to highlight.⁵ In addition to the information gathered through the interviews, the study also relied on participant observation as well as on archival documents.

As a first step, this paper draws the current state of research and then describes the historical circumstances of the expulsion of the German minority population from Hungary. The experiences of evacuation and expulsion are central elements in the narrated life stories. In a second step, the paper describes the political circumstances and living and working conditions in the admitting areas in occupied Germany and their impact on the personal perceptions of the expellees, since this played an important role in the decision to re-emigrate. And since return must be seen as a process that does

⁴Most of the contacts were conveyed to me by Hungarian historian Ágnes Tóth, whom I want to thank for the generous help during my research.

⁵The study is based on theoretical and methodological concepts developed by Rosenthal, Gabriele: *Erlebte und erzählte Lebensgeschichte. Gestalt und Struktur biographischer Selbstbeschreibung*, Frankfurt: Campus, 1995; and Lehmann, Albrecht: *Reden über Erfahrung. Kulturwissenschaftliche Bewusstseinsanalyse des Erzählens*, Berlin: Reimer, 2007.

not end with the moment of physical arrival – specific cases looked at in the study underline this point – the situation of the returnees in Hungary is also examined. These three areas of research are intended to deepen our understanding of the motives, strategies and individual perceptions of return in the aftermath of World War II.

3. State of Research

The homecoming of German expelles from Hungary was mentioned for the first time in German historian Theodor Schieder's (1908-1984) oral-history study "Schicksal der Deutschen aus Ungarn" which was published in 1957. Even though Schieder's commitment during the Third Reich is highly controversial, his book can still be regarded as a benchmark for research on the expulsion of the Germans from Hungary.⁶ Anyhow, in a three-page chapter, Schieder reports that there were displaced *svábok* who did not consider the evacuations as final and, therefore, tried to move back to their places of origin. These efforts to return were affected by various problems, obstacles and risks and usually weren't successful. Many returnees were rejected or detained at the borders in allied-occupied Germany, Austria or Hungary. Many of those willing to return were sent back to the admitting areas in occupied Germany. Schieder also mentions, that returnees, as well as Germans who had remained in the country, were regarded as political offenders by the authorities and had to live as illegals with relatives and friends for years since houses and homes had been given to Hungarian refugees after the expulsions. Anyhow, due the poor sources, Schieder was not able to estimate the actual number of returnees who had permanently resettled in Hungary, but he assumed that it must have been a relatively small group.⁷ Recent research – due to the exemplary work of Hungarian historian Ágnes Tóth – has revealed that approximately 8,000-10,000 German expellees permanently resettled back in their homeland. Tóth's study has been published in German language in 2012 and titles "Rückkehr nach Ungarn 1946-1950. Erlebnisberichte Ungarndeutscher Vertriebener". The extensive research

⁶The work was commissioned by the West German Federal Ministry for "Displaced Persons, Refugees and War Victims" and was published within the multi-volumed edition "Dokumentation der Vertreibung der Deutschen aus Ostmitteleuropa". Based on eyewitness accounts and autobiographies, a commission of historians documented the causes, courses and consequences of flight and expulsion from central- and eastern Europe. The documentation is considered one of the most extensive oral history projects in post-war Germany. See: Bundesministerium für Vertriebene, Flüchtlinge und Kriegsgeschädigte (ed.): Dokumentation der Vertreibung der Deutschen aus Ost-Mitteleuropa, Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag (dtv), 2004, first edition 1957.

⁷Schieder, Theodor: Das Schicksal der Deutschen aus Ungarn, in: Bundesministerium für Vertriebene, Flüchtlinge und Kriegsgeschädigte (ed.): Dokumentation der Vertreibung der Deutschen aus Ost-Mitteleuropa II, Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag (dtv), 2004, first published in 1957, Introduction and 67E f.

bases of interviews and archival documents break new ground in the study of Hungarian-German remigrants and show that return was accompanied by a live-long struggle for identity.⁸

4. Expropriation and Expulsion

In the last months of the war many Germans from Hungary fled to the West for fear of the Soviet occupation. In the end of 1944 – as part of the work program Maljenki Robot many Germans were deported to labor camps. A systematic transfer of Hungary's German population finally began in January 1946. In the following months, about 130,000 Svabians – according to recent research – were expelled from their hometowns.⁹ The whole expulsion process, carried out by Hungarian authorities, was hastily prepared and remained rather chaotic and disorganized. Anyhow, during this first phase of the expulsion, the transports were brought to the American zone of occupation in Germany, especially to the region of Wuerttemberg in the Southwest. The houses and farms of the expelled families were confiscated by the Hungarian administration and signed over to Hungarian refugees from neighboring countries who, in some cases, were waiting to move at the same time as the families were evacuated from their homes. An evacuation of expellees to the Soviet Zone was not planned at that time. However, problems in relocating the masses of refugees arose in the American zone of occupation soon and the American military administration was not able to house the masses of refugees anymore. Next to that they accused the Hungarian authorities of not conducting the resettlement process in a 'humane manner' and as a result refused to accept further transports.¹⁰ In this situation the Hungarian government turned to the Allied Control Commission and demanded permission to continue the transfer of the German population. The plan was approved on condition that the transports from now on would be sent to the Soviet Zone of Occupation in Germany. In this second phase of resettlement – which began in August 1947 and ended in June 1948 – around 50,000 people were displaced.¹¹

The narratives expose that the experiences of expropriation and expulsion are key moments in the life

⁸Tóth, *Hazatérték* 2008, pgs. 16-20.

⁹Beer: *Flucht und Vertreibung der Deutschen*, p. 96.

¹⁰Füzes, Miklós: *Valami Magyarországon maradt. Etwas blieb daheim in Ungarn, Eingliederung der vertriebenen Ungarndeutschen in Deutschland*, Pécs: Baranyai Megyei Levéltár Pécs, 1999, p. 90 f.

¹¹The main camp for admission of the expellees from Hungary during this phase of the expulsions was the so called "grey casern" in the town of Pirna in Saxony. Rutsch, Nóra: *Die Vertreibung von Ungarndeutschen und ihre Integration in der sowjetisch besetzten Zone*, in: Hausleitner, Mariana: *Vom Faschismus zum Stalinismus. Deutsche und andere Minderheiten in Ostmittel- und Südosteuropa 1941–1953*, Munich 2008, pgs. 121-135.

stories of the *hazatértek*. The evacuation was experienced as an absolute break that put into question almost all social values and assumptions. The memories of this historical and personal transformation are still very much alive. The specific details of the evacuations – the arrival of the resettlement committees, the transportations, date and time and so on – were described in detail in all of the interviews. This can be illustrated with the narrative of Anna, who was born in the southern Hungarian town Nagynyárád. The family was expelled in the summer of 1947, in one of the last evacuation transports to the Soviet Zone of Occupation. They returned to Hungary the following year. Anna now lives once again in her parents' house, in which Hungarian refugees from former Czechoslovakia had been quartered after the family home was expropriated by the authorities. The arrival of the evacuation commission in Nagynyárád, the confiscation of their property and the expulsion of her family are experiences that are still present in her memory: "I can clearly remember how we sat there as kids, out here in front of the house, and then the police came and the man said: 'Here's the house' Then he came in and got us, called us in order with names. Now we were supposed to pack. Half an hour later the bus was there. Then we had to leave."¹²

Of particular note is that all the narratives about evacuation and expulsion discuss issues of guilt and innocence, of acts of commission and victim(ship) in a particular way. The measures carried out by the Hungarian authorities are seen as unjust, without any legal or moral basis; the interviewees, for example, denied participating in the activities of the Volksbund (People's League of the Germans from Hungary) or the SS (Schutzstaffel). Instead, although ethnic Germans always acknowledged their cultural 'Germanness', they also saw themselves as loyal to the Hungarian nation and State. From the perspective of the interviewees, property was the main incentive for the expulsions; Swabians who had possessed houses and land were more likely to be affected by the evacuation efforts carried out by Hungarian officials than Swabian families who had not possessed land. The perceptions of the returnees, therefore, have their own internal logic. Return is seen by them as the legitimate response to the illegitimacy of the evacuations. This was evident in the conversation with Elisabeth, who I had met in her hometown Nemesnádudvar. She was 21 when she and her family were expelled to the Soviet Zone of Occupation in 1947: "When they took us and all we had, we said: 'Well, we'll go there, but we'll come home again.' [...] It all was wrong what they did to us. [...] Everyone thought that they

¹²"Das ist schon traurig gewesen. Ich kann mich noch gut daran erinnern, wie wir da als Kinder draußen gesessen sind hier vorm Haus, und dann ist die Polizei gekommen mit dem Mann und dann hat der Mann gesagt: 'Hier ist das Haus.' Dann ist er reingekommen und hat uns alle nach einer Liste der Reihe nach mit Namen aufgerufen. Jetzt sollten wir packen in einer halben Stunde sei der Autobus da. Dann mussten wir fort. Ja, das war schon schwer." (Interview, Anna)

are making fun with us. It wasn't justified. And it has not been justified. When they're talking about these things today, everyone says that should not have happened."¹³

5. Admission and the Political Approach of the Question of Return

In the receiving areas, the evacuated families were quartered in temporary camps where registration and medical examinations were performed on arrival. In the camps of the Soviet Zone, men were checked to see whether they were able to work in mining or the disassembly of heavy equipment; if men were found capable of such work, they were sent to the relevant locations. Though work in these assignments was described as voluntary, it was the only way for many to ensure survival, since opportunities for paid labor were rare. Anyhow, after several weeks in the camps, the expellees were housed in farms, houses and apartments belonging to the local population. Since supplies were scarce, most of the infrastructure was destroyed and the overall economic situation was stagnant, the arrival of the expellees was seen as an additional burden by the resident population. It is reported that, in many cases, local residents tried to prevent families from moving into their homes because they feared this would worsen their own situation. Elisabeth, who had been expelled to Saxony in 1947 and then returned to her hometown in Hungary the year after, stated: "They regarded us as gypsies and were very angry because we came and they had to share food with us."¹⁴ In direct contacts between the expellees and the local population, conflicts arose and cultural differences became apparent. Although there are also many stories of friendships formed and genuine assistance offered, in general the expellee narratives describe a feeling of being socially marginalized. Anna said that the contacts in the new environment often had been full of prejudices and hostility.

The family was sent to the transit camp Prossen in Bad Schandau and then was quartered in an apartment in a nearby village. She stated: "They said we are Hungarian gypsies'. We said in response that we are *svábok*. Then they called us 'dirty Swabians'. There [in the occupational zones of Germany], we were Hungarian gypsies'."¹⁵

¹³"Na gut, wir gehen schon dorthin, aber wir kommen wieder heim.' Das war gleich in unserem Sinn, dass wir wieder heimkommen. Wir wussten gleich, dass wir wieder zurückkommen. Das war ja alles falsch, was die mit uns gemacht haben. Jetzt hat man es ja schon bereut. Aber, na ja, es war geschehen. [...] Ein jeder hat den Gedanken getragen, die spielen uns eine Komödie vor, das ist nicht richtig. Und es ist auch nicht richtig gewesen. Wenn sie jetzt über diese Dinge reden, dann sagt ein jeder, das hätte nicht sein dürfen." (Interview, Elisabeth)

¹⁴"Die haben uns direkt als Zigeuner angeschaut und waren sehr böse, weil wir gekommen sind und auch noch mitessen." (Interview, Elisabeth)

¹⁵"Die haben gesagt, wir sind ,ungarische Zigeuner'. Wir haben gesagt, wir sind die *svábok*. Dann haben die uns ,stinkende Schwaben' genannt. Wir waren halt die ,ungarischen Zigeuner'." (Interview, Anna)

The experience of social hostility and the inversion of social roles – among other examples, as Germans living in Hungary they shared the prejudice against “gypsies” and now in Germany they were called “gypsies – resulted in mental disorientation and emotional confusion. This strengthened the desire to return to Hungary.

Anyhow, a return seemed almost impossible for the expellees at that time. Expelled families did not have enough money or other assets to finance a return trip, nor did they have the opportunity to acquire exit permits. The occupation authorities had imposed a ban on return, in large measure to support the newly-drawn borders in Central and Eastern Europe. Instead, the authorities focused on better integration and assimilation of the expellees. This included the adoption of several legal measures. The founding of expellee organizations was prohibited by the so-called coalition ban (“Koalitionsverbot”) in all occupation zones. Incoming displaced groups were scattered to prevent the formation of pressure groups.¹⁶ Since flight, expulsion and deportation were seen as irreversible, attempts to cross borders were punished and were likely to end in transit camps or prisons. The expelled families were considered to be stateless, since they lost Hungarian citizenship the moment they had left Hungary.¹⁷ In addition, those who wished to return could not expect to reestablish themselves easily back in Hungary. Houses and homes had been given to Hungarian refugees; due to the massive migrations the personal relationships and social structures which they had built up in their original homeland were almost entirely broken. But despite all these obstacles, almost all expellees hoped to return. Homecoming surely was – as a recent publication titled – a “central category” of thinking and desire in post-war Europe.¹⁸ This can be illustrated by the fact that the displaced tried to use every conceivable means to return home. Expellees wrote letters to local authorities, diplomatic missions and church organizations to seek support for a return.

They even expressed their desire for return to camp authorities. When German expellees from Hungary arrived in the transit camp Pirna in Saxony in January 1948, the camp authorities wrote in their “political report”:

¹⁶Beer, Mathias: Deutsche aus Ungarn in West- und Ostdeutschland. Eingliederung der Flüchtlinge und Vertriebenen unter den Bedingungen unterschiedlicher Gesellschaftssysteme, in: Seewann, Gerhard (ed.), Migrationen und ihre Auswirkungen. Das Beispiel Ungarn 1918–1995, Munich 1997, 127-146, p. 131

¹⁷See Executive Order 7970/1946 M.E.; Tóth, Ágnes: Rechtliche Regelungen zur Lage des Ungarndeutschtums 1938–1950, in: Kittel, Manfred; Möller, Horst; Pesek, Jiri; Tuma, Oldrich (eds.): Deutschsprachige Minderheiten 1945. Ein europäischer Vergleich, Oldenbourg 2007, 253-296, p. 292.

¹⁸See Agazzi, Elena, Schütz, Erhard (eds.) (2010): Heimkehr, Eine zentrale Kategorie der Nachkriegszeit. Geschichte, Literatur und Medien, Schriften des Italienisch-Deutschen Historischen Instituts Trient 23, Berlin.

"The desire of the evacuees [Umsiedler] would be to return to their homeland, namely to Hungary, within a short time, since they do not expect much for themselves in the Russian and American zone."¹⁹

6. Return to Hungary

Most of the *hazetértek* returned only a few months after they had been expelled – even before the formation of the two German states in 1949. The illegality and irregularity of the return process seemed to have been no obstacle for those who had decided to return. For them the desire to return was greater than the fear of being caught, imprisoned or lead back by the occupation authorities or the Hungarian government. As Elisabeth put it: "Most of them [the expellees] had the idea to return at one point. They advocated return. But they did not have any luck or how shall I put it, they have not dared to join the trip."²⁰

To minimize the risks of the journey, the actual preparations for return began weeks in advance. Maps and money had to be organized, as well as suitable and safe routes selected. One had to look for ways and means to circumvent the travel restrictions imposed by the authorities. Therefore, the emigrants relied on the assistance of their neighbors and the families that had housed them. As the interviews with emigrants show, local residents supported the decision to return. András, who was expelled in 1947 and returned to his hometown Vaskút all by himself in 1948, described these preparations as a week long process. In order to obtain information on border crossing options, friends and acquaintances provided him with maps and made recommendations for the safest routes and border crossings: "I've thought ahead three or four weeks. You have to prepare well for something like this with maps – which road or railway you take, and where you cross the borders. All this. I've bought maps – old maps. I have looked at everything very well and I had it here [taps his forehead]. I've memorized everything. And in case there was a mistake, I asked for help."²¹ It is worth noting that all

¹⁹"Die Wunscherklärung der Umsiedler wäre, in Kürze nach ihrer Heimat, und zwar nach Ungarn, wieder zurückzukehren, da sie sich hier, sei es in der russischen sowie amerikanischen Zone, nicht viel versprechen." Sächsisches Hauptstaatsarchiv (SächsHStA), Landesregierung Sachsen, Ministerium des Innern, Nr. 2286, see: Wille, Manfred, Die Vertriebenen in der SBZ/DDR. Massentransfer, Wohnen, Arbeit, 1946–1949, Studien der Forschungsstelle Ostmitteleuropa an der Universität Dortmund (19 II), Wiesbaden 1999, p. 144.

²⁰"Die meisten waren auch auf dem Gedanken, zurückzukehren. Die haben das auch befürwortet. Aber die haben kein Glück gehabt oder wie soll man sagen, die haben sich nicht alle getraut, die Reise mitzumachen." (Interview, Elisabeth)

²¹„[...] vorausgedacht hab ich das drei oder vier Wochen. Da muss man sich gut vorbereiten auf so etwas mit Landkarten – welche Straße gehe ich, mit der Eisenbahn, und wo geht man über die Grenze. Das alles. Karten hab ich mir gekauft. Alte Landkarten hab ich angeschaut und hab alles hier gehabt [tippt auf die Stirn]. Das hab

of the returnees tried to avoid to passing through Czechoslovakia even though this would have been the more direct route. On the one hand, this was surely due to the fact that the Czech and Slovak language weren't spoken by the returnees and they feared they would not be able to manage for themselves if they needed help. On the other hand, the returnees expected to be treated worse in the case of arrest or detention by Czechoslovakian authorities than anywhere else. Thus, the returnees chose routes leading through the American Zone of Occupation and the occupation zones in Austria. The actual crossings were often organized by paid smugglers. They were familiar with the area and knew safe crossing opportunities. Most of the distances were covered by train and on foot. On their way back, some of the returnees were arrested or had been turned back. Therefore, the actual act of returning to their places of origin is also remembered as a kind of flight experience. As the interviews demonstrate, the memories of these selective events – the border crossings, encounters with the police and other authorities and the travel by night – are still very much alive.

7. The returnees in Hungary

For those who actually returned, homecoming meant re-establishing *Heimat*. This is evident in the fact that most of the returnees tried to move back to their places of origin –or at least as close as possible. Over the years, some of the returnees bought back their original homes and flats which had been given to Hungarian refugees from neighboring countries right after the expulsion of the *svábok*. In the years immediately after their arrival, though, the situation was difficult. Once the returnees made it back to their original hometowns, they had to hide from the local authorities since they – as expelled Germans – did not have work permits or citizenship. The expellees were considered to be stateless in both Hungary and Germany. To make a living, the *hazatértek* worked illegally on local farms and businesses as seasonal workers or as helping hands on construction sites. Since their original possessions had been given away, the returnees had to live with relatives, friends and acquaintances. Some of the returnees even hid in wine cellars and vineyards to avoid being caught by the authorities. Nevertheless, since most of the returnees went back to environments where they were known, their illegal stay was generally tolerated by the local population and even by the local authorities as some cases show. Anyhow, for the returnees, the first years following their return were

ich auswendig gelernt. Wenn da ein Irrtum war, da hab ich nachgefragt, das war nicht schlimm.“ (Interview, András)

dominated by efforts to regain a legal status in Hungary. Regaining Hungarian citizenship was absolutely vital for them if they were to successfully participate in society. Although passports were given out beginning in 1951, things only began to really improve in the mid 1950's. Anyhow – even though the socialist regime guaranteed minority rights in its 1949 Constitution and many of the returnees managed to move back into the original houses and homes within the 1950ies, the practice of German culture and language was suppressed in Hungarian society during this period and therefore gradually disappeared from social and private life.²² A similar development is to be found within the group of the returnees. The *hazatértek* avoided speaking German in public. If the German language was spoken, then within a familiar environment. Next to that many of the returnees married Hungarian partners. Also, the traditional Svbian festivities and customs disappeared from cultural life. One can note that nowadays for most of the returners' German culture and language are rather remembered than practiced. All this was reinforced by the fact that returnee efforts to re-establish *Heimat* were linked to meeting the expectations of the socialist system. Most of the returnees eventually adapted themselves to the regime and simply focused on professional and social advancement within socialism. To sum up then, *re-integration* meant gradually giving up German identity and assimilating into Hungarian society.

8. Final Remarks

It has to be stated, that only a comparatively small group of the Hungarian Germans expelled from their homeland returned to their places of origin. Most the expellees settled well into Germany after a difficult start and gradually came to terms with their situation. Others sought further emigration overseas. Nevertheless, although return migration can be seen as an absolute exemption, the desire for return has to be regarded as a central topic in the postwar years. One can note that almost everybody was longing to return back to the homeland. Anyhow, for those who actually returned, the reasons to return were complex and reflected individual and very personal circumstances. However, certain typologies can be delineated. Due to the expulsions, which are seen as biographical turning points, the evacuees were unexpectedly pulled out of their familiar and social environment. The evacuations and expulsions were perceived as absolutely unjust and arbitrary by the interviewees.

²²Seewann, Gerhard(2012): *Geschichte der Deutschen in Ungarn (II)*, Herder: Marburg, p. 369 ff.

From now on their desire was to return back to the homeland. This feeling was strengthened by the fact that the evacuees had to face many problems in occupied Germany. The cramped and poor living conditions in the receiving areas were experienced as threatening. The admitting society was considered as hostile and dis-integrative. Socially and economically, the expellees were not integrated. As the narratives also expose, the evacuees were repeatedly exposed to discrimination because of their social status as refugees. The lack of social integration and the experience of foreignness ultimately reinforced their desire to return. Probably the most important motive for the resettlement, though, was homesickness. The expellees longed for the intact structures of *Heimat*, of life as they had experienced it before their relocation; *Heimat* connected cultural Germaness with a specific loyalty to the Hungarian nation. Anyhow, the returnees effort was to re-establish *Heimat* once they made it back. But this also meant getting to terms with the socialist system and, in consequence, gradually giving up German culture and identity.

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