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Voyages of Socialist Discovery:

German-German Exchanges between the GDR and Romania

Abstract

This article explores the little-known history of German-German exchanges between East Germany and Romania during the Cold War. It reveals a complex picture of tourism, travel, and information exchange in which Germans from both countries were able to construct socialist escapes. While the Cold War history of Germans in east-central Europe has tended to either ignore their presence or focus mainly on expulsion and emigration, this article highlights the vibrant existence of a 'German sphere' in Cold War east-central Europe.

Introduction: Alternative Spaces of Socialism

In the mid-1950s in Braşov (Kronstadt) in Transylvania, news spread among the local Transylvanian Saxon population that a group of East German tourists were staying at a hotel in town. Intrigued by the East Germans' Saxon accent,¹ a number of local Germans sought out the visitors and began talking to them.² Romanian Germans never encountered such an accent on *Deutsche Welle* or *Radio Luxembourg*.³ Very soon both sets of Germans established that they knew very little of each other. For Romanian Germans, the German Democratic Republic (GDR) was shrouded in mystery, while Romanian Germans were, in turn, utterly unknown to the East German visitors. One young Romanian German, Wilhelm Roth, took it upon himself to change this. From the 1950s on, he would regularly approach East German tourists at Braşov's Black Church and guide them around the town's German heritage. Such chance encounters, albeit state-sanctioned, helped forge strong German-German connections. By 1967, East Germans, who arrived in the Braşov area or at the airport in Bucharest intending to explore the mountainous region of the southern Carpathians, were routinely met by local

Romanian Germans.⁴ The tourist trade for GDR citizens, led by Romanian Germans, was to become an established practice bolstered by German-language tourist material, German-speaking guides, and displays of local German culture and heritage.

These were not one-way encounters. The GDR developed cultural ties with Romania and specifically with Romanian Germans from the 1950s on.⁵ The early stages of this connection were circumscribed by greater state involvement and surveillance, and these connections were viewed accordingly with considerable suspicion in the political spheres of both the GDR and Romania. Walter Ulbricht's leadership (1950-1971) in the GDR was thus characterised by growing circumspection towards Romania while Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej's headship (1947-1965) went in the equal and opposite direction regarding the East German state. Nonetheless, by the 1970s, cultural and educational exchanges between the two countries had become commonplace.⁶ Films produced in East Germany were highly popular in Romania while literary exchanges ebbed and flowed according to political will between the 1950s and 1970s.⁷ Though educational and religious contacts were suppressed at times, they certainly flourished at others. Therefore, even though the cultural image projected of the GDR was politically constructed and constrained, it became a point of reference for many Romanian Germans, and this became especially palpable in the 1980s.

By the last two decades of the Cold War, East Germany came to fulfil several roles West Germany could not: it was a space of 'alternative socialism', which was distinctly *German*, and therefore quenched the Romanian Germans' thirst for German culture.⁸ It was also far more accessible to Romanian Germans than its West German counterpart. Even, or at particular, at the height of immigration to West Germany in the late-1970s and 1980s, travelling to the GDR was a different undertaking: while emigration was a final decision, Romanian German visitors to East Germany could simultaneously satisfy their longing to experience Germany *and* return to their homeland (Romania).

By the second half of the Cold War, Romania performed a similar function for GDR citizens: it was 'German' enough thanks to the presence of Romanian Germans; its rural beauty allowed East Germans to contemplate and discover alternative socialist spaces, and it was also far easier to visit Romania than West Germany. The existing ties between Germans in East Germany and Romania as well as the countries' mutual *Programmarbeit* (cultural programme) ensured Romania's place as a destination for East German tourists. As a consequence, a good number of backpacking tourists and travellers from East Germany explored Romania, especially the mountainous region of Transylvania.⁹ In the other direction, a small yet noticeable number of Romanian Germans ventured to the GDR as this was the easiest way of exploring 'Germany'. All the while, various official institutions in both countries continued to observe and both encourage and control this German-German channel.

Yet despite these obvious connections and exchanges, scholarship has all but ignored German connections within Cold War Eastern Europe.¹⁰ Three main themes remain under-explored or indeed ignored altogether. First, over the last decade and a half, there has been a spate of scholarship investigating the 'German East' and its afterlife. Yet while the onetime paucity of scholarship on the 'German East' continues to be addressed and rectified, the post-1945 societies of the former 'German East' have been treated as static elements of Cold War political and diplomatic history.¹¹ Very few studies have looked at the complex and dynamic history of German spaces and communities within the former communist states and the interactions between them.¹² Instead, it is assumed that post-expulsion and post-1945 communist states and societies were concerned with silencing any traces of diversity and of the (former and current) German communities. To some extent this is certainly true, but it does not tell the whole story.

Secondly, when zooming in on the GDR, studies have tended to assume that the GDR represented a static entity in which there was little to no room for nuance and negotiation

regarding the topic of German traces and history in east-central Europe. This is most pronounced in studies on flight and expulsion. Here, the majority of works claim that, at best, the topic of flight and expulsion only existed until the 1950s in the public domain.¹³ Accordingly, for the majority of its existence, the so-called *Umsiedler* ('resettlers' from the East) officially vanished from the GDR and with them the memory of Germans in the East, too.¹⁴ But was it really that simple to suppress the complexities of Germans in the East for 40 years? As this article will show, awareness and knowledge of Germans in the East were, in fact, far more subtle and dynamic than is conventionally accepted.

Thirdly, writings on Romanian Germans and their experience in Cold War Romania focus almost obsessively on the lure of West Germany and the resultant growing emigration *en masse* towards the end of the Cold War.¹⁵ In this way, it runs parallel to a more general historical reading of the Cold War era in east-central Europe: the region's history is mostly told backwards, starting with the teleological assumption that opposition to various expressions of state socialism culminated in 1989, freedom, and all that. Where work has been done on connections to the GDR, this link has been treated dismissively as irrelevant or non-existent.¹⁶

It is the intention of this article to redress this balance by examining the connections between the GDR, East Germans, Romania and Romanian Germans. Drawing on recent attempts to open up debate on the complexity of identity politics in east-central Europe and emerging scholarship on 'alternative socialisms' within the region, this article argues for a more intricate reading of Germans in east-central Europe during the Cold War by focusing on Romania and the GDR.¹⁷ Using travel writings, travel guides, oral histories, official travel data and other pertinent sources, I examine what role the GDR played in the Romanian German imagination of Germany as a *Kulturnation* and how Romanian Germans made sense of their own place within it.¹⁸ Conversely, as I show, Romania – and in particular Transylvania – became, in turn, an attractive destination for tourists from East Germany. It was a place for

escape and, especially in the 1980s, also demonstrated why German socialism may have seemed good enough to some East German travellers and tourists. Rather than focusing on the gaze westwards and reading the 1980s as the culmination of a teleological narrative of the drive towards 'freedom', this article will reveal a little-known history of Cold War interaction in east-central Europe. It will explore four areas: the growing attention paid by the Stasi and other official channels to Romanian German matters in the early Cold War period; East German tourism and travel eastwards to Romania from the 1960s onwards; Romanian German attempts at consolidating links between Germans from the GDR and Germans from Romania; and finally Romanian German travel to and experiences of the GDR in the second half of the Cold War. As will be shown, the GDR and Romania acted as 'alternative socialist' places to Romanian Germans and East Germans respectively, precisely because the countries were both German and socialist enough to fulfil a number of roles.

Socialist Big Brothers: the GDR and Romania

In the late 1960s, Romania's diplomatic focus appeared to be shifting westwards. It was only the second country of the former Warsaw Pact after the USSR to establish formal diplomatic relations with West Germany in 1967. In what Peter Ulrich Weiß has termed a 'triangular relationship',¹⁹ the Romanian state was concerned with keeping the balance right between consolidating its new acceptance by the west from 1965 onwards and maintaining its standing with socialist 'fraternal countries' such as the GDR.²⁰ Generally speaking, the historiography of the region has focused primarily on the impact of the former diplomatic trend on politics as well as social and cultural practices.²¹ Yet despite the obvious importance of the development of closer ties with West Germany and the increasing Romanian German attraction to the Federal Republic, East Germany had a crucial role to play in Cold War Romanian and Romanian German history. Likewise, though an anti-fascist and Marxist-Leninist discourse

defined GDR politics and culture for its entire existence, the presence of ethnic Germans in the GDR and elsewhere in the communist bloc was visible and played a far more important part in the GDR's history than historiography has so far acknowledged.²²

In the immediate post-war period, the Soviet Occupation Zone (1945–1949) and its successor the German Democratic Republic (1949–1990) accommodated large numbers of ethnic German expellees and refugees from east-central Europe. In 1950, approximately 25% of the East Germany's population was made up of ethnic Germans from Eastern Europe.²³ Concerned by the potential for introducing right-wing revisionist discourses, the GDR tried to integrate the so-called *Umsiedler* as quickly as possible thereby curtailing public memories of a onetime German East. Furthermore, the GDR attempted to elude this revisionist undercurrent by adhering to a pro-Soviet foreign policy 'party line' by celebrating the liberation of Germany of May 1945.²⁴ This meant neglecting the demands and claims of expellees in order to comply with the sanitised, official version of World War II and its aftermath and settlement.²⁵ As Bill Niven's work demonstrates, however, the issue of Germans from the East was not simply expunged from public memory.²⁶ Expellees who visited their former homelands added to a growing public knowledge of the German East. Christa Wolf's novel *Kindheitsmuster* (*Patterns of Childhood*) from 1976 is the most prominent example of the public presence of this topic.²⁷ The topic was of course controlled and censored, as the playwright Heiner Müller found out when his play *Die Umsiedlerin* (*The Resettled Woman*) was banned after its premiere,²⁸ but it was still rather more visible than the established claims of a taboo assume.

Unlike many Germans from other east-central European countries – many of whom had become refugees and expellees –, roughly 400,000 Romanian Germans still lived in the socialist country of Romania.²⁹ They had been the victims of deportations to labour camps in the Soviet Union in January 1945 during which up to 75,000 ethnic Germans were deported, but many of them returned to those relatives and friends who had stayed behind in Romania.³⁰

A further wave of deportations to the Bărăgan region in Romania hit the Banat Swabian community in 1951.³¹ From the 1950s on, the Romanian state attempted to reintegrate them into Romanian society and thereby also counteract the steadily growing drive towards immigration to West Germany, which had been occurring under the banner of *Familienzusammenführung* (reunification of families).³² Despite this accelerating pattern of emigration, Romanian Germans remained one of a few curious German enclaves in Cold War east-central Europe.

Officials in the GDR were very much aware of Romanian German matters. In the early post-war period, East German functionaries even criticised the deportations of Germans from Romania, though such criticism remained ‘in-house’.³³ Although both countries were socialist fraternal countries, the nuanced differences regarding the treatment and reception of ethnic Germans should not go unnoticed. There was even a Romanian German presence in East Germany: some Romanian Germans, such as the poet Georg Maurer (1907-1971), emigrated to the GDR and became citizens of the German Democratic Republic.³⁴ Public understanding of both Transylvanian Saxons and Banat Swabians accepted them as unique and particular groups, even though official channels sought to reduce them to Romanian Germans or simply Germans. To claim, therefore, as recent studies have claimed, that the particularism of Romanian Germans was a taboo topic in both East Germany and Romania is to misunderstand the intricate connections that developed between the GDR and Romania’s national minorities on both a public and private level.³⁵ As we shall see, travel and tourism heightened the awareness of East Germans regarding the Saxon and Swabian presence in Romania. Moreover, references to Transylvanian Saxon history specifically, such as in the East German pocket lexicon *Rumänien* from 1985, serve as further evidence of an understanding of Romanian German particularity in the GDR.³⁶ Indeed, the two most prominent newspapers *Neues Deutschland* and *Berliner Zeitung* mentioned *Siebenbürger Sachsen* and *Banater Schwaben*

throughout the communist period.³⁷ In other words, Romanian German particularism was a regular feature of the East German public domain.

Yet the official stance towards Romania and its German minorities was not merely one of tacit protection. Until roughly 1962, both the *Stasi* (the state security in East Germany) and the *Securitate* (the secret police in Romania) collaborated across the borders on information exchange regarding émigrés from Romania and the GDR.³⁸ In the 1960s, the cooperative atmosphere changed considerably. On the high diplomatic level, the two countries performed in public as close and cooperative partners.³⁹ Yet the new foreign policy direction taken by Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej and his successor Nicolae Ceaușescu after 1965 turned Romania into a ‘hostile fraternal country’ and by 1973 both secret security organisations were conducting respective investigations in Romania and GDR independently.⁴⁰ Romanian Germans often featured in official documents of the East German Ministry for Security as potential dissidents and separatists.⁴¹ This was particularly the case under Erich Honecker’s leadership after 1971. Later still, in the 1980s, Romania was regarded as an unreliable country that was prone to political and social unrest as well as increased ingratiation to the west. Erich Mielke, head of the Stasi, paid particular attention to the possibility of an anti-communist incursion and his fear grew further during the brief ‘Brașov rebellion’ of November 1987.⁴² To compound this headache, a growing number of citizens from the GDR attempted to escape to the West via Romania. The Iron Gates gorge close in the Danube between Romania and Yugoslavia was a popular place for attempting to flee from Romania, and citizens of the GDR also knew of this.⁴³ Here, the growth of tourism intersected with political developments: as more and more East German tourists began to ‘discover’ Romania, the more prevalent this route via Yugoslavia became for potential escapees from the GDR. The brutality failed East German escapees faced in Romania and East Germany was certainly something shared by both state apparatuses.⁴⁴ Nonetheless, the East German Ministry of Security regarded Romania with deep suspicion and

understood the mix between ethnic Germans, Ceaușescu's unique policies, and increased GDR tourism to Romania as potentially catastrophic for East Germany's stability.

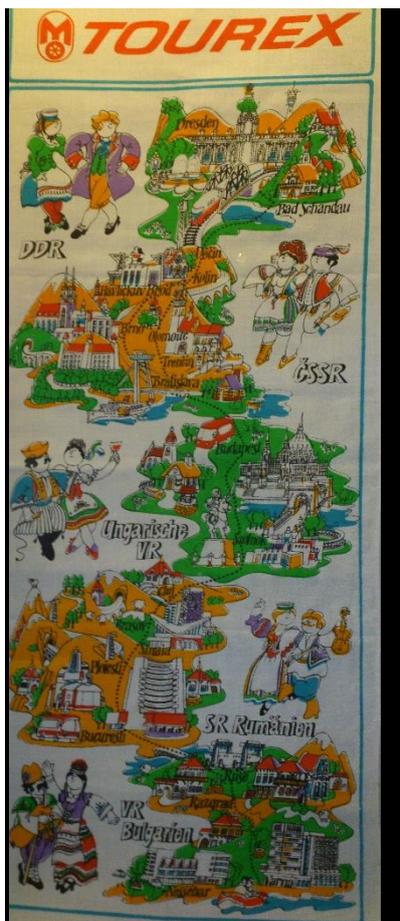
Indeed, Romania proved to be a rallying point for opposition in the GDR. Romanian German authors such as Richard Wagner reached a GDR readership by drawing attention to the worsening economic and living conditions in Romania throughout the 1980s in Samizdat publications.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, despite the deteriorating relations between the security forces in the GDR and Romania respectively, official visits were still treated with royal patronage. Nicolae Ceaușescu was awarded the Order of Karl Marx in 1988, which was the highest honour in the GDR, yet his visit also galvanised opposition within the GDR and movements to challenge Ceaușescu's course and position.⁴⁶ Between October 1988 and January 1989, Romania became a highly prominent topic among intellectual and oppositional circles in the GDR. The first 'Day of solidarity with Romania' (*Tag der Solidarität mit Rumänien*) took place in Leipzig on 29 October 1988. Others followed in Berlin on 15 November 1988 and yet again in Leipzig on 27 January 1989.⁴⁷ It was such a hot topic that the official socialist newspaper *Neues Deutschland* ran a critical piece on Romania in April 1989 entitled 'The facts speak for themselves' (*Tatsachen sprechen für sich*), in which its Bucharest correspondent attempted to disprove the stinging public criticism of Ceaușescu's policies in Romania.⁴⁸ To be sure, such statements were also informed by contemporary political concerns. Both East Germany and Romania belonged to a group of socialist countries opposed to Gorbachev's reforms. The staunch support offered by the official mouthpiece of the German Socialist Unity Party to Romania can certainly be read as evidence for this mutual political alignment. Yet what matters here is the prevalence and reception of the topic Romania in East Germany. Far from being an insignificant footnote, Romania, the plight of Germans in Romania, and the worsening living conditions in Romanian society were very well-known throughout East Germany.

Motorbikes and Prehistoric Bones: East Germans discover Romania

The mid- to late-1980s were certainly exceptional as far as the political prominence of Romania in the GDR was concerned. Yet despite the bad press, Romania, and in particular Transylvania and the Carpathians, also represented an interesting alternative destination to East Germans. As the story at the beginning of this essay indicates, travel and tourism were crucial for the growing cultural exchange between Germans in East Germany and Romania. That said there were also obstacles to this German-German connection. In some cases, the state attempted to prevent Romanian Germans from hosting GDR visitors. In Sighișoara (Schäßburg), for instance, the local Protestant parish was prohibited from taking in East German tourists in 1968.⁴⁹

Nonetheless, from the 1970s on, travel to east-central Europe, including Romania, became increasingly popular among East Germans.⁵⁰ Since travel west of the Iron Curtain was problematic and in many cases impossible, the ‘fraternal countries’ of east-central and south-eastern Europe were the preferred choice of travel for more affluent East German citizens. Furthermore, the growth of counter-culture in the GDR found expression in motorbiking culture and backpack tourism.⁵¹ East Germans began exploring east-central Europe.⁵² Even the state-run rail operator *Tourex* (short for *Touristen Express*) lured its passengers to east-central Europe with intriguing posters of the region. One such poster from 1977 (image 1.1) depicts a continuous line from the GDR to Bulgaria via Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Romania.⁵³ Beginning in 1963, this was the route offered to GDR citizens in luxurious rail carriages.⁵⁴ With the GDR cordoned off from the West by the erection of the wall in 1961, east-central Europe was now to be made attractive to East Germans as a holiday destination. The cartoonish portrayal of these countries’ details offers an interesting reading. While the urban topography of Romania is indeed shown to be dominated by industry and ‘progress’, tucked away in the

Carpathian Mountains are signs of religious and indeed Transylvanian Saxon life. Thus, adjacent to the socialist train line running from north to south, close to Braşov is the ultimate symbol of German culture and life in Transylvania: a Saxon fortified church (*Kirchenburg*) (image 1.2).⁵⁵ Produced at the height of tourism to Romania, it is yet more evidence of mutual (and tolerated) knowledge as well as a lively exchange and interaction between East Germans and Germans in Romania.



Images 1.1 (left) and 1.2 (right): a *Tourex* poster from 1977 with the detail of at least one fortified church on the map of Romania.

It was not just knowledge of the complexity of minorities in Romania that became ever more widespread. Romania with its southern Carpathian Arc and the Black Sea coast were also places where East Germans' longing and desire for escape could be satisfied. To be sure, some

East Germans chose the route via Romania and Yugoslavia for their flight to the west. Yet it would be too simple to focus only on attempts to flee from the GDR and the socialist state system. Escapism also meant looking for utopia within the confines of socialist east-central Europe, more specifically in this case within Romania. Speaking about his first trip to Romania as a student in 1970, Christoph Bergner, the onetime Federal Commissary for Foreigners and National Minorities between 2006 and 2011 (*Beauftragter der Bundesregierung für Aussiedlerfragen und nationale Minderheiten*), remembered the prevalence of ideas regarding social utopias. Accordingly, his journey to the Carpathians was dominated by his quest for an ‘idyllic world’ (*heile Welt*).⁵⁶ Much of the scholarship has focused on the lure of the west on the public east of the Iron Curtain, yet the eastern bloc also offered places of escape. In the context of the ideological quest for utopia, escaping to the Carpathian Mountains was not merely an escape from ideology, but a practising of that ideology.⁵⁷

Travel abroad was most common amongst students and young people. A survey conducted in 1989 showed that 65% of students and 39% of apprentices had travelled abroad in 1988.⁵⁸ The average percentage of the GDR populace who travelled abroad was a little lower at around 20%.⁵⁹ More generally, young people in the GDR viewed travelling abroad as an essential part of their experience of leisure and by the 1980s they tended to do so without the support of tourist companies.⁶⁰ Young travellers emphasised that their trips abroad were active holidays and not merely ‘time off’.⁶¹ As such, countercultural motorbiking and trips in the search of beauty were active undertakings, which offered not only escapism but also a degree of autonomy.

Nonetheless, it is important to note that tourism to Romania was less common than it was to other socialist countries.⁶² Seeking out Romania as a country to visit was therefore also an attempt to find a destination that was slightly off the beaten track and thus tended to attract young, single people.⁶³ Decisions to travel abroad were informed by a desire to get to know

different people and cultures and to expand one's general knowledge.⁶⁴ The Carpathian Arc and its multicultural and multi-ethnic makeup, including Transylvanian Saxons and other Germans, therefore played an important role in capturing the imagination of (particularly young) GDR citizens who decided to seek out Romania as a travel destination.

Some of the more conventional reasons among the general populace for rejecting Romania as a holiday destination often acted as intriguing incentives for younger and more adventurous East German travellers and tourists.⁶⁵ In search of the Germans in the Carpathians, Hans Rolle, now a member of the Synod for Saxony, travelled to Romania in 1987.⁶⁶ In his personal travel account he was struck by impressions of poverty and want while exploring with some fascination the Transylvanian Saxon community in Sibiu (Hermannstadt) and other cities. According to Rolle, the idyll of the Transylvanian Saxon world was being shattered by both the lure of the west and the abject failure of the Romanian state system to create proper living conditions. Staying in Romania, though, still seemed the preferable option. He was saddened to hear that many Transylvanian Saxons were emigrating from Romania to West Germany. 'East Germany is a fridge, West Germany a freezer', he was told by the very Germans that were attempting to leave.⁶⁷ In other words, despite the unstoppable drive westwards, some Romanian Germans, who had not yet emigrated, regarded emigration to West Germany as cultural suicide. It seems that some Germans in both the GDR and Romania viewed the overall idea of staying in Romania as a more favourable situation than moving abroad.

Friendships were forged between Romanian Germans and citizens of the GDR over the course of the Cold War. Some correspondence between Germans in East Germany and Romania even featured place names in German, which is a further indication of the mutual knowledge that existed between the German citizens of the two countries.⁶⁸ Moreover, it was imperative for GDR citizens, even after the relaxation of visa regulations in 1966, to produce an invitation from a Romanian citizen. German-German connections between the two countries

thus played a central role in making this possible.⁶⁹ Moreover, it was not just private but also public knowledge about Romania that made its way back to East Germany. Dieter Berger, a geologist from the GDR living in Poland, recounted in the East German journal *Der Aufschluss* a spectacular find of the fossils of a Pleistocene bear in a cave in Transylvania.⁷⁰ What is of interest here is not the discovery of ursine bones, but the *Fundumstände* – the circumstances surrounding the discovery – explained in the article. The East Germans were led by a Transylvanian Saxon, our very own Wilhelm Roth, to a cave with a German name. In this instance, it was clear that German-German connections between the GDR and Romania not merely existed in private correspondence, but they were also practiced in public.⁷¹ Significantly, it was a Transylvanian Saxon who had knowledge of the pre-history of the region, which predated any Hungarian or Romanian traces in the region, thereby implicitly laying claim to the land and its deep history.⁷² Profound historical knowledge, so it seemed, belonged to the Germans.

Looking East: Romanian Germans and the lure of the GDR

Knowledge about Romania and Romanian Germans was not only transmitted through private and semi-public links and the same was true about Romanian German awareness of the GDR. From the 1970s onwards, a number of German-language publications in Romania either covered the GDR more extensively or were produced for an East German audience. The Romania-based German-language literary journal *Neue Literatur* often published and commented on literature from the GDR. The journal's cultural review section frequently featured exhibitions, publications, and symposia in the GDR. One issue in 1975, for instance, had as its main focus the cultural and literary exchanges with the GDR.⁷³ The journal ran an interview with the East German Cultural Minister, Hans-Joachim Hoffmann, in which the interviewers tested the East German representative's views on the 'cultural and spiritual'

exchange between the Romanian and East German partners.⁷⁴ To be sure, Hoffmann's answers were often wooden and rehearsed as expected, but the strong presence of the GDR in such a prominent German-language literary journal highlighted the important part East Germany had to play in the cultural life of Romanian Germans.

Such exchanges occurred not only on paper, but in practice, too. The German philology department at the University Lucian Blaga in Sibiu (Hermannstadt), for instance, maintained exchanges with German philology departments in the GDR. In the 1970s, it also organised the so-called 'The Days of German Studies from the Democratic Republic of Germany' (*Die Tage der Germanistik der DDR in Rumänien*).⁷⁵ This involved public readings by East German visitors, excursions to Saxon fortified churches, and a dinner in the presence of the East German ambassador.⁷⁶ According to Gerhard Konnerth, the former Dean of the Faculty of Philology and History (1976–1984), this organisational link was of utmost importance to the German philology department and was treated accordingly, even though the Ministry for Education curtailed these activities towards the end of the Cold War.⁷⁷

One of the most prominent links to the GDR, however, was the annual travel guide for Romania called *Komm Mit* published by the publishing house *Neuer Weg* (Bucharest).⁷⁸ It was first serialised in 1970 and its final edition was published in 1990. This travel guide was designed to serve a number of purposes. First of all, it was *Heimatkunde* (local history) for Romanian Germans. At a time when emigration was a huge driving force amongst Romanian Germans, this publication presented the beauties and wonders of their socialist homeland, Romania.⁷⁹ It was also one of the few public outlets for Germans to explore their particular German landscape in Romania. Most important, however, was its role in cultural diplomacy abroad. While this guide was also read in West Germany and Austria, its main target audience was in the GDR.⁸⁰ Nicolae Ceaușescu was concerned with rectifying Romania's tarnished image not only in the west (and such a publication went some way to contributing towards this)

but also amongst its (former) socialist brother countries. The series' quality of print and paper reveal the extent to which official channels were behind the dissemination of this travel guide.⁸¹ In other words, it allowed Romanian Germans to write about their interests within the controlled confines of the regime while co-opting them in Romania's campaign to polish its image.

Nonetheless, it would be too simple to discount this travel guide as mere 'propaganda'. In spite of all the control machinations behind the scenes, this book series did represent a possibility for Romanian Germans to write about their homeland for other Germans in the GDR. It was also a very important source of information for East Germans about Romania and Transylvania in particular.⁸² The print run was between 20,000 and 30,000 copies a year and contained a large number of articles over approximately 200 pages. The articles, mainly written by Romanian Germans, focused on the Carpathians in particular (often the German areas) and on the Black Sea. They described rural idylls and guided readers on journeys through both 'Romanian' and 'German' places. They were even allowed to use the German names of some places. *Komm Mit* therefore allowed Romanian Germans to imagine themselves as part of a wider German community by communicating with citizens of the GDR.

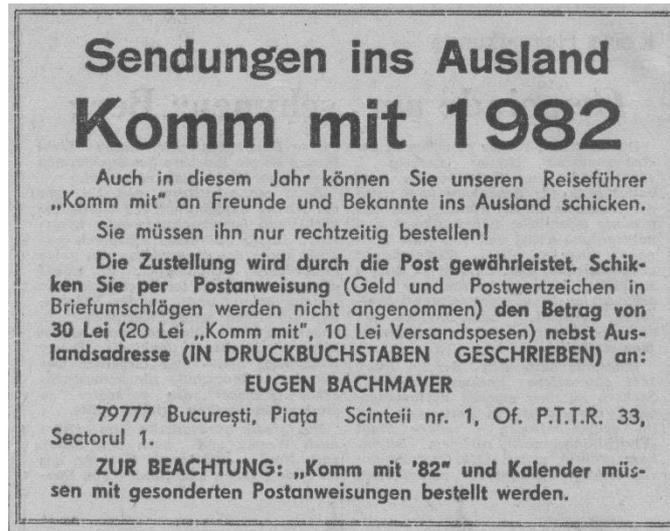


Image 1.3: An advert in the newspaper *Neuer Weg* encouraging Romanian Germans to send the travel guide *Komm Mit – 1982* to friends and family abroad. Most of the readers abroad lived in the GDR. This then demonstrates further the connections between Romanian Germans and Germans in the former German Democratic Republic.

This German-language publication acted as a vent for Romanian Germans. With a readership in the GDR in mind, regular contributors such as Erika Schneider or Gerhard Bonfert gave detailed descriptions of the flora, fauna, and culture of the region using German terms and expressions that would otherwise have only been printed in the Romanian language.⁸³ For these writers, the GDR was their main point of contact (see image 1.3).⁸⁴ Indeed, to the founding editor of the series, Georg Hromadka – a left-wing Swabian from the Banat –, links with the GDR made more sense ideologically than with the ‘homeland organisations’, the so-called *Landsmannschaften*, in West Germany. Especially during the Cold War, these *Landsmannschaften* were dominated by right-wing ideologues who pushed for ever more Romanian German emigration from Romania.⁸⁵ In this way, it was possible for Romanian Germans – especially those who wanted to stay in Romania – to imagine themselves as belonging to a world that was both German and ideologically correct. Far from unconditionally

embracing western values, the connections to the GDR therefore still offered a different voice. Hence, articles such as ‘Es blüht “an der Burg”’ (‘In bloom by the castle’) and ‘Burgen im Repser Land’ (‘Castles in the Repser region’) must also be read as a plea by Romanian Germans to East German readers to view them as part of the same ideological and German world.⁸⁶

This process, however, worked in two directions. On the one hand, relatives and friends from West Germany were responsible for smuggling in magazines and books that were otherwise unobtainable and in some cases forbidden. On the other (and despite the aforementioned ‘western’ input), the image of Germany as a literary and cultural homeland was often projected onto places that were primarily located in the GDR.⁸⁷ This was aided by the fact that travelling to the GDR, while not without its obstacles, was significantly less problematic for Germans in Romania than it was visiting West Germany. In their quest for the German *Kulturnation*, they encountered a number of important memory sites in the GDR. During its last decade, the GDR in fact actively promoted its Prussian heritage and constructed it as an integral part of East German identity.⁸⁸

In interviews with Romanian Germans, East Germany took up a contradictory role. On the one hand it was sometimes regarded as politically suspect, and on the other hand it represented cultural sophistication. One interviewee, Ingrid Aufgang, recalled the sense of awe when seeing the *Zwingerpalast* in Dresden and later the *Goethehaus* in Weimar.⁸⁹

We also went to see the *Goethehaus* in Weimar. [...] That was overwhelming. I really broke down in tears when I got there (*dort verrannen einem dann die Tränen*). Honestly. But the actual house, the way it had been done up, you’ve really got to give the GDR credit for that, they really did a good job. There were flowers on the windowsill that had just been watered. It looked as if he [Goethe] had just gone out, maybe into another room. It

looked like someone was actually living there. And there was also the room he died in, and I must say it was very impressive.⁹⁰

The GDR had not only brought Goethe to life, it had even made the interpretation of one of Schiller's plays appear 'acceptable' to her.⁹¹ Far from diminishing the value of these artefacts, the ideological framework may have even added support to her experience. Weimar, Goethe, Dresden, Berlin, Leipzig, Lutherstadt Wittenberg, Theodor Fontane's Mecklenburg Lake District, Rügen and elsewhere were all associations that constituted quintessential pieces of an imagined cultural homeland for Romanian Germans. Crucially, though, these places were in the GDR and not in West Germany. In a seminal essay from 1985, Katherine Verdery claimed that the ethnic identity of Transylvanian Saxons was being eroded in the Cold War. One result of this, according to Verdery, was that immigration to West Germany became the main focal point of Saxon identity. In other words, Marxism-Leninism as implemented in Romania was beginning to show its effects on the community.⁹² However, it is clear that German identity rooted outside West Germany (in Romania and the GDR) remained fundamental to Saxons and Swabians in late Cold War Romania. Not only was there the continuing debate on emigration to West Germany, but also the cultural affiliation with Germany as a *Kulturnation*. To some extent then, the GDR fulfilled that role couched in ideologically correct language, especially for those who had no desire to emigrate.

The practice and functioning of Marxist-Leninist ideology was also of great importance to the assessment and comparison of the two countries. Romanian Germans pointed to a more rigorous secret police system in the GDR and a stricter ideological adherence as evidence of German cultural superiority. Hermann Frühbeis, now the headmaster of a German school in Romania, remembers visiting friends and fellow teachers in East Germany during the Cold War. He judged Romanian society to have been far less authoritarian than East German society.

When asked about the possibility of voicing dissent and discussing political topics, Hermann Frühbeis interrupted abruptly and became quite defensive about the situation in Romania.

Well, granted, general experiences are always subjective [...] so [these are no] more than subjective experiences. Here, everything was far more open and easy-going (*lockerer*) than it was in the GDR; let's just make that clear. During the whole period [communism], I really can't remember at all that I ever...alright, perhaps not publicly on the town square, but among family and friends no one spoke highly of the system. Everyone thought it was absolute nonsense (*totaler Scheiß*), and that came to the fore in any and every situation (*zu jeder passenden und unpassenden Situation*)...I can't remember ever feeling any inhibitions in my free time; that is, any inhibitions to call a spade a spade (*die Dinge beim Namen nennen*). Ceaușescu was a crazy dictator, that was our life, and there wasn't really anything else we could have said.⁹³

Hermann Frühbeis's comparison between the GDR and Romania during the Cold War was revealing for several reasons. While he remembered enjoying considerably more freedom in communist Romania society when compared to East Germany, it was clear that both countries were marked by the experience of dictatorship. In the case of the GDR, this meant an odd and incongruous combination of belonging to the German sphere and under the control of an authoritarian system. This had little in common with the image of an historic Germany, which had been so prevalent among Romanian Germans. It thus revealed the inherent tensions between Cold War politics and images of a German *Kulturnation*. Still, there was something inherently German about it, as Hermann Frühbeis explained.

JK: So, you visited the GDR in 1982. What was your impression?

HF: Well, I had a number of good friends there [in East Germany], and we always ended up having long conversations. We used to stay with friends, with so-called GDR-citizens (*DDR-Bürger*) who I had got to know in Romania...So really there were two aspects to this. On the one hand, they had all the necessities of life (*das Lebensnotwendigste*), such as foodstuffs, health insurance, and all of that, which was an absolute catastrophe in Romania. But on the other hand, there was obviously the heightened political pressure. I mean, a teacher would never have been able to work at school the way I did; [it was] far, far more German; not better, not worse, but [...] far more precise. You know, all the imprecision [here] and all that Balkan loafing about (*balkanisches Schlendern*) was actually quite beneficial [for us] during communism, because no one took anything too seriously, not even in politics. That would have been unthinkable in the GDR. For example, the school I was at, back then, the entire school should have attended political education every Monday at 1pm, from 1pm to 3pm. Come ten past one, there was no one left...Everyone just left, and that was a known fact. [That was] unthinkable in the GDR; that would have been absolutely unthinkable.⁹⁴

Hermann Frühbeis drew a clear distinction between the communist system in the GDR and that in Romania. The Romanian system, so it had seemed to him, was simply not as good at being authoritarian when compared to its East German counterpart. The GDR represented something German precisely because it was not 'Balkan'.⁹⁵ Romanian Communism was therefore a rather

unsophisticated and comparatively benign system characterised by its '*balkanisches Schlendern*'. East Germany, by contrast, was very adept at employing the communist system in a far more efficient manner. Recognising and identifying more closely with an allegedly more efficient authoritarian system was therefore another way of perceiving the GDR as fundamentally German.

East Germans used this comparison in a similar manner and reciprocated such views. Far from rejecting the GDR as something un-German, their travels to other socialist states, including Romania, also helped underpin a sense of cultural superiority. Indeed, such attitudes were embedded in an older, more established German discourse on Romania. As recent studies have demonstrated, German images of Romania in nineteenth tended to consist of both a form of patronising orientalism and hopes for a promising future for Romania.⁹⁶ In this sense, East German travellers upheld these attitudes, as they bemoaned the 'backward' character of Romanian socialism while identifying the country as an intriguing, beautiful, and promising country. A postcard from an East German couple sent from the Black Sea coast in Romania to one of the spouse's mother in the GDR reveals such sentiments and echo those of Hermann Frühbeis.

Dear Mum,

Our journey has been full of beautiful impressions and fantastic weather. I will have to get my thoughts together. Romania is a beautiful country with hard-working country folk. Zero technology. It's all done with a rake in the scorching heat in the fields. Not the case in Hungary and Bulgaria.

Love, L + H.⁹⁷

The two aspects that marked the GDR out as unmistakably German – for both East German citizens and Romanian Germans – were the efficiency of authoritarianism and the better living standards, which itself seen as the result of German efficiency in modernising the country. Experiencing Romanian communism left East German visitors with a distinct sense of patronage towards the country. Hans Rolle, our GDR tourist from 1987, made similar observations to the couple in the postcard above. He noted the ‘baksheesh culture’ within the Romanian healthcare system and his notes ended with a plea to his own socialist government.

I am writing this report with the intention of highlighting the situation in Romania. It should be possible for us to undertake measures that would enable us to offer solidarity and assistance to the people there.⁹⁸

Romania and the GDR complemented each other in many ways, not least because they belonged to the same ideological sphere. However, both Romanian Germans and East Germans used this contrast to point to an acceptable version of socialism, namely one implemented by Germans. These comparisons were not simply criticisms of socialism per se, but criticisms of the specific enactment of a system loaded with cultural hierarchies. For Romanian Germans, the supposed German efficiency of the GDR was something they recognised and wished for, yet it was also something disturbing and authoritarian. The experiences in Romania made GDR tourists feel better about their own society while at the same time expressing solidarity with Romanian citizens. The expressions of dissent articulated at the solidarity days with Romania in 1988 and 1989 were not against socialism, but against that particular form of socialism. In a curious way, Germans in both Romania and the GDR used their respective countries to reaffirm socialism, criticise the other country’s form of socialism, and as an escape to a different form of socialism.

Conclusion: future directions of travel

Writing about a journey to Romania in 1999, our East German backpacker ‘Karpatenwilli’ identified the ‘*rumänische Hormone*’ (Romanian hormones) which compelled him and his friends to return to Romania again and again after discovering the country during the Cold War.⁹⁹ His travel reports end shortly afterwards, as he described his journey back from Romania to his ‘homeland’ in Brandenburg in the East of Germany: ‘Or am I in fact travelling away from my homeland (*Heimat*)?’, he pondered, before ending with a defiant vow to return to Romania yet again.¹⁰⁰ Willi and his friends are symptomatic of a perceived ‘genetic’ connection that allowed GDR Germans and Romanian Germans to find a version (often a better version) of their *Heimat* mirrored beyond the border, yet within the Iron Curtain.

German-German connections between the GDR and Romania ran deeper than current scholarship acknowledges. Perhaps in part a product of the pragmatics of restricted travel in the former socialist bloc, these connections shaped intricate and nuanced understandings of each other’s respective society and country. They certainly changed over time according to policies in East Germany and Romania. Contrary to the assumptions and claims of existing scholarship, however, the GDR, Romania, and its German citizens formed a dynamic and important nexus. Romania and its German population featured in the public and political sphere in East Germany from the early Cold War period on. Most important, however, was the impact of travel, tourism, and information exchange. The changing political environment after the erection of the wall in 1961, Erich Honecker’s new policy direction from 1971, and autarkic Romanian socialism under Nicolae Ceaușescu, contributed to the growth of tourism between these two socialist countries. Unlike other forms of mobility and movement, such as emigration or deportation, travel within east-central Europe created a different form of mutual knowledge. Émigrés and expellees tended to produce a particular picture of their former homeland, which

marked it out as a place that deserved abandonment. In the case of Romanian Germans, this was a burning issue throughout the Cold War as more and more Transylvanian Saxons and Banat Swabians attempted to leave Romania for West Germany. In focusing on the uplands of Transylvania and German cultural sites in the GDR, Romanian Germans were able to construct utopias within an existing socialist framework. The same applied to East Germans who travelled eastwards. In a pronounced fashion from the 1970s onwards, the very existence of Germans in the uplands of the Carpathians acted as a magnet to a particular demography of the GDR. Not merely looking for a way out of socialism, many GDR tourists were looking for utopias within east-central Europe. Travel and tourism within Cold War east-central Europe, though little studied, reveal a cultural practice that calls into question the one-directional, often teleological histories of the period. In the case of East Germany and Romania, this cultural practice was reinforced and perpetuated by a continued exchange between Germans in both countries.

It is also clear that research on the history of Germans within east-central Europe during the Cold War remains limited. Much research has been carried out regarding the presence of ethnic Germans from east-central Europe within West Germany and even East Germany, yet the tacit assumption remains that German life within the confines of the Iron Curtain was static, devoid of life, and even non-existent. This short history of connections between Germans in Romania and the German Democratic Republic has attempted to demonstrate that there is more to the issue than meets the eye. Future research that attributes a greater degree of agency to east-central European space and societies during the Cold War is crucial. Karpatenwilli's 'rumänische Hormonen' deserve our attention after all.

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¹ Transylvanian Saxons and Saxons from Saxony share the same name but they do not share the same accent, even though they are both part of the Central German (*Mitteldeutsch*) group of dialects. Transylvanian Saxon dialect is part of the Moselle-Franconian linguistic group while Upper Saxon is spoken in the East of Germany around the state of Saxony.

² Wilhelm Roth, 'Ostgoten' <<http://www.wilhelm-roth.de/Versc/10-ONT.htm>> [accessed 16 August 2013]; see also Wilhelm Roth, Die Deutschen in Rumänien 1944 – 2011, 5 volumes, Augsburg, 2011, vol. II, pp. 211–24, *ibid.*, vol. III, p. 106–13, and *ibid.*, vol. IV, pp. 183–9 for more stories of Wilhelm Roth's encounters with East Germans.

³ Transylvanian Saxons arrived in Transylvania from the twelfth century onwards from the Moselle-Franconian region, which now constitutes the Rhineland-Palatine, Luxembourg and the Metz region in France. For an excellent overview see Harald Roth, Kleine Geschichte Siebenbürgens, Cologne, 2012, especially from page 27 on; for an encyclopaedic history of Transylvanian settlements, towns, and cities, see Harald Roth (ed.), Historische Stätten: Siebenbürgen, Stuttgart, 2003; see also Wilhelm Andreas Baumgärtner, Der vergessene Weg: wie die Sachsen nach Siebenbürgen kamen, Bonn, 2010. Banat Swabians – the second dominant German group – arrived much later in today's western Romania and northern Serbia. They belonged to a broader group of German colonists labelled Danube Swabians who repopulated the eastern regions of the Austrian Empire that had been acquired from the declining Ottoman Empire; see Márta Fata, 'Einwanderung und Ansiedlung der Deutschen (1686–1790)', in Günther Schödl (ed.), Land an der Donau, Berlin, 1995, pp. 89–196.

⁴ Wilhelm Roth, 'Tourismus 1967' <<http://www.wilhelm-roth.de/Versc/11-ONT.htm>> [accessed 16 August 2013].

⁵ See Peter Ulrich Weiß, Kulturarbeit als diplomatischer Zankapfel: Die kulturellen Auslandsbeziehungen im Dreiecksverhältnis der beiden deutschen Staaten und Rumäniens von 1950 bis 1972, Munich, 2010, pp. 88–106.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 278–321.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 292–6, 301–11.

⁸ On the idea of *Heimat* socialism, see Jan Palmowski, Inventing a Socialist Nation: Heimat and the Politics and Everyday Life in the GDR, 1945-1990, Cambridge, 2009. See also Alon Confino, Germany as a Culture of Remembrance: Promises and Limits of Writing History, Chapel Hill, 2006, especially chapter 4.

⁹ The most prominent East German ‘backpack tourist’ to Romania is Germany’s current Chancellor Angela Merkel. According to Romania’s former Foreign Minister and former Rector of Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj, Andrei Marga, Merkel visited the two main ‘hotspots’ for East German tourists: the mountainous Făgăraş region and Mamaia on the Black Sea Coast. I would like to thank Cristian Cercel for pointing this out to me. See Marius Fratila, ‘Angela Merkel, în tinerețe, cu rucsacul în spate, în Făgăraş și la Mamaia’, Gândul, 17 May 2012 <<http://www.gandul.info/magazin/angela-merkel-in-tinerete-cu-rucsacul-in-spate-in-fagaras-si-la-mamaia-ve-zi-aici-o-fotografie-de-arhiva-9634903>> [accessed 20 August 2013].

¹⁰ Only few, such as Stefan Wolff and Karl Cordell, have pointed out to some ideological inconsistencies in the GDR’s approach towards ethnic Germans in Czechoslovakia. See Stefan Wolff and Karl Cordell, ‘Ethnic Germans in Poland and the Czech Republic: A Comparative Evaluation’, Nationalities Papers: The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity, 33, 2005, 2, pp. 255–76. A similar version of this article can be found online at <<http://www.stefanwolff.com/files/EthnicGermansPolandandCzechRepublic.pdf>> [accessed 18 August 2013].

¹¹ Examples of recent scholarship that has addressed the German East while somewhat ignoring life in the region itself during the Cold War include R. M. Douglas, Orderly and Humane: The Expulsion of the Germans after the Second World War, New Haven, 2012, Andrew Demshuk, The Lost German East: Forced Migration and the Politics of Memory, 1945-1970, Cambridge, 2012, Pertti Ahonen, After the Expulsion: West Germany and Eastern Europe, 1945-1990, Oxford, 2003 and Bill Niven (ed.), Germans as Victims: Remembering the Past in Contemporary Germany, Basingstoke, 2006. Niven’s collection is excellent in its own right and has exemplified the preponderance in recent scholarship to focus only on the ‘after-story’ in the West – a topic that certainly needed addressing. It has also given rise to efforts to correct this by exploring life beyond Germans in previously German areas of east-central Europe; a good example is a conference in Lille in February 2014, Transnationale Repräsentationen von Flucht und Vertreibung <<http://evenements.univ-lille3.fr/representation-transnationale-fuite-allemands/index.php?static2/programme>> [accessed 31 March 2014].

¹² Most research on the ‘German East’ during the Cold War focuses explicitly on its impact on the Federal Republic of Germany and not on the territories of the former ‘German East’. Only few studies stand out as different. One is an edited volume from 2005: see Christoph Cornelißen, Roman Holec, and Jiří Pešek (eds), Diktatur - Krieg - Vertreibung. Erinnerungskulturen in Tschechien, der Slowakei und Deutschland seit 1945, Essen, 2005. As the title indicates, however, it focuses on the memory of expulsion and not so much on German - German connections within Cold War Eastern Europe. There is, however, a growing body of literature in German; the *Nord Ost Institut* in Lüneburg, the *Bundesinstitut für Kultur und Geschichte der Deutschen im östlichen*

Europa in Oldenburg, and the *Siebenbürgen Institut* in Gundelsheim regularly publish books and edited collections that address the issue of the ‘German East’ in east-central Europe during and after the Cold War. See, for instance, Stefan Berger (ed.), Kaliningrad in Europa: Nachbarschaftliche Perspektiven nach dem Ende des Kalten Krieges, Wiesbaden, 2012. See also Martin Aust, Krzysztof Ruchniewicz, and Stefan Troebst (eds.), Verflochtene Erinnerungen: Polen und seine Nachbarn im 19. Und 20. Jahrhundert, Cologne, 2009. More recently life after the expulsions has been a topic for current novelists. See for instance, Sabrina Janesch, Katzenberge, Berlin, 2012.

¹³ See, for instance, Jeffrey Herf, Divided Germany, Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys, Cambridge, Mass., 1997 or Ahonen, After the Expulsion.

¹⁴ See Philipp Ther, ‘Expellee Policy in the Soviet-Occupied Zone and the GDR: 1945–1953’, in David Rock and Stefan Wolff (eds.), Coming Home to Germany? The Integration of Ethnic Germans from Central and Eastern Europe in the Federal Republic from 1945, Oxford, 2002, pp. 56–76.

¹⁵ There is a whole host of Romanian German literature on the question of staying or leaving during the Cold War. Hans Hartl was perhaps the most prominent proponent of seeing emigration as a necessary course of action for survival. See, for instance, Hans Hartl, Nationalitätenprobleme im heutigen Südosteuropa, Munich, 1973. Today, scholars tend to focus strongly on emigration as an historical phenomenon without considering what else happened during the Cold War. See, for instance, Joseph Mileck, Zum Exodus der Rumäniendeutschen: Banater Sanktmartiner in Deutschland, Österreich und Übersee, New York, 1999, especially part II, and James Koranyi and Ruth Wittlinger, ‘From Diaspora to Diaspora: The Case of Transylvanian Saxons in Romania and Germany’, Nationalism and Ethnic Politics, 17, 2011, 1, pp. 96–115.

¹⁶ See, for instance, Annemarie Weber, Rumäniendeutsche? Diskurse zur Gruppenidentität einer Minderheit (1944-1971), Cologne, 2010, pp. 240–2 and Ulrich Burger, ‘Bundesrepublik oder DDR? Anmerkungen zum Deutschlandbild der Rumäniendeutschen nach 1970’, Transylvanian Review, 12, 2003, 3, pp. 63–84.

¹⁷ Bill Niven’s recent article on representations of flight and expulsion in the GDR is particularly noteworthy in that respect; see Bill Niven, ‘On a Supposed Taboo: Flight and Refugees from the East in GDR Film and Television’, German Life & Letters, 65, 2012, 2, pp. 217–36. A monograph on this issue by Bill Niven is forthcoming. For an excellent collection on ‘socialist escapes’, see Cathleen Giustino, Catherine Plum, and Alexander Vari (eds.), Socialist Escapes: Breaking Away from Ideology and Everyday Routine in Eastern Europe, 1945-1989, New York, 2013; on alternative socialist movements, visions, and spaces that did not fit into a pattern of following the lure of the west see Josie McLellan, ‘Glad to be Gay Behind the Wall’, History Workshop Journal,

74, 2012, 3, pp. 105–30, Josie McLellan, Love in the Time of Communism: Intimacy and Sexuality in the German Democratic Republic, Cambridge, 2011, and her current project with Juliane Fürst ‘Dropping Out of Socialism: Alternative Lifestyles in the Eastern Bloc, c. 1960-1990’. See also Juliane Fürst, Stalin's Last Generation: Soviet Post-War Youth and the Emergence of Mature Socialism, Oxford, 2010 and Irina Gigova’s current research on ‘Writers of the Nation: Intellectual Identity in Bulgaria, 1939-1953’. Finally, Palmowski’s work on *Heimat* Socialism offers a nuanced and detailed study into this issue within the GDR; see Palmowski, Inventing a Socialist Nation.

¹⁸ There is a plethora of sources that are in need of being investigated further. As literature has so far made blanket claims about the absence of the ‘German East’ in the GDR, historians would do well to examine this further. Likewise, the particularity of Romanian Germans deserves further attention for which rich source material exists in both Romania and in Germany at institutions such as the *Siebenbürgen Institut* in Gundelsheim as well as the *Landsmannschaften* (Homeland Societies) and *Heimat und Ortsvereine* (Associations of Homeland and Place).

¹⁹ Weiß, Kulturarbeit.

²⁰ 1965 was the year Nicolae Ceaușescu took over from Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej.

²¹ See, for instance, Dennis Deletant, Ceaușescu and the Securitate: Coercion and Dissent in Romania, 1965-1989, London, 1995, pp. 70, 117, 134, 209.

²² Both Pertti Ahonen and Michael Schwartz have looked at the presence of Germans from the East in the GDR. See Pertti Ahonen, ‘Taming the Expellee Threat in Post-1945 Europe: Lessons from the Two Germanies and Finland’, Contemporary European History, 14, 2005, 1, pp. 1–21 and Michael Schwartz, Vertriebene und ‘Umsiedlerpolitik’. Integrationskonflikte in der deutschen Nachkriegsgesellschaft und Assimilationsstrategien in der SBZ/DDR 1945-1961, Munich, 2004.

²³ Rainer Schulze, ‘The Struggle of Past and Present in Individual Identities: The Case of German Refugees and Expellees from the East’, in Rock and Wolff, Coming Home to Germany?, pp. 38–55 (p. 38).

²⁴ Ahonen, After the Expulsion, pp. 200–13. See also Jeffrey Herf, Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys, Cambridge, Mass., 1997, pp. 162–200.

²⁵ Ahonen, ‘Taming the Expellee Threat’, pp. 1–21 (pp. 6–10).

²⁶ Niven, ‘On a Supposed Taboo’.

²⁷ Christa Wolf, Kindheitsmuster, Munich, 2000.

²⁸ Heiner Müller, Die Umsiedlerin oder das Leben auf dem Lande, Hamburg, 1998.

²⁹ Roth, Kleine Geschichte Siebenbürgens, p. 142.

³⁰ See Georg Weber et al, Die Deportation der Siebenbürger Sachsen in die Sowjetunion, 1945 – 1949, 3 Volumes, Cologne, 1995, Vol. 1.

³¹ See, for instance, Hannelore Baier, ‘Arbeitslager für die deutsche Bevölkerung im Innern Rumäniens nach 1945’, Südostdeutsche Vierteljahreshefte, 54, 2005, 4, pp. 379–87 and Smaranda Vultur, Germanii din Banat prin povestirile lor, Bucharest, 2000.

³² For a useful insight into the dynamics of Romanian German emigration during the Cold War see Hannelore Baier and Ernst Meinhardt, Kauf von Freiheit. Dr. Heinz-Günther Hüsch im Interview mit Hannelore Baier und Ernst Meinhardt, Sibiu, 2013.

³³ Weiß, Kulturarbeit.

³⁴ Daniela Olărescu, Die Rezeption der rumänischen Literatur in Deutschland zwischen 1945 und 1989, Frankfurt, 2008, p. 81.

³⁵ See *ibid.*

³⁶ Conversely, Olărescu integrates this reference into a broader claim of a taboo regarding all things Transylvanian Saxon in the GDR. See *ibid.*, p. 81.

³⁷ *Neues Deutschland* mentioned ‘*Siebenbürger Sachsen*’ in thirty-four issues while the *Berliner Zeitung* did so twenty-two times. ‘*Banater Schwaben*’ featured twenty times in *Neues Deutschland* and ten times in the *Berliner Zeitung*. Most mentions occurred around 1960. These statistics do not include variations of these labels and can be generated through the search engine of the *Staatsbibliothek* in Berlin for GDR newspapers. See <<http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/>> [accessed 24 September 2013].

³⁸ Georg Herbstritt has shown in meticulous fashion the development of official East German attitudes and policies vis-à-vis Romania during the Cold War; see Georg Herbstritt, ‘Stasi in Siebenbürgen: Eine geheimdienstliche Regionalstudie’, Zeitschrift für Siebenbürgische Landeskunde, 29, 2006, 2, pp. 187–96 (p. 188).

³⁹ To prove this point, the Institute for Marxism-Leninism collated speeches, editorials, announcements, toasts and other pleasantries to document the supposed spirit of cooperation. See Dokumente und Materialien der Zusammenarbeit zwischen der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands und der Rumänischen Kommunistischen Partei, 1972 bis 1977, Berlin, 1979.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 187, Georg Herbstritt, ‘Ein feindliches Bruderland. Rumänien im Blick der DDR– Staatssicherheit’, Halbjahresschrift für südosteuropäische Geschichte, Literatur und Politik, 16, 2004, 1, pp. 5–13. For a comparative study on secret services activities in Cold War Southern Tyrol, see Günther Palaver, ‘South Tyrol:

Ethnic Winners in the Cold War?', in Robert Knight (ed.), Ethnicity, Nationalism and the European Cold War, London, 2012, pp. 193–216.

⁴¹ Herbstritt, 'Stasi in Siebenbürgen', pp. 187–96 (p. 194).

⁴² Herbstritt, 'Ein feindliches Bruderland'.

⁴³ See, for instance, Georg Herbstritt, 'Über Rumänien in die Freiheit? Fluchtversuche von DDR-Bürgern über Rumänien in den Westen', Halbjahresschrift für südosteuropäische Geschichte, Literatur und Politik, 21, 2009, 2, pp. 5–14.

⁴⁴ Silke Janko, 'Das brutale Ende einer Flucht durch die Donau', Volkstimme, 14 December 2010, p. 3 <http://www.radewahn.eu/eike/page35/files/volkstimme_ii.pdf> [accessed 15 August 2013].

⁴⁵ Ehrhart Neubert, Geschichte der Opposition in der DDR, 1949–1989, Berlin, 1998, p. 772.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ullrich Bergt, 'Tatsachen sprechen für sich', Neues Deutschland, 26 April 1989, p. 1.

⁴⁹ Egon Eisenburger, "'Eisenburger, glauben Sie noch immer – wie vor einem Jahr im Hof?'" in Hermann Schuller, Aus dem Schweigen der Vergangenheit: Erfahrungen und Berichte aus der siebenbürgischen Evangelischen Kirche A.B. in der Zeit des Kommunismus, Bonn, 2013, p. 169.

⁵⁰ See Thomas Schaufuß, Die politische Rolle des FDGB-Ferienstes in der DDR: Sozialtourismus im SED-Staat, Berlin, 2011, pp. 131–7.

⁵¹ See, for instance, Tobias Wunschik, 'Die internationalen Motorradrennen auf dem Sachsenring als Ort der Sehnsucht nach dem Westen', paper presented at the University of Basel, 'Eden für jeden' – Towards a system and theory of tourists' Sehnsucht and tourism Sehnsuchtsorte. Unpacking tourists' desires and places of longing in Central and Eastern Europe, 19–21 October 2012 <<http://sehnsuchtsorte.wordpress.com/>> [accessed: 14 August 2013]; similar to other sporting events such as football, Wunschik demonstrated the counter-cultural milieu of the motorbiking fan-scene. For a first person account of travelling by motorbike to Romania, see also 'Zeitreise: So verreiste man als DDR-Motorradfahrer 1989' at <<http://www.bikercomics.de/rbzeitreise.htm>> [accessed 14 August 2013].

⁵² For a suggestive account of how intriguing young East Germans found Romania, see Karpatenwilli, Im Frühling nach Rumänien – Reiseberichte, Berlin, 2000. 'Karpatenwilli' only discovered Romania as a travel destination in 1986 and has since maintained that connection.

⁵³ Image author's own; photo taken at Zeitgeschichtliches Forum Leipzig <<http://www.hdg.de/leipzig/>> [accessed 16 August 2013].

⁵⁴ Marc Dahlbeck, So sind wir gereist: Unterwegs in der DDR, Stuttgart, 2012, pp. 34–9.

⁵⁵ Image author's own; photo taken at Zeitgeschichtliches Forum Leipzig <<http://www.hdg.de/leipzig/>> [accessed 16 August 2013].

⁵⁶ 'Christoph Bergner: "Europa braucht die Kraft der Kultur der Siebenbürger Sachsen"', Siebenbürgische Zeitung, 08 June 2006 <<http://www.siebenbuenger.de/zeitung/artikel/kultur/5392-christoph-bergner-europa-braucht-die.html>> [accessed 14 August 2013].

⁵⁷ For a good collection of essays on tourism in former socialist and communist countries see Anne Gorsuch and Diane Koenker (eds.), Turizm. The Russian and East European Tourist under Capitalism and Socialism, Ithaca, 2006; for a collection of essays on 'socialist escapes' see Giustino, Plum, and Vari, Socialist Escapes; see also Anne Gorsuch, All This Is Your World: Soviet Tourism at Home and Abroad after Stalin, Oxford, 2011 and Diane Koenker, Club Red: Vacation, Travel, and the Soviet Dream, Ithaca, 2013.

⁵⁸ Harald Schmidt, Der deutsche Jugend-Tourist: Jugendsoziologische Studien über Reiseinteressen und -tätigkeiten junger Leute aus Ost- und Westdeutschland 1989/90, Berlin, 1990, p. 33.

⁵⁹ See Gundel Fuhrmann, 'Der Urlaub der DDR-Bürger in den späten 60er Jahren', in Hasso Sprode (ed.), Goldstrand und Teutonengrill: Kultur- und Sozialgeschichte des Tourismus in Deutschland 1945-1989, Berlin, 1996, pp. 35–50 (p. 44).

⁶⁰ Schmidt, Der deutsche Jugend-Tourist, p. 35.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

⁶² Heike Wolter, Vom staatlichen Erholungswesen: Urlaub in der DDR, Erfurt, 2008, pp. 30, 34. See also Margita Großmann et al, Reiseabsichten der DDR-Bürger 1990, Berlin, 1990, p. 206; according to this report, only 0.9% of those surveyed in the GDR expressed an interest in visiting primarily Romania in 1990.

⁶³ Großmann et al, Reiseabsichten, pp. 208–9.

⁶⁴ Schmidt, Der deutsche Jugend-Tourist, pp. 37–8.

⁶⁵ This continues to be the case: Romania is often 'marketed' as a place where 'time has stood still'. Jochen Schmidt's recent book, an East German, on Romania sells itself on that very point by parodying this cliché. See Jochen Schmidt, Gebrauchsansweisung für Rumänien, Munich, 2013. Andrzej Stasiuk, too, has interpreted some of the alleged vices as virtues; see, for instance, Andrzej Stasiuk, Fado: Reiseskizzen, Frankfurt a. M., 2006 and Andrzej Stasiuk, On the Road to Babadag: Travels in the Other Europe, Boston, 2011.

⁶⁶ It would require another article to examine the German-German connections made possible by the Protestant church in the GDR and among Germans in Transylvania. Scholarship has been largely silent on this and has treated church history in separate national categories. See, for instance Ernst Hofhansl and Berthold Köber, Die Kirchenordnung der Evangelischen Kirche A. B. in Siebenbürgen (1807 – 1997), Cologne, 2005; Jana Osterkamp and Renate Schulze (eds.), Kirche und Sozialismus in Osteuropa, Vienna, 2007; and Schuller, *Aus dem Schweigen der Vergangenheit*. Where the Protestant has been given a more prominent role is in its competition with the Transylvanian Saxon homeland society (*Landsmannschaft der Siebenbürger Sachsen*) in West Germany with the latter advocating emigration as a means of saving Saxon identity and the former, represented by a group called ‘Torch of the Homeland’ (*Licht der Heimat*), urging their Saxon countrymen to stay in Romania. For the *Landsmannschaft*’s view, see Hans Hartl ‘Am Ende einer historischen Aufgabe’, in Hans Bergel and Walter Myß (eds.), Wir Siebenbürger, Innsbruck, 1986, pp. 85–108 and Wilhelm Bruckner, ‘Die Landsmannschaft als neue Gemeinschaftsform’, in *ibid.*, pp. 108–18; for *Licht der Heimat*, see Gerhard Möckel, Fatum oder Datum?: Zum Schicksalsweg der Siebenbürger Sachsen, Stuttgart, 1969.

⁶⁷ Hans Rolle, ‘DDR-Bürger schildert Reiseeindrücke aus Siebenbürgen im Juni 1987’, Siebenbürgische Zeitung, 20 August 2005 <http://www.siebenbuerger.de/zeitung/artikel/alteartikel/4516-ddr_buerger-schildert-reiseeindruecke-aus.html> [accessed 14 August 2013].

⁶⁸ See, for instance, Wilhelm Roth’s website where a postcard features the name the German name for Braşov, namely Kronstadt <<http://www.wilhelm-roth.de/Versc/11-ONT.htm>> [accessed 14 August 2013].

⁶⁹ Gerlinde Irmscher, ‘Alltägliche Fremde: Auslandsreisen in der DDR’, in Spröde, Goldstrand und Teutonengrill, p. 54.

⁷⁰ Dieter Berger, ‘Überreste von Höhlenbären in der Steinmilchhöhle oberhalb Pojana Brasov (*sic*), Rumänien und ihre Fundumstände’, Der Aufschluss, 25, 1974. 3, pp. 187–90.

⁷¹ Of course it helped that both parties involved spoke German.

⁷² For a short overview of the struggle over historical continuity in Transylvania between Hungarians and Romanians, see Roth, Kleine Geschichte Siebenbürgens, pp. 11–15.

⁷³ Neue Literatur, 16, 1975, 10. The journal featured the most prominent names of Romanian German literature including Richard Wagner, Wolf Aichelburg, Franz Hodjak and others.

⁷⁴ ‘Intensivierung des Informationsaustauschs – Fragen an Hans-Joachim Hoffmann, Kulturminister der DDR’, *ibid.*, p. 60.

⁷⁵ See Gerhard Konnerth, 'Jubilee Address: Forty Years of Philological Studies in Sibiu', in Eric Gilder, Alexandra Mitrea, and Ana-Karina Schneider (eds.), The English Connection: 40 Years of Studies at "Lucian Blaga" University of Sibiu, Bucharest and Sibiu, 2010, pp. 19–29 <<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0019/001907/190746e.pdf>> [accessed 20 August 2013].

⁷⁶ Email correspondence with Gerhard Konnerth, 18 August 2013.

⁷⁷ Ibid. He also emphasised that the lecturers sent to Romania on exchange were very highly qualified, even more so than their West German counterparts – an important point to note, as this demonstrates further that the GDR played an active and crucial role for Romanian Germans in constructing their German cultural sphere.

⁷⁸ See Komm Mit, 21 volumes, Bucharest, 1970–1990.

⁷⁹ This was also part of a deeply contradictory stance, since the Romanian state both actively encouraged and dissuaded Germans from leaving the country. This schizophrenic position became most pronounced from the late-1970s on after the official agreement on emigration to West Germany in 1977. See Hannelore Baier, 'Ceaușescu und die Aussiedlung der Deutschen aus Rumänien', Zeitschrift für Siebenbürgische Landeskunde, 35, 2012, 1, pp. 27–50.

⁸⁰ According to with Rothraut Wittstock, editor-in-chief of the *Allgemeine Deutsche Zeitung für Rumänien* (ADZ), the successor of the *Neuer Weg*, an unspecified number of the 20,000 to 30,000 copies each year also went to Czechoslovakia. Email correspondence with Rothraut Wittstock, 18 October 2012.

⁸¹ I am particularly grateful to Christian Noack for his observations on the quality of print and paper of the series Komm Mit.

⁸² Karpatenwilli helps us again: his online collection of Komm Mit travel guides is indicative of the role it played in his own motivation to discover Romania in the 1980s: <<http://www.karpatenwilli.com/kommmit.htm>> [accessed 16 August 2013].

⁸³ From the 1970s on place names could only appear in Romanian. Komm Mit therefore represented a real and important exception to this. Furthermore, the tradition of writing for a broader German audience continued for many of those after 1989 who did not immigrate to Germany. See, for instance, Erika Schneider, Hansgeorg v. Killyen, and Eckbert Schneider, Naturforscher in Hermannstadt: Vorläufer, Gründer & Förderer des Siebenbürgischen Vereins für Naturwissenschaften, Sibiu, 2007.

⁸⁴ Advertisement 'Komm mit – 1982', Der Neue Weg, 16 February 1982, p. 5.

⁸⁵ On the *Landsmannschaften* see Ahonen, After the Expulsion.

⁸⁶ Erika Schneider, 'Es blüht "an der Burg"', Komm Mit – 1984, Bucharest, 1984, pp. 145–52 and Juliane Fabritius-Dancu, 'Burgen im Repser Land', Komm Mit – 1981, Bucharest, 1981, pp. 129–59.

⁸⁷ Some non-German organisations and individuals also helped smuggle in illegal books. Of note is the predecessor of the Mihai Eminescu Trust, which – prior to its current incarnation as a conservationist organisation active in former Transylvanian Saxon villages – was very active in bringing books to Romania. See Jessica Douglas-Home, Once Upon Another Time, Norwich, 2000.

⁸⁸ See, for instance, Esther von Richthofen, Bringing Culture to the Masses: Control, Compromise and Participation in the GDR, New York, 2009, p. 18, Jan Palmowski, 'Regional Identities and the Limits of Democratic Centralism in the GDR', Journal of Contemporary History, 41, 2006, 3, pp. 503–26 (p. 516), and Jan Herman Brinks, Paradigms of Political Change, Luther, Frederick II, and Bismarck: The GDR on Its Way to German Unity, Milwaukee, 2001.

⁸⁹ The names used here are pseudonyms. These interviews are part of a larger research project featuring 79 interviews.

⁹⁰ Interview with Ingrid Aufgang, 6 August 2005, Sibiu.

⁹¹ Ibid. This was one of the nine interviews with Germans in Romania in which the GDR featured quite prominently. Of these, this interview pronounced the German cultural aspects of the GDR most forcefully.

⁹² Katherine Verdery, 'The Unmaking of an Ethnic Collectivity: Transylvania's Germans', American Ethnologist, 12, 1985, 1, pp. 62–83.

⁹³ Interview with Hermann Frühbeis, 24 February 2005, Sibiu.

⁹⁴ See *ibid.* Such strong differences between the GDR and communist Romania were only rarely articulated. Yet it is a useful indication of the way in which 'Germanness' and 'Balkanism' have been juxtaposed in Romanian German narratives.

⁹⁵ There is ample literature on the construction and meaning of the Balkans. While some of it has been revised and critiqued, the pioneering literature on this is still greatly informative, albeit too one-directional. See, for instance, Maria Todorova, Imagining the Balkans, Oxford, 1997 and Vesna Goldsworthy, Inventing Ruritania: The Imperialism of the Imagination, New Haven, 1998. For studies that have sought to revise some of orthodox assumptions of Balkan studies see, for instance, Wendy Bracewell and Alex Drace-Francis (eds.), Balkan Departures: Travel Writing from Southeastern Europe, New York, 2009 and Wendy Bracewell and Alex Drace-Francis (eds.), Under Eastern Eyes: A Comparative Introduction to East European Travel Writing on Europe, Budapest, 2008.

⁹⁶ See David D. Hamlin, “‘Wo sind wir?’ Orientalism, Gender and War in the German Encounter with Romania, German History, 28, 2010, 4, pp. 424–52 (p. 426). See also Klaus Heitmann, Das Rumänenbild im deutschen Sprachraum, Cologne, 1986.

⁹⁷ This postcard is courtesy of Georg Keim who has collected an abundance of postcards from East Germans abroad during the Cold War. These were exhibited between 04 and 25 February 2007 at the exhibition ‘*Hoffentlich hält sich die Bräune*’ (‘I hope the tan lasts’) in the *Interkulturellen Bühne* in Frankfurt am Main. See ‘Rumänien ein beliebtes Urlaubsland für DDR-Touristen’, Siebenbürgische Zeitung, 8 February 2007 <<http://www.siebenbuenger.de/zeitung/artikel/rumaenien/6129-ru-maen-ien-ein-beliebtes-urlaubs-land-fuer.html>> [accessed 14 August 2013].

⁹⁸ Rolle, ‘DDR-Bürger schildert Reiseeindrücke’.

⁹⁹ Karpatenwilli, Im Frühling nach Rumänien, p. 127.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 160.