

THE “LANDLER” FROM SEBEȘ

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Between 1734 and 1766 several thousands Protestants from Upper Austria (Oberösterreich), Syria (Steiermark) and Carinthia (Kärnten) were deported to Transylvania for religious and economic reasons. As a result of these colonisations three major “*landler*” communities resulted, namely, those from Turnișor, Cristian and Apoldu de Sus¹. Within these communities the immigrants were able to perpetuate their dress and specific Austrian dialect² unlike the other deportees that arrived in Transylvania in the same circumstances and were settled in other localities. In case of the town of Sebeș, the trace of the almost forty immigrants that settled here in the eighteenth century was gradually lost as a result of their small number, of the high mortality rate and the influence of other immigrant groups, especially of those originating from Durlach³.

The Austrians forced to leave their native land and settle in Transylvania during the reign of Charles VI and Maria Theresa as a consequence of their refusal to convert to Catholicism are known by the of “*landler*”⁴. Initially, they were called *transmigrantes*, which is the term chosen by the Austrian authorities to suggest and encompass both the idea that the respective people were deportees as well as the idea of colonist. “*Landler*” in the true sense of the word were only those who were forced to leave Land ob der Enns or “Land”, a region in Upper Austria, during the reign of Empress Maria Theresa. In the course of time all Protestants of Austrian origin that arrived here in the same circumstances in the eighteenth century got to be called “*landler*”. The term distinguishes them from the other German speaking ethnic groups in the area, especially from the Saxons⁵. The various origin of these deportees known by the same name is the reason why in German literature the name *landler* appears between inverted commas.

Charles VI regarded deportation to be the most suitable solution to the problem posed by Protestantism that in spite of all efforts continued to gain more and more ground among the population. Initially the focus of attention were the most influential and rich Protestant families, but as the results were not the ones expected the authorities decided to take more serious measures.

¹Sedler 2004, p. 206.

²Klusch 1979, p. 102.

³Buchinger 1980, p. 156.

⁴Sedler 2004, p. 207.

⁵Baumann 1893, p. 145; Buchinger 1980, p. 278; Sedler 2004, p. 207; Bottesch 2004, p. 21-22.

Consequently, they began to deport people pertaining to the lower social strata, mostly farmers⁶. Between 1734-1736 624 reformed Austrians from Saltzkammergut, Upper Austria and 180 from Carinthia reached Transylvania and were eventually colonized in two villages nearby Sibiu, namely, Turnișor and Cristian. The Protestants from Saltzkammergut were allowed to leave as whole families, their properties were to be sold and they were to receive the money after their arrival in Transylvania⁷. Therefore they could benefit from the best conditions to begin a new life away from home. Unfortunately things look completely different in case of the Carinthian deportees. The conditions in which they were expelled made it impossible for them to adapt to the new way of life: the men were deported first and their wives were sent here only afterwards. Their children were kept in Austria in order to be reared in Catholic families to diminish as much as possible the influence of the so-called heretic movement⁸.

Charles VI chose to send the Protestants to Transylvania and not send them away from Austrian territory altogether so as not to lose their economic potential as it happened with the massive numbers of Austrians who settled in Prussia several years before. In Transylvania they could enjoy the freedom of belief granted by *Diploma Leopoldinum* since 1691⁹ and the Saxon communities were considered to have the capacity and goodwill to contribute to their adjustment here. They also hoped to strengthen the German speaking population in this area¹⁰. This was the most suitable destination also because the great distance made it fairly impossible for the deportees to be able to return to their home country ever again. The tax exemption in the first three years after their arrival (period subsequently prolonged by Maria Theresa to ten years) and the status of free peasants, were two of the facilities the deportees were granted Transylvania¹¹. But at that time the Saxon nation was facing two major problems: the kuruc and Turkish wars and the plague which led to a dramatic decline in population, so that many villages were almost depopulated. However, the Saxons did not warmly welcome the deported Austrians despite the fact that they had expressed the wish that their villages be repopulated with German speaking colonists. The transmigrants were seen as beggars and instigators who were came to occupy the lands that pertained lawfully to the Saxon nation. The relationship between the Saxons and the “*landler*” had never been good. They attended the same churches but occupied separate seats, and married only to persons within their own communities. To call a Saxon “*landler*” was perceived to be one of the greatest insults one could bring a Saxon.

⁶Buchinger 1980, p. 154; Capesius 1959, p. 120.

⁷Buchinger 1980, p. 154, 156.

⁸Ibidem , p. 156; Bottesch 2004, p. 12.

⁹Sedler 2004, p. 212.

¹⁰Buchinger 1980, p. 151.

¹¹Bottesch 2004, p. 14; Buchinger 1980, p. 396.

In the beginning, in Austria, the measures adopted by Charles VI seemed to be successful, the problem of Protestantism fell into the background, and the deportations ceased for a while. In 1752 Maria Theresa, following the model of her predecessor, begins a new stage of deportations this time from Upper Austria, Styria and Carinthia. The Counter-Reformation failed and the actions of Charles VI did not have in fact the anticipated results. A large number of people, duly paying their taxes to the Catholic Church, were actually Protestants. Consequently, a new wave of deportations to Protestant rural areas of the kingdom of all those who refused to convert to Catholicism was regarded as the only solution. Under Empress Maria Theresa 3042 people were expelled to Transylvania, several times more than under Charles VI.

Between the years 1752-1756, according to Erich Buchinger, 2042 people from Upper Austria, 850 from Carinthia and 82 from Styria, were deported to Transylvania. These forced colonizations proved to be inefficient: one third of all transmigrants died in the early years¹², one third worked as day laborers, and only a third succeeded to establish a household. Out of the 3042 reformed Austrians that arrived in Transylvania between 1752-1758, 961 die in the same time period. Responsible for this situation is, largely, Wankhel von Seeberg who was designated by Maria Theresa to deal with the problem of the transmigrants in Sibiu. He had the idea of constructing in Sibiu a large building able to accommodate as much as 100 “*landler*” families at any given time. Seeberg wanted to use the work force of these people as craftsmen, but he overlooked the fact that in their homeland their overwhelming majority had been farmers. So, the costly building proves to be useless¹³. The colonization of transmigrants in approximately twenty Transylvanian villages was successfully carried out by Seeberg's successor, the Baron von Dietrich. He had houses for the wealthiest of the immigrants bought and built¹⁴. Among the localities where the “*landler*” were finally located Apoldu de Sus was the most important one. Unlike the colonists from other places those here managed to maintain their specific Austrian dialect and dress.

During the reign of Maria Theresa a small number of Austrian deportees had Sebeş as destination point, as well. Less than forty persons from Upper Austria, Styria and Carinthia were settled in the quarter of the immigrants from Baden-Durlach located in the outskirts of the town. Until the nineteenth century the Austrian Protestants and the *Durlacher* managed to form a distinct community from that of the Saxons¹⁵. However, the transmigrants from Sebeş, unlike their fellow countrymen from Cristian, Apoldu de Sus and Turnișor, did not succeed in preserving their dialect and dress. This situation is due to a number of factors: their small number, high death rates, the influence of other immigrant groups and mixed marriages. Their specific Austria dialect got

¹²Buchinger 1980, p. 367, 425 ; Bottesch 2004, p. 13, 16; Capesius 1959, p. 134.

¹³Bottesch 2004, p. 15.

¹⁴Sedler 2004, p. 216.

¹⁵Buchinger 1980, 415, 418-419.

replaced by the so-called *Kucheldäitsch*, a colloquial German specific to the suburbs, or by standard German. Moreover, L. Reissenberger reports that in the first few years after their arrival outsiders were of the unable to distinguish between the “*landler*” and the *Durlacher*. Nor were the Romanians able to make a difference between a Saxon and other German speaking ethnic groups¹⁶. Irmgard Sedler's research revealed that in Cristian, Apoldu de Sus and Turnișor, known for their larger communities of Austrian Protestants, only 78 out of 482 subjects were able to identify any difference between the “*landleri*” and the Saxons¹⁷. Therefore one cannot wonder why the small “*landler*” community from Sebeș has fallen into oblivion.

According to the lists published by Erich Buchinger in his book *Die “Landler” in Siebenburgen*, during the reign of Empress Maria Theresa, the following persons originating from several Austrian provinces arrived in Sebeș: (June 30, 1754) Wolfgang Kottbauer together with his wife and two children, Paul Riedlinger with his wife, Paul Schachinger, Johann Schlematiger with his wife Eva, Sturmayer Wolf and his wife Regina and their children Maria, Susanne, and Regina Rosina; (Juli 5/August 29, 1755) Aichmüller Simon, his wife Magdalena and their children Mathias and Margaretha; Heydecker Wolf along with his wife and five children with the transport of March 21, 1754 (the family settled initially in Vurpăr, but later on they moved to Sebeș).

Most Styrian transmigrants had as destinations points the localities Iklad and Keresztúr in Hungary and only a small part came to Transylvania¹⁸. The reason for this situation lies in the fact that the Saxons strongly opposed the arrival of a new transport of immigrants because the derelict households had already been occupied by the Protestants Charles VI had sent here several years before. There was no place for more newcomers. Moreover, this idea did not appeal to the Catholic Church either as they did not sympathize with the idea of increasing the numbers of Protestants in the area. Consequently, from the first transport (June 2, 1752) only 16 people reached Transylvania, from the second 8 (August 8/September 10) only 6 people from the third, 39 people from the fourth (July 7, 1753) and 13 people from the fifth transport. The great majority of Styrian transmigrants that arrived in Transylvania remained in Sebeș and the first transport from Styria from June 2, 1752, consisting of 16 persons, came here in full: Adelwöhrer Eva, widow, whose children from her first marriage, Peter, Adam, and Maria Katharina Gewessler remained back in Styria, to be reared in the Catholic religion; Andreas Bruner and his wife Mary and daughter Catherine (the other four children remained in Austria) Mathias Egger, alone, because his wife converted to Catholicism; Gewessler / Gewissler / Kowisler Helene; Grübler Hans and his wife Catharina; Holl Paul with his wife and his daughter Maria, Rosina Mayer, whose children remain in Styria; Schranz Georg,

¹⁶Reissenberger 1893, p 150.

¹⁷Sedler 2004, p. 218.

¹⁸Buchinger 1980, p. 260; Bottesch 2004, p. 14.

with his wife Maria and daughter Anna. The second transport of August 8, 1752 (eight people) also came in full to Sebeș: Gasthuber Eva, Lackner Johann, Loresser Katharina, Pötsch Mathias with his wife Maria and son Josef, Schachner Mathias with his wife. The last Styrian deportees arrive with the transport from October 14, 1752 : Gewessler Paul, Hochrainer Philipp and Stadler Helene. Greymann Eva and her four children, Eva, Maria, Therese and Philipp from Carinthia arrive in Sebeș with the transport of September 10, 1754.

According to Erich Buchinger, the deportations from the province of Styria between the years 1752-1756 was numerically relatively unimportant, because approximately one third of the transmigrants, i.e. 31 of 82 died until 1758. Most of the other passed away in the following years. Thus, from those who arrived in Sebeș: Gewessler Eva died in October 1752, Bruner Andreas and Maria in 1754, Egger Mathias 1757, Gewessler Helene in 1767, Grübler Hans in 1754, Holl Paul in 1752, his wife, Holl Maria died in 1758 and his daughter Maria in 1755, Schranz Anna in 1752, Lackner Johann in 1756, Pötsch Maria in 1767 and Pötsch Mathias in 1769, Schachner Mathias in 1755, Gewessler Paul in 1769, Stadler Helene in 1753. The large number of deaths among the newcomers occurred as a consequence of their inability to adapt to the new living conditions. The sale of their assets went on very slowly, so that relatively wealthy people in Austria were in the situation to fight for survival. The number of deaths among the “*landler*” was, according to Erich Buchinger, three, even four times higher than among the Saxons¹⁹.

Neither in Transylvania nor in Austria, did the deportations have the expected impact. When Joseph II issued the Edict of Tolerance in 1781 in Austria there was still a fairly large numbers of Protestants²⁰. The economic objectives were not achieved, because a very small part of the transmigrants under the reign of Maria Theresa survived and thrived in their new homeland. The nearly 40 Protestants from Upper Austria, Styria and Carinthia that arrived in Sebeș in the eighteenth century are among the victims of the religious and political views of the Habsburgs and part of the history of this town.

Landlerii din Sebeș

(Rezumat)

Între anii 1734-1766, în timpul domniei lui Carol al VI-lea (1711-1740) și a Mariei Tereza (1740-1780), câteva mii de protestanți din landurile austriece Austria Superioară, Steiermark și Kärnten, au fost deportați în Transilvania din motive de ordin religios și economic. În urma acestor colonizări forțate s-au format trei comunități însemnate de „landleri” în Turnișor, Cristian și Apoldu de Sus, în județul Sibiu. În perioada tereziană un număr de aproximativ 40 de deportați austrieci au avut ca destinație și Sebeșul. Aceștia se stabilesc în cartierul imigranților din

¹⁹*Ibidem*, p. 148-289.

²⁰*Ibidem*, p. 423.

Baden-Durlach, de la periferia orașului alături de care, până în secolul al XIX-lea alcătuiesc o comunitate distinctă de cea a sașilor.

Austriecii obligați să-și părăsească locurile natale și să se stabilească în Transilvania în timpul lui Carol al VI-lea și a Mariei Tereza, ca urmare a refuzului de a trece la religia catolică sunt cunoscuți sub numele de „landleri”. „Landleri” în adevăratul sens al cuvântului erau, însă, doar cei deportați din Land ob der Enns sau „Landl”, o regiune din Austria Superioară, în timpul Mariei Tereza.

Carol al VI-lea a considerat deportarea ereticilor ca fiind soluția optimă pentru soluționarea problemei protestantismului care, în ciuda tuturor măsurilor, continua să ia amploare. Între 1734-1736 în Transilvania au ajuns 624 de austrieci reformați din Saltzkammergut din Austria Superioară și 180 din Kärnten, care au fost colonizați în două localități de lângă Sibiu, Turnișor și Cristian. În Transilvania aveau să beneficieze de libertatea religioasă garantată prin „Diploma Leopoldină” din 1691 și de alte facilități, iar autoritățile se așteptau ca populația săsească să contribuie la acomodarea cât mai rapidă a acestora în regiune. Însă austriecii deportați au fost considerați a fi niște cerșetori și niște instigatori care urmau să ocupe pământuri ce aparțin de drept națiunii săsești

În 1752 problema protestanților reîntră în atenția autorităților. Împărăreasa Maria Tereza începe o nouă serie de colonizări forțate, de această dată vizate fiind Austria Superioară, Steiermark și Kärnten. Potrivit lui Erich Buchinger între anii 1752-1756 au fost deportați 2042 protestanți din Austria Superioară, 850 din Kärnten și 82 din Steiermark. Colonizările forțate din această perioadă s-au dovedit a fi un eșec: o treime din totalul transmigranților au murit în primii ani, o treime lucrau cu zia și doar o treime au reușit să își întemeieze o gospodărie. Aceasta situație se datorează, pe lângă condițiile în care au fost deportate aceste persoane și proastei gestionari a situației în Transilvania de către trimisul Mariei Tereza, Wankhel von Seeberg. Colonizarea transmigranților în aproximativ 20 de localități din Transilvania fost realizată de succesorul lui Seeberg, baronul von Dietrich care a cumpărat și a construit case pentru cei mai înstăriți din rândul deportaților. Dintre aceste localități în care „landleri” au primit domiciliu stabile se remarcă Apoldu de Sus, singura localitate în care aceștia au reușit să-și păstreze dialectul și portul din regiunile de origine.

În perioada tereziană un număr mic de deportați austrieci din Austria Superioară, Steiermark și Kärnten au avut ca destinație și Sebeșul. Aceștia se stabilesc în cartierul imigranților din Baden-Durlach de la periferia orașului, dar din cauza numărului mic, al căsătoriilor mixte și a influenței celorlalte emigranți, transmigranții din Sebeș nu au reușit să-și păstreze dialectul și nici îmbrăcămintea tradițională. În plus, L. Reissenberger susține că în primii ani „landleri” erau adesea confundați cu durlacherii.

Deportările nu au avut efectul scontat nici în Transilvania și nici în Austria. Obiectivele economice nu au fost îndeplinite întrucât o foarte mică parte din cei deportați în perioada tereziană care au supraviețuit și prosperat în noua patrie. Cei aproape 40 de transmigranți austrieci sosiți la Sebeș din Austria Superioară, Steiermark și Kärnten se numără printre victimele politicii de catolicizare a Austriei de către suveranii habsburgici și fac parte din istoria acestei localități.

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