

German Language and Culture in Southern Bukovina.

The Disappearance of a Cultural Enclave

The present paper aims at completing a gap in the research of the German enclave in Bukovina, through resorting to the linguistic information resulted from the inquiries undertaken by Margarete Jumugă in the 1970s, and also through an inventory of the cultural and linguistic vestiges of the Germans from the southern part of Bukovina.

The beginnings of Bukovina as a distinctive administrative region are connected to the Russian – Turkish War (1768-1774), when Austria-Hungary was allowed to occupy, as mediator, the region that was to be called Bukovina from 1774 on. Present-day Bukovina is divided in two parts: Northern Bukovina (the region of Cernăuți, belonging to Ukraine), and Southern Bukovina (which is known as the Suceava County, in Romania). Being a subject to the Austrians, Bukovina represented, at the end of the 17th century, an immigration destination for numerous German colonists coming from Bohemia, Zips (North-East of Slovakia), Pfalz (South-West of Germany), but also from other Austrian provinces.

The colonization process mainly affected the rural areas, and was initiated by the Austrian military administration between 1774 and 1786. The immigration continued after the annexation of Bukovina to Galicia, with the colonization taking place as result of private interests. In 1849, Bukovina becomes a province of the Crown, at which moment the region starts a period of significant cultural development: the “Franz Josef” University is founded in Cernăuți in 1875, the publishing of newspapers is in bloom, more associations appear and more schools are built. The official language being German, German also served as main means of communication between the different ethnic groups in Bukovina, even though the percentage of population of German origins never rose above a third of the total. Drawing upon the linguistic similarities of their language with German, the Jewish population adopted German as “native language”; they could be differentiated from the German population only towards the end of the 17th century, through a detailed analysis of their religious affiliation. Thus, the German language was considered to be the genuine *lingua franca*.

Against the background of the different origins for the German colonists, three distinctive communities became noticeable in Bukovina, according to the dialect they used: the Zipsers in the mountainous areas, the Bohemian Germans in the hills and the so-called Swabians in the lowlands. Next to these three categories there was a fourth one, comprising the Germans

living in towns, who used the Austrian German, but with influences from the contact languages (Romanian, Ukrainian, Yiddish).

The inventory of these remnants of dialects was the subject of Margareta Jumugă's research in the 70's, who, as Professor at the Faculty of Letters (German Studies) at "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University, Iași, undertook field studies in Suceava county, more exactly in the Southern half of the former Bukovina, recording on tape the dialect of the inhabitant of German ethnic origins. The research stagnated for a period, and a few years afterwards the Professor passed away. The drive to commence this thesis partly came from the Professor's husband, who, convinced of the value of the materials she had left behind, wished to make her entire collection of recordings available to the Faculty of German Studies in Iași.

The importance of continuing the field research initiated by Margarete Jumugă resides in the fact that the Germanic cultural enclave is still observable at a demographic level, although the Germans from Bukovina were relocated more than a decade ago. Thus, according to the data provided by the National Statistics Institute, in 2011 there were 699 people of German ethnicity in the southern part of the former Bukovina, more exactly in Suceava County. On the other hand, the desire expressed by the German community to reinvigorate and assert their culture is becoming more and more obvious, having reached significant discrepancies as far as the number of people belonging to this ethnic group is concerned. Consequently, in towns such as Gura Humorului, the latest census indicated the existence of 57 people of German ethnicity, while the Democratic Forum of Germans possesses documents that certify more than 200 members registered. In the period covered by M. Jumugă's research, in the '70's, there still were 2,265 Germans in Suceava County.

This time-frame coincided with a rediscovery of German culture in the historical region of Bukovina, which had been almost forgotten for about 30 years, after World War II. The fact that German culture was ignored can be explained by the collective mentality causing an erroneous conviction of all Germans having supposedly left the region – this assumption was to be eventually proven wrong. The approximately 4,000 users of German recorded in Suceava by the 1956 census were to become the focal interest of ethnologists and Professors in Humanities specialized in German Studies, representatives of the Romanian research field, like Claus Stephani, Eduard Eisenburger, Horst Fassel and Margarete Jumugă.

This rediscovery resulted in various scientific papers, both ethnographic and linguistic in nature, generated by the desire to capture and describe – while still possible – the German

cultural phenomenon in the region. Until that time, the German communities of the former Dukedom of Bukovina had been described predominantly beginning with the third decade of the last century. Thus, the first ample description of the three German ethnic groups in Bukovina – Swabians, Zipsers and Bohemians – was made by Franz Lang in the paper *Bukowina* published in *Handwörterbuch des Grenz- und Auslandsdeutschtums I*, Wroclaw (Breslau) 1933, an article reviewing cultural, social, historical and linguistic aspects. A few years later, the first authentically linguistic papers appeared, based on analysis of the “Wenker”-type of sentences; these papers were authored by Bronislaus Irion (1934) and Franz Lang (1939).

Nonetheless, these studies, even though ample and eloquent, are only limited to describing the Swabian dialect. Throughout the following decades, Franz Lang continues and develops the research of this dialect, publishing, in 1956, the paper *Mundart und Herkunft der 1787 in der Bukowina angesiedelten sogen. Schwaben*, in which he evokes the existence of differences in dialect, even within the same ethnic group (with similar ethnic origins), despite the general tendency of levelling observed in the spoken language. The main promoters of such descriptions of the German Bohemians are Siegfried Mirwald (with the paper *Die Sprache von bayrischen, deutsch-böhmischen Buchenländern*, Essen 1988) and Linde Blass-Kiessling (*Das Dorf Karlsberg in der Bukowina*, München 1982). The dialect of Zipsers constitutes the subject of papers by Franz Lang and Leonore Binder (*Die Mundart der Bukowiner Zipser*, München 1988). The linguistic aspects are analysed, secondarily, by various monographic works, as well as books authored by J. Chr. Dressler (Ilișești), Chr. Armbrüster (Satul Mare), Erwin Massier and Kurt Rein (Frătăuți), Josef Wild (Voievodeasa) Michael Leopold Hauser (Cârlibaba and Iacobeni) and Irmtraud Schaper (Poiana Micului).

Besides the linguistic aspects, these papers offer an insight into the social and cultural framework which is vital when it comes to establishing the various stages of dissolution of the German enclave, a transformation which represents the core of the present paper. The author’s personal contribution lies in the inventory of the German cultural remnants in Northern Moldavia, the former historical region of Bukovina, from a linguistic as well as a cultural point of view. The importance of this endeavour is all the more necessary if one takes into account the fact that census results indicate the disappearance of all members of the German ethnic group, thus leaving us without the research subject.

The structure of the thesis corresponds to the specific stages of describing a cultural involution, having as starting point the linguistic element and reaching, after a review of the historical evolution and the cultural heritage, an inquiry into the present status of the German community. After an attempt to establish the stages in the linguistic evolution, the first chapter focuses on the creation of a frame of reference, through presenting the present stage of the research in the field and the characteristics of the German dialect, at its peak. Following this chapter, after phonetic transcriptions of the recordings made in the 70's, these transcriptions are analyzed and compared with similar inquiries from present day.

Within this context, one can conclude that 40 years there already were tendencies of levelling the dialect, and today, the German spoken by the Germans in Suceava is marked by similarities with formal, literary German, but also by the massive influence from the Romanian linguistic environment, syntactically and lexically, even though remains of the dialect can still be traced in their speech. The first chapter is followed by a contrastive analysis of the enclave in Bukovina and the Sorbs, the ethnic group in Eastern Germany. This occasions a crucial remark: despite environmental influences, a cultural enclave can still preserve its traditions, with support from authorities.

The following two chapters study the historical evolution of the German colonies after the annexation of the province to the Austro-Hungarian Empire; in other words, we describe the birth of Bukovina and its transformation in an autonomous region. The first historical rift that had a major significance in the evolution of the region was represented by the First World War, one of its consequences being the unification between Bukovina and Romania. The effects of this political change are described in the third chapter: Bukovina under Romanian administration. The dislocation of the Germans from Bukovina, the main culprit for the dissolution of the German cultural enclave in Bukovina, is presented in subchapter 3.1. These chapters are also preceded by historical accounts, having the purpose of avoiding an isolated analysis and taking into consideration the relationship between Bukovina and other German communities in Romania.

The German cultural heritage represents the subject of the fourth chapter, where we distinguish between material heritage and spiritual heritage, with landmarks analysed at the peak of the development for the German community.

The fifth section describes the situation of the few Germans that remained in the South of the province after World War II: demographically, linguistically, socially and – according to the sources of the time – culturally, including here the disappearance of some traditions.

The final part of the thesis, containing a fusion of all the ideas presented up to this point, questions the perspectives of the German community in present-day Suceava. As a matter, the conclusion is rather predictable: the German culture is represented today by few individuals, usually old, language is not being passed on through family ties anymore, and the social environment and the dispersed German community have led to a slow but certain assimilation.