

“Natives” of a “Home” (Un)known: Trips of Expelled and Forcibly Displaced Germans to Czechoslovakia and Their Perception of the Local Population in Expellee Periodicals

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Abstract

This study focuses on a specific type of tourism (so-called *Heimattourismus*), the main aim of which is to visit the countries, or better said, the localities that forcibly displaced Germans had to abandon after the end of World War II due to their forced migration, places they consider(ed) one of their “homes”. After the first such unofficial trips were made, it is possible to observe a gradual increase in group and individual tourism by forcibly displaced Germans to Czechoslovakia from the second half of the 1950s. In this article, we focus on one of the many subjects related to *Heimattourismus*, namely, Sudeten German tourists’ reflections about the local populations in their former homeland and the stereotypes constructed by them about these locals. We investigate this subject by analysing reports about such travel that were published by these forcibly displaced persons and expellees in their periodicals from the time such trips began until the mid-1960s.

Key words

Homeland tourism (*Heimattourismus*), German expellees and forcibly displaced persons, Czechoslovakia, expellee periodicals (*Heimatzeitschriften*)

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In the anthropology of tourism,¹ there is a specific sort called *homeland tourism* (*Heimattourismus*) where the grounds for visiting a country/location are that the actors, whether female or male,² (re)construct it through this travel as their *homeland*, or rather as one of their *homelands*. This traveling *home* takes many forms, and many specific branches of the study of tourism concentrate on it, whether as diasporic tourism, roots tourism, ethnic tourism, legacy tourism, personal heritage tourism, emigrant homecoming, homesick tourism, or Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) tourism (Marshall 2017: 214; Scholl-Schneider 2020: 127). Some of these anthropological branches study the *trips home* that are taken by the second or third generations of migrants, people who may have never personally known the reality of their (re)constructed *homeland*. However, returns by the *first generation* of migrants, the *generation of experience*, are also included in this category of *homeland tourism*. Such an individual does not enter the destination-space in the position of a *stranger*, as is usually the case for a first-time tourist trip, but as a *homecomer*. “To the homecomer home shows – at least in the beginning – an unaccustomed face. He believes himself to be in a strange country, a stranger among strangers, until the goddess dissipates the veiling mist. But the homecomer’s attitude differs from that of the stranger,” writes Alfred Schütz (1945: 369). The *homecomer*, unlike the *stranger*, anticipates a return to an environment with which he is intimately familiar thanks to his own lived experience. He then finds himself in a world that has undergone a transformation during his absence, on the one hand. It is no longer the same *safe, self-evident* place that he left, the one preserved in his memories. On the other hand, the *homecomer* is also not the same person he was when he left. The border between what is *close* and what is *distant*, what is *familiar* and what is *strange*, what is *old* and what is *new* appears to be blurred, and the area through which the *homecomer* moves during his trip can seem so mysterious as to be strange, despite his expectations. From this perspective, it is possible to also ascribe *homecomer* status to the forcibly displaced, expelled Germans³ who, after the Second World

1 In cultural and social anthropology and in ethnology, tourism is one of the relatively new subject areas of research, and academic interest has been gradually paid to it since the 1970s. For a general overview of the beginnings and development of the anthropology of tourism, cf. Schlehe (2003) or Půtová (2019).

2 For ease of reading we will not be including the female forms of nouns in the rest of this paper and will just use the generic masculine form to refer to both men and women.

3 Currently there does not exist a unified vocabulary for describing the displacement and expulsion of the German population from Czechoslovakia, but two terms above all appear repeatedly. The concept of *expulsion* (*Vertreibung*) cor-

War, had been forced to migrate from Czechoslovakia and later started, through group or individual tourism, to revisit their country of origin. Postwar Czechoslovakia was undergoing cultural, economic, ethnic and social transformations that were radical and, like Schütz’s *homecomer*,⁴ the forcibly displaced Germans experienced feelings of *difference* and *otherness* there in their new positions as *revanchists* and *tourists from the West*. Return always involves important impacts that are political, social, economic and cultural, as Ellen Oxfeld and Lynelny D. Long note (2004: 4).

We consider this study to be a contribution to research on the *homeland tourism* undertaken by Germans who had been forcibly displaced from Czechoslovakia, and it comprises an important component of research into tourism in Central and Eastern Europe (Hoenig – Wadle 2019: 13). From the comparatively broad spectrum of subjects on offer for research into this phenomenon,⁵ we are concentrating on the question of which groups in the imagined *native* population⁶ came into contact with these visitors

responds to the subjective view of those directly affected – i.e., the Germans who had to leave Czechoslovakia. This term can also be found referring to what is called *wild expulsion* (*wilde Vertreibung*), the supposedly disorganized, undisciplined course of that forced migration, and is also used as an overarching term for forced migration in the postwar period by researchers in Germany. On the other hand, in the Czech-language environment, the concept of *transfer* is used (in Czech, *odsun*, in German, *Abschub*), accenting the view that this was a justified process approved of by the powers in charge. This concept dates from that period and is also commonly used by Czech academics. In the rhetoric of the Czech-German commission of historians, we encounter a differentiation between the concepts of *expulsion* (*Vertreibung*), which references what is called the *wild expulsion*, and *forced displacement* (*Zwangsaussiedlung*), used to reference the process of *organized transfer*. In this study, we incline toward the use of the concept of *forced displacement* and its derivations, which we comprehend herein as an overarching denomination for both the process of the *organized forced displacement* and the *wild expulsion* of Germans from Czechoslovakia.

- 4 Sandra Kreisslová pointed this out in her study of *homeland tourism*, where she chiefly followed the relationship between those forcibly displaced from their erstwhile *homeland* on the basis of narrative interviews (cf. Kreisslová 2018a).
- 5 A fundamental work dedicated to the *homeland tourism* of forcibly displaced Germans is the monograph of the German ethnologist Albrecht Lehmann (1991). An overview of other literature on this subject has been written by Sarah Scholl-Schneider (2017: 238–241).
- 6 With a certain degree of exaggeration, we use the term *natives* to refer to the inhabitants of the border regions, or of what were called the *language islands* of Czechoslovakia to which the previously forcibly displaced Germans headed during their *homeland trips*. This concept is vague and is commonly used within the framework of the anthropology of tourism to designate inhabitants liv-

during their travels, and which conceptions and stereotypical images of these *others* have been (re)constructed thereby. Within the framework of the anthropology of tourism, we are working in the research field of investigating the conceptions held by tourists about the host population (and not just them), conceptions created through narratives, discourses and images, fantasies and myths, interpretative schema, ideas and convictions. These conceptions are comprehended as socially constructed, and through their circulation, stereotypical images are produced (Půtová 2019: 107). Hermann Bausinger (1988: 13) defines stereotypes as generalizations that are uncritical, the characteristic feature of which is their constancy and resistance to change. Stereotypes reduce complex social reality to make it easier for individuals to orient themselves in the world. As shared views among a certain group about itself (autostereotypes) or about others (heterostereotypes), they contribute to consolidating and reproducing group cohesion, and at the same time, through these views, a contrast to groups of those who are *different/strange* is emphasized – whether in an ethnic sense or involving some other parameter. Autostereotypes and heterostereotypes are closely connected, each invoking the other without having to be explicitly expressed (Hahn 2007: 15–24). The same principle applies to the case of the concept of *strangeness (Fremdheit)*. Contemporary anthropology/ethnology assumes these categories are relational – encountering something *alien*, or rather, experiencing *strangeness*, also implies acknowledging what is *familiar*. *Strangeness* is based on contact experience and is associated with the process of distinguishing and drawing a line between things that are *familiar, alike and close to each other* and those that are *strange, other and distant from each other* (Frank 2011: 84). During our study of the (re)constructed views of local groups in the country being visited, we will, therefore, not be able to avoid the conceptions produced by the actors/visitors about themselves, which can also depend on many stereotypes.

ing in the target destination, meaning they are the host country's *native-born* population. In the case of Czechoslovak postwar society, as a consequence of migration in the postwar period, this group of inhabitants was culturally and ethnically heterogeneous, considerably so, comprised chiefly of what were called *new settlers* hailing from other regions of the Czechoslovak Republic and also even from abroad. The inhabitants were predominantly of Czech and Slovak origin from the area of East and South-east Europe, Romani people, communist members of the Greek émigré community, or forcibly displaced Hungarians from southern Slovakia. As a consequence of previous migrations and the persecution that happened during Nazism, those who were called the *long-settled* population formed just a small proportion of the people residing there after the war (for more, see Arburg – Staněk 2010).

When applying these findings to *homeland tourism*, we ask which groups of inhabitants in the localities visited by Sudeten German⁷ tourists were reflected on by them during their Czechoslovak trips. How did they conceive of, grasp or view these *others*, what conceptions about them did they (re)construct, and concomitantly, what kind of self-evaluation and self-image did they form in the context of those conceptions? The question of mutual perceptions, i.e., how the local residents in turn saw the visitors, which is so current in the anthropology of tourism (Maoz 2006: 222), is something we will leave aside, given the nature of the sources we have selected.⁸ For the same reason we will leave aside another quite interesting area, how (the residents of) Czechoslovakia were perceived at that time by tourists from West Germany who were not from the Sudetenland.

Homeland tourism on the pages of forcibly displaced Germans' periodicals

The importance of forcibly displaced Germans' journalism to researching *homeland tourism* was highlighted in one of her more recent studies by Sarah Scholl-Schneider (2017), who concentrated on analysing reports from trips to the *old homeland* from the mid-1950s to the 1990s using the example of two magazines produced by Saxons from the Transylvanian Region of Romania. In addition to that paper, we are also using a piece by Andrew Demshuk (2011) for the sake of comparison and contextualization in which he concentrates on reports about visits to Poland by Germans who had been forcibly displaced from Silesia. Likewise, Julia Wagner (2017) researched the reports from trips taken by forcibly displaced Germans from both East and West Germany who visited Poland, the Soviet Union or Czechoslovakia from the 1950s to the mid-1970s and then either published their reflections as books, magazine articles, memoirs or shared them in interviews with the author.

For our purposes of studying intergroup contacts and the conceptions about *others* associated with them, or conceptions about one's own group, we chose the forcibly displaced Germans' publications that gradually came into existence beginning in the late 1940s in the western occupied

7 While we will refer to the concept of the *Sudetenland* and its derivations from this point forward without the use of italics, we are aware that this is a constructed concept. For more on its birth, development and instrumentalization cf., for example, Weger 2008: 30–51. In other cases we are sticking to indicating constructed concepts or those we are relativizing by italicizing them without parentheses throughout this piece.

8 This question was partially elaborated by Stanislav Burachovič (2002).

zones, chiefly in the Federal Republic of Germany as of 1949.⁹ Through a combination of qualitative content and discourse analyses, we follow the content of media reports about trips to Czechoslovakia published by Sudeten German tourists in regionally-focused periodicals from the beginning of their publication until the mid-1960s. We are concentrating above all on local residents as they are portrayed in these writings, which we interpret in the context of the discourses and ideologies produced in the forcibly displaced Germans' environments and then more broadly in what was then West German or Austrian society.¹⁰ Specifically, we concentrated on the biweekly published by forcibly displaced Germans from Cheb (in German, Eger), the *Egerer Zeitung*, which came out in 1950 and continued the interwar periodical of that same name, or rather continued the *Egerer Anzeiger* which began publication in 1846.¹¹ As well as the Cheb newspaper, we also concentrated on newspapers by Germans originally from Chomutov (in German, Komotau) and its environs in North Bohemia, specifically the *Komotauer Zeitung – Heimat-Chronik* published as a monthly from 1951.¹² Two other periodicals targeted more than one *district of the homeland* (*Heimatkreis*) simultaneously. The monthly *Mei' Erzgebirg'*, the first issue of which was published in October 1954, was intended for readers from the Jáchymov (in German, Sankt Joachimsthal), Přísečnice (in German, Preßnitz) and Vejprty

9 The most recent contribution to the research into forcibly displaced Germans' periodicals is the publication *Heimatzeitschriften* (Kasten – Fendl 2017).

10 Reports from trips and travelogues are traditionally considered in anthropology/ethnology as one of the main sources for learning about the conceptions held about *others/strangers* (Jeggler 1987: 16–17). For a more nuanced picture, the chosen reports from these trips published in the Sudeten German media could have been augmented by other sources describing travels to the *old homeland*, such as interviews or written recollections, but we gave up on that option. Such sources were partially used in a study by one of the authors of this paper (Kreisslová 2018a). In addition, their use seemed slightly problematic to us given the fact such recorded oral sources have been produced in recent decades, i.e., the speakers are reflecting back on trips from the 1950s and 1960s with a delay of 40, 50 or 60 years.

11 The weekly *Egerer Anzeiger* was renamed *Egerer Zeitung* in 1868.

12 This monthly was formed in 1951 by merging the *Heimat-Chronik des Kreises Komotau* with the *Komotauer Zeitung – Organ der Heimatvertriebenen aus Komotau und dem Erzgebirge*, the independence of which lasted just a few months from May to November 1951, when it merged with the *Heimat-Chronik*. In the case of the *Heimat-Chronik*, in 1950 that became the new name for the circular *Am Quell der Heimat – Der Brief für den Heimatkreis Komotau* which first served above all to connect those forcibly displaced from the Chomutov/Komotau area around the country – its more extensive distribution in print form dated to 1947. The magazine *Das junge Komotau* began publication in 1948 and became incorporated into the *Heimat-Chronik* in 1950. Cf. Kreisslová 2014: 150–151.

(in German, Weipert) areas. The monthly *Der Südmährer*, targeting those from South Moravia, was established in 1949 and included four areas from the start – Mikulov (in German, Nikolsburg), Nová Bystřice (in German, Neu Bistritz), Slavonice (in German, Zlabings) and Znojmo (in German, Znaim). The last periodical selected is the *Brünner Heimatbote*, a periodical produced by forcibly displaced Germans from Brno (in German, Brünn) and its environs that was published between 1949–1965, the period under review, as a biweekly.

In all of these publications we identified as an important component the articles covering political, economic, social and cultural life and transformations in Czechoslovakia, or rather, such changes in the regions, towns and villages followed by these magazines after 1945. Such reporting also includes accounts of the trips taken by the forcibly displaced readers of these publications to once again lay eyes on their places of origin, reports which their editors decided to publish. These magazines even document the first illegal trips across the border that were made immediately after the forced displacements happened. One example of such a report is an article published by the editors of a magazine for forcibly displaced Germans from Chomutov on the basis of information from an anonymous correspondent who visited there in 1950 and filed a quite unflattering portrayal of that city and the life there, a perspective that is also symptomatic of later writings (... und aus Komotau 1950). This was a classic “inspection” report (cf. Fendl 1998: 86), in which the appearance of the city is reported on, chiefly how the buildings are being demolished and are dilapidated. Of the new constructions there, the author intentionally notices (or the editors of the newspaper who prepared the correspondent’s report for publication notice, it is not possible to determine exactly who was responsible) just the new memorial honouring the victims of the burning of Lidice, which the editors then discredit by asking how many such “Sudeten German Lidices” were committed by the Czechs, claiming for themselves the role of the *victim* in the historical narrative about Czech-German coexistence.¹³ The

13 *Lidice* routinely appeared as a motif in the publications edited by Sudeten Germans – the violence committed against Germans after 1945 was compared to *Lidice*, as in the case of the contribution cited above. It was possible to encounter such comparisons during the time of what was called the wild expulsion, specifically in association with reactions to what was called the *Postoloprty massacre* of the Germans and spoken of as “the second (German) Lidice” (Staněk 2005: 115). Comparisons were also exploited with what were referred to as the “events of March 1919,” which had immediately become a subject of German nationalists’ propaganda after they transpired, and their instrumentalization in political terms continued even after the Second World War (e.g., references to 4. März 1949). The phrase *the events of March* was used to

depiction of Chomutov as a place of *retrogression* is achieved by the author describing the Czechs' low standard of living and inability to afford free market goods.¹⁴ The institution of compulsory employment¹⁵ was criticized, chiefly in relation to women, who reportedly are not "enthusiastic about their 'liberation' at all," as the text states.

In the magazines that we followed it is possible to find many similar reports that assess developments in Czechoslovakia negatively, comprehending them as a consequence of the forced displacement of the Germans and the communist regime's establishment. Along with these reports, a conception of the disappointment and dissatisfaction of the citizens of Czechoslovakia with their liberation was abundantly disseminated, a conception of their hope of being saved by the West or even their desire to return to the Czech-German coexistence of the interwar period (cf. also Kreisslová 2014).¹⁶ The above-mentioned article, therefore, in terms of content, does not deviate from the discourse that prevailed among the Sudeten Germans at that time, based as it was on cultivating the forcibly displaced Germans' exclusive position as *victims of expulsion*, a position which, within the frame of reference of the Cold War conflict, was simultaneously transformed into the position of the *victors* who are now standing on the *right* side of the Iron Curtain. This *exchanging* of roles copied events that were underway throughout society which, in West Germany, had felt itself the *victim* of the war and of postwar shortages, but subsequently assumed the position of the *victor* by orienting itself toward the economic growth associated with the West. Those expressing anti-communist attitudes in these forcibly displaced Sudeten German magazines during the period under review based their arguments on the desire, expressed frequently, to return, something that allegedly could only happen after the communist system was defeated. Of

indicate the demonstration by Germans in the Czech lands who, in March 1919, referencing their right to self-determination, protested against the inclusion of the border (Sudeten) areas into the newly-created Czechoslovak state and demanded they be allocated to German Austria. During the demonstration, clashes happened with security forces and lives were lost. For these events and their interpretation by the Sudeten Germans, see Weger 2006.

14 In addition to the rationing system, there was a free market in place until the monetary reform of 1953, for more see Průcha et al. 2009: 280–284.

15 Compulsory employment as a universal principle in Czechoslovakia was established by *Decree no. 88/145 Coll., on general work duties* and was also later anchored in the communist Constitution (*Constitutional Act no. 150/1948 Coll.*).

16 For more, see Nosková – Kreisslová 2017; the tendency to provide quite consistent assessments of the state of the homeland as compared to the interwar state of affairs, with a predominance of negative commentaries about the present, is also significant in the reports by forcibly displaced Germans from other countries (cf. Wagner 2017: 76–77).

course, the above-mentioned article was exceptional, both in the year of its publication and in the fact that it is a report from a *clandestine* trip, of which, for comprehensible reasons, not many were ever sent to the editors.

After this pioneering period of travel that was unofficial, from the second half of the 1950s it is possible to trace the gradual growth in group and individual tourism by the forcibly displaced Germans to Czechoslovakia, in part a response to the relaxing of Czechoslovak policy on the industry of travel and to foreign nationals being granted visas (Rychlík 2007: 53), which itself was associated with international relations undergoing a phase of thaw.¹⁷ The economic situation of the Sudeten Germans was improving and also played a role, as it reflected the existential stabilization of the society in West Germany that was experiencing what was called the *economic miracle*. Sudeten German tourism – which from the perspective of the forcibly displaced was at least a temporary return to their dreamed-of land of origin – was based on the West German foundational myth of economic growth, which was ascribed to West Germans’ own diligence and productivity, the main symbol of which became owning one’s own personal vehicle (Münkler 2017: 353, 357; cf. also Krauss – Scholl-Schneider 2011: 21). As one author documenting his travel to the *old homeland* aptly noted: “The highway beyond Poysdorf, which is almost never used otherwise, is quite busy today, automobile after automobile, everybody heading for the border. Young people, proud automobile owners, are driving their parents home.” (Fahrt über die Grenze 1964: 35)

According to period statistics, tourists from Austria and the Federal Republic of Germany clearly dominated among the visitors from what were called capitalist countries after 1955 (Mücke 2017: 105). Although it is not possible to establish a precise proportion of how many forcibly displaced Germans were among those visitors (Ibid.: 55), it is possible to presume from the high number of reports about these trips in the forcibly displaced Germans’ press that their proportion was decidedly not marginal. Editors of forcibly displaced Germans’ magazines responded to this strong growth in *homeland tourism*. For example, the monthly *Der Südmährer* pointed out in January 1964 that the editors had received such a large number of letters

17 This issue was also echoed in the pages of these publications – see, for example, Tschechisches Tauwetter 1964: 63, where the author mentions conditions easing for visits to Czechoslovakia by tourists from West Germany, including more rapid handling of visas, the opportunity to freely move around Czechoslovakia (without surveillance), etc. The same applies, however, to the Saxons of Transylvania, for example – from the beginning of the 1960s Transylvania too was “flooded by a regular stream of visitors” (Scholl-Schneider 2017: 243, 245).



Figure 1 Owning an automobile became a symbol of economic growth in West Germany. According to the Sudeten German tourists, this car caused a sensation among local populations on Chomutov's main square. Source: Komotauer Zeitung – Heimat-Chronik 1957, 11, 11: 125.

from those visiting South Moravia that they could not publish them all (F. B. 1964). During the period under review, the number of reports from such trips actually increases meaningfully, overshadowing the otherwise frequent reports on visits to different destinations on the Austrian and German side of the border with Czechoslovakia, from where the forcibly displaced used telescopes to look at their *lost homeland* (*verlorene Heimat*), frequently watching the process of the demolitions of houses and different buildings or entire municipalities falling into disrepair through lack of repopulation or being entirely removed so as to better guard the border on the Czechoslovak side. Articles about excursions that were organized or family outings near the border, from which it was possible to look at the longed-for *homeland*, understandably appeared in the magazines made by and for forcibly displaced Germans from regions neighbouring what were called the capitalist countries after the war, which in our sample are the *Der Südmährer* and *Egerer Zeitung*. At those locations, observation towers would also be built in the future (e.g., “Steht meiner Heimat Haus...” 1961, for more on what is called border looking – Komska 2015: 221–233).

According to the publishers of the monthly *Der Südmährer* (F. B. 1964), who responded to the above-mentioned *boom* in forcibly displaced Germans' tourism, all of the reports from trips to Czechoslovakia were connected with a feeling of “deep disappointment” over the state of the *homeland*, and it is therefore a question whether the expelled might have felt some



Figure 2 This observation tower in the Bavarian municipality of Neualbenreuth made it possible for forcibly displaced Germans to take a look at their *old homeland*. Source: Sandra Kreisslová, 2018.

need to destroy their own memories when confronted with reality. These reports encourage Sudeten German visitors not to humiliate themselves by asking for an opportunity “to tour your own property, whether from the foreigners’ services or those who are now spreading out in our homes”. This apparently anti-Czech attitude was then amplified through an appeal for anti-communist mobilization that not only supported the assumption of Sudeten German return, but also became its presumptively causal condition – in the text, all forcibly displaced persons who return to Czechoslovakia are spoken of only as “free people” and not as “collective farm slaves”.¹⁸ In the context of *homeland tourism*, moreover, it was possible to cast forcibly displaced Germans in the role of exploited rich tourists from the West who are, according to the editors of *Der Südmährer* magazine, mere bearers of hard currency in the eyes of the Czechoslovak authorities. In these writings, this accented asymmetry between the countries’ economies, divided as they were by the Iron Curtain, reflected the discourse of the day in the society of West Germany, which defined itself in opposition to communism and for which the East symbolized *backwardness* and *barbarism*, following the model of Cold War propaganda (cf. Wippermann 2007: 56–60, e-book). At the same time, this article also criticized the behaviour of Sudeten Ger-

18 According to Demshuk, when representatives of forcibly displaced Germans’ organizations deterred their peers from traveling to the *old homeland*, it was associated above all with the fact that those who undertook such trips then stopped longing to return (Demshuk 2011: 85–86).

man tourists who buy up everything on the shelves in local shops and eat up everything from the local restaurants. The editors, therefore, were taking an opportunity to cultivate their readers/tourists and encourage them to behave with “less curiosity and instead, more dignity and restraint”.¹⁹ However, behind this critique it is again possible to read the ethnocentric reproduction in these magazines of the images of the *civilized, rich* West and the *impoverished, primitive* East, which consolidated the power relationship between the superior Sudeten German/Western tourists and the Czechoslovak, Eastern Bloc, inferior locals.

It has to be added that besides such texts (like those mentioned above) that deterred and warned the forcibly displaced Germans away from traveling to Czechoslovakia, there were also many that contained information and advice necessary to traveling and staying there, including offers from various travel agents organizing bus excursions there. The editors of the magazine *Mei' Erzgebirg'* even asked their readers to send them reports documenting such trips, from which can be deduced the importance ascribed to them (Schriftleitung 1956). After all, if “one of the former neighbours went home, a part of the community went with him” says Elisabeth Fendl (1998: 88). It was an event of significance not just for the travellers themselves, but also for the community of forcibly displaced Germans as a whole. Readers who for different reasons did not take such a trip were able to find information in the reports about what their home town or village looked like now, and it was not exceptional for them to even read about the state of their former homes – the authors of these contributions quite frequently also described their acquaintances' and neighbours' former houses.

The desire to experience authenticity as one of the main reasons for modern tourist travel (Půtová 2019: 92) also applies to these *homeland journeys*. An important aspect of *homeland tourism* was nostalgia (for the *authentic homeland*). Driven by feelings of nostalgia for their erstwhile *homeland*, Sudeten German tourists looked for the idealized, prior world that they constructed from group memory during their Czechoslovak visits. Sabine Marschall (2017: 220) aptly comments that for returnee tourists, what is important is not the “tourist gaze”²⁰, but the “memory gaze” – “the constant search for the most ordinary, familiar traces of their remembered past”.

19 Similarly, see also Scholl-Schneider 2017: 248 (the tone, however, was somewhat different) where editors warned against forcibly displaced *homecomers* “showing off” in front of their friends and loved ones in Transylvania and bragging about what they had acquired in Germany, urging them to take into account those who had to remain in the *old homeland*.

20 A reference to a book by John Urry, who understands this gaze as looking for difference, the unfamiliar and the unusual (Urry 1998).

Original residences and their surroundings became a “locus of longing” (*Sehnsuchtsort*) in which what clearly manifests is the constant interplay between imaginary and material space (Hoenig – Wadle 2019: 28). However, the imagination of the *homeland* and memories of it, according to most reports from trips published during the period under review, do not correspond to what was encountered by the Sudeten German visitors during their travels. The assumed fear of disappointment and of not finding the *authentic homeland* could have also led to some forcibly displaced Germans making the decision to never travel to Czechoslovakia,²¹ while a single and never repeated trip could also function as a way to cope with their experience of trauma and to close that chapter in their lives. Despite the predominantly negative media representation of Czechoslovakia in the magazines reviewed (cf. Nosková – Kreisslová 2017, which discusses reports from trips taken in the 1950s in more detail), some forcibly displaced Germans returned to the country regularly, and for some of them and their descendants Czechoslovakia, or rather the Czech Republic, has been retransformed from a “locus of longing” to their “home away from home” for vacationing (*Urlaubheimat*) (Lehmann 1991: 114–124; Meindl 2019: 77).²²

Conceptions and stereotypical images of those others – between contempt, compassion and nostalgia

Tourism is inherently linked to meeting *others* – local residents. In the forcibly displaced Germans’ reports from their travels, their reflections about the inhabitants were of secondary importance; what was primary was an assessment and description of the state of the physical space (the houses where they were born, churches, squares, cemeteries, etc., cf. also

21 There was more than one reason why some Sudeten Germans refused to travel to their former *homeland*: Their traumatic experiences from the postwar period; or their waiting first for an apology from the Czechoslovak state for the wrongdoings committed (Eisch 2002: 31); or their fear of possible prosecution on Czechoslovak territory for having been a member in a Sudeten German organization (Kreisslová 2018a: 160); and lastly, complications connected with compulsory visas and the need to exchange money, despite the fact that from the late 1960s travel was simplified thanks to the launch of the normalization of relations during the period of so-called *Ostpolitik* (Scholl-Schneider 2014: 158).

22 The fact that all three options had already become subjects of discussion by the beginning of the 1960s is testified to by an article in the *Brünner Heimatbote* in which the author describes the dilemma of whether to take a trip to Czechoslovakia or not and unequivocally argues in favour of traveling *home*, as “whoever actually loves their homeland will return again and again even if by now it is just a modest reflection of its past glory” (Markgraf 1965: 145).

Wagner 2017: 80). Despite this, it is possible in the sources that we analysed to identify three ethnic groups of local populations – Czechs, Germans who never left, and Romani people – to whom the Sudeten Germans traveling to Czechoslovakia paid attention in their reports on those trips.²³

Images of Czechs

Czechs, in the reports about such travel, are the most represented, which is understandable, as the Sudeten German tourist trips targeted the Czech lands. Moreover, for centuries Czechs have formed, for the Germans in the Czech lands, a *significant other*. In the above-mentioned examples it was possible to identify two main representations of Czech inhabitants in the forcibly displaced Germans' journalism from this period.

In the first of these representations, the Czechs are typically depicted negatively, whether as those who committed postwar injustices, or as inhabitants who have no relationship to their new *home*, who are indifferent and insensitive to it, and who therefore are to blame for the cheerless state in these areas of former German settlement. In this context, the dichotomy of today (*the decline*) vs. yesterday (*the golden age*) is in operation. So, for example, author M. K. writes the following in a contribution about a visit to Dobré Pole (in German, Guttenfeld) in the Mikulov district:

“Ever since the Iron Curtain opened up a bit on the border of South Moravia, many countrymen have already visited our beloved Guttenfeld, afflicted by their curiosity and nostalgia for the homeland. Their disappointment, however, has been terrible. Instead of a clean community of nice estates, they found just a ravaged municipality, the consequence of the indifference and insensitivity of those living there today. There are no more barns, many farms have disappeared, the wilderness is spreading through the very centre of the township...”
(M. K. 1964)

In the second example, the Czechs are stylized into the role of the communist regime's victims, reflecting the anti-communist attitudes described above. One correspondent reporting on his trip to Znojmo paints the local residents as follows:

23 We are choosing to deal with ethnicity for the absolutely basic reason that the categorization of persons in such publications is chiefly undertaken on the basis of ethnicity or nationality.

“And the population? Allegedly, Žnaim has 25,000 inhabitants again today. That cannot be believed, though. On the streets, very few people can be seen, flitting through the town silently and reservedly. The former local residents are almost nowhere to be seen at all; Germans are a rare sight. Nevertheless, they greet us nicely. There are more complaints to hear than news that would be pleasant. People have succumbed to circumstantial pressures. To make a living, both husband and wife have to work hard. And the children? They are left to the influences of the schools – which are naturally communist-oriented. It is not especially necessary to stress that in such conditions there is almost no family life. There is no rest in the evening: There are meetings with monitored participation, ‘volunteer work brigades’ and such take place on a daily basis. People avoid chatting about politics, out of fear. Saving money is out of the question...” (K. W. 1959)

Such compassionate descriptions of the burdensome situation in which the Czechs had ended up because of their new political arrangements (according to the forcibly displaced Germans) were published elsewhere along with acrimonious remarks either from the authors themselves or the editors: “Even the Czechs got no joy out of moving into a nest that was already feathered for them, they’re just as poor as the Germans who have remained there still” (“... Die Häuser” 1957), a Komotau newspaper reported. In the narrative of Czech-German relationships based on this dichotomous vision of *victims* and *perpetrators*, therefore, even Czechs can play the role of *victims*, but the meaning of their *victimhood* is simultaneously relativized because they deserve their destiny as a punishment for their bad deeds, i.e., their expulsion of the Germans.

The image of the Czechs, however, cannot be divided across the board into just these two different (and mutually complementary) narratives. The Czechs, in these travel reports, are further divided into different categories that are seen in different ways. We can demonstrate this through the reports from the *Brünner Heimatbote* from the first half of the 1960s. Czechs as a group monolith are further articulated into categories that are socio-professional, and the correspondents also distinguish between *ordinary* people and the *powerful*, with a special category for *Czech acquaintances and friends* – i.e., mostly acquaintances and friends from the days before the forced displacement. To generalize, it is possible to say that from the beginning of the 1960s, contributions appear in which the Czech population even acquires certain characteristics that are positive. However, to correctly comprehend this, such pieces must also be seen in the context of the news reporting as a whole. Frequently this is about one fact that is

positive in a report full of negatives – which, moreover, is often framed as the exception confirming the rule.

If we divide up these reports according to the Czech groups in the population whom they are about, then the first people whom Sudeten German tourists encountered during their travels were the customs and passport officials at the borders with Austria or Germany. The depictions of these border checks differ considerably – some correspondents complain of bullying and unnecessarily lengthy inspections (Schuhmayer 1965: 534), but from the beginning of the 1960s it is also possible to find reports that, on the contrary, acknowledge that the checks have become faster, with gratitude, and above all that customs officials are showing a certain helpfulness. Even their knowledge of the German language tends to be mentioned (A. G. 1965: 642). One author of reports from travels to Czechoslovakia mentioned with a certain kind of admiration that the customs officials were greeting them by saying “*Nazdar*” (a casual greeting in Czech) because he had anticipated “a greeting that would conform to political lines” (A. G. 1965: 642).

A second group encountered by returning Sudeten Germans were the employees of hotels and restaurants.²⁴ Again, they appear in reports most frequently from the beginning of the 1960s and their assessment is mostly positive. The traveller K. K., in his article *Brünn 1964*, gives high praise to the friendly reception he received at Brno’s Grandhotel and to the brilliant German spoken by the receptionist and other staff, not failing to add that “the personnel are nice and cleanly dressed”, with waiters even wearing tuxedos, and that there are German-language menus (K. K. 1965: 147). This is not an isolated report from this time (the hotel is highly praised also by Moder 1965: 414, 416 and others). Helpfulness, knowledge of German, and tidiness are facts that come to the forefront, and not just in this context. These images create a dichotomy – in this case, with the year 1945, the days of the Second World War. Back then, the Czechs hated the Germans (and thanks to their language, they could be distinguished easily from others – language here functions as a basic distinctive sign), but now the Germans are becoming welcomed even though (or precisely because) they are, once again, easy to recognize through their language. However, at the same

24 The reports about these hotels and people are quite interesting – for those visiting Brno, one component of the pieces became lauding the new Hotel International, which opened in 1962. This was not just about its quite modern equipment, corresponding to standards in the West, but also about the excellent food quality and, from the perspective of travellers from the West, the affordability of both the accommodation and the meals. Reports of high prices at these or other hotels are exceptional in this context (Reisebericht 1964).

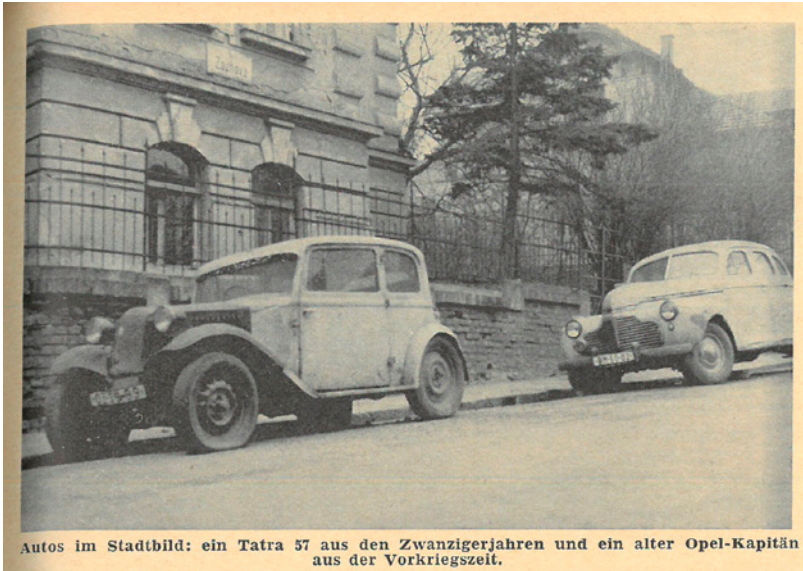


Figure 3 The much-lauded Hotel International on the front page of the *Brünner Heimatbote*. Source: *Brünner Heimatbote* 1963, 15, 12: 313.

time, most correspondents do not forget to stress that dining or spending the night at the hotel is not affordable for locals (i.e., the Czechs) (e.g., Moder 1965: 416).²⁵

The next group is that of *ordinary* people on the street, or perhaps former acquaintances and friends from the interwar and wartime years. In *Brünner Heimatbote* the elegance and exclusivity of Brno’s hotels contrasts sharply with the description of the everyday lives of *ordinary* people. Correspondents chiefly notice their clothing, employment rate, transportation methods, the availability of goods and services, and sometimes even cultural events. Facts about consumerism are what is mainly at issue. Here the comparisons for the Czechs mostly turn out negative – in the days of the *economic miracle* in West Germany, Sudeten German tourists saw the living standards of the Czech population as deficient. The people here are “poorly dressed” (A. G. 1965: 643), or in the eyes of Sudeten German / West German tourists, dressed in an old-fashioned way (Reisebericht 1964); the men

²⁵ In Czechoslovakia, the price range (converted into the West German mark) is a favourite general component of these reports from trips there (mentioning the amounts of salaries and the cost of gasoline, accommodation in hotels, basic groceries, consumer goods...).



Autos im Stadtbild: ein Tatra 57 aus den Zwanzigerjahren und ein alter Opel-Kapitän aus der Vorkriegszeit.

Figure 4 The antiquated fleet of vehicles – a Tatra 57 from the 1920s and an old Opel Kapitän from the interwar period. Source: Brüner Heimatbote 1964, 16, 13: 355.

do not wear white business shirts and ties (K. K. 1965: 368). They are startled by the employment of women in professions that seem “unfeminine” to the tourists (for example, as a gas station attendant – Moder 1965: 417, or as the driver of a tram – Markgraf 1964: 355). There is a lack of opportunity to go to a restaurant for “*Gabelfrühstück*” (i.e., brunch), and there are no “idlers” (“*Müssiggänger*”) in the streets, as everybody has to be employed (Markgraf 1964: 525). The descriptions of Brno residents’ personal vehicles and of Zelný trh, Brno’s quite famous open-air market, paint their subjects in the very worst light. The vehicles on the road are, according to the vast majority of correspondents (most of whom are men, it must be said) impossibly antiquated (Markgraf 1964: 356) and in comparison with Austria or Germany, the amount of bustling traffic is small.

In addition, the correspondents never fail to point out that buying a car is, for most Czechs, beyond their (financial) possibilities (Reisebericht 1964). The Zelný trh open-air market on the square of that same name, a Brno icon,²⁶ is mostly described as “desolate and empty” (Moder 1965: 441), or the goods being sold are described as just “potatoes, apples” which are of inferior quality to boot, with no tropical fruit anywhere in

26 On Zelný trh and its importance in Brno, see Nosková 2010, Nosková 2013.



Figure 5 Zelný trh, the author of the report on his trip there, and his companion. Source: *Brüner Heimatbote* 1965, 17, 9: 259.

sight (Reisebericht 1964), or it is reported that people stand in line for potatoes there²⁷ (K. K. 1965: 154).

In summary, it is possible to say that all of the descriptions mentioned above suggest one thing, that Brno as a city lacks a certain interwar urbanity, a big-city flair that the correspondents enjoy recalling and imagine as a *golden age*. In these descriptions from their travels they spare no praise on the areas developing such urbanity – be they the above-mentioned new hotels, the much more developed network of tram lines and mass transit in general compared to the interwar and war years (Markgraf 1964: 355; K. K. 1965: 148), or Brno’s Engineering Fair.²⁸

27 However, it is necessary to note that the author immediately adds that this was the only such line he experienced in Brno. It is clear, therefore, that he had anticipated many more of them.

28 When it comes to their choice of the facts to write about, many of the tourists who filed reports about Brno were representatives of professions in technology (engineers) who travelled to Brno as representatives of West German firms during Brno’s Engineering Fair. It is interesting that construction and the development of industry is also assessed positively in some of the reports by returnees to Silesia (Demshuk 2011: 97).



Figure 6 Technical innovations in Brno – new trams that “travel at up to 70 km/h”. Source: *Brünner Heimatbote* 1960, 12, 11: 309.

These publications also reflect upon the influence of the political situation on the Czech population’s everyday life. However, this is done much more boldly in the items reprinted from other newspapers covering what it is like for the Czech population living in their communist “paradise” (Schuhmayer 1965: 534) – and here irony is an abundantly exploited instrument in terms of writing style. All of these authors follow the religious situation (it is possible to find reports on churches that are open and packed full of visitors – e.g., Moder 1965: 438, as well as reports that a church wedding is being held with just two people in attendance and is therefore “poor” – Markgraf 1964: 300, or that churches are closed – Markgraf 1964: 300). This image is also well-known from other magazines published by Germans who were forcibly displaced – the constructed image of the new socialist states in Eastern Europe during the Cold War as “Godless states” and the creation of a dichotomy vis-à-vis the former German inhabitants as believers, i.e., belonging to the “Catholic West” (of positive values) has already been pointed out by Yuliya Komska (2015: 74–79). The publications also frequently cover a kind of atmosphere of fear, grimness, unfreedom and distrust that appears to surround the inhabitants of Czechoslovakia (Markgraf 1965: 145; E. R. 1964: 674). One author

even mentions that she and her husband were “watched and viewed with suspicion” by the local population (E. R. 1964: 674). Another closes his report by saying that it was only after crossing back into Austria that he once again felt “cheerful, and freer somehow” (Moder 1965: 442). Sarah Scholl-Schneider points out that travels to the *former homeland* did not just mean border crossings in a geographic sense, but also at the level of personal biography and emotions – travellers passed through a phase of *liminality*. During border crossings they experienced a mix of excitement and fear over what awaited them in Czechoslovakia in comparison with how they remembered their *homeland*. The visit itself yielded grief and pain for the visitors, the feeling of being subjected to an alien, communist regime. Compared to that, the world on the non-communist side of the border symbolized life and light (cf. Scholl-Schneider 2014: 162–163; Nosková – Kreisslová 2017: 224). A contrast here is created both to the contemporary situation in the western (free) countries to and the inter-war times.

Images of Germans who remained in Czechoslovakia

The Germans who were forcibly displaced categorized the Germans who remained for various reasons in Czechoslovakia after the Second World War as *victims*. Their living conditions were attentively followed in general by the newspaper publishers, and Germans who had remained also became important information sources about Czechoslovakia and the situation there.²⁹ During their travels, some Sudeten German tourists intentionally sought out the ethnic German residents, whether because they were their relatives or because they were former acquaintances or neighbours. This was another important reason for trips to the *old homeland*. Such persons then fulfilled the functions of interpreters, guides and intermediaries in this culturally and socially transformed space for the German *homecomers*, a space in which they felt *disaffected*. Those who had been forcibly displaced could better orient themselves thanks to such contacts, and when writing reports of their travels they then customarily drew on the more detailed

29 The Czech settlers who had lived in the border region before 1945 were less likely to become information sources. The situation is somewhat different in the pages of *Brünner Heimatbote*, where some correspondents report that during their visit they stopped by to see their “old acquaintances” who were Czech, or that they used their knowledge of the Czech language (Moder 1965: 441, 442) or that they attempted to find old acquaintances (Markgraf 1964: 411–412); this was determined by the multiethnicity of interwar and wartime Brno, where the German population formed a numerous minority.

information from their acquaintances or relatives about affairs either in Czechoslovakia as a whole or in the city or town they visited.³⁰

Moreover, in much of this writing the Germans who had remained were depicted as the protectors/saviours of a culturally German heritage in the Sudetenland when, for example, they took care of German tombstones in cemeteries or spoke their dialect of German. They had become, therefore, already at that time, the *guardians of memory*, which is an attribute peculiar to the remaining Germans to this day. To not forget these things legitimized their existence. One correspondent complained nostalgically that “in the city you encounter many Germans and at every step you will hear them confidentially saying ‘*Grüß Gott*’ [God bless you]. That sparks more attention if for 10 years somebody has only heard ‘*Guten Tag*’ [G’day]!” (... Aber der Herrgott 1957) The dialects of German spoken indigenously by locals during these *homeland journeys*, dialects which the forcibly displaced Germans had given up as part of integrating into West German society, could have evoked ideas of the *authentic homeland* for which they were yearning among the Sudeten German tourists. However, some of the reports from the 1960s also acknowledge an improvement to the German population’s position in Czechoslovakia (Moder 1965: 416–417) – in this case, again, an important role is played by language, chiefly referencing the opportunity to speak German in public.

Images of Romani people

The final group reflected upon in the forcibly displaced Germans’ journalism is that of Romani people,³¹ who arrived in the borderlands during the postwar migration period from eastern and southern Slovakia in particular. The depiction of the *gypsy population*, as this group was called at the time, was congruent with the racist approach toward them taken during the Nazi era in many respects.³² In forcibly displaced Germans’ magazines from the borderland areas in the northwest and west of Czechoslovakia, reports appeared describing what was seen as the appalling behaviour, poverty and

30 The form of tourism that involves visits to acquaintances and relatives has been previously underestimated by research on tourism, under the mistaken notion that it does not contribute to the economic prosperity of the locality being visited, but today it is entering into debates on the industry of sustainable tourism in a meaningful way (cf. Griffin 2013).

31 It is interesting that Romani people almost never appear in *Brünner Heimatbote*, as they were part of the city’s population there after 1945 as well.

32 After 1945 in Czechoslovakia, the journalism was similar, see Spurný (2011: 239).

backwardness of this ethnic group, as is demonstrated, for example, by the following report from a visit to Chomutov:

“The way the Gypsies are surviving on Badgasse Street could be seen in more than one place. They were using apartments as horse stables and the floors and roof trusses, windows and doors were used for a campfire in the courtyard. They also relieved themselves in the living room. If the garbage and stench began to become unbearable, then the buildings had to be bricked up so disease would not spread.” (Drüben in der alten Heimat... 1957: 1, cf. also Kreisslová 2014: 18)

In the newspapers for forcibly displaced Germans from Cheb, as part of documenting Cheb through photographs, in 1956 a reportage entitled “Fruits of Hatred – Beneš’s Work of Retribution” published photographs of dilapidated buildings, dirty, neglected streets, and Romani children captioned as “The youth of Cheb today” (Früchte des Hasses 1956). This was one of just a few documentations of a local population through photographs that was ever published in any of the magazines reviewed.³³ In association with other photographs showing dilapidated buildings and streets, such images were meant to support the view of the destruction of the Sudetenland. The headline put this “ruin and destruction of the homeland” into a causal connection with the forced displacement for which former Czechoslovak President Edvard Beneš was responsible. The newspaper, through this commentary, was reproducing the conservative discourse among the Sudeten Germans about Czech-German/Sudeten German relations at that time (Weger 2008: 352–356). This negative heterostereotype of Romani people, moreover, was frequently contrasted with the self-idealizing autostereotype of the hardworking, orderly Germans whose eventual return to Czechoslovakia was reportedly anticipated and desired by the Czechs themselves for that reason. This was yet another strategy through which, on the pages of the forcibly displaced Germans’ periodicals, the argument was made for the presumed return of the Sudeten Germans to the *old homeland*. However, on the other side of the Iron Curtain, these efforts were interpreted by communist propagandizers as proof of revanchism in West Germany.

33 Reports from the mid-1960s in *Brünner Heimatbote* are quite well-produced in terms of visuals, however. It is clear the travellers took the photographs themselves and provided them to the editors for printing. For more on the documentation of the *old homeland* in photographs in the *Brünner Heimatbote* and *Komotauer Zeitung* during the 1950s, and on the growing numbers of such depictions, see Kreisslová – Nosková 2020.

Conclusion

We have reviewed these tourists' conceptions of *others* as they were (re) constructed in the magazines produced by forcibly displaced Germans during the 1950s and the first half of the 1960s. These publications are a resource *sui generis* – they reflect the attitudes of a certain segment of the group of Sudeten Germans, and they were produced in large print runs at the time, but we do not know very much about how their readers actually received them. The fact that the reports from these travels were read is documented by the editors of some of the magazines, who encourage correspondents/readers to send them such content, and the references in some of these pieces to previously-published articles of this kind is more evidence that they were indeed being read. That this was a favourite genre in these media is also documented by Wagner (2017: 72).

The Sudeten German visitors were, during their travels to their *old homeland*, the bearers of a hybrid status that oscillated between that of seekers of the past (*Spurensucher*), family members coming home, and tourists (Scholl-Schneider 2017: 238). In the context of what is called *homeland tourism* it is, therefore, necessary to consider them *homecomers*, not *strangers*, as is common in the anthropology of tourism. Their return transpired in a specific context, and it is exactly the taking into account of ethnic, cultural and geopolitical contexts that is important when studying return migrations (Marschall 2017: 216). These people had been forced to leave Czechoslovakia and then returned to their *old homeland* which, at that time, was behind the Iron Curtain under a different political regime. Their erstwhile *homeland* had undergone an important transformation after their forced departure. They encountered the “strange in the familiar” here (*das Fremde im Eigenen*), moving through *alien*, different sociocultural surroundings inhabited by *another* population in a place which, of course, they considered their *own homeland*, while at the same time they recognized the “familiar in the strange” (*Eigene im Fremden*) when, in this *foreign* state, they met their acquaintances and relatives who had remained in Czechoslovakia and walked through the locations that were important to them because they were associated with parts of the life they had experienced there.³⁴ Compared to regular tourism, what is specific about the Sudeten German travellers is that they were visiting municipalities/towns that quite frequently were not destinations of interest to ordinary tourists. The excep-

34 The dialectical relationship between the *familiar* and the *strange* with which we are working here has been addressed within the framework of tourism in the Habsburg monarchy, which was multiethnic, and during the period after its breakup, see Stachel – Thomsen 2014.

tions were locations in Czechoslovakia that functioned as destinations for tourism, such as the spa triangle (Karlovy Vary – in German, Karlsbad, Mariánské Lázně – in German, Marienbad, Františkovy Lázně – in German, Franzensbad) or Prague. Especially within the framework of organized tourism, localities that were exposed to tourism became part of the programs of the trips being offered to forcibly displaced Germans. If these travellers were not directly from such places, then they were often visiting them for the very first time during such trips.

The reports from these travels that were published in the forcibly displaced Germans’ journals are framed as “balance sheets” (Wagner 2017: 70) and as “inspection” reports (Fendl 1998: 86) – however, these “inspections” were not just to report on the *homes* of the travellers or the *houses* of their loved ones, but also in general to report on the situation in Czechoslovakia and the life of its population. The reports from the trips are based on comparison, as a basic cultural technique for subjectively treating the “experience of being a stranger in a new place” (Lehmann 2007: 193). The journeys to the *old homeland* do not just take place in space, but in a way are journeys back in time, to a different era. The desire to “go back in time” was shared by thousands of forcibly displaced Germans who visited their *homes*, emphasizes Wagner (2017: 69). Their motivation to travel was a desire to find the *same home* they had preserved in their memory; it was not a desire, primarily, for *difference* and *the exotic*, as is customary of ordinary tourist trips (Salazar – Graburn 2014: 4) – even if some may have conceived of their travel to the *old homeland* as an adventure. Sudeten German tourists, when visiting places in Czechoslovakia, constantly sought the *once upon a time*, comparing *once upon a time* with *today*, and the images they created of the past were significantly idealized, aiding, as such, in the creation of a dichotomy with the more or less negative state of their present.³⁵ Demshuk, in this context, speaks of images of an idealized “homeland of memory” (*die Heimat der Erinnerung*), in which the Silesia of the past was “always a clean, orderly, peace-loving, timeless, German country without any National Socialists, Poles or Jews”, the opposite of the images of the “transformed homeland” (*transformierte Heimat*), i.e., contemporary Silesia, which belongs to Poland, a country that is “dirty, chaotic, dangerous”, including the racist stereotype of a “Polish economy”³⁶ (Demshuk 2011: 81).

35 Romanticizing the situation prior to 1945 is a coping strategy with respect to having lost the homeland (see Oxfeld – Long 2004: 8).

36 *Polnische Wirtschaft* – this is a negative stereotype about the inefficiency, disorganization and corruption that was allegedly typical of the Polish culture, economy and society.



Figure 7 – Seeking the *once upon a time* and inspection reporting about what no longer exists... A view of Kreuzgasse [Křížová Street], where the buildings have been demolished all the way to the corner of Mendelplatz [Mendlovo náměstí]. The caption reports: “This is where the Schweizer Hof pub, the Michler drugstore, and a single-storey house once stood (Pistauer).” Source: Brüner Heimatbote 1965, 17, 22: 582.

In the periodicals’ reports which we analysed, a specific kind of tourism is being presented – a tourism created by mixing curiosity, nostalgia, rejection and even satisfaction that these *significant others* are today in a situation that is worse than the situation of the travellers themselves – and compassion is sometimes presented as well. This includes the so-frequently used dichotomy between the *perpetrators* and the *victims*, as well as argumentation that works with historical incidents playing the role of evidence. Both satisfaction from and a desire to reverse the roles of *perpetrators* and *victims* can be seen on the side of the Sudeten Germans as a method of coping with historical events and traumatic experiences from 1945–1946.

Sudeten German tourists entered Czechoslovak territory with certain preconceptions. These were influenced not just by the propaganda that had been developed during the Cold War, but also by many ideas that had been circulating for a much longer time. Their notions about Czechs in their descriptions, therefore, are not just pictures of the residents of a socialist

country behind the Iron Curtain (images of unfreedom, political suppression, propaganda, economic insufficiency, social transformations – for example, the high employment rate of women), but also certainly reflect conceptions of the Czechs as a nation with whom the German population in the Czech lands had either been forming a society for centuries or with whom they had been in conflict (Kural 1993; 1994). Ethnocentric ideas about Czechs and Roma held by Germans from a position of a certain cultural superiority are not uncommon (this superiority does not just concern areas related to culture, but also the economy; if somebody writes, for example, about staff being “nice and cleanly dressed”, he allows himself to express a certain surprise at that fact and reveals that he anticipated crude behaviour and sloppy clothing). Classic tourist notions of *noble savages* living happily in close connection with the natural world and standing apart from the developments of history have partially been preserved and are not just attributed to non-European societies, but also to the *backward* regions of Europe (Hennig 1997: 126–127); however, in the case of *homeland tourism*, the Sudeten German tourists do not share these notions. Rather, the aspect of abhorring what is *alien*, whatever contrasts with the above-mentioned idealization of what is one’s *own*/from one’s past, dominates during the period under review in the selected sources.

The analysis of these texts indicates there is a close connection between the autostereotypes and heterostereotypes, which are the generally understood prerequisites for the study of stereotypes. The heterostereotypes about Czechs or Roma can therefore be read also as descriptions of the preconceptions held by the group of the forcibly displaced Germans about themselves – such explicitly and implicitly expressed autostereotypes and a predominantly positive self-stylization were the counterpoint to the heterostereotypes (if Czechs are lazy and don’t take care of their houses, then Germans are hardworking and have always taken exemplary care of their property). Critical self-reflection and the assessment of the historical role of the Sudeten/German inhabitants during the 1930s and the wartime era is absent from these reports; the German travellers “felt little desire to engage with or even acknowledge the loss and mourning of other communities. Their journeys were attempts to come to terms only with their own losses,” and their interest in understanding why they had been forcibly displaced was minimal (Wagner 2017: 84; also Demshuk 2011: 97).

Although most of these stereotypical notions are constant, there are minor deviations that do appear in the images built up about Czechs and Germans (even though the Romani population is seen unequivocally negatively). The Czechs, in some reports, become *victims* because of the communist regime, although frequently with a tinge of *schadenfreude*

from the German side. One exception in this big group of *Czechs* are those with whom the correspondents have personal relationships – *Czechs* as a generalized group are seen mostly negatively, but *family XY, whom I knew before*, is an object of pity. A certain positive attitude toward Czechs also corresponds to the personal mood of the traveller. If the trip to Czechoslovakia is undertaken out of personal fascination (and therefore even in spite of the opinion prevailing at the time that Sudeten Germans should not travel to Czechoslovakia because they are aiding an *enemy* state by spending hard currency there) then it is possible to find more positively-framed information in the report than if the author does not explicitly declare such an attitude – “a particular return necessarily receives its meaning from the returning individuals’ experiences and points of view” (Oxford – Long 2004: 6; also Marschall 2017: 216). The question remains as to what degree censorship was operating in the editorial boards of the periodicals reviewed, and whether negative reports in particular were published that could be used as an argument for advocating for the *right to the homeland* (*Recht auf Heimat*) that was raised in 1950 along with the declaration of the “Charter of the German Homeland Expellees” (*Charta der deutschen Heimatvertriebenen*) (for more, see Weger 2008: 465–476). It can be documented from other periodicals that there was a preference for such reports in some Sudeten German publications (cf. Kreisslová 2018b: 306). Negative commentaries about reports of travel, or reports that were themselves negatively framed, certainly could have aided the editors, or rather could have aided the representatives of the Sudeten German expellee organizations (*Landsmannschaften*) with promoting their interests politically (Demshuk 2011: 87). *The right to the homeland*, however, also appears in reports authored by *normal* travellers; according to Demshuk, this does not mean that forcibly displaced Germans did not simultaneously understand that return was basically impossible, as their *old homeland* had been “fundamentally transformed” (2011: 97).

The constructed images about the Czechs and the Roma from this time can be, in our opinion, read as a component of the discussion on the right to return to the *old homeland*, a discussion that recurred in the forcibly displaced Germans’ periodicals during the period under review and that became a basic framework of social reference within which the portrayals arose of these groups of *others* living along the borderlands of Czechoslovakia or in the areas that had also been settled by a German population up until 1945. This framework of social reference may also be applied to interpreting the narratives about the Germans who remained behind in the *homeland*, whose situations after the Second World War were precarious, and who therefore wished they had been forcibly displaced. In the

eyes of the forcibly displaced Germans, such people should have been glad not to have lost their *homeland*. It is a question whether this framework of social reference (the demand for return) did not itself change over time into a reaction to the attitudes in the politics and society of West Germany which were themselves transforming,³⁷ or whether it is possible to assume there was a different attitude among individuals from the forcibly displaced generation compared to the attitudes of their descendants – maybe even in association with the fact that the bonds to the *old homeland* loosened over time as one generation replaced the next.³⁸ However, to answer these questions it would be necessary to analyse publications from later periods, to know more about how editorial boards functioned, and to know more about the correspondents themselves who contributed these reports from their travels.

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37 For example, Julia Wagner (2017: 73) has shown that in this regard, the authors of reports from their travels remained faithful to the idea of return despite the changing debate in public life.

38 Sarah Scholl-Schneider points out, on the basis of work by Doris Stennert (1995), that perspectives on travel to the *old homeland* change intergenerationally – Stennert says children do not feel the same nostalgia for the *homeland* as their parents do and that what is essential to them is a feeling of enrichment. The trips they then make become tourism in the classic sense of the word (Scholl-Schneider 2017: 239). However, one can also speak of there having been different generations in the 1950s and 1960s, the period we investigated. For instance, we do not actually know whether the travellers visiting Czechoslovakia at that time were young, middle-aged or of retirement age. From the articles published in the forcibly displaced Germans’ periodicals, the age of the authors can just be ascertained if the author reveals something about his own life story or mentions at what age he had to leave Czechoslovakia.

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