

“Hineingestreut ins überflutete Mutterland”¹

Contingency, Integration, and Identity in “Southeast German” Postwar Discourse

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Introduction

AFTER THE end of the Second World War, the Germans from Southeastern Europe who had arrived in the West found themselves caught on the fence: in their mythical original homeland they were ultimately strangers, despite all the “ethnic” (*völkisch*) solidarity propagated just a few years earlier. In the meantime, the Iron Curtain separated them from their “old homeland” in the Danube-Carpathian region, and many of them considered leaving Europe altogether for America. In this state of complete indecision and rapid change, the Transylvanian writer Heinrich Zillich turned to his “Landsleute” (compatriots) (“Is it a swan song?”). He elaborated this idea in a festive speech on the 800th anniversary of the Transylvanian Saxons in October 1950 in Munich:

Yes, things will never be the same again, but the old can be renewed. Few of us want to turn our backs on Europe. In the past, our people emigrated more easily. . . . But today, they are overrun, devastated, forgotten, they have left behind their loved ones at home. No, we will not leave our birthing, our uncanny, our native Occident! In time, fate will tire of beating us, who meant well and did good to peoples and countries. No, do not emigrate! We are so rooted in the Occident that we want to wait for the miracle of its resurrection. At the Thermopylae of Europe, one does not fall to the last man—one is reborn. In front of the Tartar Pass at home lies the community of Tartlau, clustered around the largest fortified church in the world. In five hundred years, fifty times the enemies burned down the settlement, and fifty times it rose again. Let us be peasants of Tartlau, hope and create, wait and believe.²

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This fragment from Zillich's appeal condenses the wide range of topics covered in the "Southeast German" postwar discourse unfolding between the ethnoregional-confessional "self" and the consciousness of belonging to the German "Volk" (people). This discourse is unique in its formation but also paradigmatic of the Southeast Germans' integration into West German society. This essay takes on the task of examining and classifying this discourse in order to uncover its specific telos, the goal of the argumentation: In what ways are self-understanding and sense-making updated after the events of World War II? What role do leading actors assign to their Southeast German groups in the West German (resp. West European) "host society?" What visions of the future are inherent in the discourse?

About the Method

THE STUDY applies the tools of historical discourse analysis and focuses on that phase of the 1950s which is characterized by the legal and institutional consolidation associated with the German refugees, expellees and resettlers, and the possibilities of expression for discourse producers are constantly increasing. The examined source corpus focuses on texts published in the *Südostdeutsche Heimatblätter*³ (hereafter cited as *SODHB*), as well as selected key texts, especially reprints of speeches by Heinrich Zillich and fragments from the anthologies *Wir Donauschwaben* (1950) and *Wir Siebenbürger* (1988). Formed under the sign of radical change and the closely related collective liminality of these Southeast German arrivals originating from Romania, Yugoslavia, and Hungary, the investigated field of discourse ranges between the cornerstones of contingency management, striving for integration, and identity actualization.

Officially founded in 1951, the *Südostdeutsche Kulturwerk* (*SOKW*), a cultural association, whose journalistic mouthpiece were the *SODHB*, represents with its culture-mediating and journalistic practice in almost ideal-typical form a specific and interest-driven institutionalized discourse at the crossroads between science and social policy. The authors⁴ of the texts studied thus represent a Southeast German discourse leadership. As ethnopolitical entrepreneurs,⁵ they are highly biographically involved in the topics addressed. The corpus examined thus stands *pars pro toto* for the discourse of an influential network of political and cultural-political actors that extends far beyond the *SODHB*'s circle of subscribers.

The most publicly present actor in this context is writer and editor Heinrich Zillich, who came from Transylvania. In the interwar period, he established himself as one of the most important Southeast German writers and cultural actors. From 1936 he lived in Starnberg, Bavaria, and became a supporter and profiteer of the National Socialist regime, as evidenced by his literary works and their reach. After World War II, he continued to work, albeit far less successfully, as a publicist and speaker, and became a leading functionary in the *Landsmannschaft der Siebenbürger Sachsen*, the Transylvanian Saxons' association in Germany. The *SODHB* served as one of his most important journalistic platforms since its publication in 1952. From 1959 he also acted as editor of the periodical, and later as publisher.

In the following analytical part, the context is examined first, within the framework of which the field of discourse is delineated. The key points of the discourse are presented in detail in the second step. In the third and last step, five types of collective personality traits are presented, which result from the central topoi.

The Context

Historical Premises

AFTER 1918, most of the Germans in Southeast Europe lived in the newly founded Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (from 1929: Kingdom of Yugoslavia), in the Kingdom of "Greater Romania," and in Hungary, which had been greatly reduced in size. After World War II, a large part of them found themselves in Germany after wartime deployment, flight, expulsion, and resettlement. Until 1949, Germans from the East were forbidden to form political associations. The first denominational groups (*Hilfskomitees*—aid committees) were primarily dedicated to the social welfare of the new arrivals. From 1949 onward, individual compatriot associations and umbrella organizations emerged.⁶ While this institutional formation process continued well into the 1950s and can only be considered complete with the official constitution of the Federation of Expellees on 14 December 1958, political milestones were set at the legal level: expellees in particular benefited from the so-called "Lastenausgleichsgesetz" (Burden Equalization Act, 1952), which provided financial assistance to all those who had suffered material losses as a result of the war. The 1953 Bundesvertriebenen und Flüchtlingsgesetz (Federal Expellees and Refugees Act, hereafter cited as BVFG),⁷ also gave the integration process a stable and comprehensive legal basis. In addition to resolving the economic and social issues raised by the integration of so many people in the FRG,⁷ this law also officially created the right to continue cultivating one's "own" cultural identity. Institutions such as the Südostdeutsches Kulturwerk received and continue to receive their institutional funding on the basis of the BVFG.

Pragmatic Spheres of Identification

AFTER 1918, the German (as well as the other⁸) minorities in Romania, Yugoslavia, and Hungary aimed to create a state-framed and, when legally possible, institutionalized level of identification and organization in order to better protect the German minority and represent it before the government. In contrast, the term *Donauschwaben* (Danube Swabians), which was also established only after 1918, describes a genuinely transnational collective concept, because the Catholic German groups that settled in areas of Hungary along the Danube before 1918 found themselves after World War I in all three southeastern German states mentioned above.

The concept of *Südostdeutschum* (Southeast Germanness), rooted in the geopolitical aspirations of the interwar period, but relevant to the field of discourse under study

especially after 1945, subsumed the fled, resettled, expelled, and remaining Germans of Romania, Yugoslavia, and Hungary. The common historical-regional Habsburg character and the associated, self-attributed “border mentality” suggest such a Southeast German solidarity, which also made it possible to safeguard the common interests of the Germans from the Danube-Carpathian region vis-à-vis politics and in a certain competition with the Sudetendeutsche and the Northeast Germans (Nordostdeutsche)—Prussians and Baltic Germans—who were perceived as more influential. However, it was not necessarily clear which groups were to belong to such Southeast Germanness after 1945. In 1957, Göllner defined it as “mainly the Germans in the Hungarian half of the former Danube monarchy,” but in the very next sentence he expanded the definition to include Cisleithanian and even former Russian or Old Romanian Kingdom areas:

*Until World War II, the settlement area of the Southeast German ethnic groups comprised the entire Carpathian Basin, plus Lower Styria and Carniola, Bukovina and, on the other side of the Pruth, Bessarabia with its daughter colonies in Dobruja.*⁹

In this context, it seems central that one’s own positioning always includes a dominant geopolitical component, specifically a European “occidental” context, which goes hand in hand with a cultural demarcation from everything that appears (too) Eastern:

*The encounter between Western and Byzantine Christianity took place uninterruptedly in Transylvania, and in no respect did a commitment to Eastern ways of life appear, as those unfamiliar with the country might suppose. Transylvania, Romania, indeed the entire southeast, north of the lower Danube, was as Western minded as any other area of central and western Europe.*¹⁰

Despite their different qualities, ranging from the collectively political to the personally emotional, all these levels of identification—from the “Occidental–European” to the “all German” to the “the local, concrete life world”—represent formative factors of influence for the field of discourse.

Transformation and Liminality

FOR HEINRICH Zillich, it was the Potsdam Agreement of August 1945, in which the political and geographical reorganization of Germany after World War II was laid down, that most clearly marked the turning point in the history of the East Germans and the Southeast Germans in the aftermath of the war. It had “blown up everything that Germans, promoted by Christianity and called upon by the Eastern peoples themselves, had created there in twelve centuries for the benefit of the Occident.”¹¹ With the expulsion events (before and) after Potsdam, about twelve million Germans from Eastern Europe found themselves in war-ravaged Germany, including about 760,000 Southeast Germans. For many of them, however, the often-motivated migration movement to the Reich (“empire”) had already begun before 1945: in 1940 with the “Heim-

ins-Reich" movement (Back home to the Reich movement) and with the flight accompanying the Wehrmacht's withdrawal in 1944.

After the end of the war, these people found themselves in a state of disorientation that is still clearly evident in the texts of *SODHB*, which began to appear in 1952: the areas of origin "flooded with the mud of a world that excludes ours."¹² Karl O. Kurth described the situation of the German refugees and expellees in his reflections on "The Nature and Meaning of the Landsmannschaft Idea" as "pushed out of all ties" with the homeland: one had not only lost one's economic existence and a certain social position, but also saw all previously existing value concepts fundamentally shaken.¹³ In 1953, Diplich referred to the fact that it was not only a matter of the possible end of a *Lebenswelt* as one had known it until then, but also of the dissolution of the "patriotic world of ideas" as a whole.¹⁴ Adalbert Gauß saw the German refugees from the East and Southeast "hineingestret in überflutete Mutterland" (scattered into the flooded motherland). With his very fundamental question "But what still ties us?"¹⁵ he opens the field of discourse between contingency management, integration efforts and identity actualization, as it will be examined and presented in the following part.

The Field of Discourse Contingency Management

THE AUTHORS of the studied discourse fragments tended to portray the demographic, and psychosocial initial situation after World War II as difficult and humiliating. While the Southeast Germans placed desolate, sparsely populated areas which they had to civilize at the historical beginnings of their group history, this new start in West Germany meant the opposite. Thus, in his essay "Vom neuen Kolonientum" (1950), the Austrian geographer Egon Lendl saw the Danube Swabians in the "highly developed motherland" facing a "much tougher competitive struggle than at home."¹⁶ Local elites in their societies of origin had now become supplicants: "miserable" refugees were now, as Zillich described it in 1951, "on overpopulated soil."¹⁷ He sums up the bitter irony behind this dichotomy between the old homeland in the Danube-Carpathian region and the new, forced "residential areas" (*Wohngebiete*): "Whether peasants or not, all of you are now again settlers arriving at a forest clearing and—strangely—settlers in the motherland."¹⁸ A "final" emigration to other parts of the world also came into question for many Germans, although this was not desired by the Southeast German spokesmen in West Germany. However, one had to face the displaced group's reality: Diplich described the German expellees and refugees as the "real wanderers," settlers all over the world.¹⁹ Finding themselves "outside their former homeland in new residential areas"²⁰ was at first perceived as a "blow of fate" (*Schicksalsschlag*²¹), not as a "historically coherent" homecoming.

The double existential angst, related to identity as well as material, was intensified by the radical, post-fascist transformation in which West German society, moved by moral issues (although often left out of public discourse), found itself. Zillich leaves open the

question of whether Germany, which he still referred to as Reich in 1950, would prove a “good mother,”²² and how this “motherland” of Germany, divided into zones, and with it the entire Occident, could hold their own between “the mass mush of Russia and the unity of the United States.”²³

The perspectives developed in the studied fragments of discourse thus represent a state of collective contingency that prevailed well into the 1950s; they oscillate between the insight of the immediate irreversibility of 1945 and the hope for change for the better for the Germans from the East: “Wait and see!” Gauß wrote for his compatriots: “There will be an Occident again, and under seas of grain, the horror will decompose, for still the innocent victims will be led into the morning!”²⁴ Hope for an improvement of the situation—admittedly diffused in its quality—had to be conjured up, especially in the first years after World War II.

Integration Efforts

THE NEW existence required a “far-reaching rearrangement” of the “basic spiritual attitude,” Lendl wrote in 1950.²⁵ The Southeast Germans who had arrived in West Germany were searching for their new mission:

*For eight years we have been searching for new meaning in our old spiritual heritage. We hurried along the paths of modern processes across countries, zones and times to find the keyword that would unlock those areas in which we could once again be at home.*²⁶

With the finding of a specific role in the host society, “Einwurzelung” (a retaking of roots), an identification with the “new homeland,” seemed possible, “for defeat does not mean an end; peoples live as long as their tasks endure, and we East Germans feel the German task more urgently than ever since we looked into the face of the West, back then, in 1945.”²⁷ This cautiously optimistic atmosphere of departure, which is evoked in the foreword of the *SODHB*, was, however, always counteracted by the distrust of superordinate actors, dependencies and foreign determination: “For the future, however, it will be crucial that we resolutely take our fate into our own hands.”²⁸ For integration into the host society, the goal was obviously the highest possible degree of self-determination, but by no means complete assimilation.

Identity Actualization

THIS NEED for self-determination defines the third vertex that delimits the field of discourse. The question of the actualization of one’s own identity with its various aspects oscillated between a monolithic, unbreakable Germanness and the specific “self” in all its facets, as it is found in a qualitatively and quantitatively particularly pronounced form among the Transylvanian Saxons as well as the Danube Swabians: Where was one now foreign, where at home?

The Transylvanian-Saxon Germanist Karl Kurt Klein, who taught in Innsbruck after 1945, made a clear distinction between the “Heimat” left behind and the host country, resp. “Mutterland” Germany: in the “Fremde” (foreign land) the “Stamm” (tribe) of the Transylvanian Saxons was now, after 1945, “fighting for its existence.”²⁹ What used to serve the preservation of Germanness, “Volkszugehörigkeit” (the “consciousness of ethnicity”) among foreign peoples, now seemed to be relevant the other way around, in the German dominated context, for the preservation of collective character: “We have value and meaning only as Transylvanian Saxons, and where attempts are made to remove these barriers, a piece of emptiness remains.”³⁰ The concern to lose the specific character as *Auslandsdeutsche* (a “foreign German” group) among the autochthonous Germans in Germany (*Binnendeutsche*) is clearly expressed here.

In this context, the concept of *Landsleute* (compatriots) appears paradigmatic: for a “tribal” discourse inwardly, it functions integratively by demarcating the “self” in two respects³¹—the German people “as a whole” on the one hand, and the other ethnic groups in the region of origin on the other. Thus, the double special status becomes clear—that formerly in the region of origin, and that now, in Germany.

This rhetorical balancing act between local imprinting and belonging to an “overall Germanness” also finds its paradigmatic expression in the tree metaphor that has been tried and tested since the eighteenth century: the Southeast German Neustämme³² (new tribes, “Stamm” can also to be translated with “trunk”) of the Saxons³³ and the Swabians³⁴ invoked their specific historical imprinting, while at the same time signaling their belonging to an organic common. Despite the biologicistic background of this metaphor, it coherently describes migration and settling in a new home: the trunk and its kin can, as argued in several fragments of discourse, lead to “Einwurzelung”³⁵ (a (re) taking of roots) in foreign soil. On the other hand, such a root can also be “ruptured.”³⁶ With its trunks and ramifications, the tree metaphor thus fixes the “natural” belonging to Germanness, and with the motif of “transplanatability,” it shows that they can make themselves at home anywhere.

Thus, the question of belonging oscillated between arguments for the necessity and feasibility of a new beginning in Germany, and a medium-term hope of returning home: “We know how to continue to exist even without a homeland. It continues to exist in our hearts, which is the source of real culture.”³⁷ Heimat becomes a mobile, mobilizable and mobilizing essence: “Wherever in the world today Danube Swabians reshape their destiny, they carry their homeland on the Danube in their hearts as an undetachable possession.”³⁸

Types of Collective Personality Traits

IN THE field of discourse defined by questions of contingency, integration, and identity, we can identify a number of self-attributions whose self-assuring aspect did not represent a pure end in itself, but rather served the reorientation in the context of the comprehensive transformation and integration process of and into postwar German society. The network of topoi uncovered in the texts studied can be grouped into five clusters of collective personality traits (types).

Defenders of the Occident

WITH THE idea of having served the *antemurale christianitatis*, as a bulwark, a European reference is established *ab ovo*: the Southeast Germans share this with many other groups and nations;³⁹ in their self-description, however, this is only dealt with to a small extent: “Träger des Reiches” (the bearers of the empire) had been the Germans, and in those of them who had stood on the eastern border, “Ur-gesetz europäischer Ordnung” (the primordial rule of European order) had become most clearly apparent: “placed on the border, in the face of the completely foreign” they had had to stand up for Europe.⁴⁰

This historical motif, like all the types described here, leads directly to the postwar present. In particular, the “reconquest” or rather “liberation” of the Southeast by the Habsburgs made it possible to talk about the current situation of the “old homeland,” which was plagued by Stalinism. In this sense, the Ottomans and Islam were a permanent threat from the East and Southeast, which was continued *mutatis mutandis* with the Soviet Union. However, this did not lead to complete alienation: the landscapes of the southeast, civilized thanks to the “Sendlinge des Abendlandes”⁴¹ (agents of the Occident) and transformed into German soil, could continue to be seen as integrative members of the Occident—even if they were at the moment “groaning under the dust of the steppes.”⁴²

The timeless nature of the mission of the Germans in the Danube-Carpathian region also made it possible to harmonize the early narratives of the Transylvanian Saxons and the Danube Swabians, which actually took place in different eras: in both cases—once from the twelfth century and once from the seventeenth century—Germans were needed to “civilize” a depopulated landscape and to act as a bulwark against the East.⁴³ At the same time, the ambivalence with which the authors judged the West and its attitude, which they perceived as ungrateful, becomes clear: “We always felt attached to the Western world and protected it with us, even when it stood against us.”⁴⁴

Civilizers of the Southeast

ANOTHER IMPORTANT aspect of the historical narrative was the Southeast German self-attribution as a civilizing and ordering factor of a devastated landscape and its numerically small, non-German population. This task was described as owing not least to the cultural and economic superiority of the “self” over the other population groups.⁴⁵ Innovation enters the space via the active presence of the Germans; by making the landscape their own, domesticating it, and subsequently dominating it, it became “German.” In Zillich’s eulogy to the popular Banat-Swabian poet Adam Müller-Guttenbrunn (1852–1923), this argumentative strategy can be traced particularly well:

to honor a poet who was born outside Germany a hundred years ago, and yet on German soil, if a stretch of land may be so called, which Germans have cleared, to which alone they have

*infused the creative breath, given the cultural face, and which they have made their home with ever new sowings and harvests, with cities and countless villages.*⁴⁶

From this point of view, Müller-Guttenbrunn's region of origin, the Banat, becomes a

*sub-region of the vast German settlements that were established after the expulsion of the Turks in what was then Hungary, where, according to the poet, more Swabians eventually lived than in Württemberg.*⁴⁷

In an indirect way, "civilization through Germanization" ultimately means a lasting, at least moral incorporation of these landscapes into the Reich, which was actually only present there via the detour of the Habsburgs, when they wore the crown of the Holy Roman Empire and the Hungarian crown at the same time.

Victims of History

IN THE long-term perspective, the discourse producers' focus on the "sacrifice" demanded of the Southeast Germans over the centuries as a group exposed at the "protective wall of the Occident."⁴⁸ The motif of suffering for Europe regularly finds its transfer to the immediate past and present. As late as 1957, the well-known literary historian and publicist Paul Fechter, who was born in what was once West Prussia, complained about a Reich that "knows nothing of its children, whom it once gave up a long time ago," since it is not even informed about its own children from its time and their deeds and sufferings.⁴⁹ It becomes clear that the discourse producers demanded that Germany take responsibility for the German refugees and expellees, but also for those who remained in the "old homeland." An implicit accusation of also being responsible for the great rupture in 1944–1945 also resonates.

In general, an in-depth discussion on what happened in the Third Reich is underrepresented in the sources; in the few cases, the ethnic Germans become victims of their own people, for example, when Hermann Schlandt exceptionally addresses National Socialism in 1954: only the "aid imposed by the German people as a whole" had shattered the Southeast Germanness, "for the shield with which the Third Reich intended to protect the German people of the Southeast has laid itself upon them in the form of a coffin lid."⁵⁰ The gaze always remained focused on one's own group: Diplich wrote of the "blow of fate" of homelessness, which affected "all compatriots."⁵¹ Only the Germans from the region are meant here—other displaced persons are implicitly, but clearly, excluded.

The fact that the Germans in Romania were not expelled, but suffered other forms of collective punishment, appears ambivalent through the prism of the victim topos. On the one hand, the topic was brought into the present when Hans Hartl, in an analysis of the current situation of the Transylvanian Saxons in communist Romania, praised their "admirable sacrifices for the defense of the Occident" ("Abendland").⁵² On the other hand, he was also referring to the incorporation of the Southeast Germans into the Waffen-ss in World War II and their fight against communism. The anti-Ottoman

antemural christianitatis myth thus effortlessly found its new impact in the post-National Socialist, anti-Soviet discourse.

The strategy behind this argumentation aims at a materially as well as ideationally better treatment of the ethnic Germans who, as is well known, were not very welcome in war-ravaged Germany: With the manifold manifestations of the victim theme, the host and “mother country” Germany incurs a debt from “East and West” to the “expellees, fugitives, all in inadequate circumstances, cared for in part by the church and by the associations of the Landsmannschaft.”⁵³

Preservers of Identity

IN THE field of tension between being German and ethno-regional self-perception, a number of self-attributions oscillating between demarcation *from* and patronage *for* the regional co-inhabitants can be identified in the sources studied. This attitude was associated with a nationally conserving function; in particular, the originality presumed among the first groups, which had already been settled in the Middle Ages, was supposed to provide a kind of cultural refreshment for the German society with the “return” of the Southeast Germans to the “motherland:”

*The spirit of unconditional faith in their mission . . . could assert itself on its German island in the sea of foreigners only through a peculiar mixture with freedom from prejudice, conservative austerity, love of one’s homeland, and diligence.*⁵⁴

The ethnic isolation expressed by the island metaphor was interpreted in this sense as useful for the collective as a whole, when Gauß wrote of the “world of imagination” that had been preserved more primitively “in the realm of the ethnic” (“volkhaft”) than in the “German space, because it had to be demarcated from the innermost districts from the other-language environment if it was not to be buried.”⁵⁵ Under St. Stephen’s crown, it was necessary to overemphasize sovereignty in order to preserve “Bewusstsein der Volkszugehörigkeit” (the consciousness of ethnic belonging)—as Karl Kurt Klein put it most clearly.⁵⁶

From this point of view, the motif of the “Sonderart” gets its “all-German” dimension in addition to the ethno-confessional and regional character—the Southeast Germans saw themselves as renewers of the German society, which had been stirred up and disoriented by the upheavals of World War II, by bringing it a “primal variant of Germanness” preserved over the centuries.

The qualities and competences preserved by the Southeast Germans, which were to contribute to the rebuilding of German society, aimed, especially for Zillich, above all to preserve the “Occidental” character of the continent, which he saw threatened by the developments after 1945: “We want Europe to become as we always wanted it to be and for which our tribe suffered more than all the chatterers of the present.”⁵⁷

Experts in Coexistence

HOWEVER, THE statements determined by integration issues were not limited to guilt-based claims on the part of the Southeast Germans. Rather, this endogenous special discourse, as reflected in the *SODHB*, also pursued the goal of clarifying the special contribution that Germans from Southeastern Europe could make to postwar society. At that time, it was not so much the economic arguments that were ostentatiously put forward, especially in the later “Wirtschaftswunder” (economic miracle) discourse, but above all social competencies that were brought into play. Those “familiar with the East” (“Ostgewohnten”)⁵⁸ saw themselves as experts in organizing and ordering diversity: the “recognition of the different” was a historically acquired main characteristic of the Southeast Germans; at the same time, however, this specific *Lebenswelt* had closed itself off to outsiders and provoked misinterpretations, as Zillich argued in 1956. The Transylvanian Saxons had not granted civil rights to the “others” only out of “self-defense against alienation.” However, a “Western European common man” would anyway “suspect all three Transylvanian peoples as nationalistic;” they had rejected mixed marriages, linked their church affiliation with national sentiments and fought zealously.⁵⁹

In this concrete sense, which can be summarized with the motif *pluribus unitis*, the *Lebenswelt* of the Southeast Germans became a space of experience and a model of tolerant coexistence of collectives that were, however, sharply demarcated from one another. Hungarians and Romanians would have liked to live in the Transylvanian-Saxon sphere of influence, because they had already found there, even if without civil rights, the “Transylvanian-German trait of recognizing what was different.” The peoples in Transylvania would have lived in a “tense peace,” recognizing the respective characteristics (“Eigenwesen”). Especially when German protagonists were involved, life seemed to border on an idyll: the Saxon bishop would be greeted by the bells of all denominations during a visit to the village, and teachers taught in several languages.⁶⁰

However, the discourse producers did not always dwell on romanticization: Diplich described this regional communalization process as an emergence of “life communities.” This was by no means painless, however, but took the form of a “hard selection process” that he located between “landscape and history.”⁶¹

When Gauß emphasized that “a fertilizing influence from people to people” had been possible,⁶² and Diplich evoked the historical neighborhood of “many peoples, nations and denominations,” these realistic but admittedly idealized memories led back to the early 1950s: one wanted to “preserve this wealth of experience” as the group’s best inheritance in the difficult present, regardless of whether one remained in Germany or Austria or emigrated overseas.⁶³

These Germans, described as “understanding and tolerant,”⁶⁴ not only brought understanding for diversity lived in practice, but also saw themselves as leading democrats: in Transylvania, “as the first country in Europe, a truly democratic community was realized, centuries before Switzerland.”⁶⁵ Zillich, a few years before a supporter of a thoroughly authoritarian system, wrote in this context of a “free German republic,” which he compared to the Nordic “Thing” and which had been “incomprehensible” to

the Habsburgs.⁶⁶ Although these selected historical highlights were supposed to serve as a future model for the West,⁶⁷ Zillich could not do without criticizing the present in his “retro-vision” of democracy formulated in 1950, when he contrasted an idealized historical image with the Germany occupied by the victors:

*whereby the dazzling word democracy must be understood not as mass domination, demagoguery, or the figurehead of disguised backers, but simply as an order of equal freemen with a free sense of breeding.*⁶⁸

*The country was liberated from Islam forever, but we know all what can be understood by the term liberation.*⁶⁹

Thus, it was not by chance that the topos of freedom played a central role in this narrative: the authors of the postwar period evoked this freedom for the present, as they saw it discoverable in “deutsches Freitum” (German freedom) since the Middle Ages in the Danube-Carpathian region and as it seemed purposeful for the process of “Europeization”⁷⁰ in the sense of the German expellees, refugees and repatriates. Karl Kurt Klein provides the historical “raw material” for the formation of a free “Volksgemeinschaft” (national community) according to the Transylvanian-Saxon model:

*A vigorous peasantry, a defensible urban bourgeoisie, to which the old high nobility ceded its claim to leadership, while later the rank of the civil service nobility worked together with the educated classes brought up at German universities, that was the raw material of a people's community, with no master and no servant, as our Saxonian hymn so confidently puts it.*⁷¹

Conclusion

THIS STUDY was dedicated to the analysis of a specific, “Southeast German” postwar discourse in the early Federal Republic. The aim was to uncover, based on sources, the discourse strategies that were used to achieve the argumentation goals. These, in turn, serve as a basis for the political and social thought and action of the Southeast German ethnopolitical entrepreneurs, as they formed around the Südostdeutsche Kulturwerk and the *Südostdeutsche Heimatblätter*, among others.

For this purpose, the most important aspects of the historical context were described, a concrete field of discourse was delineated, and the central topoi were identified and bundled into five clusters of collective personality traits (types). The source corpus from which the analyzed discourse fragments were taken paradigmatically represents a special discourse that reflects the general postwar transformation until the late 1950s and breaks it down to the situation of Germans originating from Southeastern Europe in a postmigrant integration situation.

This Southeast German transformation discourse found its emotional and atmospheric dispositive in a state of collective liminality triggered by a compellingly felt and forced migration: with World War II, Germany, at first only an ideal “motherland,” had

also become a real host country, a “residential area;” *natio* and *patria* were now congruent for the Southeast Germans who had become residents in Germany. The Southeast Germans found themselves in a sort of limbo, which on the one hand made going back to their homeland in Romania seem unrealistic, but on the other hand also triggered the fear that integration into West German society would in the long term be associated with a loss of identity through complete assimilation. From this point of view, the need to preserve the ethnoregional-confessional “self,” to emphasize or create historical distinctive features for this purpose, can be seen as a direct reaction to this situation. The delimiting and preserving function that the emphasis on being German had held in the Hungarian and later in the Romanian context is now fulfilled by the compatriot principle: an idealization of the “old homeland,” to which the specific characteristics of the group (“Eigen-Sinn”⁷²) are owed, is a logical step.⁷³ The two categories of identification—“ethnoregional/confessional” and “völkisch-territorial/state”—are rarely in competition with each other, but represent complementary elements of a larger-volatile “identity package,” and at this moment they are being radically called into question.

The question of whether a return to the *Heimat* in the Danube-Carpathian region was possible (and if so, when?) provided the humus, as it were, for the field of discourse moving between three cornerstones that were to provide answers to further existential questions: Who are we? Who do we want to be? What can we do?

The mechanisms of self-attribution and self-assurance have always drawn on historical narrative fragments and were aimed, first, at dealing with the experiences of the war and the ensuing radical geopolitical uncertainty (contingency management). The second cornerstone was determined by the question of how the Southeast Germans could contribute to the establishment of the Federal Republic—how could the integration efforts succeed? What was the mandate for this? And thirdly, after leaving behind the *Heimat* and entering a new living environment in the new social context, identity actualizations had to be made.

The numerous relevant statements that can be isolated from the text corpus present themselves as an intertextual frame of reference, a network of themes and motifs that condition and complement each other.

Five types of collective personality attributions make the central aspects visible in the sense of the research question. In the historical long-term perspective, there were two main tasks one had to fulfill as an “agent of the Occident:” on the one hand, to act as *defenders of the Occident* on the southeastern border of Europe and thus to make a central contribution to the preservation of a continent shaped according to Western values, as was currently necessary against Bolshevism. On the other hand, one saw oneself in the historical task of *civilizers of the Southeast* and thus had not only to arrange the defense lines there, but with the appropriation of the settlement areas to Germanize them, as it were, for all times. Closely connected to these achievements is the tendency to describe oneself as *victims of history*: the sacrifices made as a defender were seen as necessary and honorable, while the situation of expulsion that one was currently facing was portrayed more as a predicament through no fault of one’s own, which had been partly caused by an ideologically unhinged “motherland” and from which not only the Southeast Ger-

mans who had arrived in the West suffered, but also all those who had remained behind the Iron Curtain in what was now the “old homeland.” This multiple victim status was seen as an obligation for the “inner-German” host society to take care of its “ethnic German” groups at home and abroad. Ultimately, the question of what qualities the Southeast Germans brought with them could contribute to the construction of a new West German. Ultimately, European society was also moving from an identity perspective: as *preservers of Germaneness*, it was the possibility of bringing a primal—in a sense, “innocent”—version of being German into German society. Somewhat more zeitgeisty and addressed to more critical recipients of the message, however, appears the quality of *experts in coexistence*, which should probably be seen as particularly promising in the newly emerging West that was beginning to Europeanize: while the idea of a conserved Germanness must have seemed abstract and, at least to observers distant from discourse, out of time, this expertise was demonstrably based on historical experience in the areas of settlement. At times, the discourse producers went a bit further and portrayed their Lebenswelt as an anachronistic model region for a democratic and free society.

Further studies will have to show which discourse strands and topoi manifested themselves prior to the period under investigation (and in what quality), and which ones found their continuation afterwards. It can be anticipated that the multiple “in-between-ness”—geographically, socially, culturally, historically—will continue to be an essential aspect of the discourse after this first, liminal phase.



Notes

1. Engl.: “Scattered into the flooded motherland.”
2. Heinrich Zillich, *Der Schicksalsweg der Siebenbürger Sachsen: Festansprache bei der 800-Jahrfeier der Siebenbürger Sachsen am 21. Oktober 1950 zu München* (Munich: Kultureller Arbeitskreis der deutschen Heimatverwiesenen in Bayern und Verband der Siebenbürger Sachsen in Deutschland, 1950), 28.
3. Since 1958: *Südostdeutsche Vierteljahresblätter* (SODVJB). During the period under review, Hans Diplich acted as editor at the Südostdeutsches Kulturwerk. The editorial board of the first issue included Adalbert Karl Gauss, Karl Kurt Klein, Otto Klett, Johann Liptak, Hans Prelitsch, Anton Valentin, Johannes Weidenheim, and Johann Weidlein. Cf. *Südostdeutsche Heimatblätter* 1, 1 (1952): 1. The biographies of the members of the founding network of the SOKW were made available as part of a research project at www.sokw.de.
4. Female actors or authors are not represented in the SODHB at this stage.
5. The term introduced by Rogers Brubaker is further developed for the case of Romanian Germans in Cristian Cercel, “Postwar (West) German-Romanian Relations: Expanding Brubaker’s Analytic Triad,” *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 23, 3 (2017): 297–317.
6. Cercel, 304–305.

7. Cf. Bundesministerium für Vertriebene, ed., *Die Eingliederung der Flüchtlinge in die deutsche Gemeinschaft: Bericht der ECA Technical Assistance Commission für die Eingliederung der Flüchtlinge in die deutsche Bundesrepublik* (Bonn: n.p., 1951); Friedrich Karl von Zitzewitz-Muttrin, *Vertriebenes Landvolk: Eingliederung als Dienst an der Heimat* (Hamburg: Agricola, 1952); James Koranyi and Ruth Wittlinger, “From Diaspora to Diaspora: The Case of Transylvanian Saxons in Romania and Germany,” *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 17, 1 (2011): 96–115.
8. Gerhard Seewann, *Geschichte der Deutschen in Ungarn*, vol. 2, *1860 bis 2006* (Marburg: Herder-Institut, 2012); Carl Bethke, “Gab es ‘Jugoslawiendeutsche’? Regionale Spezifika und nationale Integrationsprozesse deutscher Minderheiten im Gebiet des südslawischen Staates (1918–1949),” in *Vom “Verschwinden” der deutschsprachigen Minderheiten: Ein schwieriges Kapitel in der Geschichte Jugoslawiens 1941–1955*, edited by Christian Glass et al. (Ulm: Donauschwäbisches Zentralmuseum, 2016), 39–55; Florian Kühner-Wielach, “(Was) Minderheiten schaffen: ‘Eigen-sinnige’ Lebenswelten und ethnonationale Blockbildung am Beispiel ‘Großrumäniens,’” in *Zusammenbruch, Trauma, Triumph: Das Epochenjahr 1918 und sein Nachleben in Zentral-, Ostmittel- und Südosteuropa*, edited by Steffen Höhne (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2020), 327–362.
9. Hans Otto Göllner, *Die Katastrophe des Südostdeutschtums: Das Schicksal der südostdeutschen Volksgruppen im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Graz: Alpenland Buchhandlung Südmark, 1957), 5. This outlined space resembles the concept of “Carpathian Germans” (*Karpatendeutsche*) by the Austrian historian Raimund Friedrich Kaindl, whose definition, however, was hardly used after 1918.
10. Heinrich Zillich, “Siebenbürgen und Europa,” *SODHB* 5, 2 (1956): 83.
11. Zillich, *Schicksalsweg*, 25.
12. Zillich, “Siebenbürgen und Europa,” 83.
13. Karl O. Kurth, “Wesen und Bedeutung des landsmannschaftlichen Gedankens,” in *Wesen und Bedeutung des landsmannschaftlichen Gedankens*, edited by Göttinger Arbeitskreis (Munich: Christ Unterwegs, 1952), 10.
14. Hans Diplich, “Vorwort,” *SODHB* 2, 1 (1953): 4.
15. Adalbert Gauß, “Martyrer des Abendlandes,” in *Wir Donauschwaben*, edited by Hans Diplich and Hans Wolfram Hockl (Salzburg: Akademischer Gemeinschaftsverlag, 1950), 404.
16. Egon Lendl, “Von neuem Kolonistentum,” in *Wir Donauschwaben*, 394.
17. Heinrich Zillich, “Die Ostdeutschen als Schutzwall des Abendlandes,” in *Reden und Vorträge: Gehalten auf dem ersten Bundeskongreß der Vereinigten Ostdeutschen Landmannschaften (VOL) in Frankfurt am Main am 1. Juli 1951*, edited by Vereinigten Ostdeutschen Landmannschaften (Leer: n.p., 1951), 91.
18. Zillich, *Schicksalsweg*, 26.
19. Diplich, “Vorwort,” 3.
20. Wilfried Krallert, “Zur gegenwärtigen zahlenmäßigen Stärke des Deutschtums in und aus Südosteuropa,” *SODHB* 4 (1955): 89.
21. Hans Diplich, “Zum Geleit,” in *Wir Donauschwaben*, 8.
22. Zillich, *Schicksalsweg*, 24.
23. Zillich, “Schutzwall,” 91.
24. Gauß, 404–105.

25. Lendl, 394.
26. Diplich, "Vorwort," 3.
27. Zillich, *Schicksalsweg*, 26.
28. Diplich, "Vorwort," 3.
29. Karl Kurt Klein, "Sachsenbischof Friedrich Teutsch," *SODHB* 2, 1 (1953): 15; Zillich, *Schicksalsweg*, 25.
30. Klein, 16.
31. Cf. e. g. Diplich, "Vorwort," 3.
32. Zillich, "Siebenbürgen und Europa," 81.
33. See for example Klein, 15.
34. See for example Heinrich Zillich, "Der Kündler und Vorkämpfer des Südostdeutschtums," *SODHB* 1, 1 (1952): 8.
35. Zillich, "Kündler," 3.
36. Gauß, 404.
37. Zillich, "Schutzwall," 91.
38. Diplich, "Zum Geleit," 7.
39. Cf. Florian Kühner, "Die Pforten der Christenheit: Der Fall Konstantinopels und der Kampf gegen die Osmanen in den rumänischen Geschichtslehrbüchern 1942–2006," in *Matthias Corvinus und seine Zeit: Europa am Übergang vom Mittelalter zur Neuzeit zwischen Wien und Konstantinopel*, edited by Christian Gastgeber et al. (Vienna: OAW, 2011), 247–260; Paul Srodecki, "Antemurale Christianitatis," in *Religiöse Erinnerungsorte in Ostmitteleuropa: Konstitution und Konkurrenz im nationalen- und epochenübergreifenden Zugriff*, edited by Joachim Bahlcke, Stefan Rohdewald, and Thomas Wunsch (Munich: De Gruyter Akademie Verlag, 2013), 804–822; Małgorzata Morawiec, "Vom Topos zum Mythos: Das antemurale christianitatis-Verständnis bei Europa-Historikern," in *Gebrochene Kontinuitäten: Transnationalität in den Erinnerungskulturen Ostmitteleuropas im 20. Jahrhundert*, edited by Agnieszka Gąsior, Agnieszka Halemba, and Stefan Troebst (Cologne–Weimar–Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2014), 199–216.
40. Zillich, "Schutzwall," 92.
41. Zillich, "Siebenbürgen und Europa," 79.
42. Zillich, "Kündler," 3–4.
43. Zillich, "Kündler," 4.
44. Zillich, "Schutzwall," 90.
45. Lendl, 393.
46. Zillich, "Kündler," 3.
47. Zillich, "Kündler," 3.
48. Zillich, "Schutzwall," passim.
49. Paul Fechter, "Adolf Meschendorfer zum 80. Geburtstag am 8. Mai," *SODHB* 6 (1957): 68.
50. Hermann Schlandt, "Drei Vorkämpfer der deutschen Gemeinschaft im Südosten," *SODHB* 3 (1954): 120.
51. Diplich, "Zum Geleit," 8.
52. Hans Hartl, "Die Siebenbürger Sachsen im heutigen Rumänien," *SODHB* 2, 2 (1953): 18.
53. Gauß, 404–405.
54. Zillich, *Schicksalsweg*, 11.
55. Gauß, 208.
56. Klein, 16.

57. Zillich, *Schicksalsweg*, 26.
58. Zillich, *Schicksalsweg*, 26.
59. Zillich, “Siebenbürgen und Europa,” 81–82.
60. Zillich, “Siebenbürgen und Europa,” 81–82.
61. Diplich, “Vorwort,” 3.
62. Gauß, 208.
63. Diplich, “Zum Geleit,” 8.
64. Zillich, “Künder,” 11.
65. Zillich, *Schicksalsweg*, 14–15.
66. Zillich, *Schicksalsweg*, 18.
67. Zillich, “Siebenbürgen und Europa,” 80.
68. Zillich, *Schicksalsweg*, 14–15.
69. Zillich, *Schicksalsweg*, 17.
70. Zillich, “Künder,” 4.
71. Klein, 15.
72. Kühner-Wielach, *passim*.
73. Koranyi and Wittlinger, 18. On the topic of “Idealisierte Heimaten” (Idealized homelands) see also *Spiegelungen* 12, 2 (2017).

Abstract

“Hineingestret in überflutete Mutterland”

Contingency, Integration, and Identity in “Southeast German” Postwar Discourse

This study analyzes a specifically “Southeast German” as well as postmigrant arrival situation representative of postwar discourse in the early Federal Republic, as it emerged around the Südostdeutsche Kulturwerk and the *Südostdeutsche Heimatblätter*. The aim was to uncover, based on sources, the discourse strategies with which ethnopolitical entrepreneurs attempted to answer existential questions of collective reorientation: Who are we? Who do we want to be? What can we do? To this end, first, the most important aspects of the historical context were described: the historical premises, the various pragmatic levels of identification, and the factors of transformation, especially that of collective liminality. The Southeast Germans found themselves in a state of uncertainty which, on the one hand, made a return to the Heimat seem unrealistic, but, on the other hand, triggered the fear that integration into West German society would, in the long run, be associated with a loss of identity through complete assimilation. Second, a concrete field of discourse was defined, ranging between the cornerstones of contingency management, integration efforts, and identity actualization. Third, the central topoi were identified and bundled and analyzed into five clusters of collective personality characteristics (types): defenders of the Occident, civilizers of the Southeast, victims of history, preservers of Germaneness, and experts in coexistence.

Keywords

Südostdeutsche Heimatblätter, German emigration, self-perception, Germanness