

2012

A Story of Ethnic Germans in Hungary: From their Origins to their Expulsion

Sierra Hunt
SUNY Geneseo

Follow this and additional works at: <https://knightscholar.geneseo.edu/proceedings-of-great-day>
Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

Recommended Citation

Hunt, Sierra (2012) "A Story of Ethnic Germans in Hungary: From their Origins to their Expulsion," *Proceedings of GREAT Day*: Vol. 2011 , Article 8.

Available at: <https://knightscholar.geneseo.edu/proceedings-of-great-day/vol2011/iss1/8>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the GREAT Day at KnightScholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in Proceedings of GREAT Day by an authorized editor of KnightScholar. For more information, please contact KnightScholar@geneseo.edu.

A Story of Ethnic Germans in Hungary: From their Origins to their Expulsion

Sierra Hunt

Introduction

The admiration I hold for my Oma's generation is what initially inspired me to conclude my years at Geneseo with a project about them. Some of my earliest memories are filled with my Oma's stories about her early days in Hungary. Every time I leave a morsel of food on my plate, my Oma screams "Don't you know that we had no food during the war," which then leads into an extensive recount of her early life as a German growing up in Hungary during the years of World War Two. Admittedly, my brother and I always exchanged glances and laughed – partly because such scarcity is foreign to us. As a young girl, I found these stories fascinating just by imagining my Oma as young girl, such as myself. As I got older, more and more questions began arising; the stories she told me remained as scattered fragments that never tied together in a cohesive story line.

As I interviewed my family members and researched the history surrounding their experiences, I was drawn to the complexity of the history and the profoundness of what she and her family endured; I can't never help but compare my own (once thought to be interesting, but now comparatively banal) life up to their own. When I first began this project, I was startled by the sheer lack of information present about the expulsion of ethnic Germans from Hungary. My personal connection to this piece of history sparked a small level of indignation on my own part - every aspect of history deserves, in some sense, its due attention.

I was initially intimidated, but later absorbed, by the complexity of Hungary's role in World War II; Hitler had desperately and recklessly used them as pawns in a hapless war even when defeat was inevitable for the Axis. Moreover, I was startled to learn what a central role Western Allies had in the fate of German minorities after the war. In addition, though the interviews proved difficult at times, I was provided with surprisingly informative and insightful stories. The more I researched and spoke to my relatives, the more I realized the narrow focus of my paper had to widen; the story I sought to paint broadened to include, not only the expulsion, but the history German minorities in Hungary, their experience during World War II and what happened to them in the years following the

expulsion. Finally, I was able to make sense and organize the fragmented stories I had been told about my whole life.

Preceding each chapter, I have included a section from Henry Longfellow's poem, "Evangeline." His epic poem told of a young woman living in Acadia who, after being displaced from her homeland to new Louisiana territory, desperately searches for her true love, Gabriel. Upon first reading the poem, I was struck by the parallels to my family's expulsion; though it occurred 200 years apart and an ocean away, an extraordinary experience linked two groups of ordinary and honest people, affected by extraordinary events they had no control over. "Evangeline" speaks of the peace and contentment of Acadians as well as the beauty and fertility of the land predating English occupation; it speaks of apprehension upon foreign occupation, the sadness of leaving land they knew so well to go to a land where they were unwelcome, and the struggle of beginning again. It is for these reasons I have included relevant segments before each chapter begins, which I hope compliment all that follows in a more concise and eloquent way than I can ever manage to do.

Part 1: Before the War

"There, in the midst of its farms, reposed the Acadian village.
Strongly built were the houses, with frames of oak and of chestnut,
Such as the peasants of Normandy built in the reign of the Henries.
Thatched were the roofs, with dormer-windows; and gables projecting
Over the basement below protected and shaded the door-way.
There in the tranquil evenings of summer, when brightly the sunset
Lighted the village street, and gilded the vanes on the chimneys,
Matrons and maidens sat in snow-white caps and in kirtles
Scarlet and blue and green, with distaffs spinning the golden
Flax for the gossiping looms, whose noisy shuttles within doors"¹

The number of ethnic Germans in Hungary exceeded 600,000 just prior to World War Two.² This group of people experienced the worst of both worlds during the war: they were subject to the brutal whims of Hitler and then were rather ironically subject to punishment for Hitler's crimes. This paper seeks to shed light on ethnic German minorities in Hungary; a struggle exemplified by the stories of two families from a village in Hungary who were affected by the war, subject to a year of tense Soviet occupation, then cast out of

their homes in Hungary and forced to begin again. But perhaps this story best begins by untangling the complex web of Ethnic German origins in Hungary.

Germans arrive in Hungary

Hungary, located on the Carpathian Basin in central Europe, has been the epicenter of many turbulent wars shaking the stability of Europe. The origins of German minorities to this area resulted from three waves of immigration to present day Hungary. The third and greatest of these waves occurred in between the years of 1718 and 1787 and came to be known as “The Great Swabian Migration”³; the German peasants who migrated with this wave were called Danube Swabians in reference to the territory in Germany, Swabia, from which most (though not all) migrated.⁴

The Kingdom of Hungary had been founded sometime around 1000 AD and encompassed the present day regions of Hungary, Slovakia and Croatia, as well as parts of Romania, Ukraine, Serbia and Austria. A long period of cohesion and peace followed, but in 1526, the Ottoman Empire began placing pressure and demands placed on the Kingdom of Hungary. Soon after a hot and cold war erupted; constant conflict ensued between the two empires for nearly 150 years, with the borders of the Kingdom of Hungary remaining somewhat dynamic and undefined. The Ottomans eventually managed to take over a considerable portion of land from this Hungarian Kingdom, part of that land included present day Hungary.⁴ This Hungarian victory was fleeting. Soon after, a portion of the Ottoman territory was taken by the Austrian Empire in the late 17th century - part of the new Austrian Empire land included present day Hungarian territory.

In just one hundred years, Hungary had been shuffled between the hands of three major Empires: The Kingdom of Hungary to the Ottoman Empire to the Austrian Empire. The Habsburgs Dynasty - who had ruled the Austrian Empire at this time - forcibly expelled the Turks from the newly acquired territory. Following the Turks departure, the Hungarian land was devastated, depopulated and comprised of swamp and wilderness.⁵ The Turks had made up a large percentage of occupants, so the Habsburg emperor (Charles VI) decided to establish a decree promoting the migration of Germans to the unoccupied area. Two Habsburg Kaisers (Maria Teresa and Joseph II) further encouraged the migration of Germans to this new land between the years of 1718 and 1787.⁴ The

settlers followed the Danube River down to Hungary during the so deemed ‘Great Swabian Migration’, which ultimately lead to a two-fold increase in the number of Germans within the Carpathian Basin.⁶ Following this large wave of immigration, approximately 400 German communities⁷ were established in Yugoslavia, Romania and Hungary with 450,000 Germans⁸ in Hungary.

In Hungary, German migrants occupied four territories; one of which was the Buda environs, or the areas surrounding Budapest.⁸ Following this newly conquered land containing Germans and Hungarians, the Austrian Empire sought a compromise with the Kingdom of Hungary in 1867. The Kingdom of Hungary unsurprisingly leapt at the chance of regaining its lost homeland and the two merged, forming the Austro-Hungarian Empire. At this time, present day Hungary was a widely diverse nation: only 48.6% claimed Magyar (aboriginal Hungarian language) as their mother tongue.⁹ Like all prior times of peace, the peace enjoyed by this merger was short-lived: soon after the Austro-Hungarian Empire became the epicenter of World War I.

Following the defeat of the Central Powers after World War I the Treaty of Trianon was signed as one of the many treaties designed to force war reparations on the Austro-Hungarian Empire.¹⁰ These Treaties dramatically reestablished the post war borders of many European countries and the Treaty of Trianon specifically addressed Hungary; the Kingdom of Hungary had simply become the Republic of Hungary, consisting of 66% less land than it had before the war.¹¹ Its new neighbors included Slovakia to the north, the Ukraine and Romania to the East, Serbia and Croatia to the south and Austria to the west.

The Treaty of Trianon was established without much regard for the minority nationalities that happened to fall within the new borders¹²; many Hungarians fell outside the new Hungarian lines, while ethnic Germans in the Buda area found themselves circled within a strictly Hungarian nation.¹³ Prior to the new territorial arrangements established after World War I, the ‘problem’ of German minorities did not exist since virtually all lived in Austro-Hungary or the Bismark Reich. Since this new border arrangement had left such a substantial amount of Germans outside their homeland, the Paris Peace Conference attempted to preclude any impending minority problems. (In all, over ten million Germans became minorities after World War I; Poland had one million,

Czechoslovakia had three million, Hungary had 500,000 and the remaining were spread between Slovakia, Romania, The Soviet Union and Serbia).² At this conference, the Minorities Treaty was established by the League of Nations and any country containing German minorities were forced to grant these minorities cultural autonomy and equal treatment. Some countries - namely Poland and Czechoslovakia - found these requirements cumbersome and generally evaded their application. Moreover, many politicians in these countries rose to power through rhetoric that portrayed German minorities as antagonists.¹⁰ In defense, German minorities frequently petitioned the League of Nations with complaints.

As a side note - German minority issues tended to be tenser in Poland and Czechoslovakia than in Hungary. Ironically enough however, Hungary was generally the most oppressive towards its minorities¹⁴ and in return, the Swabians in Hungary had their fair share of complaints against their government.⁹ Though these communities spoke German, they developed a 'Swabian' dialect that is very distinct from German proper. One of these Buda environs, located to the Southwest of Budapest, was known as Budaörs.

Budaörs

*"Then came the laborers home from the field, and serenely the sun sank
Down to his rest, and twilight prevailed. Anon from the belfry
Softly the Angelus sounded, and over the roofs of the village
Columns of pale blue smoke, like clouds of incense ascending,
Rose from a hundred hearths, the homes of peace and contentment."¹*

The Latozinsky family ancestors likely settled on the far eastern end of Budaörs during the Great Swabian immigration. Budaörs grew from a small town of 1000 people in the 17th century, to number over 12,000 inhabitants by the 1930's - ninety percent of whom considered themselves German descendants.¹⁵ Though it is an agrarian town, Budaörs is located only 10 kilometers southwest the major metropolitan city, Budapest. After World War I, economic conditions had deteriorated substantially throughout Germany and Hungary and by the mid 1930's, poverty levels continued to climb; agrarian towns like Budaörs were considerably affected.¹⁶ The Hungarian Republic was still in its infancy and, on top of war reparations, they now had to deal with ethnic minorities who seemed to constitute a large portion of the population.

Josef Latozinsky, born in 1898, labored as a carpenter to make ends meet for his family. He

assumed many characteristic features of a stereotypical German; he was conservative, strict and assiduous. He specialized in making coffins – a trade he learned from another carpenter in his younger years. As a younger man during World War I, his job began with bringing dead soldiers bodies back into town – an experience that scarred him deeply. If there was a just God, he once told his children, He would never let those young men die. Nonetheless, he continued with his profession, though he never again attended church. Katarina Latozinsky, born in 1897, stayed at home, helping to raise the four young children - Hans, Theresia, Maria and Stefan. Hans, born in 1925, was the oldest child and had already begun working as a baker in the late 1930's.¹⁷

On the other side of town lived the Hummels. The Hummels were, in many ways, similar to the Latozinskys – they had five children; two older boys, Paul and Luka and three younger girls, Annete, Ines and Margaret.¹⁸ The father, Martin, supported the family through his construction business. Though they did not know each other personally, both families would be deeply affected by the War and, in time, their paths would merge.

Though money was scarce, the Latozinsky and Hummel lifestyle was characteristic of the agricultural town. A large percentage of Budaörs residents owned grape and peach farms to produce wine, but this trade produced meager wages in a country suffering from a post war economic lapse.¹⁹ Most Swabians (approximately 56 %) were engaged in agriculture in Hungary.²⁰ Whenever a needed commodity was not available in the town, the townspeople would make the 10-kilometer walk to Budapest. Their houses were small, but quaint; each had two bedrooms – one for the four children and one for the parents – as well as a kitchen. No homes in the town had plumbing, so water had to be carried daily from the town well.

Most children attended the local school run by Brothers and Nuns in the Catholic town. At that time, the Roman Catholic Church controlled what was taught in most Hungarian schools.²¹ Boys and girls were split into separate schools and all the towns' children were lumped into one class, which often numbered up to 60 children. The highest education level almost exclusively reached in the town was 6th grade, simply because this was the minimum education level compulsory by law.²¹ Most children then sought a job to help their parents economically.

The level of education attained in Hungary strongly depended upon social status. Any

education above the elementary level was reserved for elite or wealthy members of society. Following World War I, Hungary had begun to lean politically towards conservatism, which dictated a decidedly anti-liberal educational policy.²²

Rising National Identity - for Work and Bread

“Now had the season returned, when the nights grow colder and longer,
And the retreating sun the sign of the Scorpion enters.”¹

The rural Swabian population did not develop an ethnic identity until the late 1800’s, following a spread of Romantic Nationalism.²³ By this time, the Swabians had grown frustrated with the Magyar state; they felt it defended Jewish Hungarian Landlords at the expense of peasant farmers.²³ Fueled by this sentiment, Hungarian-German peasants came to consider themselves solely German, and the Magyar state foreign. This new nationalism also contained an anti-Semitic element; Jews were simply lumped in with the Hungarians as antagonists.²³

The Great Depression made its way across Europe in the early 1930’s. The depression, coupled with war reparations, resulted in a steady and precipitous economic decline for Hungary and Germany. As a consequence, the political mood in both countries began shifting further towards the right.²² Hitler rose to power on the promise of “Work and Bread” – a promise he in fact delivered in many ways²⁴ - though his deliverance often required illegal means and were fueled by selfish reasons. He did, however, managed to gradually pull Germans out of the depths of the Great Depression and in so doing, gained immense trust from his constituents.²⁴ In Hungary, Hitler’s message of economic hope and national unity seemed promising for a struggling ethnic minority. Hitler, in fact, used ethnic Germans outside of the German borders to his advantage by exaggerating their mistreatment; this tactical move on Hitler’s part further entrenched German Nationalism.²⁵

After World War I, the Hungarian government included some minority representation in their government; and though a Hungarian German Cultural Association had formed in 1923, the leaders of this association were Zippers and Saxons (two other German minority groups). All in Hungary deliberately avoided Swabian representation since they were considered lower class peasants.¹⁶ The Hungarian government was particularly suspicious of this group and would not hesitate arresting any Swabians who denounced Hungary.¹⁶ Consequently, Swabians began

identifying with pan-Germanism more adamantly than other minority in Hungary.

Many in Budaörs, especially the younger generation, became radically devoted to this Nazi ideology. Pan-Germanism in these minority villages became even more solidified when radical right wing Germans began visiting these villages to spread rumors of the supposed ‘wonders’ awaiting them in Germany.¹⁶ The notion of belonging to a “Master Race” was understandably appealing to poverty stricken peasants. This new sense of self-worth was intoxicating, and some unquestionably accepted every aspect of the Nazi ideology.¹⁶ Some young men in these German villages were indeed promised German citizenship if they joined this movement by German agitators who visited these villages. In fact, a practice of smuggling Swabians into Germany began in the late 1930’s under the misleading pretense that they would be given well-paid jobs and dormitory housing upon their arrival. They were largely unaware of the dangers of their decision²⁶; in reality, they were directly brought to SS training camps.¹⁶

In many small German-Hungarian towns, like Budaörs, day laborers would frequently get together for drinks after work and drunkenly dismiss the Magyar State while praising the efforts of Hitler.¹⁶ However, many older, more experienced men, like Josef Latozinsky, were not fooled by the brash promise of Hitler - or at least recognized that the Nazi ideology was being carried too far. Josef began seeing this Nationalism as a thin veil covering a sinister scheme. His son, Stefan, was born in 1934 and had attended a local town fair one day in 1940. He approached one stand, where he recognized a picture of Adolf Hitler being sold. He had, of course, heard of the famous Adolf Hitler and was exposed to the collective National identity spreading in Budaörs. Just as one today would buy a picture of a celebrity, Stefan bought the souvenir along with his other friends and carried it home to show his parents. Josef took one look at his son holding the picture of Hitler – a man so profound, idolized and feared. He grabbed the picture of Adolf Hitler from his son’s hand and threw it in the trash.

Part 2: The Midst of WWII 1940-1944

“Alike were they free from
Fear, that reigns with the tyrant, and envy, the vice of republics.
Neither locks had they to their doors, nor bars to their windows;
But their dwellings were open as day and the hearts of the owners;
There the richest was poor, and the poorest lived in abundance.”¹

Hungary's Ideological Shift

Following World War I, a democratic regime was established in Hungary. This was soon replaced by a Marxist dictatorship led by the Hungarian Communist Party. Yet again, the communist regime only lasted for a year, demonstrating the instability of Hungary at this point in time. A right wing opposition party - led by Admiral Miklos Horthy who was formerly the chief of the Austro-Hungarian Navy - overthrew this communist regime in 1919. The "Horthy Regime" then ruled Hungary until 1944. His regime was initially characterized as Moderately Conservative; however, more revolutionary, fascist-like parties existed in Hungary and Horthy's Regime began radicalizing to pull support from these right wing parties.²

The effects of the first World War coupled with the depression had a strong impact on Hungary's developing political system; jobs were hard to come by and many clung to the notion of a strong government in hopes that it would pull Hungary out of this downward spiral.³ Horthy initially proclaimed a moderate-conservative philosophy; however, the government began moving towards right radicalism when he instated the extremist, Gyula Gömbös, as Prime Minister in 1932. Gömbös had a National-Socialist vision he hoped to fulfill in Hungary, and even traveled to Berlin on numerous occasions in order to develop a political and economic relationship with Hitler. These visits ensured a close tie between Hungary and Germany.³ Gömbös' dream of seeing Hungary as a National Socialist state was cut off when he died in 1936.

In the years following Gömbös' death, political leanings strayed even farther right and Hungary began adopting anti-Semitic tendencies.³ Anti-Semitism first surfaced in Hungary as early as the 1880's.³ The cause initially grew from a resentment of the Jewish minority population, who were very successful professionals in Hungary; in fact, 50% of physicians were Jewish by 1920.³ Moreover, a disproportionately high percentage of communist leaders had been Jewish, and the coup against the Communist party provided a motive for further anti-Semitic propaganda. Horthy's regime, however, did not initially condone or permit anti-Semitism at the government level.

The most radical party in Hungary, however, was the Arrow Cross Party, led by Ferenc Szalasi, and it espoused the typical features of German National Socialism: Anti-Semitism and a belief in

the 'Master Race'.³ Szalasi was born to a German father and a Hungarian mother; he was not characterized by others as particularly eloquent or talented, but rather as a radical ideologue who relentlessly pursued his cause.⁴ He proclaimed himself a-Semite; in other words, he believed Jews simply had no place in Hungarian society.⁵ Following Gombos' death in 1936, Szalasi inherited most of Gombos' support group.

For a time, conditions in Budaörs – and all of Hungary for that matter – appeared to improve in the eyes of the average working class. This was particularly so for the Swabians; jobs were increasing and the ethnic minorities had a newfound sense of German pride and importance.⁵ Despite the fact that Hungary's economy had improved substantially by 1937, and though Szalasi's Arrow Cross party was viewed as a serious threat, the Hungarian government system as a whole still began adopting more authoritarian aspects. The Prime Minister at the time, Daranyi, began imposing legislation against the Jewish population; Daranyi was well aware of the growing support for the Arrow Cross Party and tried appealing to more radical constituents. His legislation restricted the number of Jewish professionals to less than 20% of all Hungarian professions. In fact, he began engaging in secret negotiations with the Arrow Cross Party – much to the dismay of General Horthy. Horthy dismissed Dayani in 1938, replacing him with Bela Imredy.⁵ Imredy's political strategy, much like Dayani, was to out-radicalize the Arrow Cross Party; he passed yet another anti-Jewish legislation in his first year as Prime Minister.⁵ Horthy's patience with these disappointing Prime Ministers had worn thin; by 1939, he attempted moving the political system more towards the center when he instated the moderate Prime Minister Pal Teleki in 1939. Furthermore, he established an election to take place shortly after his instatement to have Hungary appear more Democratized.

By this time, the Arrow Cross Party was at its peak, boasting over 250,000 members. The party promised economic changes to favor farmers and working families; consequently, a sizable contingent of Swabians comprised the party.⁶ The Arrow Cross Party received 25% of the vote in 1939 – the second highest percentage in the election - but Pal Teleki gained the edge and remained Prime Minister.

Though Pal Teleki was moderate, Germany began placing pressure on Hungary in the early stages of World War Two to form an alliance;⁶

Hitler strategically offered Hungary territory that it had lost after World War I in hopes that this would persuade them into a partnership. On November 20, 1940, Teleki signed the Tripart Agreement, which established Hungary's place in the Axis alliance. In April of 1941, German soldiers began marching towards Hungary to prepare for the invasion of Yugoslavia and requested the aide of Hungary, and upon hearing this news, Teleki committed suicide; presumably, the pressure placed on him from Germany had become unbearable and despite his efforts in preserving Hungarian autonomy, he saw his efforts were futile. Soon after, the Hungarian city of Kassa was bombed, supposedly by the Soviets - though whether Germany had done so to gain Hungarian support still remains controversial.⁷ On the following day, June 27th 1941, Hungary declared war on the USSR.

Recruitment to the SS

“Alas! in the mean time
Many surmises of evil alarm the hearts of the people.”
Then made answer the farmer:—“Perhaps some friendlier purpose
Brings these ships to our shores. Perhaps the harvests in England
By untimely rains or untimelier heat have been blighted,
And from our bursting barns they would feed their cattle and children.”
“Not so thinketh the folk in the village,” said, warmly, the blacksmith¹¹

At some point during this time, even many Swabians who were not fully aware of the political happenings began sensing a radicalism of the Nazi party beyond their initial impressions. As expressed in by Balazs Szelenyi in an Ethnic conflict, “There is no direct line from German Romantic Nationalism to Aushwitz”⁸. Despite these uneasy feelings the vast majority of ethnic Germans supported Germany; it was apparent that German victory could project them to social ranks that were not attainable otherwise.

The Latozinsky family, as well as many working in Budaörs, was generally unaware of most of the ongoing governmental turmoil. By early 1942, Teresa, born in 1928, had graduated from school and began housekeeping for a local family in town. Stefan was entering his early years in school and Maria was entering the second grade. Hans, now 17 years old, had begun working for the local bakery. On the other side of town, the Hummels were also living quite peacefully in spite of the war; Paul was 18, working with his father, Luke was just 15 and had too begun working in the construction business and the three young girls were still attending grade school. In the small town, life was proceeding quite normally. It wasn't

long, however, before the Nazi rise pervaded into their small society and the political proceedings extended to their front door.

By 1943, the war in Europe had escalated, but the tide of the war began favoring the Allies after besieged German forces notoriously surrendered at the Battle of Stalingrad. Hungary had reluctantly entered into a one-sided alliance with Hitler – and upon realizing a probable Allied victory, Horthy wanted to retract this alliance. Horthy with Kallay, the Prime Minister of Hungary at the time, felt the gravity of their position in the war and began engaging in secret peace negotiations with the Allied forces. It was not long before Hitler caught wind of these secret negotiations. In March of 1944, he ordered Operation Margarethe; Horthy was invited to a meeting with Hitler in Austria while SS units were secretly sent to occupy Hungary. As Hungary quietly slipped into the hands of Hitler, Horthy was quickly losing control of his countries autonomy.⁹

At this point in 1944, Nazi forces had entered Budaörs. Once seen as allies, the German soldiers assumed a more threatening attitude towards the Hungarians, but were apparently “greeted with flowers” by many ethnic-Germans.¹⁰ Though many were unaware of the political turmoil, the more astute understood German occupation as a sign of serious contention between the once-allied countries.

By July, Hitler began to recognize the distinct possibility of failure and was growing desperate. Looking to extend the USSR's sphere of influence, Stalin sought to take over Hungary before the British and American forces invaded or before Hungary had abandoned German ties.¹⁰

With Soviets threatening to invade Hungary, Hitler decided to recruit ethnic Germans in Hungary into the German army. In 1944, the Hungarian government signed an agreement with Hitler, placing all ethnic Germans liable for military service at the disposal of the Waffen SS. Nothing so clearly demonstrates the ideological pressure exerted by the Nazis' on the Hungarians, as does the recruitment of ethnic Germans to the Waffen SS. Josef and Martin had both been recruited to the Hungarian army; their generation had trained with the Hungarians at a younger age, so they were thus incorporated into the Honved, or Home Guard¹¹ but the younger boys of the family were subject to German Waffen SS recruitment.

The Hungarian government had in fact sanctioned recruitment to the Waffen SS; they had the task of enrolling any ethnic Germans born

between 1912 and 1925 in accordance with the first act of a bilateral agreement with Germany.¹² This was initially on a volunteer basis, though strongly encouraged. In 1943, a second agreement included those aged up to 35. The final agreement was signed in April of 1944 – in this agreement, the volunteer aspect of service was abolished. Moreover, only 10 percent of ethnic Germans were allowed to serve in the Honved;¹² however, this was later interpreted as disloyalty to the Hungarian state.¹¹ German villages were carefully combed for those available to fight. Draft notices were to be sent to German-Hungarian towns in August; males as young as 16 years old and as old as 24 years old were to serve in the German army.¹¹ German soldiers with draft notices made their way to Budaörs. One morning Hans, Paul and 16 year-old Luka received a notice from a visiting officer; in September they were to report to the Rathaus and serve in the German Army.

In September, the young men made their way to the Rathaus, or the local town hall where they were to receive instructions. Before doing so, each said a mournful goodbye to his mother. Katarina prayed for her husband, Josef, and her son's safe return. On the other side of town, Rose Hummel, with her husband in the Hungarian army and the two boys, Luka and Paul, leaving to join the German Army, was left alone to care for her three young daughters. Neither knew the fate of Germany or the fate of their families.

The Rathaus in Budaörs was located in the center of town, and all the new soldiers piled into the main room. Here, they were divided into units led by a German officer. They were hastily ushered outside Budaörs for a brief training period – lasting no more than a week, in fact, since the Soviets were fast approaching the Hungarian border.¹³ Hitler found inexperienced army units expendable and did not hesitate placing these units on the front lines against Soviet forces – Paul and Luke happened to be placed in such a unit.

Horthy was not so ready to give up his country to Hitler; he knew the Allies were likely victors and had no desire to face the Soviet army. On October 15th, 1944, it was announced that Hungary had signed an armistice with the Soviet Union. He contacted the Soviet Union and announced an official armistice. An outraged Hitler launched Operation Panzerfaust and sent Waffen-SS commandos to force Horthy to abrogate the armistice. He was removed from office¹³ and the radical Arrow Cross Party leader, Ferenc Szálasi, was placed in power. Szálasi immediately

recommended the deportation of Hungarian Jews, which had previously been halted by Horthy (Hungary was one of the few European countries that did not allow deportation). A reign of terror was then unleashed against Jews on the streets of Budapest – a time Hans recalls acutely.

On this day of October 15th, Hans stood upon a chain bridge on the outskirts of Budapest with his army unit. The Arrow Cross Party finally gained the power they had sought for so long and were not going to waste a moment. On the opposite side of the chain bridge, Hans saw that a brigade of German soldiers had gathered up Jews and Hungarian dissenters. He watched with shock as the German soldiers lined them up, and told them to jump to their death into the Danube River and if they refused to comply, the soldiers threw them off. One by one, he saw men and women - people his own age, some older, some younger – plunging to their death for reasons that were suddenly unclear to him. 440,000 Hungarian Jews had already been sent to Auschwitz and the remaining 200,000 were now facing the brutality of the Arrow Cross Party; on this first fateful day, hundreds of Jews were killed. A friend in his unit, who had been around the same age as Hans, approached him with a shaking head. The concern in his friend's voice spoke more than his words - one day, he told Hans, they would be the ones held responsible for these actions.

His friend's words stuck him profoundly, both for their sensitive insight and startling revelation; the German 'cause' - this once appealing lure of the Master Race - was being carried to its logical end, and that end was nothing more than malevolent. For the first time, Hans recognized the gravity of the German army's actions and realized that he was living history. He continued to look on with the other men in his unit, wondering whether, in some sense, he was to blame. It was both extraordinary and terrible; what he saw would remain with him all his life.

Approach of the Soviets

*“Then came the guard from the ships, and marching proudly among them
Entered the sacred portal. With loud and dissonant clangor
Echoed the sound of their brazen drums from ceiling and casement,—
Echoed a moment only, and slowly the ponderous portal
Closed, and in silence the crowd awaited the will of the soldiers.”¹*

The Soviets were advancing swiftly across Hungary. Hitler and Stalin both realized that Budapest was an essential political victory in the war and began giving the looming battle of

Budapest the utmost attention. Stalin had even sent a memo to the General in charge of this operation, Malinovsky, on October 28th: “The supreme command can’t give you 5 days. You must understand that for political reasons we have to take Budapest as quickly as possible.” Hitler, on the other hand, realized he was hanging on to the war by a thread, and this thread had become the city of Budapest.

The United States Military landing at Normandy drew forces away from the Eastern Front, so Hitler had to selectively place his panzer units. In late October of 1944, German and Hungarian forces with 70 tanks faced a Soviet unit with 627 tanks in the Great Hungarian Plain. Soviets commenced forward, out powering the Axis, and pushing farther inward towards Budapest. However, the German and Hungarian units simply could no longer stand up to the manpower of the Soviets; in the city of Debrecen (220 km east of Budapest), for example, 227 German tanks faced 773 Soviet tanks and three times as many soldiers.¹⁴

Despite the strong Soviet progression, the pace proved too slow for Stalin who was growing impatient. Stalin demanded the Soviets cross the Danube and reach the town of Budaörs by December 8th.¹⁵ The Axis counter gradually yielded to the Soviets, who continued to push forward as the Germans and Hungarians forces retreated. By November 3rd, 1944, Soviet tanks had already reached the outskirts of Budapest. On November 8th, the Soviet General Malinovsky decided to attack Budapest from the Northwest. This attack was countered by the 18th SS Panzergrenadier Division, which consisted mostly of Ethnic Germans.¹⁶ Ethnic German and Hungarian Army divisions had a relatively ‘low combat value’ since many soldiers crossed over to enemy side and only 1 rifle per 18 men was available. The morale of many Hungarian and Swabian soldiers was waning; food was scarce and they began questioning for what and for whom they were fighting.¹⁴

On November 23rd, Hitler demanded to the civilians that no house be abandoned without a fight.¹⁶ But in early December, Hitler realized that failure was imminent; in desperation he ordered that soldiers and recruited civilians line the streets and buildings of Budapest with explosives – an order that was not carried out due to time constraints.¹⁷ By December 20th, the Soviets had completely encircled the West and North end of Budapest; the Soviets were closing in on the encircled, combat-weary soldiers.

In the early evening of December 24th, Hans had been fighting alongside his unit in Budapest. The soldiers were then sent to the local school for shelter and sleep until the morning. Food rations were running desperately low¹⁸; by mid-December, civilians were receiving only 150g of bread per day and 120g meat on holidays. The soldiers, in particular, were fed inadequately and by the final weeks of the war, most were starving. Theresia, upon hearing where the soldiers were stationed, decided to find her brother and bring him food on Christmas Eve. Since the Soviets had encircled the Northwest portion of the city, the road that led from Budaörs to her brother’s unit was clear of Soviets. She made the precarious 10 km walk into Budapest and entered the once beautiful city - now war torn and in ruins - as the artillery sounded around her. Theresia finally located the schoolhouse and found her grateful brother safely.

Theresia made it back to Budaörs just in time. When she arrived home, her mother told her the Soviets were approaching. Katarina took her children, Stefan, Theresia and Maria, to the neighbor’s house where all hid in the basement cellar together. Soon after, late on Christmas Eve, the Soviets entered Budaörs.

The Soviets had completely encircled Budapest on Christmas Day, 1944. Within this encirclement were about 100,000 soldiers of the Axis. The German military authorities, fearing punishment from Hitler, placed blame on the Hungarian forces with their listless morale and frequent desertions. The Hungarian forces were split up and placed with German units to prevent further desertion.¹⁹ The two young soldiers, Luka and Paul, were placed on the Front to prevent the Soviets from entering the city.

The Siege of Budapest lasted for nearly two months, until February 13th.²⁰ The Axis forces were ordered to prevent Soviet entry at all costs. Some ethnic Germans had evacuated when the fate of the war became apparent, but the vast majority of ethnic Germans refused to leave their homes²¹; it simply did not occur to them that they would be considered culpable for Nazi atrocities, and they certainly did not expect to face repercussions by their own government. Meanwhile, the civilians of Budaörs were in the hands of the Soviets, unprotected and without further food rations. Katarina waited in the cellar for two days with her children and neighbors before daring to leave and face the Soviets.

One of the longest sieges of World War Two came to an end in early February of 1945. After

two failed attempts to relieve Budapest, the city was left to its fate.²¹ The starving and cold soldiers could no longer withstand the siege and Hungary surrendered to the Soviets. The Soviets began grouping the captured soldiers – often separating Hungarians from Germans. The Soviet Union established an order stating ethnic German soldiers were to be deported for forced labor from the occupied territories. When the deportation quotas were not met, Hungarian soldiers were deported as well. The treatment of soldiers by the Soviets was inconsistent – some were shot without provocation while others were almost invited to escape.²² Much as the treatment of soldiers, treatment of civilians was left to the discretion and whims of individual Soviets.

When a Soviet soldier approached Hans, he made sure to speak Hungarian and was grouped with other Hungarian Prisoners of War. At the time he was captured, Hans was about 30 km away from Budaörs; recognizing that his impending fate was probable to end with death or long-term imprisonment, he decided to risk escape. He managed to slip away undetected by the Soviets on guard of the prisoners. He dressed in dingy clothes in hopes that he may slip under Soviet radar as made his risky travel on the back roads to Budaörs. When Hans arrived home, the thin boy in drab garments was unrecognized by his two sisters and brother at first. When his mother finally arrived home and she saw her son sitting in the house, she scolded his foolishness for coming home when the towns were being searched for escaped soldiers.

The Prisoners of War, meanwhile, were to be taken to work camps in the Soviet Union or Poland; approximately 32,000 ethnic Germans were transported to the Soviet Union in January of 1945. To get to the railroad station, many prisoners had to march through the main road in Budaörs. As the Battalion containing many Budaörs natives marched through the town, the residents lined the streets looking for their sons, husbands and brothers. Rose Hummel lined the streets with her neighbors and three daughters and began looking for her two sons, beset with worry. Her worry deepened as more and more soldiers passed with no sign of either son; she then began calling out to the passing soldiers, asking if anyone had seen or heard of Luka and Paul Hummel. Most soldiers passing vacantly shook their heads, but one finally recognized the names being called. He turned to Rose and, his words carried the heartrending news: On a cold afternoon in the winter of 1945, Rose

found out she would never see her 16 and 19-year-old boys again.

Josef Latozinsky and Martin Hummel had fought in a Hungarian battalion and were captured after the Siege had ended. Josef was sent to a work camp in Poland, while Martin was placed on a freight train to the Soviet Union. It seemed unlikely to Martin that he would be able to return in the near future – if at all. As he sat on the train with the other prisoners, an idea crossed his mind. He wrote a note – stating his name, his town and where he was going - crumpled the paper up and threw it out the window of the train. He knew it was a long shot, but figured it was worth attempting to notify his family.

As fate would have it, a woman found it in passing one day. A short time after Martin had been taken to the Soviet Union, she personally went into Budaörs, knocked on the Hummel's door, and handed the note, a cold comfort, to Rose.

Part 3: Soviet occupation in 1945

“Then she remembered the tale she had heard of the justice of heaven; Soothed was her troubled soul, and she peacefully slumbered till morning.”¹

Under heavy Soviet influence, the Hungarian political system gradually shifted to Communism by 1945. A Provisional National Assembly was initially established, with joint power shared between various political parties; Stalin hoped to deflect Western Criticism and on the façade, Hungary appeared to give equal weight to parties across the political spectrum. In reality, however, the Soviets exerted firm control over the National Assembly; the Red Army began suppressing any other political parties propaganda activities² and when the Independent Smallholders Party beat the Communist Party in the November election, the Soviet Commissioner, Marshal Kliment Voroshilov, refused to grant the party the power they had rightly attained. Instead, a coalition government was established with Communist party leaders holding chief positions. Fulfilling Stalin's vision, the Hungarian government and the Soviet government had in many ways become one in the same.

The Siege of Budapest proved to be one of the longest and bloodiest battles of World War Two. It also marked the demise of the Nazi party - by May, Hitler was dead and Germany surrendered to the Allies. The aftermath of the war had taken a toll on Hungary: approximately 80,000 civilians and 300,000 Hungarian soldiers were killed. After a

fleeting peak in economic status, Hungary was in economic ruins once again – 25% of its industrial base was destroyed and the land given to Hungary by Hitler was lost once again. To make matters worse, Stalin refused to let any country under his influence receive aid from the Marshall Plan – a plan that allowed the rest of Western Europe to recover fairly rapidly. On top of this economic strife, over 30,000 ethnic Germans – soldiers as well as some civilians - were taken to Gulag labor camps in the Soviet Union.³

The initial days of Soviet occupation were unpredictable for those in Budaörs. Many Soviets, exhausted and embittered by the war, came in hate. Their destructive impulses and want of revenge manifested as violence against the Swabians. The soldiers were not given unequivocal orders on how to treat civilians by high authorities, and thus, many of the crimes committed resulted from an individual soldiers' disposition. Often, this disposition was hostile since most Soviet soldiers had previously been inundated with propaganda pamphlets, portraying Hungarians and Germans as barbarians.⁴ It also did not help that Budaörs had large stores of wine – the soldiers often got drunk which made their behavior more erratic and violent. Despite these predispositions, the German-Hungarians did not face the extreme inhumanity like those in Eastern Germany suffered;⁵ this is partially because many Soviets did not immediately recognize the Swabians as Germans. However, hardly a single house escaped looting; Soviet soldiers stationed throughout towns, such as Budaörs would frequently enter homes to ransack them for food – taking whatever they pleased whenever they pleased.

The new local town authorities had been appointed by the Soviet government and consisted mainly of Hungarian communists.⁵ Compulsory labor was required of some civilians – mainly ethnic Germans. In addition, most were recruited to build trenches in the areas where fighting was still occurring. The Soviets would often cruise the streets and pick up civilians for forced labor whenever work was needed. Women were often put into a field to dig trenches, so the residents would avoid walking around the town unless absolutely necessary. In fact, the overriding objective of each day had become to avoid the wrath and whims of Soviet soldiers.

One day, the Soviets needed to use the airport located in Budaörs, but feared that the airport had been lined with mines. The Soviets gathered all the women of Budaörs together and brought them to

the local airport, where the women were told to link arms and march down the runway. Under the pretense that this action was to compact the snow so the airport runway could be used, Katarina and her two daughters linked arms with their neighbors – including Rose and her daughters - and slowly marched down the airport strip. Only after did they realize the true purpose - to make sure no mines were present. Fortunately for them, no mines went off.

After Hans returned and things settled down a bit, he managed to find work as a baker for the Soviets. This fortunate profession allowed him to easy access to food that he would steal for his family. Though the Soviet soldiers were, for the most part, apathetic to those who had been soldiers during the war, the Hungarian Police were not. They had become a main concern for Hans as they persistently sought out soldiers who had fought with Germans during the war - despite the fact that this service had been compulsory. The Hungarian police would often search individual houses for unaccounted soldiers, at which time Hans would disguised himself as a woman to hide from Hungarian police.

Just a few months working in the bakeshop, an announcement was made in Budaörs demanding anyone who had served in the army to report to the Rathaus. Hans finally gave in and went to the courthouse, where the Hungarian police vigorously interrogated him. After finding out that he evaded labor camp, he was imprisoned briefly, then was forced to work for the Hungarian government for a year in Budapest. The entire concept seemed puzzling to Hans – he was informed just months earlier by the Hungarian government that he was to serve in the war, now - by a turn in politics - he was viewed by his country as an enemy, guilty of betrayal. Though this sudden shift against German minorities seems counterintuitive, the Hungarian Government desperately wanted to distance itself from the Nazi Regime; this prompted full cooperation with Soviet demands. Even in the years before World War Two, Hungary had wanted to establish a Nation State comprised of Magyar homogeneity, and this feeling intensified after the war. This mentality proved to be disastrous to the ethnic German population, who were no longer viewed as Swabian immigrants, but as unwelcome enemies.⁶ And the soldiers were their first targets.

If soldiers lived in fear of imprisonment by their government, it was nothing compared to the fear of rape Hungarian women experienced by the Soviets. This war crime was disproportionately

higher by the Soviet army than any other European army of World War Two. Soviet authorities did not generally give heed war crimes committed by Soviets, so the soldiers rarely faced repercussions. In some areas of Hungary, as many as 70 percent of women were raped⁷ – it was quickly becoming the norm, rather than the unfortunate exception. To protect themselves against the Soviets, Katarina and her daughters would sleep in groups with neighbors in one room at night. Even Hans had an odd experience; when dressing up as a woman to hide from Hungarian police, a Soviet soldier entered his house. The soldier – seeing what he presumed to be a woman alone – grabbed his leg. When Hans stood, the Soldier realized he was a man and, baffled and embarrassed, cursed him and left. Katarina and her two daughters once narrowly escaped an attack by two Soviet soldiers; they were one of the few lucky enough to evade rape. Just a few doors down from the Latosinskys, a man was shot when he stood up to the soldiers threatening to rape his wife.

Life for POW's

Meanwhile, Josef and Martin were enduring the Gulag camps. Josef was placed cleaning up a concentration camp in Poland. He happened to befriend a soldier who was running the work camp, and was sent home earlier than most. Instead of going home to Budaörs and being harassed by the Hungarian police like his son, Hans, Josef remained in Budapest. He found a job and would visit his family time to time. He rarely spoke of his experience in Poland.

The post-war USSR was in desperate need of rebuilding, so Martin worked to rebuild streets. The prisoners received dismal daily rations of one piece of bread and a bowl of hot water. If such a ration sounds like a death sentence, it was in many ways. Stalin did not care in the slightest how many died – just as long as they put in enough work before doing so. Death rates approached 25% in some camps.⁸

Martin toiled the days away, wondering about his family, his sons – whether they were all right, or whether they knew where he was. As he worked over the months, he gradually became weaker and death starting seeming imminent. After a year in the camp, he awoke one morning without enough strength to even get up. A soldier came over and kicked him, telling him to get working. When the prisoner failed to respond, the soldier gestured to another soldier, telling him to take the prisoner

away. Martin thought he would be left to die; instead, he was taken to a freight train with a group of prisoners who were also too weak to be of any use to the Soviets anymore.

It was, at first, unclear where he was being taken, but eventually Martin and the other prisoners realized they were not going to be killed; they were freed and returning home. On the way home, the train would stop periodically in fields, where the men would get off the train and rush for whatever vegetables or fruit they could find. Two young men returned to the train with raw, frozen beets, and Martin advised they not eat them; he insisted that their bodies would not be able to handle that type of food after dieting on only bread for the past year. The two young men supposed he was merely jealous – or even plotting to steal the food for himself. Martin noticed that the younger soldiers often died the quickest, making imprudent decisions in vital situations, at which point his thoughts strayed to the fate of his sons. Over the evening, dysentery took hold of the two young men and both died by the following morning.

Martin finally arrived at the train station in Budaörs. With barely enough strength to walk, he began making his way towards home. At this point, he was nearly dead and was garmented in ragged Soviet attire. In the distance, he saw his wife out in the back of the house. Rose, however, only saw what appeared to be a Russian soldier – she wondered why he was approaching their house, but was not afraid since the emaciated man hardly seemed threatening. When he reached a distance of perhaps, five feet away, Rose finally recognized her husband. Martin collapsed, and the family laid him on a bed. A doctor came to tend to the dying man: he ordered three tablespoons of soup a day to be given at first, gradually increasing the amount over time. He was only later told about the death of his two sons, when he seemed better able to handle such upsetting news. Over the course of time, Martin healed and revitalized. In vain, the Hummels, minus two sons, tried to move on from the horror of the past year.

The Latozinskys were also trying to come to terms with the extraordinary times; past times of peace seemed so vague and distant. With Hans still in a work camp, and Josef in Budapest, the future seemed uncertain and unpromising. It was only a few months longer that they would all live under Soviet rule; no one, however, expected what was to come.

Part 4: The Expulsion - January, 1946

“Soon o’er the yellow fields, in silent and mournful procession,
Came from the neighboring hamlets and farms the Acadian women,
Driving in ponderous wains their household goods to the sea-shore,
Pausing and looking back to gaze once more on their dwellings,
Ere they were shut from sight by the winding road and the woodland.
Close at their sides their children ran, and urged on the oxen,
While in their little hands they clasped some fragments of
playthings.”¹

An ‘Orderly and Humane’ Transfer

In August of 1941, British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill met with President Franklin Roosevelt aboard a ship in the Atlantic Ocean in order to generate a list of peaceful principles. They hoped to reduce extremism and ensure civility when they officially released a declaration of peace, called the Atlantic Charter.² It is in times of war, however, that declarations are tested, and the Atlantic Charter did not live up to its own protocol when, in 1945, the Potsdam Agreement was released.

Just four years later, in July of 1945, the “Big Three” - leaders from Great Britain, United States and the USSR – met at the Cecilienhof Palace outside Berlin. The Potsdam Conference took place from July 17 to August 2 to address the preliminary issues of a war that had just previously ended. Among the agenda were the issue of war reparations, new territorial boundaries and, finally, the fate of Germans minorities who fell outside the German border. Stalin forcefully pushed for the expulsion of Germans from Czechoslovakia and Hungary. The United States and Britain were really concerned with the division of Germany, so were willing to compromise on certain issues – namely, the expulsion of ethnic Germans. Gradually Churchill and Roosevelt gave in to Stalin’s demands. In an effort to avoid breach with the Soviets, the Western Allies finally agreed to the transfer of Germans in Eastern Europe.³

Article XIII of the Potsdam Agreement states, “The Three Governments having considered the question in all its aspects, recognize that the transfer to Germany of German populations, or elements thereof, remaining in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary will have to be undertaken. They agreed that any transfers that take place should be effected in an orderly and humane manne.r”³ The reasons all three leaders finally agreed on expulsion remain rather contentious, and actually include a number of

factors. Firstly, one key factor for the Big Three was to make the Eastern European states roughly homogenous. Secondly, Stalin claimed Germans within these European countries were potential sources of future conflict, and expulsion would preclude such issues; immediately after the war, there was a distrust and sense of culpability on part of all Germans - despite what their political beliefs may have been. Thirdly, many felt the need to punish all people of German heritage based upon the premise of collective guilt; many were still coming to terms with the atrocities committed by the Nazis, and a desire to obtain justice often led to brash decisions. Finally, many propose that Stalin pushed for expulsion because he felt satellite states may look to the Soviet Union for protection against the angered Germans,⁴ and Roosevelt and Churchill simply appeased his proposals.

Hungary’s inclusion in this agreement was largely due to the Soviet Union; Marshal Voroshilov urged the government to consider expelling ethnic Germans months before the conference took place. The Communists went along with Soviet opinion, driven by the notion of collective guilt;⁵ though the Hungarian Government formally renounced the principle of collective guilt upon all Germans, their sentiments and private statements often spoke to the contrary. Following the release of the Potsdam Agreement, plans began forming to organize the mass expulsion. By December, 1945, a decree was issued by the Hungarian government: Any Hungarian citizen who declared himself German, changed his last name to a “German sounding” name, or served in the SS, was to be expelled from Hungary and brought to annexed areas of Germany.⁵

Just four years prior, the Atlantic Charter had specifically stated that no territorial changes were to be made if they did not meet the wishes of those affected. But these high ideals were disregarded after the war; ethnic Germans were never asked for input and few were even aware of the decree.

Leaving Budaörs Behind

“Foremost the young men came; and, raising together their voices,
Sang they with tremulous lips a chant of the Catholic Missions:—
“Sacred heart of the Saviour! O inexhaustible fountain!
Fill our hearts this day with strength and submission and patience!”
Then the old men, as they marched, and the women that stood by the
wayside
Joined in the sacred psalm, and the birds in the sunshine above them
Mingled their notes therewith, like voices of spirits departed.”¹

Budaörs was the first ethnic German town targeted and the winter of 1946 was one of the

coldest in Hungary. The first train was to carry residents from the eastern section of Budaörs with very little notice or warning given. On January 29th, a Soviet soldier knocked on the Hummel's door – they had to leave their homes, pack whatever they could carry, and get to the train station a mile away within two hours. They were told that they were not going to return home, but were not told where they were being taken. Every expellee was allowed to take 100 kilograms of luggage, and every freight train consisted of 40 wagons, each carrying 30 persons.⁶ The expulsion basically extended to anyone who had committed offenses against “National Loyalty”; the fact that Hungary had sanctioned ethnic Germans joining the SS was apparently disregarded.

Martin had finally recovered from his rough ordeal during the war in the Soviet Union, and finding about the death of his two sons; the prospect of being uprooted seemed daunting. Rose took a sheet and placed it on the floor of her home. It was difficult deciding what to bring, but only practical items could be taken; the only clothes they brought were the clothes they wore. They also brought a feather blanket to battle the cold conditions. Martin suggested bringing a fork: despite their being treated as animals, they would not become animals.

They made the mile walk to the station with their neighbors to see a freight train waiting for them. Twenty to thirty people were placed in each cart, so there was very little room to move about and barely enough room for each to sleep on the floor. What is worst is that none were told where they were being taken – most however, assumed it was the USSR.

The following day, the Soviet soldiers summoned the Latozinskys. Since they were not the first in the town to be transferred, they were unsurprised - if not disillusioned - by the news. Again, they were given a couple hours to pack and get to the train station. The trains were dirty and cold and, although a train in those days could make it from Hungary to Germany in a matter of hours, it took each train twelve days.

The train carrying the Hummels stopped in the American Zone of Germany, a section in the southwest known as Huchhausen. The American General, Lucius Clay, described the disturbing sight as the first train was unloaded: “The first trainload from Hungary was a pitiful sight. The expellees had been assembled without full allowance of food and personal baggage, and arrived hungry and destitute.”⁷ The Latozinskys ended up in a nearby

town, known as Obrigheim. Here, they were inspected and sterilized by American doctors.

Though the stipulations of the Potsdam Agreement urged an orderly and humane transfer, these regulations were hardly met. The Hungarian communists looted the luggage of the expellees and all arrived cold, hungry, poorly clothed and dirty.⁸ After the first few trainloads, however, these problems were sorted out and the expulsions gradually became more “humane”. On June 1, 1946, the transports were temporarily halted by America because Hungary wanted to claim all ethnic German property as their own; they claimed a right to do so based on reparations for the war. Soon after, the American government refused any further expellees to the U.S. Zone of Germany since the humane and orderly stipulations of the Potsdam Agreement were not fully adhered to. In total, approximately 170,000 ethnic Germans had been transported to Germany – mainly to the state, Württemberg, though some were taken to the zone occupied by the Soviet Union. Expulsions again resumed the following year, in August of 1947, when another 50,000 ethnic Germans were displaced.⁹

Part 5: Starting Over 1946-1950

“Bearing a nation, with all its household gods, into exile,
 Exile without an end, and without an example in story.
 Far asunder, on separate coasts, the Acadians landed;
 Scattered were they, like flakes of snow, when the wind from the northeast
 Strikes aslant through the fogs that darken the Banks of Newfoundland.
 Friendless, homeless, hopeless, they wandered from city to city,
 From the cold lakes of the North to sultry Southern savannas,—
 From the bleak shores of the sea to the lands where the Father of Waters
 Seizes the hills in his hands, and drags them down to the ocean,
 Deep in their sands to bury the scattered bones of the mammoth.
 Friends they sought and homes; and many, despairing, heart-broken,
 Asked of the earth but a grave, and no longer a friend nor a fireside.
 Written their history stands on tablets of stone in the churchyards.
 Long among them was seen a maiden who waited and wandered,
 Lowly and meek in spirit, and patiently suffering all things.”¹¹

The expulsion of ethnic Germans was barely known outside of Germany. However, tons of grains and potatoes were shipped from America to mitigate the food scarcity. The German economy was, unsurprisingly, in shambles after the war - industrial production had declined by 73% and unemployment was widespread.² In addition to coping with these dire post-war conditions, Germans had to somehow deal with the sudden influx of ethnic German expellees. In fact, many native Germans were forced to give up space in their homes to accommodate the refugees. The expellees found they had arrived unwelcome by the native Germans and with little prospect of work and food.

Both the Hummels and Latozinskys moved in with German families in their separate towns, Hochhausen and Obrigheim respectively. With few available jobs, food stamps supplied each family, but they never seemed to provide enough sustenance. The Latozinskys lived with the German family, and after both families acclimated and accepted their situation, they all got along reasonably well. Stefan entered school with the other children while Theresia worked in a factory, pickling food for some time. Since the Soviets claimed any German machines as war reparations, many were employed cleaning or repairing these factory machines.

Despite leaving their homeland and having to readjust to entirely new surroundings, all agreed that life was better and less dangerous in Germany than in Soviet-occupied Hungary. Stefan was called a Hungarian Gypsy by school children and bullied occasionally; otherwise, all got along well with the Germans. After Hans had been locked up a second time for being drafted in the war, he was rather resentful towards Hungary; though it was difficult starting over, he felt relieved that he no longer had to live in a country that exploited him.

Food, however, always seemed scarce and they remained entirely dependent on food stamps for years. They did find innovative ways to deal with the lack of food; trees in the town had little seeds that would fall. The younger generation figured out that when these seeds were pressed, they could make oil to be used for cooking. Many of the towns had apple orchards as well; after farmers picked the trees some apples would be left behind that were considered of poor quality to the German farmers. The children would wait for the farmers to leave, and then pick up any apples the farmers had missed.

The Hummels lived with the German family for four months; they were then able to buy a one-room place of their own on the other side of town. The Latozinskys lived with the German family for a couple of years until they were able to afford a two-room barrack that had been previously occupied by the German military. The mother and father slept in the kitchen, while the rest slept on the bedroom floor.

So much had changed for each family in such a short amount of time, but life did once again start pulling together. Each family had one another other and was free from the Soviet abuse.

Part 6: Moving on to America

In the heart of the city, they lie, unknown and unnoticed.
Daily the tides of life go ebbing and flowing beside them,
Thousands of throbbing hearts, where theirs are at rest and forever,
Thousands of aching brains, where theirs no longer are busy,
Thousands of toiling hands, where theirs have ceased from their labors,
Thousands of weary feet, where theirs have completed their journey!¹

Slowly but surely, the ethnic Germans integrated fully into German culture. In 1949, the Federal Republic of Germany was established. At this point, the expellees organized politically, developing their own 'Magna Carta.' The Charter of the Expellees was recognized on August 6, 1950 – five year after the Potsdam Agreement was signed - but was not comprised of complaints or demands; rather, it spoke of the duties of the expellees as citizens in a new country, and the rights that should duly follow.²

The two families also began integrating and becoming accustomed to their new environment. Stefan eventually graduated school and worked as a painter in a town next to Obrigheim, while Hans remained working in a factory and with the prospect of moving to America constantly on his mind. Since money was still tight, Theresia decided to venture elsewhere for work in 1948. She had heard of job opportunities in Belgium and decided to risk imprisonment and cross the border without papers. This time, the risk did not pay off when she was caught and arrested by Belgian border patrols. She was placed in prison along with other Germans who had attempted to illegally cross the border in addition to a few drug smugglers. All German citizens in the prison were sent back to Germany, but they were unsure of what to do with Theresia - a Hungarian citizen who spoke German.

After spending two weeks in a prison in Brussels, a Senator came to the prison looking, oddly enough, for a housemaid. When he saw Theresia, he asked if she would be willing to work in Belgium, taking care of his house and children. Recognizing her stroke of good fortune, she worked there for two years until she was 21, sending the money she earned back to her family in Germany.

When Theresia returned to Obrigheim, she met Johann Schefzik. Johann was also a displaced Swabian who had lived in Bayern. He had also fought in the German army and spent a stressful year evading imprisonment after the war. Johann would frequently visit Obrigheim when he went to see his cousin, Fred Hoffman. On weekend evenings, the two men would go out to drinking and dancing with other Hungarian Germans. It was

at one of these dances that Johann met Theresia Latozinsky and Fred met Annete Hummel.

Severe unemployment plagued Germany in the years following World War Two, so it was unsurprising that many refugees in the area were unable to find steady work. Due to this lack of employment, American politicians constituted a lax emigration policy³ and reserved immigration slots for some ethnic Germans – provided they found a sponsor in America. Hans and Stefan had, however, tried moving to America in 1953 when the quotas were not relaxed; as a result of the borders being closed, they were unable to attain a visa. Since they were unable to gain access to the United States, they turned their prospects north to Canada. A friend of theirs who had moved to Canada described it as a nice place and since no sponsor was required for entry into Canada, they immigrated there 1953. Maria followed her brothers soon after and all lived near each other in Canada.

Annette decided to move to America in 1950 under the assumption that economic conditions in Germany would be slow to improve. She was permitted to immigrate since a family member, her Uncle, was living in New York at the time. After a brief stay, she returned to Germany and married Fred Hoffman. Following the birth of their first daughter, they decided to move permanently to the United States, but since Annette had briefly lived in America, she was granted authorization before her husband and daughter. She left for America alone, knowing that leaving her newborn daughter would be difficult, but that doing so would put her family in a better position to immigrate over. Nine months later, Fred and their daughter journeyed to meet Annette in New York. They eventually settled down in a Queens neighborhood that was densely populated with other Germans immigrants. In time, Fred, started up a successful construction business.

After spending some time in America and taking advantage of the opportunities that were otherwise unavailable in Germany, he wrote to his cousin, Johann, telling him of all the available opportunities. Johann had been working in a fabric factory, while Theresia worked in a sewing factory; though they were living comfortably, a future in America seemed like it had more potential. Like many German expellees who immigrated to America, Johann and Theresia decided to move temporarily until things soothed over in Germany. And, like many who emigrated from Germany, they never returned.

In 1956, Johann and Theresia decided to head for America with their two-year-old son, Johnny. They found a sponsor through Johann's cousin, packed up all their belongings and, once again, left the comfort of their home for an uncertain future – only this time, it was by choice. On the boat, Theresia and Johnny slept in a small cabin with another German family while Johann slept in a separate room with thirty other men. The eleven-day ride could not have felt longer to Theresia who - like many others aboard the ship - was seasick the majority of the boat ride. When they finally reached their destination in New York harbor, they were pushed through a series of security checkpoints. After fighting their way through what seemed like endless red tape, they stepped out into the streets of New York with nothing but 300 dollars and the hope of a better life.

As time passed, each family member acquired a living and kept in close touch with one another. Josef and Katarina and Rose and Martin remained behind in Obrigheim and Hochhausen. They were getting old and starting over again in another country was simply not worthwhile. Today, Hans, Stefan and Maria live near each other in Sarnia, Ontario, and see each other quite often. Theresia and Annette live on the same block in Glendale, Queens - a block filled with many German immigrants. They remain close friends, bonded by marriage and shared experiences of their childhood in Budaörs, starting over in Germany, and raising their children in America.

Epilogue

“Still stands the forest primeval; but under the shade of its branches
 Dwells another race, with other customs and language.
 Only along the shore of the mournful and misty Atlantic
 Linger a few Acadian peasants, whose fathers from exile
 Wandered back to their native land to die in its bosom.
 In the fisherman's cot the wheel and the loom are still busy;
 Maidens still wear their Norman caps and their kirtles of homespun,
 And by the evening fire repeat Evangeline's story.
 While from its rocky caverns the deep-voiced, neighboring ocean
 Speaks, and in accents disconsolate answers the wail of the forest!”¹

The expulsion of Germans from Hungary was halted in June of 1948, but the damage had already been done: the total number of Germans who had been expelled from Hungary is estimated around 180,000. In March of 1950, the Hungarian government withdrew repatriation and gave the expellees the opportunity to return to Hungary; however, only 30,000 chose to return.²

The Federation of Expellees is a nonprofit organization that was formed to represent the ethnic

Germans who were displaced from their homes after World War Two. In 2006, this group initiated the inauguration of a memorial in Budaörs to commemorate the Germans who were expelled. Stefan and his wife decided to go for the ceremony, along with other German minorities from surrounding areas.³ During the ceremony, the President of Hungary, Laszlo Solyon, apologized to all those who were affected by the expulsion.³ The president of the Hungarian Parliament, Katalin Szili, erected the memorial; engraved beneath the stone is a quote that reads in English, "Such injustice will never happen again." Stefan walked along the town he had so long ago left with a sense that a long sought for justice had been granted.

The expulsion remained largely uncovered until the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989; at this point, with the formation of the Republic of Hungary and diminishment of Soviet influence in Germany, the treatment of ethnic Germans and wrongful expulsion slowly became resurrected.⁴

It is difficult to fully appreciate what so many were forced to endure during and after World War Two. The political decisions of so few affected so many. As aptly stated by Balazs A. Szelenyi: "They started out on the eve of the First World War as privileged ethnic groups in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, became ethnic minorities under new nation states in the inter-war period, *Übermenschen* during Nazi rule, and finally ended up as refugees."⁵ What this author failed to include was that they did not *end* as refugees. They persevered, moved on, and ended up free. Integrating the hard statistics of a war with the experiences of individuals who actually lived it can allow a remote concept to be more fully understood - this cannot be illustrated more clearly by these two families.

Bibliography

Part 1: Before the War

- ¹ Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth. 1990. *Evangeline a tale of Acadie*. Champaign, Ill: Project Gutenberg:
<http://www.netlibrary.com/urlapi.asp?action=summary&v=1&bookid=2009554>
- ² De Zayas, Alfred M. 1994. *A terrible revenge: the ethnic cleansing of the east European Germans, 1944-1950*. New York: St. Martin's Press, Appendix.

- ³ Prauser, Steffen, and E. A. Rees. 2004. *The expulsion of the "German" communities from Eastern Europe at the end of the Second World War*. Florence: European University Institute, p. 37.
- ⁴ Prauser and Rees. *The expulsion of the "German" communities from Eastern Europe at the end of the Second World War*, p. 35.
- ⁵ Fischer, Henry A. 2004. *Children of the Danube*. Bloomington, Ind: AuthorHouse, p. 1.
- ⁶ Prauser and Rees. *The expulsion of the "German" communities from Eastern Europe at the end of the Second World War*, p. 36.
- ⁷ Alfred De Zayas. *A terrible revenge: the ethnic cleansing of the east European Germans, 1944-1950*, p. 5.
- ⁸ Prauser and Rees. *The expulsion of the "German" communities from Eastern Europe at the end of the Second World War*, p. 38.
- ⁹ Szelenyi, B.A. 2007. "From Minority to *Übermensch*: The Social Roots of Ethnic Conflict in the German Diaspora of Hungary, Romania and Slovakia". *PAST AND PRESENT -OXFORD-*. (196): p. 221.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 215-216.
- ¹¹ Frucht, Richard C. 2005. *Eastern Europe an introduction to the people, lands, and culture. Volume 1*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO.
<http://site.ebrary.com/id/10183722>: p. 534.
- ¹² Alfred De Zayas. *A terrible revenge: the ethnic cleansing of the east European Germans, 1944-1950*, pp. 14-15.
- ¹³ De Zayas, Alfred M. 1977. *Nemesis at Potsdam: the Anglo-Americans and the expulsion of the Germans : background, execution, consequences*. London: Routledge & K. Paul: p. 3.
- ¹⁴ B.A. Szelenyi, "From Minority to *Übermensch*: The Social Roots of Ethnic Conflict in the German Diaspora of Hungary, Romania and Slovakia", p. 247.

15. Budaörs, *The Innovative City – History of the Settlement*. Budaörs Official Website: <http://www.budaors.hu/en/>
16. B.A. Szelenyi. "From Minority to Ubermensch: The Social Roots of Ethnic Conflict in the German Diaspora of Hungary, Romania and Slovakia", pp. 243-45.
17. Latozinsky, John. Interviewed by author. Tape recording. Sarnia, Canada., October 9th, 2010.
18. Klaus, Rose. Interviewed by author. Tape recording. Glendale, NY., January 11th, 2011.
19. Schefzik, Theresia. Interviewed by author. Tape recording. Glendale NY., January 5th, 2011.
20. B.A. Szelenyi. "From Minority to Ubermensch: The Social Roots of Ethnic Conflict in the German Diaspora of Hungary, Romania and Slovakia", p. 228.
21. Nóda Mózes. 1970. *The Roman Catholic Denominational Education between the World Wars*. Seminar for the Interdisciplinary Research of Religions and Ideologies. http://www.jsri.ro/old/html%20version/index/no_3/noda_mozes-articol.htm.
22. Payne, Stanley G. 1996. *A history of fascism, 1914-1945*. London: UCL Press: pp. 268-69.
23. B.A Szelenyi. "From Minority to Ubermensch: The Social Roots of Ethnic Conflict in the German Diaspora of Hungary, Romania and Slovakia", pp. 230-232.
24. Stanley Payne. *A history of fascism, 1914-1945*, p. 178.
25. Tongue, Steven. *Hitler's Foreign Policy*. A Web Of English Histories. <http://www.historyhome.co.uk/europe/hitfor.htm>
26. Schieder, Theodor. 1961. *Documents on the expulsion of the Germans from Eastern-Central-Europe: a selection and translation from Dokumentation der Vertreibung der Deutschen aus Ost-Mitteleuropa. 2, The fate of the Germans in Hungary*. Göttingen: Schwarz: p. 34.

Part 2: The Midst of WWII 1940-1944

1. Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth. 1990. *Evangeline a tale of Acadie*. Champaign, Ill: Project Gutenberg: <http://www.netlibrary.com/urlapi.asp?action=summary&v=1&bookid=2009554>
2. Stanley Payne. *A history of fascism, 1914-1945*, p. 131.
3. Ibid., pp. 268-69.
4. Ibid., pp. 271-72.
5. Ibid., pp. 274-275.
6. Ibid., pp. 276.
7. <http://www.feldgrau.com/a-hungary.html>
8. B.A Szelenyi, "From Minority to Ubermensch: The Social Roots of Ethnic Conflict in the German Diaspora of Hungary, Romania and Slovakia", p. 250
9. Stanley Payne. *A history of fascism, 1914-1945*, p. 277.
10. Ungváry, Krisztián. 2005. *The Siege of Budapest: One Hundred Days in World War II*. New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press: p. 7.
11. Theodor Scheider. *Documents on the expulsion of the Germans from Eastern-Central-Europe*, p. 34.
12. Ibid., pp. 37.
13. Krisztián Ungváry, *The Siege of Budapest: One Hundred Days in World War II*, p. 10-13.
14. Ibid., pp. 18-20.
15. Krisztián Ungváry. *The Siege of Budapest: One Hundred Days in World War II*, p. 28.
16. Ibid., pp. 40-42.
17. Ibid., p. 45.
18. Ibid., p. 262.
19. Ibid., p. 131.

20. Ibid., p. 195.
21. Theodor Schieder,. *Documents on the expulsion of the Germans from Eastern-Central-Europe*, pp. 38-39.
22. Krisztián Ungváry. *The Siege of Budapest: One Hundred Days in World War II*, p. 330.

Part 3: Soviet occupation in 1945

1. Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth. 1990. *Evangeline a tale of Acadie*. Champaign, Ill: Project Gutenberg:
<http://www.netlibrary.com/urlapi.asp?action=summary&v=1&bookid=2009554>
2. Mueller, Wolfgang. 2010. "Soviet Policy, Political Parties, and the Preparation for Communist Takeovers in Hungary, Germany, and Austria, 1944-1946". *East European Politics and Societies*. 24 (1): p. 99.
3. Krisztián Ungváry,. *The Siege of Budapest: One Hundred Days in World War II*, 372, p. 428.
4. Ibid., p. 335.
5. Theodor Schieder,. *Documents on the expulsion of the Germans from Eastern-Central-Europe*, p. 43.
6. Ibid., p. 50.
7. Krisztián Ungváry. *The Siege of Budapest: One Hundred Days in World War II*, p. 248.
8. Ibid., p. 428.

Part 4: The Expulsion January, 1946

1. Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth. 1990. *Evangeline a tale of Acadie*. Champaign, Ill: Project Gutenberg:
<http://www.netlibrary.com/urlapi.asp?action=summary&v=1&bookid=2009554>
2. Alfred De Zayas. *A terrible revenge: the ethnic cleansing of the east European Germans, 1944-1950*, p. 80.
3. Ibid., p. 83.

4. De Zayas. *Nemesis at Potsdam: the Anglo-Americans and the expulsion*, pp. 25-30.
5. Theodor Schieder. *Documents on the expulsion of the Germans from Eastern-Central-Europe*, pp. 61-62.
6. Ibid., p. 63.
7. Alfred De Zayas. *A terrible revenge: the ethnic cleansing of the east European Germans, 1944-1950*, p. 114.
8. Theodor Schieder. *Documents on the expulsion of the Germans from Eastern-Central-Europe*, p. 64.
9. Ibid., p. 66.

Part 5: Starting Over 1946-1950

1. Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth. 1990. *Evangeline a tale of Acadie*. Champaign, Ill: Project Gutenberg:
<http://www.netlibrary.com/urlapi.asp?action=summary&v=1&bookid=2009554>
2. Alfred De Zayas. *A terrible revenge: the ethnic cleansing of the east European Germans, 1944-1950*, p. 126.

Part 6: Moving Forward

1. Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth. 1990. *Evangeline a tale of Acadie*. Champaign, Ill: Project Gutenberg:
<http://www.netlibrary.com/urlapi.asp?action=summary&v=1&bookid=2009554>
2. Alfred De Zayas. *A terrible revenge: the ethnic cleansing of the east European Germans, 1944-1950*, p. 130.
3. Ibid., p. 126.

Epilogue

1. Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth. 1990. *Evangeline a tale of Acadie*. Champaign, Ill: Project Gutenberg:
<http://www.netlibrary.com/urlapi.asp?action=summary&v=1&bookid=2009554>

2. Theodor Schieder,. *Documents on the expulsion of the Germans from Eastern-Central-Europe*, 70.
3. Dr. Gehl, Hans; translated by Tullius, Nick. *Donautal-Magazin* Jg. 30, Nr. 140 dated 1. *Memorial to the Expulsion of Germans in Budaörs*. August 2006: 8-9.
<http://www.dvhh.org/hu-highlands/ofner-berglund-budapest/mem-germans-budaors.htm>
4. Prauser and Rees. *The expulsion of the "German" communities from Eastern Europe at the end of the Second World War*, p. 37.
5. B.A Szelenyi. "From Minority to Ubermensch: The Social Roots of Ethnic Conflict in the German Diaspora of Hungary, Romania and Slovakia", p. 251.