

Bukovina and Bukovinians after the Second World War: (Re)shaping and (Re)thinking a Region after Genocide and 'Ethnic Unmixing'

Veranstalter: Gaëlle Fisher / Maren Röger, University of Augsburg

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In the aftermath of the Second World War and associated politics of expansion, 'ethnic unmixing' and genocide, the historical region of Bukovina disappeared definitely from the map of Europe. However, the memory and traces of this multicultural and multiethnic landscape did not. Many Bukovinians left and rebuilt their lives elsewhere; those who stayed adapted to new circumstances. But Bukovina remained an important point of reference, even if it was subject to constant reshaping and rethinking throughout the postwar period. This international two-day workshop aimed to explore the 'afterlife' of Bukovina and the postwar histories of Bukovinians in all of their political, cultural and geographical diversity. It was organized at the Bukovina-Institute at the University of Augsburg in cooperation with the University of Klagenfurt, the Institute for German Culture and History of Southeastern Europe (IKGS) at Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich and the FORUMOST of the University of Augsburg and funded by the Bavarian State Ministry for Work and Social Affairs, Family and Integration.

In her introductory remarks, MAREN RÖGER (Augsburg) offered a brief history of Augsburg's Bukovina-Institute, where the conference was taking place. The institute – today associated institute of the University of Augsburg – was founded in the late 1980s on the basis of the 'sponsorship' agreement (Patenschaft) of the regional government of Swabia over the group of Bukovina-Germans dating from 1955. Röger emphasized that the institute itself is „a piece of the puzzle“ if one wants to understand the afterlife of Bukovina after 1945 in West Germany in particular.

The first panel discussed the experiences of various Bukovinian communities and their ef-

forts to rebuild communities after the Second World War. OLENA PETRENKO (Bochum) dealt with the transformation of Bukovina into a Ukrainian region, which started in 1944. In particular, she looked at the role of female cadre brought in from the East in the process of Sovietization. As Petrenko argued, the Soviet state sought to impose a new culture and mark historical Bukovina as 'other' and backward. However, the retrospective accounts of these women offer a more complex picture and reveal the gap, not only between them and the local population, but also between the state's aims and their practical implementation. GAËLLE FISHER (Augsburg) explored the situation of Bukovina Jews in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. Although many sought 'repatriation' to Romania from Transnistria or the Soviet Union, this was often just a short stop before further emigration to Israel, Western Europe or the USA. Fisher highlighted the differences between the experiences of Jews who had survived in Romania and 'survivor refugees' from Bukovina who faced sickness, statelessness, economic hardship and a crisis of belonging. As she argued, the lack of state support for the Jews in Romania helps explain the resonance of Zionism and the feeling that their homeland was lost for good. MAREN RÖGER (Augsburg) tackled aspects of the postwar activities of Bukovina-Germans (Buchenland-deutsche). Röger pointed to the role of the Homeland Society (Landsmannschaft) as an institution. It not only offered mutual aid, but also a space for dealing with questions of identity and culture. For a long time, its key figures maintained a distinctive tradition, promoting group coherence and shaping images of the region in West Germany. Since the 1980s, the growing interest in genealogy, family history and Bukovina on behalf of a wider number of people has been a challenge and an opportunity for this organization. MAGDALENA POKRZYŃSKA (Zielona Góra) offered a sociological perspective on the development of Bukovinian regional traditions in postwar Poland. Immediately after the war, Polish Bukovinians, who had been repatriated to western Poland, were regarded as 'exotic birds' who had to assimilate into the wider society. However, after Stalin's death in 1953, re-

gional movements became tolerated and this resulted in the establishment of several folkloric institutions. These activities expanded considerably since the collapse of communism.

The second panel turned to the role of literature and the perception of the former Habsburg region in the works of Bukovinian writers. WOLF MOSKOVICH (Jerusalem) focused on the works of writers from Bukovina born after the war in the Soviet Union. Many of them started writing in the 1970s and continued to do so later in the diaspora – in the US, Israel, Germany or the Czech Republic. All of the authors identified strongly with the tradition of their hometown, Chernivtsi and its multicultural past. However, as Moskovich argued, there are differences comparing documentary prose, which honestly described the reality in Czernowitz, and poetry which produced an idealized image of the city culture or folk life in surrounding villages. ANDREI CORBEA-HOISIE (Iasi) explored how Bucharest became a new center for German-speaking Jewish writers from Bukovina in the immediate postwar years. In particular, he focused on the literary circle around Alfred Margul-Sperber, which recreated and revived the intellectual tradition of Czernowitz in the Romanian capital. However, according to Corbea-Hoisie, as a consequence of persecution, emigration and the need for accommodation to the new circumstances under communist rule, by 1948 Bucharest had already lost its promising position. ANNA ZACHMANN (Augsburg) examined the image of Bukovina in the works of Edgar Hilsenrath. As she argued, Hilsenrath erected a literary memorial to the region where he spent his childhood after fleeing from Nazi-Germany and before being deported to the ghetto of Mogilev-Podolsk. In his works, the author offers an image of Bukovina inspired by the idealization known as the Bukovina myth. However, as Zachmann concluded, Hilsenrath's use of humor, satire and irony distorts it. By critically depicting the problems of a multiethnic society, he in fact seeks to liberate the region from its myth.

The third panel focused on the memory of home and exile. FRANCISCA SALOMON

(Iasi) examined autobiographical texts of former deportees to Transnistria, Edgar Hilsenrath and the Yiddish-language writer Alexander Spiegelblatt. As Salomon explained, the family is at the center of these narratives. They emphasize the loss of their mother tongue and home. Reconstructing the lost world of their relatives serves to work through the traumatic experiences. At the same time, as Salomon argued, these family narratives can function not only as self-therapy or rebirth for their authors, but also as starting point for an investigation of this history for others. They offer a kaleidoscopic picture of human life in a certain period. FLORENCE HEYMANN (Jerusalem) dealt with contemporary practices of memory and nostalgia among Bukovina Jews and the recent phenomenon of 'roots-tourism' in particular. As Heymann argued, this type of tourism conflates the search for identity with nostalgia for childhood places. By analyzing the cases of the virtual space of the Ehpes Czernowitz-List and real trips from Israel to Chernivtsi, Heymann discovered a varying dialectic between past and present depending on the generation: Whereas members of the first generation long resisted the urge to return, the second went with the nostalgia of their parents feeling at home in a place they never experienced as such. As Heymann concluded, with their distance to the past members of the third generation are the only ones who actually pay attention to the present of the Ukrainian city.

The last panel pursued further the discussion of memory and nostalgia by focusing on contemporary manifestations of identity in Bukovina. KAROLINA KOZIURA (New York) investigated the role of nostalgia and national politics in the processes of the post-socialist transformation of Chernivtsi. By analyzing post-1991 urban restoration projects and the position of various ethnic communities within them, Koziura argued that behind the often-contradictory meanings of nostalgia lies, in fact, a political agenda. The aim is namely the struggle to nationalize the cityscape and to transform it into the heart of a Ukrainian nation-state. NIKLAS BERNSSAND (Lund) also investigated the post-communist space of Chernivtsi. He looked more specifically at the organization and impact of the an-

nual literary festival Meridian Czernowitz. In today's urban space the vanished cultural diversity of old-Czernowitz is seen as both an asset and challenge. For him, multiculturalism is, on the one hand, retrospective – an idealized and unproblematized vision of the past – and, on the other hand, transformative insofar as it tries to change people. In many cases, however, as Bernsand argued, it is the absence of ethnic groups such as the Jewish one which opens opportunities for celebrating multiculturalism. JAKUB OSIECKI (Kraków) gave insights into the oral history interviews he conducted for the Polish KARTA Center with Poles who remain in Bukovina today. Most of the Polish Bukovinians he spoke to mentioned the mass deportation and evacuations after the Second World War, but also their pride in speaking Polish. By looking into the lives of people living in Bukovina today and what they remember, Osiecki contributed to taking the discussion of the history of Bukovina beyond its myth.

In their concluding remarks both DIETER POHL (Klagenfurt) and ANDREI CORBEA-HOISIE (Iasi) stressed that so far, only little research has been done on the postwar societies of former Bukovina and transformations on the ground. Pohl noted that since Ukrainian historiography is often guided by the traditional paradigms of modernization and nationalization, the complex history of Bukovina, including the history of the war, the Shoah and their legacies, is often ignored. A stronger focus on memory inside Bukovina and on the comparison between the North and South of the territory, as well as between Bukovinians and other exiled groups would certainly bring about new insights. Corbea-Hoisie added that in future, scholars should highlight social differences within and across the various ethnic groups in order to deconstruct still dominant national categories in scholarship. Moreover, as he argued, the fact that there is no common collective experience or identity of Bukovina points to the very fact that from the beginning the 'homo Bucoviniensis' was an artificial Habsburg construction.

As the conference demonstrated, Bukovina and Bukovinians are all over the world and relate in very different ways to the often-

mythologized image of the former province of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. So far, scholars have paid much less attention to the period after 1945. Therefore, the various presentations contributed to a very fruitful and often multilingual dialogue between senior and younger scholars. It certainly opened up prospects for further comparative and transnational research, including on the Ukrainian and Romanian settings, in order to present a more nuanced picture of the afterlife of Bukovina in history and memory.

Conference Overview:

Gaëlle Fisher and Maren Röger (Augsburg): Opening and Welcome Addresses

Gregor Weber (Dean of the Philological-Historical Faculty, Augsburg) and Marita Krauss (Chairwoman of the Board of the Bukovina-Institute, Augsburg): Introduction

Maren Röger (Augsburg): The Bukovina-Institute: Past, Present and Future

Panel I: Rebuilding Communities after Genocide and 'Ethnic Unmixing'

Olena Petrenko (Bochum): Die neuen Kader „aus dem Osten“: Narrative der Nachkriegssowjetisierung in der Bukowina

Gaëlle Fisher (Augsburg): Between Liberation and Emigration: Bukovina Jews in Post-war Romania

Magdalena Pokrzyńska (Zielona Góra): Bukovinians in Poland after 1945: Tradition in process of community building

Maren Röger (Augsburg): The Bukovina-Germans after 1945

Panel II: Rewriting Bukovina: The Role of Literature

Wolf Moskovich (Jerusalem): Images of Czernowitz in the Works of Some Modern Ex-Bukovinian Émigré Jewish Writers

Andrei Corbea-Hoisie (Iasi): Bukarest als literarische Hauptstadt der deutschsprachigen Bukowina 1945–1947

Anna Zachmann (Augsburg): „Ich möchte mir selber viele Geschichten erzählen“: The Literary Depiction of Bukovina as Idealized (childhood) Memory in the Work of Edgar

Hilsenrath

Panel III: Remembering Survival: Home and Exile

Francisca Salomon (Iasi): Die Bukowina als traumatischer Ort – Zur Literarisierung spezifischer Erfahrungen im Kontext der Deportationen nach Transnistrien

Florence Heymann (Jerusalem): Trip to Chernivtsi or return to Czernowitz. The paradoxes of memory and nostalgia over three generations

Panel IV: Recalling and Reinventing: The Bukovina Myth

Karolina Koziura (New York): The Meanings of Nostalgia in Reshaping Contemporary Cityscape of Chernivtsi

Niklas Bernsand (Lund): „Returning Chernivtsi to the cultural map of Europe?“ Analysing the Memory Work of the Poetry Festival Meridian Czernowitz

Jakub Osiecki (Kraków): Poles in Bukovina: An Oral-History Project

Andrei Corbea-Hoisie (Iasi) and Dieter Pohl (Klagenfurt): Closing Discussion

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