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**DEPORTATION OF ETHNIC GERMANS
FROM HUNEDOARA COUNTY IN THE USSR.
IN THE "CRUCIBLE" OF
TWO TOTALITARIAN REGIMES
(ABSTRACT)**

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PHD THESIS ABSTRACT

The practice of deportations and internment in labor camps is not new in human history. Forced labor was a form of slavery used since Ancient Egypt, Babylon or Persia and which was known on all continents - in Africa, Asia and the two Americas. In Europe, ancient Greece and Rome were societies that used slavery on a large scale. In the European Middle Ages, serfdom was also widespread. Here, in Romania, the Roma population was freed from slavery only 170 years ago. In the 20th century, millions of innocent people met their end in deportation and forced labor in Nazi concentration camps, but also in the Soviet Gulag. Deportation and forced labor were also used in Asia, in China and Japan, where the armies of the two countries forced millions of people to perform Forced labour.

The deportation to the Soviet Union of the ethnic Germans from Romania constituted a milestone in the history of this community, but, at the same time, it anticipated the measures of retaliation and repression that the communist regime would implement, on a large scale, not only against the ethnic minorities, but also on the entire Romanian society. With few exceptions, such as Dinu Brătianu, who took an open stance against the deportation of Romanian citizens of German ethnicity through a letter of protest addressed to the President of the Council of Ministers, we did not record, in the era, other important public positions. At the opposite end, in the days of January 1945, Gheorghiu-Dej was, for validation and receipt of instructions, at I.V. Stalin in Moscow. We recorded, in our research, the statement that Dej would make, on August 13, 1945, right in Hunedoara county, from the podium of the first free regional conference of the P.C.R., about the Germans in Romania and those in Orăștie. On this occasion, he declared: "It was about transferring everyone (Germans - n.n) to the Soviet Union to work, and their assets to be utilized and, from them, to pay the armistice debts. I sweetened this measure a bit more, because we had to make a small difference, but small at all. If there are still unexpropriated Saxons, take measures! If there are more, a list of them, with a delegate and directly to our interior minister or Prime Minister Groza".

In January 1945, under the threat of the Soviet bayonet, a school operation was launched, carried out by the institutions of force of the Romanian state - the army, the police and the gendarmerie - through which a minority (ethnic, in the present case) was executed, without being able to resist. At that moment, probably few anticipated that the repression applied to this community, just for the guilt of belonging to a specific ethnicity, would soon be applied to the majority of the Romanian population. As a consequence, the turn of ethnic Romanians will come,

who, for 45 years, will be sifted through the meshes of all kinds of sites, such as party membership, ideology, material condition, religion practiced or even after sexual orientation.

The Soviet power, *ex cathedra*, had a vast repressive experience because it had organized, only in the first three decades after its installation in power in the U.S.S.R., 52 deportation campaigns[Ilie Schipor, *Deportarea in U.R.S.S. of ethnic Germans from Romania. Russian archival arguments*, Honterus Publishing House, Sibiu, 2019, p. 9.], to which more than 6.4 million Soviet citizens fell victim [Ibidem.]. With such expertise, the N.K.V.D. was a good teacher for the local collaborationists in the country. In Romania, the lesson was quickly, well learned and applied by the Romanian communists, who, in the following decades, will replicate it, with their own tools, in the ideological shelter of national-communism, and will start their own campaigns against the Romanian people.

The lifting of the Germans was a large operation, in which important forces of the Gendarmerie, the Police and the Army participated. Two centers for the collection of German internees were established in Hunedoara county. The first one worked in Deva, where ethnic Germans from Deva, Orăștie, Hunedoara and Brad were brought, with the means made available by the Prefecture. The second collection center was in Petroșani, for Petroșani, Lupeni and the Hațeg area. The operation was carried out in three phases: that of the collection on police cells, the transport of those picked up to the nearest camp or collection center, the handing over of the Germans for their transport to the Soviet Union.

The deportation of an ethnic community is not a singular episode in human history. What should be mentioned, in the case of the deportation of ethnic Germans from Romania, is that, in addition to the stated goal, war work, in favor of the Soviet ally, another goal was also pursued in parallel, we would not call it secondary, because at least as high a stake was the destructuring of a relevant ethnic community. This was in favor of the young communitarian state and was done through a concerted process of measures, which doubled the deportation - nationalizations, the prohibition of civil rights, such as the right to vote, the abolition of education in the mother tongue, the secularization of the assets of the evangelical church. It is what today could be called a hybrid war waged against a collective, forced, finally, to leave the native lands on which it had lived for hundreds of years, to retreat to the borders of the mother state. The deportation episode had a beginning, but not an end to the repression, because it only opened the door to a series of concerted abuses by the Romanian communist state against its own citizens. It is part of the permanent civil war, of which the French historian Thierry Wolton speaks, in the name of the proletarian revolution, and which will continue, in multiple guises, until the communist regime is abolished.

The labor battalions in which the Romanians deported to the U.S.S.R. were detained. they operated in three countries of the Soviet Union: in the R.S.S.R. Ukrainian (Donetsk, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporozhye, Kharkiv, Luhansk Regions), R.S.F.S. Russian (Rostov, Sverdlovsk, Chelyabinsk Regions), in the S.S.R. Kazakhstan (Aktyubinsk).

The return of ethnic Germans from deportation was not the end of the ordeal and did not mean their release, but, as will be seen, it was a resettlement in another type of camp, much larger, that of so- the so-called popular democracies. Former deportees are sent to Romania or, as we have seen, to Germany, from where they return home, where they find Romanian society completely changed. Romania was no longer a monarchy, but a republic

And not just any, but a popular one (sic!). There was no more multipartyism, but a single party-state had seized the political scene. The Germans' properties had been liquidated on the grounds of collaborationism, their churches were without funding, and education had been nationalized. None of what they had left behind still existed, yet we can't say that this took them completely by surprise. During the period of deportation to the Soviet Union, they had seen and understood how socialist society works. Although it could have been an advantage, what they saw there turned them, for the umpteenth time?, into enemies of a demonic system that had established itself at home. Far from being an advantage, they became a target for the Securitate precisely for fear that some of them might report what they saw and experienced in the Soviet Workers' Paradise.

The deportation of the Germans had significant economic consequences, along with the not-insignificant expenses that the Romanian state had to bear to ensure the logistics of the deportation. In Hunedoara alone, they amounted to 70 million lei by the end of January 1945 (that is, approx. 709,000 dollars, in the course of 1945, a considerable amount for that time). Much more important, however, was the loss of an important human capital active in the Romanian economy. The gap left in the economic units, simultaneously, by the deportation of the Germans and the release of the prisoners of war will make itself felt more and more acutely, as the effort to support the front, and then the reconstruction of the economy, will demand more and more skilled labor.

One long-term consequence of political violence on a community is reflected in attitudes towards voting. The studies carried out highlight the fact that in the areas where the repressed population is located, the voter turnout is almost ten percent lower than in the other constituencies. In the long term, collective psychology will manifest itself in distrust of state institutions.

The episode of the deportation of the Germans can also be interpreted as the key to an event of great violence, through which a totalitarian regime comes to impose itself in a

democratic society and annihilate a minority, ethnic or of whatever nature it may be, until its total extermination of its members. It is the study of a *modus operandi* of an illegitimate and criminal regime, which will be multiplied and applied, in the years to come, to the Romanian ethnic majority, in the name of the class struggle.

The deportation of Germans from Hunedoara to Soviet Donetsk has many specific elements, which make it similar, but also differentiate it from the event that happened in Romania (and not only) in January 1945. First of all, the German population in Hunedoara County had, in a singular case, a bivalent composition. It was both Saxon and Swabian, both Catholic and Evangelical, rural and urban, characteristic of a synthetic area on the border between Saxon Transylvania and the Swabian Banat. The Swabians were, for the most part, skilled workers in heavy industry, in steel and mining, and the Saxons carried out a predominantly agricultural activity. The first lived in the urban environment, and the others were in the Hunedorian countryside.

Another specific element is the socio-economic profile of Hunedoara, similar to that of Donetsk, nicknamed the city of coal and roses [Simion Morcovescu, *Correspondence from the U.S.S.R., La Donetsk, in the city of coal and roses, in Scânteia*, no. 14055, year 56, October 1987.]. Even some historical aspects, related to the beginnings of the industries, have commonalities.

Mining and steelmaking have made both provinces essential to their countries' economies and become regions of ethnic and cultural synthesis for the populations that were brought to work here. In both regions, the ever-increasing need for labor could not be met with domestic labor, but was imported from neighboring regions or even states. In the Jiului Valley, for example, the ethnic communities were diverse: Romanians, Hungarians, Germans, Czechs, Poles, Jews, Bonsmias, etc. Likewise, in Donetsk, in addition to Ukrainians, Russians, Germans, Welsh and others.

The Germans who worked in the coal mines of Valea Jiului, although they had, at the beginning, difficulties in adapting, especially due to the technological backwardness of the exploitations in Donbas, fared much better than their compatriots from Transylvania or Banat. Much more important was the expansion of the camp-type way of life in the new economic and political reality in Romania, after the return from deportation. The Germans from Hunedoara had the unwanted surprise of finding the generalization of the Donbas model in the life of popular Romania and, later, of the socialist one. The similarities were already felt in the workplace, where Soviet technology replaced the Western (German) one, but also in everyday, everyday life. Practically, the Hunedoara region was rebuilt based on the model of the Donbas-type mining-metallurgical complex.

The role of the two regions was similar during World War II. If, in Donbas, the German army used Soviet prisoners for hard labor underground, in the same way, in Valea Jiului, the Antonescu government used Soviet prisoners held in Camp no. 9 from Vulcan, for work in the mines of Văii Jiului. Towards the end of the war and after, things evolved in the mirror. In Donbas, the place of Soviet prisoners was taken by German prisoners, and in Valea Jiului, the Petroșani Coal Company, which became one with mixed, Soviet and Romanian capital, SOVROM Cărbune, used, in modern slavery, the Romanian miners who had to work hard to cover war reparations. Also here, approximately 100,000 young Romanians completed their military training, in another modern form of slavery.

During the communist period, when the region of Hunedoara developed according to a Soviet-type economic-social model, P.M.R., through the propaganda section, tried, over time, to cultivate and develop close relations between Hunedoara residents and their Soviet colleagues in Donetsk . They are manifestations of a psychological phenomenon that, from 1973, will be known as the Stockholm syndrome. The victims end up, after a while, justifying their aggressor, who keeps them prisoners, and to whom they end up becoming so emotionally attached that they reject any attempt to free them from this captivity. Fear and hatred are replaced by love and attachment for a supposed common cause. Thus, in August 1951, the communist press in Romania wrote that "the miner from Valea Jiului works enthusiastically and full of gratitude towards the Party and towards the Soviet Union." "He dreams of a Donbas of our own and strives to fulfill this dream. He knows that from the East lies the most perfect model (sic!) of the miners' way of working and living, in the country where the miner is a glorified citizen of his homeland" [Miner's Day, in "Lupta Sibiului", August 1951, year VIII, no. 1911.].

The symbolic elements accompanying his detention in Donbas will also be found at home, in Hunedoara, which has become "our Donbas", as the communists at the head of the state had dreamed. The underground mining equipment bears mnemonic names, such as "Donbas", which must remind the former deportees, day by day, of the Soviet paradise, for the construction of which they had to work. An attempt is being made, *avant la lettre*, to transform the victim into the involved defender of the aggressor's (Soviet) cause, already considered common, that of communism. The victim is dependent, including emotionally, on the aggressor and will willingly refuse, in the name of this illusion, any help that might come from the West.

In the false imaginary staged by the propaganda in the media of the time, the miners from Valea Jiului maintain a close correspondence with their fellow citizens from Donbas: "Nephew and son of miners, Hajdu Iuliu carries the brightest torch through the depths. He knows, like no one else, that that torch acquired its unparalleled brilliance from the fire of liberation, from friendship with the hard-working scormonitors of the Donbas. There are sometimes warm

exchanges that sound something like this : "My dear Evdokii Mihailovici...I really use your letters". And in Donbas, another capable miner, Evdokii Mihailovici Rubantev, smiles happily at the success of the miner from the Carpathians" [Dumitru Mircea, laureate of the State Prize, *La Lumina* Great October, in "Munca", no. 2503, 1953].

In 1962, in a historic visit, but problematic, from many points of view, tov. Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev, General Secretary of the P.C.U.S. is invited, among other objectives, to come to Hunedoara, to meet the brave steel workers and hardworking miners here. The county and the place are not chosen by chance, because Khrushchev, in turn, worked for several years in Donbas and came from these harsh, working-class environments, in which he fully found himself. Probably the idea of this visit to Hunedoara belonged to the Saxon I. G. Maurer, the Prime Minister of Romania at the time, who accompanied him to Hunedoara. Nikita Khrushchev had been, in his youth, a shepherd, then a metal worker, he had also worked at a mine in Donbas, and the region of Hunedoara, with its miners and steel workers, could have welcomed him and made him feel at home in the Union Soviet. On the agenda of the Romanian-Soviet discussions, there were thorny issues, which will be repeated in the "Valev Plan", and with which the Romanian side did not agree.

"I would say that here we feel like a steelworker at a Martin furnace. We feel warmth and joy [Proverb tov. Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev, in "Work", no. 4551 of 22.06.1962.]". With these words, in his speech, he addressed the Hunedoren workers, tov. Nikita Khrushchev. But, with all the heat of the ovens of Western, Franco-German conception, the relations between the two socialist states, the Soviet Union and Romania, continued to cool down...

The socio-economic profiles of the two regions, Hunedoara and Donetsk, were similar. Both were heavily industrialized areas, both were labor centers essential to their countries' economies, thanks to mining and steel. This led to intense economic and cultural exchanges developing between the two industrial centers in the following years. In addition to the import of Soviet technology, which gradually replaced the Western one, Soviet specialists were present in the life of Hunedoara, under the cover of SOVROMs. Donetsk served as a model and inspiration for the construction of the Hunedorian socialist society. The Donbas became for the Romanian communists, an ideal, paradisiacal organizational model, the pinnacle of the Soviet experience, which had to be reproduced in our country. As in Donbas, the destiny of the working man, but also of the Romanian working women, tends and approaches asymptotically. In 1950, it was reported, with pride, that over 3,000 housewives from Hunedoara were guided by the Communist Party to engage in productive activity. In this way, for the whole of Romania, in the 1950s, the Hunedorences become an "impulse for the broadening and expansion of this

movement" [Femeia Magazine, no. 4/ 1953.]. And in the strong labor center here, as in Donetsk, a center of higher education was created to provide the necessary technical personnel.

The miner's life unfolds on two levels. One is on the surface, in the meager array of small working-class, minimal, utilitarian towns with bedroom neighborhoods. The second level is underground, much more extensive in area than the city above. Here, in a vast network of galleries, tunnels, shafts, the length of which, put together, far exceeds that of the streets and boulevards on the surface, sometimes even more than ten times, the real life of the miners unfolds . Most of a day, about 10-12 hours, is spent in the darkness of the mine. The duality of the life regime is of great symbolic value for the destiny of the captive man in a totalitarian regime. Working in a mine is not just a simple job. Here, many of the miners take refuge from the stepmothers endured above, here reigns a primal equality between individuals. The underground even becomes a place of eternity for some. In Donbas, for example, there were, symbolically, "some mines that were never restored and were not rebuilt. A monument rises above them. I am the grave" [The Liberators, in "The Red Flag", no. 344, 5.08.1955.]. Thousands of Soviet people would have died in these mines. The underground of Donbas finds its counterpart in the underground universe of the mines of the Jiu Valley. And in the darkness of the galleries here, Soviet prisoners held in Camp no. 9 from Vulcan, but also thousands of local mining workers. Tragedies, wherever they happen, have a common denominator and produce the same suffering, impossible to quantify.

In this paper, we insisted not only on the deportation of the ethnic Germans from Hunedoara to the Soviet Union, but we wanted to clarify the context of this dramatic episode, its immediate consequences, but also the long-term ones, for the ethnic Germans, as well as for the Romanian majority, which were, for decades, at the hands of an illegitimate and criminal regime. The blender of totalitarian regimes worked flawlessly in the middle of the 20th century. The German minority was deported externally, to the Soviet Union, but also within the country, in labor camps or even in Bărağan. The repressive measures taken by the communist regime, but also the growing economic and democratic gap in the second half of the 20th century, generate the push-pull effect on the German community. At the beginning of the 90s, the exodus can no longer be stopped, and a tradition of hundreds of years of peaceful coexistence comes to an end. In this context, we wish to register the present approach as, beyond the monochrome colors of human suffering, an exhortation to assume and respect democratic values and freedoms, which each generation must learn and practice responsibly.