

PILGRIMAGE EVENTS FOR THE HUNGARIAN
GERMANS/DANUBE SWABIANS IN THE NORTH OF
THE ARCHBISHOPRIC OF FREIBURG AFTER
WORLD WAR II. WALLDÜRN AND
THE "PAULUSHEIM" NEAR BRUCHSAL

Introduction

From¹ January 1946, Swabians from Hungary affected by the expulsion or "kitelepités" were transported to the US occupied zone in North Württemberg/North Baden. In terms of canon law, these were the northern parts of the archbishopric of Freiburg and the bishopric of Rottenburg/Stuttgart. With as rapid as possible dissemination and (forced) settlement in civil households, the occupation authorities sought to advance and organise a kind of "forced assimilation" of the expellees that was essentially irreversible.² Special refugee and expellee pilgrimage events were already held in the region very early on. Because the ban on political gatherings and associations imposed by the military government did not apply, some of the pilgrimage events quickly became opportunities for major events at which the common spirituality enculturated from the regions of origin could be upheld, and the cultural values, the habitus, expressed uninhibited. Several pilgrimage destinations, some of which were highly frequented by Danube Swabian groups, are mentioned in the systematic overview of all expellee pilgrimage events in the German-speaking region published by folklorist Georg R. Schroubek in 1968 (undoubtedly still the standard literature),³ and in a newer publication with a regional orientation.⁴ These include the Schönenberg in Ellwangen (bishopric [BH.] of Rottenburg-Stuttgart, with many Hungarian German groups since 1947),⁵ Maria Bickesheim (near Karlsruhe, archbishopric [AH.] of Freiburg, 1947), Rechberg (near Schwäbisch-Gmünd, BH. of Rottenburg, 1948),⁶ Bilfingen (near Pforzheim, AH. of Freiburg, 1949), Neckarmühlbach (near Mosbach, AH. of Freiburg, 1950), an exam-

¹ The following essay is based upon a lecture at Szeged University, Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, October 12th 2012. It provides a condensed and renewed version of the more extensive study by the author entitled "Heimatvertriebenen-Wallfahrten. Aspekte volkskundlicher Erforschung unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Erzdiözese Freiburg und der Donauschwaben." In: KRANEMANN 2012, 188-216.

² GROSSER 2006, 70-71.

³ The basic material for the essay primarily derives from the responses to a survey he conducted in the German-speaking bishoprics in addition to extensive notes from the research centre for East German folklore (*Forschungsstelle Karasek für ostdeutsche Volkskunde*) in Bischofswiesen/Upper Bavaria at the time.

⁴ BENDEL 2008.

⁵ SCHROUBEK, Wallfahrt, 175-177; see also the documentation: Bendel 2008.

⁶ BENDEL 2008, 21.

ple that an area inhabited predominantly by members of the Protestant faith can be revitalised following pilgrimage events after 1945,⁷ Laudенbach (near Creglingen, BH. of Rottenburg, 1950),⁸ Sasbachwalden (Bühl/Baden district, 1951)⁹, and also the “Dreifaltigkeitsberg” (near Spaichingen, BH. of Rottenburg, from 1954).¹⁰ In the bishopric of Rottenburg-Stuttgart, the great baroque pilgrimage event destination of Schönenberg near Ellwangen undoubtedly enjoyed an excellent position; one of the largest expellee pilgrimage events was (and continues to be) held here. On 8 June 1947, more than 2,000 participants attended for the first time; gatherings of a comparatively vast size were subsequently registered here, peaking at around 40,000-45,000 people (1952) and once even 45,000-50,000 (in 1960, when both the diocesan bishop and the German Chancellor counted among the speakers).¹¹ Initially, the event was not supported by the church, though the Caritas association of the diocese of Rottenburg has been a key partner since 1950.¹² Schroubek’s aim at the time was to present the new styles of spiritualism that the refugees and expellees had brought with them to Germany’s former occupied zones and established in the Federal Republic of Germany since 1949.

However, two key pilgrimage event destinations for the Hungarian Germans/Danube Swabians at the time of arriving in the beginning are only touched upon briefly in the work of Georg Richard Schroubek and of Wolfgang Brückner. But they both require emphasis due to their immense significance: Walldürn and Bruchsal in the north of the archdiocese of Freiburg.

Walldürn

The first refugee and expellee pilgrimage event ever organised was documented in Walldürn in the archbishopric of Freiburg (already on 2 July 1946).¹³ No mention is made of this in Schroubek’s work, though the estimated 6,000 participants are an important indicator. If this figure is correct and only refugees and expellees participated, this corresponds to participation of 37.5 per cent of the 16,000 expellees from Hungary and Czechoslovakia who arrived in the administrative district (*Landkreis*) between winter and spring of 1946. Heinrich Magnani, who was the priest of Hettingen and at the same time the regional chairman of the local Caritas association, organised the first pilgrimage event with the help of a civil servant at the administrative district office (*Landratsamt*).¹⁴

⁷ SCHROUBEK 1968, 147-148.

⁸ SCHROUBEK 1968, 103.

⁹ SCHROUBEK 1968, 171.

¹⁰ BENDEL 2008, 21.

¹¹ SCHROUBEK 176, see also KIRCHE – HEIMAT 1998, 31 and 34; DOWE 2009, 78-81, with instructive illustrations.

¹² SCHROUBEK 1968, 177.

¹³ EAF, 55.44, vol. 1: Letter from Heinrich Magnani/Hettingen to the Ordinariate of the Archbishop (*Erzbischöfliches Ordinariat*) of 3 July 1946.

¹⁴ Ibid. EAF, 55.44, vol. 1; the civil servant is also named as “Inspektor Sieber”.

Archbishop Dr. Gröber also already advocated committed support in 1946 in his Lent pastoral letter:

“I hereby call on the Caritas in my archdiocese to do everything in their power, including exerting influence where possible to help the refugees from the east, the children, the sick and the elderly in particular. Do not allow this holy hour of charity that is now upon us to go unheeded.”¹⁵

A further pilgrimage event took place in Walldürn on All Souls Day of the same year (2 November 1946).¹⁶

There are three striking points that already exist at the nucleus of this pilgrimage event in 1946 that should be consolidated and have an impact later on:

- In the main sermon, there is talk of the fact that “in human terms [...] the hope of a return is hopeless”¹⁷.

- The reports also mention that opportunities for confession in the “mother tongue” could be taken advantage of. Though the people were expelled due to their German nationality, Hungarian or Croatian was meant with this.

- A worldly yet equally official part with speeches and ceremonies (such as laying of a wreath in honour of the dead) by politicians and representatives from public authorities was also included in the programme; indeed, in 1946, these were the *Landrat*, the representative of the refugee commission (*Flüchtlingskommissariat*) and the officer for refugees (*Flüchtlingsreferent*) at the district office (*Landratsamt*). The need for home construction measures was also clearly emphasised within the context of the pilgrimage event. The latter, which is at first glance perhaps surprising, should be examined briefly and explained in greater detail together with the other points:

At the time, an aid centre (“Kirchliche Hilfsstelle Süd”) was set up for the expellees. It organised a preliminary major pilgrimage event in Bavarian Altötting on the occasion of the *Visitatio Mariae* on 2 July, which was agreed as a general date for future pilgrimage events for expellees. This was only institutionalised as a regular and permanent date in Walldürn, which is in fact a “Holy Blood” religious site. Thus the pilgrimage event for expellees is organised in a cooperation between the regional or local powers (such as the district Caritas association) and international institutions (Augustinian holy order/Walldürn and the international “Kirchliche Hilfsstelle” aid centre). I believe the fact that clear messages that a return was ruled out under all circumstances were articulated exactly here in 1946 – before an audience comprising Hungarian Germans and Sudetendeutsche – is extremely important and indeed almost decisive. However, what the “Kirchliche Hilfsstelle” aid centre greatly lamented in this context was the “defensiveness of the long-established residents”¹⁸ – Heinrich Magnani describes a similar situation

¹⁵ Lent pastoral letter of 22 February 1946, quoted here according to SCHILLINGER 2001, 519-520.

¹⁶ EAF, 55.44., vol. 1, 1945-46, Letter from Father Magnani at the pastoral office in Hettingen of 12 October 1946 to the archbishop of Freiburg.

¹⁷ EAF 55.44, vol. 1, here the report on “Wallfahrt der Neubürger zum Hl. Blut nach Walldürn” by refugee priest Schmid [no first name] on 2 November 1946.

¹⁸ PROSSER-SCHELL 2010, 62-70.

on the regional level with a “vast divide”¹⁹ between the locals and the newly arrived immigrants. The fact that Father Magnani devoted so much of his “pilgrimage” message to the *Erzbischöfliches Ordinariat* specifically to the necessity to build new homes also has to do with the building cooperative that he had founded and promoted extensively from a moral perspective. In 1946, Magnani described the pilgrimage event in the context of the “catastrophic sufferings of the refugees” as a counter to social desolation and the spiritual neglect of those affected.²⁰ One line later, he writes entirely practically of the “generation of homes and work” as the “only option”²¹: Magnani built up the “Neue Heimat” housing cooperative from the aforementioned “Notgemeinschaft Hettingen”, first in Hettingen and then for the Buchen district (*Landkreis*). The conditions of exactly *this* founding also benefited from the fact that Magnani came from a family experienced in the profession and the number of representatives of the masonry trade was exceptionally high in the parish of Hettingen. Above all though, the new inhabitants (*Neubürger*) committed themselves to putting in a large number of unpaid man hours rather than financial cooperative fees.²² Thanks to the pertinent historical survey by Frank Schillinger, we know that organisational tasks had already been assigned and preliminary planning work completed by 29 September 1946.²³ The organisational structure of Magnani’s “Kreisbaugenossenschaft Neue Heimat” was not entirely new nor devised individually locally – recourse could be sought from the ecclesiastical building cooperative from the pre-war period.²⁴ And yet the initiative in Hettingen was the first of its kind successfully set up in Germany for expellees and refugees. Looking back, Magnani describes how difficult it was to induce the expellees to invest in houses here in Hettingen or Walldürn and to settle down.²⁵ Many still planned to return to their home country and were therefore against the construction of houses with concrete foundations.

The words of the district administrator (*Landrat*) and his gestures of recognition in the ritual complex of the pilgrimage event as well as the active participation of responsible employees and experts from the regional (building) authorities are to be considered against this backdrop. The intensity of the relevant construction consultations directly at the pilgrimage event cannot be discerned from the archive notes. Within this, it was seen as extremely important that in the event of queries to the authorities by those affected, the responsible officials could

¹⁹ Magnani by letter to the Ordinariate on 12.10.1946, in: EAF, 55.44, vol. 1.

²⁰ EAF, 55.44, vol. 1.

²¹ EAF, 55.44, *ibid.*

²² Five building cooperatives were already established in Northern Baden in 1947 under the name of “Siedlungswerk *Neue Heimat*”. The purpose and key tasks were laid out in the statutes issued in 1949: the intention was the “construction of affordable housing, specifically for expellees from the east, the bombed out and returnees”. So as to achieve acceptable costs to this end, the “homesteads it called for” should be built as far as possible “by helping oneself or with the help of neighbours”. SCHILLINGER 2001, 537, 539; PROSSER-SHELL 2011, 491-500, esp. 493-500, with the according evidence.

²³ SCHILLINGER 2001, 523-525; see also the aforementioned letter by Magnani of 12.10.1946, “Flüchtlingswallfahrt nach Walldürn”, EAF 55.44, vol. 1.

²⁴ SCHILLINGER 2001, *passim*.

²⁵ Looking back, in his memoirs published in 1974, see MAGNANI 1974, 334-344, here 336, 340.

be recognised as individuals present at and involved in the pilgrimage events and therefore deemed sympathetic. In 1949, we read in the Hungarian German newspaper "Unsere Post" of similar *worldly* programme items: not only are the song performances and singers originating from Hungary mentioned in texts and images as an uplifting, representative impression of their own non-liturgical cultural programme.²⁶ The article on the pilgrimage event of 1 July 1949 also explicitly highlights that the housing official from Buchen district office (*Landratsamt*), a district chief inspector (*Kreisoberinspektor*) and the district administrator (*Landrat*) himself held speeches or presentations. There was also an address by the head of the Hungarian German section of the Caritas refugee aid (*Ungarndeutsche Abteilung Caritasflüchtlingshilfe*).²⁷ A later article published in the regional paper in 1953 discloses that information on the Federal Expellee Act (*Bundesvertriebenengesetz – BVFG*), Equalisation of Burdens Act (*Lastenausgleichsgesetz – LAG*), maintenance and furniture support would also now be offered during the "announcement" part of the pilgrimage event. This clearly corroborates that not only priests but also administrators and authority representatives were regularly also active at pilgrimage events, and that they apparently did not only pray but also inform and build trust.²⁸ The so-called "Bacon Priest" ("*Speckpater*") Werenfried van Straaten also counted among the distinguished preachers. Through advertising, he was even able to bring schoolchildren and young people from the Netherlands and Belgium wishing to help with construction during the holidays to Hettingen.²⁹ He thus showed that not only were religion, politics and hometown meetings upheld but also that the pilgrimage events in Walldürn were used by the respective interested parties to share advice. This is a highly crucial revelation, for the pilgrimage events thus fulfilled entirely *practical* functions besides the *representative* and *social* ones.

From 2 July 1947 when the number of participants in Walldürn had risen to around 25,000 and the crowds could no longer be accommodated on the pilgrimage event square, a distinction had to be made between the places of origin over two days: one day for the "Sudetendeutsche" and a second day for those from Hungary, Yugoslavia and Romania known at the time as "south-east Germans" (*Südostdeutsche*). Up until the 1960s, the number of participants in the expellee pilgrimage in Walldürn frequently totalled 10,000-20,000 people.³⁰ The expellee pilgrimage in Walldürn can claim an unusual position for numerous reasons, in-

²⁶ "... melodious singing by Katarina Pollak, Agnes Poll [illegible], Emma Milz, Rosina Milz and Anna Simon [...] from Weindorf provided ... a pleasant backdrop." See "Unsere Post", no. 12 from 1949, 4.

²⁷ Ibid. U.P., 13 (1949), p. 4. (speech by Dr. Lajós Leber).

²⁸ Art.: "Südostdeutsche trafen sich in Walldürn", see Fränkische Nachrichten, no. 151 of 3 July 1953, unpag. Many thanks to Mr Fritz Baier (Abg. i. R.), Mosbach, for this information.

²⁹ Regular reports in the "Konradsblatt" of the Freiburg Ordinariate drew attention to the church's efforts for the expellees, e.g. a Siedlungswerk meeting, Konradsblatt, vol. 19 (1949), 211.

³⁰ SCHROUBEK 1968, 202: In 1948, around just 4,000 people attended due to the currency reform. The next figure - for the two days in 1952 (1-2 July) - is 21,000 people (6,000 Hungarian Germans, 15,000 Sudetendeutsche). According to Schroubek, as many as 15,000 people attended continuously up until the 1960s.

cluding because the President of the Federal Republic of Germany Heinrich Lübke also attended the pilgrimage event (4 July 1965), as did other political representatives. Within this, it was on the one hand about spiritual matters to reinforce and confirm these special gatherings in a religious context. However, visits were also specifically paid to the family homes and educational establishments of the expellees in the *Landkreis* built as part of the cooperative work whose function was now already established.

A second example of a major pilgrimage event, which is today almost forgotten: the “Paulusheim” near Bruchsal

A large, almost forgotten pilgrimage event also already took place in Bruchsal with many Hungarian Germans on 22 September 1946. According to the pertinent report from the archbishopric archives, around 5,000 people registered for the event, though close to 8,000 actually attended.³¹ Up to eighty per cent of Bruchsal, the former residence city of the bishop of Speyer and seat of the district Caritas association (and thus a Catholic city within predominantly Protestant Northern Baden), was destroyed during the war, with up to three quarters of the housing stock destroyed. Yet with the “Paulusheim” and Marienkapelle, it still offered the appropriate infrastructure for such an important gathering of the people from the various reception centres and emergency housing in the local area.³² The large “Paulusheim” school was run by the Pallottine fathers, who had already had extensive contact with Germans abroad before the Second World War, particularly those in south-east Europe, as well as by the nuns in Schönstatt, who ran the Marienkapelle there.³³ Greater willingness to provide a cordial, sympathetic reception and hospitable benefaction could undoubtedly be achieved, which the members of the religious order organised in conjunction with Bruchsal district Caritas association (*Kreiscaritasverband Bruchsal*). By bringing the expellees scattered across the entire *Landkreis* together, highly emotional excitement prevailed, and details of the songs sung together feature in the report to the *Erzbischöfliches Ordinariat*: besides pilgrimage songs in German, the “Himnusz” (Hungary’s national anthem) and the patriotic “Szózat” song that starts with the words “Hazádnak rendületlenül légy híve, óh magyar” (“To your homeland be faithful steadfastly, O Hungarian”) by Mihály Vörösmarty are mentioned.³⁴ The songs were understood by the reporters to be a “manifestation of unanticipated yearning for

³¹ EBA 55.44, vol. 1; see also (less exact) *Nachlass Karasek* in IVDE Freiburg, “HV-Wallfahrt”, 31 b. Judging by the official reports to the Ordinariate, this was as many as at the first large organised pilgrimage for refugees in Altötting in the same year, and even more than at the events in Walldürn also in the same year.

³² The classic pilgrimage destinations near Bruchsal from the baroque period were in fact Kislau and Waghäusel, the final residence of Martin of Cochem.

³³ Grateful thanks from the author for this information to archbishop Dr. Robert Zollitsch, Freiburg.

³⁴ The report from the teacher Stephan Klein, in EAF 55.44, vol. 1.

the lost home of the Hungarian Germans".³⁵ The reporters make clear that the pilgrimage event was felt and experienced as momentum of the social cohesion, the social cement. We can now also consider the opportunity for confession in the "mother tongue" already mentioned for Walldürn: this highlights the fact that many of the expelled Danube Swabians could barely speak any German, and that the language they were most familiar with and able to understand was in fact Hungarian or Croatian. Explicit confirmation of this fact can be found in the reports on other pilgrimage events and church services held in the north of the diocese of Freiburg, such as at Maria Bickesheim near Karlsruhe.³⁶

In the following year (1947), a second large pilgrimage event for refugees and expellees took place again in Bruchsal, as is exclusively recorded in Freiburg's "Konradsblatt" diocese newspaper: the report sets the number of participants at 3,000 and the aspect of the adoration of the Virgin Mary is again emphasised.³⁷ Thanks to a food donation from the pope, the "people's kitchen" ("Volksküche") set up at the event was able to host a large dinner. The reporter again shows themselves to be particularly impressed with the music performances and songs of the new citizens ("Neubürger") from south-eastern Central Europe.³⁸ A Hungarian German music group originally formed in Pomaz accompanied and intoned the participants' singing. Music from the mass by Joseph Haydn, the great composer in the service of the Eszterházy family, is also mentioned. As at the other pilgrimage events in 1946/1949, it was discernible here that these events were perceived as an occasion and opportunity to experience spiritual solace and encouragement, but also to gather in a special place to live out their own, 'imported' lifestyle and the familiar culture without feeling at all inhibited to let go of the rigour and difficulties with the problems of the start in south-west Germany.

To my knowledge, the pilgrimage event in Paulusheim was not permanently institutionalised in this multifaceted way – at least there are not any further indications of this in the records. Later however (in the 1950s/early 1960s), there are several mentions of youth sections of the Hungarian German "Sankt-Gerhardswerk" [sc. Szt.-Gellért-Iskola-Társaság], who came here to train and gain inspiration.³⁹

³⁵ EAF, 55.44, vol. 1.

³⁶ In a contemporary report on the expellee pilgrimage to Maria Bickesheim in 1948 (EAF, 55.44, vol. 2): "Many refugees were able to go to confession for the first time, as they finally found a father confessor with whom they could speak Hungarian or Croatian."

³⁷ KONRADSLATT (1947), 199. One of the most obvious pieces of proof that pilgrimage events were considered a characteristic, familiar affair in Hungary is also the fact that "Unsere Post" continued to report on Hungarian pilgrimage destinations. In 1949, for example, there was an article on Máriaremete: "50 Jahre Máriaremete" ["50 years of Máriaremete" ("Máriaremete ... in der Nähe von Budapest ... feierte kürzlich sein 50 jähriges Bestehen. Zur Jubiläumsfeier hatten sich über 10.000 Wallfahrer eingefunden." ["Máriaremete ... near Budapest ... recently celebrated its 50th year of existence. Over 10,000 pilgrims came together for the anniversary celebrations"]). Cf. Unsere Post, vol. 4, no. 22, Dec. 1949.

³⁸ The music group from Pomáz near Budapest is named specifically. Ibid.

³⁹ Der Gerhardsbote, vol. 4, no. 5 (May 1959), unpag. (p. 4). St. Gerhardswerk has been the main organiser of the Danube Swabians pilgrimage event in Germany since its founding in 1955. See FATH 2010. 76-77.

Brief summary

The pilgrimage events once again not only reflect the fact that the different origin communities were separated by the migration and the different transports but also by the forced home allocations by the occupation authorities in 1945/46. The pilgrimage events were – in the truest sense of the word – a way to evade the coalition and gathering bans imposed by the authorities and to meet as a large group. It is clearly noticeable that the pilgrimage events were neither conducted together with the locals nor did the expellees join existing, conventional events, but rather that they were dedicated pilgrimage events for expellees *only*. In the case of the Danube Swabians, there are revelations that cannot be transferred to other groups without further ado: with regard to the aspect of the special style of spirituality that Schroubek already examined at the pilgrimage events for expellees, it could further and above and beyond this be discovered that patriotic songs such as the “Himnusz” in Hungarian fulfilled a telling role at the beginning. (The evidence additionally even refers to the difficult question of a Danube Swabian identity, as well as to the “Hazatértek” – the illegal “returnees” to Hungary.⁴⁰) However, it also seems of significant relevance that a pilgrimage event was already used as a public forum in 1946 to deny fellow comrades an opportunity to return.

In the sources consulted for this essay, which also include the verbal personal statements from contemporary witnesses who are still alive today, mention was made time and time again of the great tension between the long-established residents (*Alteingesessene*) and the new residents (*Neubürger*) – far more than could be quoted at this point. However, it is at the same time necessary to note that when considering the northern part of the diocese of Freiburg, the *locals* emerged as decisive initiators and organisers of the pilgrimage events and also gave them shape (through speeches, ritually-demonstrative gestures, technical equipment such as vehicles). It ultimately became clear that not only the practice of religion and hometown meetings (individual, significantly different forms of action; ways of life; linguistic customs of the established population) were maintained, but that particularly the pilgrimage events in Walldürn could also be used by the respective interested parties to share advice. This is an essential fact, for the pilgrimage events thus fulfilled an entirely *practical* function besides the *spiritual* and *social* ones. Indeed, the cooperative construction planning of housing (private homes) and social facilities must be clearly emphasised.

⁴⁰ TÓTH 2012.

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This essay seeks to consider a particular form of spirituality: the pilgrimage events of the “Danube Swabians” shortly after their arrival in south-west Germany following the Second World War. In terms of the time span, the focus will be on the years 1946-1949 – a phase during which the future forms of government had not yet been constituted in Central Europe.

The essay wishes to reflect on two key aspects, namely that (a) these early events afford a tangibly Hungarian spiritual aspect, and (b) entirely practical, functional aspects also came into effect at these events. The essay expands on contemporary theories, which are currently the subject of international debate, with an evaluation of new archive materials.