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Deutsche Identitätskonstruktionen in
transnationalen Kontexten

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Introduction¹

CRISTIAN CERCEL, JAMES KORANYI, STEFAN BERGER

What is the purpose of sticking two labels together that stand in seeming opposition to each other? How can a nationally framed group be placed beyond that national frame? The ‘transnational turn’ has become omnipresent over the past decades within a broad range of research fields and subfields, including German studies and German history. There is, however, still an inherent tension in scholarship framing itself as indebted to the transnational turn while using national labels and focusing on the national. Even as the transnational turn programmatically attempts to go beyond the national and to de-centre the nation-state (in our case, Germany), ‘trans-national’ is frequently still about the ‘national’: perhaps recast and reframed differently, but by no means beyond that research framework. In practice, trans-national often comes to mean simply ‘across borders’. It is less about resisting the ‘national container’, and more about reweighing it, recontextualising it, resituating it.

Transnational has become so commonplace that some of the early criticisms of transnational history seem a distant past: a sense of ‘transnational overreach’ still upset some historians in the 1990s and 2000s, and set apart other historians who proudly advocated transnational history.² But over the past two to three decades, transnational history has become part of the basic repertoire of historical practice. The history of migration in the modern period has been of pressing relevance to transnational studies, so much so that scholars have criticised the contemporary transnational historical practice of reinforcing established

1 The authors would like to thank all the colleagues who have offered feedback on the papers presented at the workshop “Transnational Germans: Competing Ideas of Germanness since the Mid-Nineteenth Century”, organised online on 14–16 July 2021. We would particularly like to thank H. Glenn Penny for his input. Student assistants Katharina Haas and Till Traute also deserve our special thanks.

2 See, for instance, Michael McGerr: *The Price of “New Transnational History”*. In: *The American Historical Review* 96 (1991) 4, pp. 1056–1067, and Ian Tyrrell: *Transnational Nation. United States History in Global Perspective since 1789*. London 2015.

global centres such as North America or particular regions in Europe.³ Our field, transnational German history, has effortlessly expanded German history, which has itself been subject to criticism.⁴

This volume cannot fully escape the impulse to find more ‘Germans abroad’. Some of the examples introduced in this volume are self-aware transnational actors, but the majority are not. The contributions also reveal collectively that the transnational framework takes on different meanings, too. We build on H. Glenn Penny’s work on German polycentrism; that is, German histories decoupled from the German state and metropole.⁵ We also foreground that transnational history is *our* perspective rather than centrally about the histories introduced in this volume. A baby who was murdered during the Shoah in today’s Lithuania, as Katherina Piro makes clear, is not ‘transnational’ in any meaningful way. Instead, it is our lens, through which we recover his story, which is the transnational element in Piro’s study. At the same time, transnational Germans are not simply Germans seen from a ‘transnational perspective’, but they also do not fit neatly into labels such as Germany, the German state, or even German studies. In this way, transnational perspectives allow us to explore what does not quite fit in: identities that are contingent, flexible, and undefined. Our transnational Germans intersect with but do not belong exclusively to German studies. They also belong to other area studies, to labour history, to biographical research, local history, and indeed transnational history.

The ‘transnational turn’ in German historiography (and, by extension, in German studies) largely implied an emphasis on the global and transnational aspects embedded in the construction of the German nation, often linked with German emigration.⁶ In this view, either as agents/actors or as objects of

3 Mae M. Ngai: *The Future of the Discipline: Promises and Perils of Transnational History*, *Perspectives on History*, 1.12.2012, <<https://www.historians.org/research-and-publications/perspectives-on-history/december-2012/promises-and-perils-of-transnational-history>>, 6.12.2023; Matthew Pratt Guterl: *Comment: The Futures of Transnational History*. In: *The American Historical Review* 118 (2013) 1, pp. 130–139.

4 See, for instance, Jan Rüger, Nikolaus Wachsmann (eds.): *Rewriting German History. New Perspectives on German History*. Basingstoke 2015, and Kris Manjappa: *Transnational Approaches to Global History. A View from the Study of German-Indian Entanglement*. In: *German History* 32 (2014) 2, pp. 274–293.

5 See H. Glenn Penny: *German Polycentrism and the Writing of History*. In: *German History* 29 (2012) 2, pp. 265–282.

6 Bradley Naranch: *Inventing the Auslandsdeutsche. Emigration, Colonial Fantasy, and German National Identity 1848–71*. In: Eric Ames, Marcia Klotz, Lora Wildenthal (eds.): *Germany’s Colonial Pasts*. Lincoln, London 2005, pp. 21–40; Sebastian Conrad: *Globalisation and the Nation in Imperial Germany*. Trans. Sacha O’Horgan. Cambridge 2010; Stefan Manz: *Constructing a German Diaspora. The “Greater German Empire”, 1871–1914*. New York 2014. Stefan Berger: *Building the Nation among*

imagination, Germans abroad played a particularly prominent role in the construction of a transnational German identity at the intersection of migration and colonial desires.⁷ Developing that approach, the ‘transnational turn’ also meant a plea to integrate German emigration and Germans abroad within German historical narratives, while also de-centring the German nation-state from such narratives.⁸ The consequence, maybe not always spelled out as such, is fundamentally that of no longer taking for granted the presumably unbreakable link between Germanness (a word requiring or even begging for a plural) and the German nation-state. Germany? Relevant, but not necessarily central. A further consequence of this ‘transnationalisation’ of German history could then be that of replacing the ‘national’ with ‘German’ and asking what does ‘trans-German’ mean or what can it be made to mean? What and where are the borders of Germanness and who gets to define them? How do tensions of identity and belonging intersect with assumptions of Germanness?

The present volume addresses these and other related questions and issues through a series of case studies and examples, which we present in four groups of articles. In the introduction to this volume, we stress four themes in our collective attempt to think of ‘Germans’ transnationally: individuals/subjectivity; groupness; settlers; and left-wing political activism. In bringing these aspects to the fore, we indicate the main concerns that emerged from the workshop on which this volume is based. Initially planned for the summer of 2020, and then organised online in July 2021, the workshop was part of a project funded by the German Federal Commissioner for Culture and Media, on account on Paragraph 96 in the Federal Expellees Act, entitled “Expellees outside Germany: The Postwar Danube Swabian Migrations to France (La Roque-sur-Pernes) and Brazil (Entre Rios)”. Conducted at the Ruhr University Bochum between November 2019 and December 2023, the project dealt with postwar Danube Swabian migration to France and Brazil, framing the history of the flight and expulsion of Germans as a transnational event, not just the forced migration of ‘Germans back to Germany’.

While the ‘transnational’ part of our volume explicitly enters into conversation with the German part of German history and German studies, it also

Visions of German Empire. In: Stefan Berger, Alexei Miller (eds.): *Nationalizing Empires*. Budapest, New York 2015, pp. 247–308; Frederik Schulze: *Auswanderung als nationalistisches Projekt: ‘Deutschtum’ und Kolonialdiskurse im südlichen Brasilien*. Köln, Weimar, Wien 2016.

7 Naranch: *Inventing*; Conrad: *Globalisation*, pp. 275–333; Schulze: *Auswanderung*.

8 David Blackburn: *Germans Abroad and Auslandsdeutsche*. In: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 41 (2015) 2, pp. 321–346; H. Glenn Penny: *German History Unbound. From 1750 to the Present*. Cambridge, New York 2022.

touches on some key tensions in transnational history. If early transnational historical studies devoted much energy in finding transnational actors and organisations that historically tried to overcome the nation, more recent approaches to the field have emphasised that research is transnational even if the research objects are not.⁹ Our volume reflects this bifurcated approach. The first theme it addresses is that of individuals and subjectivities, where transnationalism is both a feature (of life trajectories) and a research lens. It then goes on to discuss questions of group belonging, and tensions between various ideas and representations of the national, easily flowing into or reacting to implicit or explicit transnational stances and positions. It looks at ‘German’ settlers, also by thinking of them as uncoupled from the German nation-state and/or from ‘German’ empire(s). Nonetheless, this does not mean a complete rejection of their role in colonisation(s) undertaken by ‘German’ actors or framed as ‘German’. Finally, it also engages with self-aware transnational actors, such as left-wing political activists. Thus, the volume espouses overall a transnational perspective. It questions Germany as both the primary starting point and the main prism through which to examine German studies.

Individuals

In July 2023, Fabian Wolff – a public figure, journalist, and essayist in Germany – was exposed for fabricating his Jewish identity.¹⁰ Over the course of a decade, Wolff had become a prominent figure in public debates on German memory politics, Jewish cultural identity, and German-Israeli relations.¹¹ Wolff, who claimed a familial cultural Jewishness, was celebrated in some circles as an authentic Jewish voice who did not shy away from controversial political statements on contemporary Israeli politics, from challenging German memory politics, and from charging critics of mobilising antisemitism. His public presence was very much framed by his public identity ‘as a Jew’ and

9 For an approach that identifies transnational actors, see, for instance, Patricia Clavin, Jens-Wilhelm Wessels: *Transnationalism and the League of Nations. Understanding the Work of Its Economic and Financial Organisation*. In: *Contemporary European History* 14 (2005) 4, pp. 465–492. For the latter approach, in which actors are not transnational but are subjected to a transnational lens, see Tonio Andrade: *A Chinese Farmer, Two African Boys, and a Warlord: Toward a Global Microhistory*. In: *Journal of World History* 21 (2010) 4, pp. 573–591.

10 See for instance Mirna Funk: *Der Beste aller Juden*. In: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 31.7.2023, <<https://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/debatten/fabian-wolff-gab-sich-als-der-jude-aus-den-die-deutschen-wollten-19071189.html>>, 24.1.2024.

11 On the power of positionality in recent online identity debates in Germany, see Casper Battegay: *#NeverForget: Repräsentation, Deutungsmacht und Literarizität auf “3G-Twitter”*. In: *Yearbook for European Jewish Literature Studies* 10 (2023) 1, pp. 41–55.

was accepted as a constant, definite identity in public forums.¹² His Jewishness was so central to his public political presence that his articles in *Die Zeit* and elsewhere which predate his ‘outing’ as ‘not Jewish’ are now prefaced with a ‘health warning’ that Wolff is not, in fact, Jewish. But Wolff did not lose all public backing. Having showcased Wolff ‘as a Jew’, sympathetic reactions to Wolff’s unveiling then proceeded to argue the opposite: it would be unfair to expect ‘identity purity’ from anyone and, in any case, the insistence on ‘provable’ identity merely highlighted problems in mainstream German memory debates.¹³ Much of the discussion then focused on whether and when Wolff had knowingly publicly paraded his created identity as a Jew. The main issue with Wolff, however, was his own insistence on an unchanging positionality, that ‘as a Jew’ – even as it turned out to be fictional – his identity was fixed, giving him a privileged platform on which to proclaim often unorthodox and counterintuitive political positions. Once unmasked, Wolff claimed to have fled Germany to the United States for a few weeks – a claim which also turned out to be untrue – during which he was publicly recast as a ‘goy’.¹⁴

The Wolff affair opened up, yet never addressed, questions of identity in a global context. Wolff, whose audience was German and also global, conversed in German and English, coolly employed Denglisch and dabbled in ‘global Yiddish’. In many ways, then, Fabian Wolff became a transnational German, but for the knowing deceit he had concocted. Wolff was guilty of *‘jüdeln’*, that is the known phenomenon of pretending to be Jewish. Performing and claiming an identity without some obvious ‘real’ connection was deemed to be fake and misleading. For our volume, questions about identity and recognition seem even more urgent: Who is a German and who gets to define being a German? What is Germanness?

These questions come into sharp relief when viewed through individual stories. Recent trends in transnational history have focused on smaller scales including inserting the individual scale into the picture.¹⁵ Jonathan Sperber’s work on Karl Marx, for instance, employs Marx as a transnational figure

12 See, for instance, Fabian Wolff: Nur in Deutschland. In: *Die Zeit*, 2.5.2021 <<https://www.zeit.de/kultur/2021-04/judentum-antisemitismus-deutschland-israel-bds-fabian-wolff-essay>>, 24.1.2024.

13 See, for instance, Michael Hesse: Philosophin Neiman: “Die Deutschen sollten sich fragen, warum nur Juden Israel kritisieren dürfen”. In: *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 9.8.2023, <<https://www.fr.de/kultur/gesellschaft/israel-susan-neiman-interview-deutschland-juden-kritik-antisemitismus-fabian-wolff-92449062.html>>, 24.1.2024.

14 See Fabian Wolff: Mein Leben als Sohn. In: *Die Zeit*, 16.8.2023, <<https://www.zeit.de/kultur/2023-07/juedischsein-familiengeschichte-deutschland-ddr-antisemitismus>>, 24.1.2024.

15 Bernhard Struck, Kate Ferris, Jacques Revel: Introduction. Space and Scale in Transnational History. In: *The International History Review* 33 (2011) 4, pp. 573–584.

whose life intersects with historical moments and periods.¹⁶ More challenging approaches have zoomed in on individuals' lives, often 'unknown' individuals, and refracted their individual histories through a transnational prism.¹⁷ Work in migration and exile history has traced the experiences of transitory lives.¹⁸ In this view, transnational history has become far more anchored in 'primary sources and concrete contexts'.¹⁹ The central focus then is the individual stories that we as researchers appreciate through transnational perspectives. This is less a matter of forcing individuals into bigger historical narratives. Instead, individual biographies have the capacity to recalibrate the overbearing position of big historical narratives in a way that creates a tangible relationship to individuals.

Often presented as passive actors in periods of shifting political borders, our plea is thus to push the individuals back into the centre of histories. Katerina Piro's essay examines Nora Segal's (née Isaak) and her baby Hermann's lives in the run up to and during the Third Reich's annexation of the Memel Territory in 1939, the annexation of Lithuania by the Soviet Union in 1940, and the annexation of Lithuania by the Third Reich in 1941. Moving between different territorial regimes, Piro reflects on Nora's life and Hermann's very short life (born 1940, murdered 1941) against the assumptions of 'national containers', identity, nationality and language. Nora Segal left no memoir behind. Instead, her biography and that of baby Hermann can only be reconstructed thanks to the efforts of her nephew who published a family biography in 1995. Out of the shards of mid-twentieth-century shattered lives, Piro sensitively addresses issues of identity and labels when writing about individuals. Nora Segal's life was transnational in part because of the rapidly shifting border regimes, but also, quite centrally, because of the afterlife of her story. Evidence for and stories about her life existed in a transnational network of family heritage and sources in Canada, Italy, and Israel. Piro insists on the difficulties of labels when talking about Nora Segal and her family. They were neither self-evident nor constant. Some labels used today would not have been

16 Jonathan Sperber: *Karl Marx. A Nineteenth-Century Life*. New York 2013.

17 Desley Deacon, Penny Russell, Angela Woollacott (eds.): *Transnational Lives. Biographies of Global Modernity, 1700 – Present*. Basingstoke 2010.

18 Heléna Tóth: *An Exiled Generation. German and Hungarian Refugees of Revolution, 1848–1871*. New York 2014; Ulf Brunnbauer: *Globalizing Southeastern Europe. Emigrants, America, and the State since the Late Nineteenth Century*. Lanham 2016; Benjamin Moore: *The Names of John Gergen. Immigrant Identities in Early Twentieth-Century St. Louis*. Columbia 2021.

19 Laura Almagor, Haakon A. Ikonou, Gunvar Simonsen: Introduction. In: Laura Almagor, Haakon A. Ikonou, Gunvar Simonsen (eds.): *Global Biographies. Lived History as Method*. Manchester 2022, pp. 1–22, here: p. 1.

recognised by the protagonists of the story, and it is at that juncture that the transnational perspective onto Nora Segal's life becomes apparent. What makes Nora Segal, and her family, transnational is *our* view back onto her biography in the middle of a politically volatile context.

In the contribution by Sacha Davis and Jamie W. Hunt on polycentrism in Newcastle, Australia, the problem of label and reference points also looms large. What does Germanness mean in a diaspora made up of different migration stories? The Novocastrian German community – variegated in background from working-class migrants to political refugees, to professional migrants from the 1970s – has, over time, acculturated to the dominant Australian society, which has in turn led to an increase and then decline in polycentric Germanness. Descendants of German migrants who once anchored their German heritage in diverse loci in Europe – Germany, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), the German Democratic Republic (GDR), various places across east-central Europe – have recalibrated their German identity mainly onto the FRG. In that way, 'home' has become a far more abstract place and less rooted in the specific places of their families' histories. Being Novocastrian, Australian, and German therefore coalesce around an abstract belonging to the FRG as the representative entity for their Germanness. In the chapter by Davis and Hunt, the descendants are the ones playing with labels, rather than only us as scholars. Reacting to shifting political boundaries and realities in Europe, Novocastrian Germans could frame family histories accordingly. Germanness, Davis and Hunt conclude, has turned from an active sense of belonging – as expressed once by membership at the local *Germania* club – to a historically ossified one. While specific family's homes in Europe were still present in family histories or in official insignia (*Wappen*), the shift towards acculturation has marked a collapse in German polycentrism as the FRG dominates individual and family stories.

Patricia Anne Simpson's contribution refracts the way individuals constructed their Germanness by placing gender at the centre of her analysis. In this view, German settlers in Chile understood and fulfilled their roles as settlers differently. In two case studies, Simpson examines the intersection of Germanness with gender: one case study is that of Magdalene Barbara Hörz (née Aichele), a German who framed her role as a settler in terms of home-making, and the other one is that of Theodor Piderit, whose experiences in Chile were defined by scientific exploration and adventure. Piderit, Simpson argues, primarily gendered his world and experiences which conditioned his Germanness. Magdalene Aichele by contrast, as a German woman and settler, understood her role as that of a trustworthy narrator. Her correspondence is riddled with concerns in which homemaking and colonisation are entangled, as Simpson shows. Both Aichele

and Piderit, she concludes, performed themselves as German colonists in deeply gendered ways, captured in the writings the two actors left behind.

Groups

All actors, whether approached as biographical studies (Piro), as case studies (Simpson), or as individual glimpses into belonging (Davis and Hunt), were also part of multiple groups. This volume tests the meaning and edges of Germanness by loosening the grip of the German nation-state on German identity and by purposely foregrounding our present-day transnational perspective as historians onto historical identities. A sense of ‘groupness’ thus unites most examples in this volume, but specifically the four contributions in the second section of this book. All four authors emphasise the contingent nature of group identity. Group identifications appear and are performed against changing socio-political circumstances. Scholars have worked on banal nationalism where groups and group actors perform identity in everyday actions.²⁰ Seemingly unconsciously embedded in the ‘banal situations’, interwar Romania and interwar Yugoslavia witnessed a politicisation of precisely those everyday activities.²¹ In this context, Pauli Aro’s contribution on the *Verein der Banater Schwaben* in Vienna after 1918, when their former ‘homeland’ became divided between Romania and Yugoslavia, examines the political panic that raced through the association. Originally founded by Banat Swabian barbers, the *Verein* turned its attention to instilling a specific sense of belonging specific to the former crown territories, including the Banat. Driven both by a zeal to unite German-speaking migrant workers in Vienna and by a sense of duty to foster regional *Heimat*-nationalism, the *Verein* went into activist overdrive in the 1920s by organising holiday clubs abroad for the children of Viennese Banat Swabians in case they forgot their roots. A truly transnational youth exchange programme sprung up in the former Habsburg territories of Romania and Yugoslavia centred, however, on *Heimat*-tourism as identity performance.²² The Austrian and German state feature, but only as counterpoints to a group identity that was negotiated in very different geographies and weakly defined social groups.

20 Michael Billig: *Banal Nationalism*. Los Angeles 1995; Rogers Brubaker et al.: *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town*. Princeton, Oxford 2006.

21 Gábor Egry: *The World between Us. State Security and the Negotiation of Social Categories in Interwar Romania*. In: *East-Central Europe* 44 (2017) 1, pp. 17–46.

22 See also James Koranyi, Ruth Wittlinger: *From Diaspora to Diaspora. The Case of Transylvanian Saxons in Romania and Germany*. In: *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 17 (2011) 1, pp. 96–115.

In the case of *Russlanddeutsche*, as Hans-Christian Petersen examines, we encounter a group defined by diasporic dispersion and by its perceived in-betweenness. Petersen looks at the making of a group identity among *Russlanddeutsche*, labelled nowadays as alt-right-friendly and viewed as not-quite-migrants. He employs Rogers Brubaker's lens against looking at groups as fixed and bounded entities and instead explores ethnopolitical entrepreneurs who have framed Russian German group identity. In so doing, they also moved in-between Russia/the Soviet Union, Germany, and North America. The main Russian German myth of their arrival in Russia centred on their role as settlers in a cultural and agricultural wasteland, or so they claimed. Ethnopolitical entrepreneurs in interwar Germany, such as Karl Stumpp, made it their ambition to create a veritable Russian German identity as a *Volk*. Stumpp and others slotted in nicely to Nazi visions of *Auslandsdeutschtum* and were leading proponents of a generational conflict among Germans in Bessarabia – something that played out elsewhere among German speakers in east-central Europe. Their efforts to manifest *deutsches Volkstum* among German-speakers in Russia reverberated long after 1945 until the present day. *Russlanddeutsche* in Germany today have become German due to the framing of their identity as singular and German, which became enshrined in law after 1945. Since the end of the Cold War, Russian German identity has been subjected to close and intense 'ethnomanagement', as Petersen explains, which foregrounds their collective experience as victims of Stalinism, the Soviet Union, and indeed the post-Soviet world.

Jan Rybak's contribution examines group identity in the German-speaking Jewish community of Poznań/Posen in the period immediately after 1918. As part of the new Polish state, identity actors in that community were divided over the meaning of group loyalty. The *Volksrat* remained convinced that Jewish identity was bound up with German identity while the *Centralrat* argued that Jewish identity could be understood as a national one. Both groups of identity activists claimed to speak for their community. Their decision to direct their identity activism in one way or another was, Rybak shows, contingent on the changing political framework. There were often practical considerations for publicly framing Poznań Jewish identity. Even though this was ostensibly a battle over national belonging, the ramifications on everyday life were taken far more seriously than 'national ideologies', which is why, Rybak argues, the process of shaping and reshaping Poznań Jewish identity was defined more clearly as a transnational process.

The contribution by Dani Kranz brings us to the present. Discussing the efforts of the descendants of Jews denaturalized by the Nazi regime to have their German citizenship rights reinstated, the chapter by Kranz engages

with the legacy of Holocaust on changes to German citizenship. By means of an anthropological approach focusing on the interactions between German authorities and the pressure groups pushing for the reinstatement of citizenship rights, Kranz shows the construction of the legal frameworks of Germanness to be the outcome of processes that can only be conceptualized in transnational terms. Her contribution thus builds on and directly communicates with previous work by scholars such as Jannis Panagiotidis, which emphasised the entanglements between postwar German and Israeli citizenship laws and practices.²³ Furthermore, Kranz's paper also has the merit of critically discussing the transformation of Jews into 'symbolic Others' for German identity and the professed anti-antisemitism that has become a central tenet of official German identity discourses. Both processes, even if they seem very 'national'/'German', can only be understood by breaking with tight national frames. The national is transnational.

Settlers/Colonists

Discussions of (German) colonialism have been moving into the limelight of scholarship on German history and on German studies.²⁴ This relies on an acknowledgment of the fact that German national identity discourses have developed in close entwinement with fantasies and imaginations of a Greater German Empire. Moreover, imperial visions deployed in the name of Wilhelmine Germany appropriated and co-opted 'Germans abroad' and the numerous 'German' settlements outside the borders the German Reich.²⁵ Settler colonialism in the German colonial empire, overseas German emigration, internal colonialism in the form of state-sponsored settlement schemes at Germany's eastern border, and the presence of German communities in the east of Europe were all elements of an ideology centered on an alleged German penchant towards colonisation and a civilisational mission.²⁶

23 Jannis Panagiotidis: *The Unchosen Ones. Diaspora, Nation, and Migration in Israel and Germany*. Bloomington 2019.

24 Michael Perraudin, Jürgen Zimmerer (eds.): *German Colonialism and National Identity*. New York, London 2011; Jürgen Zimmerer: *German Rule, African Subjects. State Aspirations and the Reality of Power in Colonial Namibia*. New York, Oxford 2011; Bradley Naranch, Geoff Eley (eds.): *German Colonialism in a Global Age*. Durham 2014; Britta Schilling: *Postcolonial Germany. Memories of Empire in a Decolonized Nation*. Oxford 2014; Willeke Sandler: *Empire in the Heimat. Colonialism and Public Culture in the Third Reich*. New York 2018; Janne Lahti: *German and United States Colonialism in a Connected World. Entangled Empires*. Cham 2021.

25 Naranch: *Inventing*; Manz: *Constructing*; Berger: *Building*; Schulze: *Auswanderung*.

26 Naranch: *Inventing*; Michael Perraudin, Jürgen Zimmerer (eds.): *German Colonialism and National Identity*. New York, London 2011; Dörte Lerp: *Farmers to the Frontier*:

Nonetheless, this should not make us fall into the trap of thinking of German settlers only through the prism of and in connection with the endeavours of the German national state formation(s). We understand ‘Germans’ as not being by default linked with German national statehood. We think of ‘German’ ‘settlers’ likewise. In effect, ‘Germans’ acted as settlers at the behest and on behalf of other state and non-state entities. The *Russlanddeutsche*, discussed in Hans-Christian Petersen’s contribution, are just one illustration of this.

Processes of land settlement and colonisation in the east of Europe long predated the formation of the German national state. The so-called late medieval ‘eastern colonisation’, treated and interpreted by national historiographies from the nineteenth century onwards as an act of German migration-cum-colonisation was a much more complex phenomenon – not least ethnically – than ‘its treatment as a function of German history’ suggests.²⁷ As Sebastian Conrad put it, “...settler ‘colonization’ since the Middle Ages needs to be differentiated from modern colonialism, as it was not tied to an expansionist nation-state, not premised on the centrality of national discourse, and not predicated on notions of race that became crucial for modern forms of colonialism”.²⁸ At the same time, precisely the fact that such processes were not tied to the German nation-state, yet led to the formation of vibrant ‘German’ communities in the east of Europe, invites to de-center the German nation-state when analytically engaging with these communities.

Thus, ‘unbinding’ the study of ‘Germans abroad’ from the ties with the German nation-state, to use the terminology recently advanced by H. Glenn Penny, is also bound to mean unbinding the study of German settlers and colonists from the German nation-state.²⁹ Transnational German history emerges as a history meant to recalibrate the place of the German state within the study of Germans abroad, including of German settlers and colonists before and after the unification of the German ‘nationalizing empire’.³⁰ Yet this should not lead to discarding the scholarly confrontation with German colonial projections and practices, but rather to an acknowledgment that such

Settler Colonialism in the Eastern Prussian Provinces and German Southwest Africa. In: *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 41 (2013) 4, pp. 567–83; Sebastian Conrad: *Internal Colonialism in Germany: Culture Wars, Germanification of the Soil, and the Global Market Imaginary*. In: Bradley Naranch, Geoff Eley (eds.): *German Colonialism in a Global Age*. Durham 2014, pp. 246–64.

27 Jan M. Piskorski: *The Medieval Colonization of Central Europe as a Problem of World History and Historiography*. In: *German History* 22 (2004) 3, pp. 323–343, here: p. 341; *ibid.*: *Medieval Colonization in East Central Europe*. In: Charles Ingrao, Franz A. J. Szabo (eds.): *The Germans and the East*. West Lafayette 2008, pp. 27–36.

28 Conrad: *Internal Colonialism*, p. 249.

29 Penny: *German History*.

30 Penny, Berger: *Building*.

projections and practices do not have to be seen perforce as emanating from the state. The critical engagement with German settlers invites for a cautious and multifaceted consideration of the ‘Germanness’ of people engaged in acts of settlement – understood as a particular type of movement through space – and frequently identified as ‘Germans’. At the same time, it also invites for a reflection on the varied meanings and limits of settler colonisation and on the relationship between settler colonisation, migration, and colonialism.

Kristina Jõekalda’s contribution, critically discussing the German-language historiography on Baltic monuments and history, shows that Baltic German identification discourses fed on positive interpretations of German colonialism in the Baltic region. These discourses were not simply an effluence of the German metropole, although they were politically motivated and could clearly reinforce its imperial and colonial visions. Moreover, in focusing on art historian and heritage scholar Georg Dehio (1850–1932) and in bringing to the fore Dehio’s under-researched positions on ‘German’ art and heritage in the Baltics, Jõekalda’s intervention also implicitly suggests that there might be a need for a de-colonial reassessment of Dehio (and, in general, of the German presence in the east of Europe). Scholarship has already made steps towards such a reassessment, engaging with the colonial aspects of German representations and politics with respect to the east of Europe.³¹ Jõekalda’s text adds to this body of literature. It suggests that the use of a transnational lens on German history in the east of Europe can implicitly communicate with debates and discussions on colonialism and colonisation. Her contribution also reminds us that such discussions do not have to be by default centered on states and in this particular case on the German nation-state.

Such considerations do not apply only to German communities in the east of Europe, such as the Baltic Germans, whose settlement dates to the late Middle Ages, but also to Germans in transatlantic locales, such as Latin America, whose settlement histories are much more recent. Gruia Bădescu’s contribution to this volume engages with the multiple layers of German (settler) migration to Chile and with the entangled memories of Germanness emerging out of these multiple migrations. Bădescu dissects the transnational aspects informing the construction of German Chilean identifications and memories, from the nineteenth century up to the present, when German Chileans ‘are far removed from the localized enclaves of Germanness trans-

31 Kristen Kopp: *Germany’s Wild East. Constructing Poland as a Colonial Space*. Ann Arbor 2012; David Hamlin: *Germany’s Empire in the East: Germans and Romania in an Era of Globalization and Total War*. Cambridge 2017; Christoph Kienemann: *Der koloniale Blick gen Osten. Osteuropa im Diskurs des Deutschen Kaiserreiches von 1871*. Paderborn 2018.

planted into Andean foothills and their Swiss-like lakes' in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but are 'part and parcel of a transnational network of links'. Such links are articulated partially around the role of the Federal Republic of Germany as a de facto kin-state for Germans abroad, and partially around Chilean narratives of 'triumphalist colonisation', in which 'Germans' have played a key role. Nonetheless, in Bădescu's study, methodological transnationalism is not simply methodological nationalism times two, but it means a consideration of entanglements and interconnections informing articulations of Germanness in the Global South. Bădescu's text acknowledges the distinction that representations of Germanness were endowed with in the Chilean context, as well as the flattening character of multiple 'German' identifications, the smallest common denominator within a much more complex landscape. Recognising and critically commenting on such representations, Bădescu also foregrounded the relationship with indigenous populations of German – and, more broadly, white European – settlers. As he rightfully reminds us, transnational German migrations led to encounters with otherness ushering in dispossession and violence.³² Furthermore, he emphasises the links between transnational migration – including German migration – and national identity in Latin America, foregrounding the tensions embedded within these links.³³

Adopting a transnational approach in thinking about 'Germans' and about the production of 'German' identifications (both inside and outside the German nation-state) should also mean investigating the role and the relevance of non-state institutions involved in the formulation of German identifications. The Catholic Church is a prime example, not least given its universalistic tenets. Cornelia Eisler's study on the *Reichsverband für die katholischen Auslandsdeutschen* (The Reich Union for Catholic Germans Abroad) and on its politics of support for German emigrants fleshes out the tensions between the ideology of German nationalism, with its pan-German outlook in its treatment of Germans abroad, and the universalistic tenets of Catholicism. She thus shows that religiously-minded actors were not only involved in the negotiation of the religious and of the secular, but also in the negotiation of the 'national', if with 'German' we mean a 'national' category.³⁴ Thus, Eisler suggests that it

32 See also Matthew P. Fitzpatrick, Peter Monteath (eds.): *Savage Worlds. German Encounters Abroad, 1798–1914*. Manchester 2018.

33 See also Michael Goebel: Introduction. Reconceptualizing Diasporas and National Identities in Latin America and the Caribbean, 1850–1950. In: Nicola Foote, Michael Goebel (eds.): *Immigration and National Identities in Latin America*. Gainesville 2014, pp. 1–27.

34 Rebekka Habermas (ed.): *Negotiating the Secular and the Religious in the German Empire*. Transnational Approaches. New York 2019.

is legitimate to think of the transnational sphere as an influence upon representations of the nation that cannot be easily subsumed to the field of the nation-state. Furthermore, her study also opens up paths towards a discussion of the tensions between the transnational aspects of pan-Germanism on the one hand and the potential pan-German implications of transnational approaches to the study of Germans on the other hand. Alongside other texts in this volume, including those by Gruia Bădescu and Patty Simpson, Eisler's contribution reinforces the idea that a significant part of the historical mobilities which made possible the heterogeneously transnational character informing ideas and practices of Germanness should be analyzed in connection with imperial, colonial, and Eurocentric power structures.³⁵

Eurocentrism as transnational and imperial nostalgia is the focus of Florian Kühner-Wielach's chapter, which deals with visions of Europe among the organised groups of German expellees from the southeast of Europe in the early aftermath of the Second World War, against the background of the (forced) return migration to West Germany. Drawing on Zygmunt Bauman's posthumous work, Kühner-Wielach speaks of 'retrotopia' to describe the visions for the future advanced from within such groups, that were informed by a nostalgia for the historical past of the Holy Roman Empire. Furthermore, the groups that Kühner-Wielach discusses had in common a Habsburg past as well as various points of reference framed regionally. The idea of a particular 'Germanness' in the southeast of Europe is in itself an attempt to configure the scale of identifications beyond the level of the nation-state. This, then, is a reminder that a transnational approach invites to a reconsideration of space and scales, both in how research delineates the unit of analysis and in how historical actors themselves imagined space and scales.³⁶

At the same time, alongside Pauli Aro's chapter, Kühner-Wielach's text invites to a serious consideration of the Habsburg past and hence of Austria (as a continuator of the Habsburg Empire) as a point of reference for 'Germans abroad' after 1918 and as a key place for the production and formulation of multiple 'German' identifications, an aspect too often neglected in scholarship. It also underscores the fact that the presence of particular German groups in the southeast of Europe can be traced to processes that can be characterized as processes of settler colonisation, be it medieval as in the case of Transylvanian Saxons, be it late modern imperially-steered colonisation as in the case of Danube Swabians or Bukovina Germans.³⁷ The visions of the

35 See also Penny: *German History*, p. 22.

36 Struck, Ferris, Revel: Introduction.

37 See Robert Bartlett: *The Making of Europe. Conquest, Colonization and Cultural Change 950–1350*. London 1994; Charles Higounet: *Les Allemands en Europe centrale*

future nurtured by a nostalgia for a pre-modern imperial past articulated around ideas of Europe come as a reminder that transnational stances and positions, even as they translate into articulations going beyond the nation-state or bypassing it, are not per se better than national ones. Particularly against the background of the eastward enlargement of the European Union, national conflicts between Germans and their eastern neighbours appear to have dissolved in a transnational Europe. However, it is worth asking whether the European-oriented transnationalism, professed at times by discourses on Germanness, has not transpired out of visions of both regional identifications and imperial pasts that bypass the (German) nation-state, yet should be critically considered.

All four chapters in the ‘Settlers’ subsection, alongside the chapters by Hans-Christian Petersen on Russian Germans and by Patty Simpson on nineteenth-century German migrants to Chile, suggest that addressing issues related to ‘German’ migration – frequently the point of departure in adopting transnational approaches – implies touching on questions that are related to colonialism, and particularly settler colonisation and its relationship to settler migration. That one does not necessarily need to grant the German “nationalizing empire” a central place in addressing such questions is a key insight to consider.

Left-Wing Activism

From its earliest inceptions, the left in the German Lands saw itself both as an international and a transnational movement. This view had much to do with the influence of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, who famously stipulated that workers did not have a fatherland and that class allegiances were more important than national ones.³⁸ The strong internationalism of the German labour movement was in part founded on that tenet. While the historiography of the left has paid considerable attention to this internationalism, it has until now largely ignored a particular dimension of internationalism, namely the transnational connections between German-speaking activists who lived in different parts of the world.³⁹ Thus, we know much about the internationalism of leading labour movement activists within the German Lands. Stephan Born

et orientale au Moyen Age. Paris 1989; Colin Thomas: *The Anatomy of a Colonization Frontier. The Banat of Temešvar*. In: *Austrian History Yearbook* 19 (1984) 2, pp. 2–22.

38 Ephraim Nimni: *Marxism and Nationalism. Theoretical Origins of a Political Crisis*. London 1991, pp. 17–43.

39 See for example: Kevin J. Callaghan: *Demonstration Culture: European Socialism and the Second International, 1889–1914*. Leicester 2010.

(1824–1898), for example, who organised the first working-class mass associations in the context of the 1848 revolution, was very Francophile. Indeed, during his journeyman years as an artisan, he had travelled extensively outside of the borders of the German Lands, which certainly contributed to his internationalist convictions.⁴⁰ This ‘international transformation’ was a practice of many journeymen, who were the most important social group among early labour movement activists.⁴¹ Wilhelm Weitling (1808–1871) was widely regarded as the spokesman of ‘artisan socialism’ in the German Lands. He incessantly travelled Europe and North America and had an incredibly transnational network of people with whom he communicated. He preached the gospel of a social Christianity as the basis of the universal socialist community of the future. It fell on fertile grounds among many artisans around the middle of the nineteenth century.⁴² Many socialists in the nineteenth century saw the French Revolution as an inspiring example of the future social revolution, which contributed to their international orientation. Jean-Numa Ducange has provided us with a detailed analysis of just how influential the French Revolution was for the historical understanding and contemporary positioning of German social democracy until well into the twentieth century.⁴³

Yet the hugely influential founding father of German Social Democracy, Ferdinand Lassalle (1825–1864), was more a Prussian-German nationalist than an internationalist. Contrary to Marx and Engels, Lassalle did not see the state as an instrument in the hands of the ruling classes. Rather, he believed in the state as the key ally of the workers in achieving social reforms. In particular, he wanted the state to give credit to working-class consumers’ and producers’ cooperatives which he saw as the most promising solution to the social question of the nineteenth century. His most hated enemies were thus liberals who demanded a non-interventionist state in most social affairs.⁴⁴ Giving the state such a prominent role in his designs for the working class also meant that Lassalle perceived the Prussian state as one of the most modern and efficient state apparatuses which he hailed as a model for other states to emulate.⁴⁵

40 Stephan Born: *Erinnerungen eines 48ers*. Berlin 2017 [first published in his Swiss exile in 1898].

41 Karl Kautsky: *Die Vorläufer des neueren Sozialismus*. Stuttgart 1895, pp. 47–73.

42 Waltraud Seidel-Höppner: *Wilhelm Weitling (1808–1871). Eine politische Biographie*. Bern 2014.

43 Jean-Numa Ducange: *The French Revolution and Social Democracy. The Transmission of History and Its Political Uses in Germany and Austria, 1889–1934*. Leiden 2019.

44 Of course, later on, liberals developed social liberalism as a concept aiming to combine the idea of liberal freedom with the idea of social responsibility. For Britain, see Michael Freedon: *The New Liberalism. An Ideology of Social Reform*. Oxford 1986.

45 Hans-Jürgen Friederici: *Ferdinand Lassalle. Eine politische Biographie*. Bonn 1985.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, German social democracy has always veered between these two poles of nationalism and internationalism. Its history in Imperial Germany went in both directions at the same time.⁴⁶ The foundation of the nation state in 1871 gave the activities of the party a national frame in which it continued to operate. In its social practices it engaged with the nation state at various spatial levels, from the municipalities to the regional and national parliaments. In the more liberal states of Germany's south-west, the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) forged coalitions with other political parties, notably the liberals and the Catholic Centre Party, long before 1914. In addition, the self-governing bodies of the German social insurance system gave Social Democrats the opportunity to get involved in practical activities aimed at making the lives of German workers better. The anti-socialist laws between 1878 and 1890 pushed German social democracy more towards a Marxist understanding of a class state waging war on the representatives of the working classes on behalf of the ruling classes. It also led them to renew their internationalist efforts through the Second International, founded in Paris in 1889. Within the Second International, the SPD was to become the leading socialist party and an object of much admiration due to its mass membership, its electoral successes and its forging of a tightly-knit milieu which cared for its members from the cradle to the grave, via Social Democratic kindergartens to Social Democratic burial associations.⁴⁷ These two sides of the same coin produced what Dieter Groh has described as 'negative integration' of Social Democracy into the Imperial German state, and that perhaps was not as negative as Groh had assumed.⁴⁸

The article by Sebastian Braun in this collection leads us back to the anti-socialist laws, which became years of exile for many active Social Democrats in Imperial Germany. In exile, he argues, they made many transnational experiences and met a transnational socialist community that had been in existence well before the anti-socialist laws came into effect. Having formed in the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century and having been re-enforced by the steady stream of 1848ers emanating from the German lands after the

46 For more detail see Stefan Berger: *German Social Democracy and the German Working Class from the Nineteenth Century to the Present Day*. London 2000, pp. 54–93.

47 Peter Nettl: *The German Social Democratic Party, 1890–1914*. In: *Past & Present* 30 (1965), pp. 65–95.

48 Dieter Groh: *Negative Integration und revolutionärer Attentismus. Die deutsche Sozialdemokratie am Vorabend des ersten Weltkriegs*, Frankfurt am Main 1973. For an interpretation arguing that many sections of pre-war social democracy were more positively integrated into Wilhelmine Germany than Groh had allowed for see Berger: *German Social Democracy*.

defeat of the revolution,⁴⁹ the German labour movements outside of the border of the German Lands amounted to a strong associational culture complete with its own yearly festivities, its journals and its shared values. It continued to be a significant milieu into the 1940s, and from its inception it did not only carry the memory of German socialism abroad but also cooperated in manifold ways with the labour movements which German socialists encountered in different parts of the world. In this way, the German socialist organisations abroad carried their ‘German’ associational culture into that of other nations. At the same time, they took from those ‘others’ elements that they integrated into their culture, thereby producing the manifold hybrid elements that were so characteristic of German socialist organisations outside of the borders of Germany.

Braun introduces the concept of ‘transnationalisation from below’, by which he understands civil society actors that produce forms of transnationalism that are not state- or elite-driven. Especially under the anti-socialist laws, such forms of transnationalism produced manifold forms of direct help for the oppressed Social Democracy in Imperial Germany ranging from collection of monies to helping exiled socialists with finding accommodation, and further – to providing networks in which they could find employment and a new Heimat outside of the borders of the German Reich. In particular, their German-language newspapers were an important means of creating a transnational communication community that went across nation-state borders and oceans. International events, such as the Irish revolution of 1916, were discussed within this transnational German community.⁵⁰

Braun’s chapter also raises the question to what extent the maintenance of this milieu, complete with Christmas, Lassalle and March Celebrations, became itself a nationalist milieu. After all, Braun assembles a lot of evidence that members of this milieu were convinced that it was German socialists who had to take the lead in the internationalist socialist struggle, as the Germans were not only the best organizers but also stood on a higher cultural level as socialists from many other parts of the world. Cultural forms of nationalism bordering sometimes on racism stood next to a self-declared internationalism and coincided with similar positionings of German social democracy in the Second International referred to above. At the same time, as Braun also emphasises in his chapter, the German socialist associations abroad delineated themselves firmly from other German associations, more in line with Imperial

49 Christine Lattek: *Revolutionary Refugees. German Socialism in Britain, 1840–1860*. London 2002.

50 Stefan Berger, Sebastian Braun: *International Socialist Responses to the Easter Rising in 1916*. In: *Saothar* 41 (2016), pp. 187–212.

German nationalisms and racisms. In this way, they also constituted an alternative Germanness, while recognising that there were overlaps and synergies not just with socialist organisations in their host countries but with nationalist German groupings abroad.

It is fascinating to observe similar ambiguities in the chapter by Aileen Lichtenstein who examines German anarcho-syndicalist circles outside the German Lands before 1914. These were similarly affected by the anti-socialist laws and organised similar support networks and transnational communication communities. Although the ideological setup of anarcho-syndicalism was, if anything, more internationalist than those of Social Democracy,⁵¹ Lichtenstein also observes a very clear tendency to form national associations, in which German anarchists were more likely to sit alongside other ethnic Germans than alongside anarchists from different nationalities. Like with the Social Democrats, the numbers are impressive: thousands of anarchists were active in dozens of groups across the US alone. In many ways, Lichtenstein's and Braun's stories are parallel narratives of the creation of ideological milieus abroad, in which believers could join to share a sense of common cultural and ideological heritage and exchanges stories about their experiences of exploitation and hardship – both in their old home and their new host countries.

The First World War marks a major watershed for the German labour movement and its orientation between nationalism, internationalism and transnationalism. Whereas anarcho-syndicalists belonged to the most consistently internationalist faction of the labour movement and, with few exceptions, rejected support for the respective national war efforts,⁵² German Social Democracy was badly divided and ultimately split in 1917 into a Majority Social Democratic Party, supporting the German war effort, and an Independent Social Democratic Party, opposing it. While some historians, above all Carl Schorske, saw the split rooted in pre-war ideological divisions, others, notably Susanne Miller, argued that the war was the decisive event bringing about the rupture.⁵³ Both factors were influential in different measures with different people, but ultimately it would develop into the more permanent division of the socialist labour movement into a Social Democratic and a Communist wing in the interwar period. Of the two, Communism was

51 Carl Levy, Matthew S. Adams (eds.): *The Palgrave Handbook of Anarchism*. London 2018.

52 Wayne Thorpe: 'The Workers Themselves'. *Syndicalism and International Labor. The Origins of the International Working Men's Association, 1913–1923*. Leiden 1989.

53 Carl Schorske: *German Social Democracy, 1905–1917. The Development of the Great Schism*. Cambridge 1955; Susanne Miller: *Burgfrieden und Klassenkampf. Die deutsche Sozialdemokratie im Ersten Weltkrieg*. Düsseldorf 1974.

undoubtedly the more internationalist-minded, although it can also be argued that the Communist Parties became foreign policy agents of the Soviet Union, the (under Communists) much-admired motherland of the Communist world, where the Bolshevik revolution of 1917 had ushered in the first Communist state. The international Social Democratic party family also recreated its internationalism – despite considerable difficulties in overcoming the tensions associated with the First World War. And the transnational pre-war milieu of transnational socialist Germans was also split along ideological lines between Communists and Social Democrats.

However, as the article by Manuel Lautenbacher underlines, the interwar period saw a new form of transnationalism emerge out of the debris of the great east-central European empires, notably in his case the Habsburg Empire. The collapse of these empires, one could also include the Ottoman and Russian Empires, brought with them considerable political insecurities for several of the ethno-cultural groups that had existed within the boundaries of those empires, including the ones that identified with socialism.⁵⁴ Lautenbacher examines in detail the Banat Socialist Party, whose members identified with the German culture and language. They developed a strong regional identification with the Banat, which they constructed as multilingual and multinational space. They did not form a German irredenta inside an unwanted nation state (in their case, Romania), and refrained from developing ‘*völkisch*’ sympathies. Instead, they envisioned a multicultural Banat republic on its way towards a socialist society. Remarkably successful electorally, they retained strong links with German socialist circles in Vienna and the newly founded Austria, which pre-dated the collapse of the Habsburg empire. They could not entirely escape the idea that was already prominent among transnational German socialist groups before the First World War, namely that German speakers formed a kind of avantgarde which had to teach backward ‘others’, in their case Romanians and Serbs, how to organise, become disciplined, develop a class consciousness and generally civilise ‘others’ towards the ideal of enlightened progress. Yet this remained at a huge distance to the construction of a German ‘*Volksgemeinschaft*’ in the Banat that more nationalist-conservative groups identified with.

During the Weimar Republic the Social Democrats were, in the words of Peter Gay, ‘the outsider as insider’.⁵⁵ For the first time they were part of national and regional governments in the different states that made up the

54 On the complex relationship of nationalism and empires, see Stefan Berger, Alexei Miller (eds): *Nationalizing Empires*. Budapest, New York 2015.

55 Peter Gay: *Weimar Culture. The Outsider as Insider*. New York 1968.

republic. They dominated many municipalities, including some of the biggest German cities, notably 'red Berlin'. Such success within the nation state weakened transnational ties, and it was only after the National Socialists destroyed the labour movement and forced many back into exile that transnational ties became more prominent again. Many labour movement activists learnt to rethink their positions in exile - not the least through the contacts they forged with transnational Germans and their networks.⁵⁶

After the end of the Second World War many could choose whether they wanted to return to a capitalist or a communist Germany. By and large, only the communists opted for the GDR, which, in 1946, had forced Social Democrats into an alleged Socialist Unity Party, the SED, which only thinly veiled the dominance of communist cadres. While the Communist Soviet Union remained the crucial lifeline for a communist East Germany, painfully revealed both in 1953 and 1989, it is still remarkable to observe how this German socialist avantgarde thinking, present from the nineteenth century onwards, resurfaced also among East German communists who felt themselves as teachers of other communists in east-central Europe, including their Soviet big brothers. Time and again, the GDR leaders made it all-too-clear that they knew best how to move ahead towards a 'developed socialist system' – an attitude which did not make them popular among the communist leaders of Eastern Europe.⁵⁷

In West Germany, the Communist Party was banned as unconstitutional in 1956, and Social Democrats were kept out of governmental power until the late 1960s in an intense atmosphere of anti-communism underpinned by an alleged 'anti-totalitarian consensus'.⁵⁸ The Social Democrats were focused almost exclusively on developments within the nation-state framework of the Federal Republic, with some attention to the area of socialist internationalism, especially under Willy Brandt and the attempt to develop a genuine dialogue between the Global South and the Global North.⁵⁹ But the world of transnational German socialism had started to disappear in the 1940s, and it

56 Julia Angster: *Konsenskapitalismus und Sozialdemokratie. Die Westernisierung von SPD und DGB*. Munich 2003; Isabel Tombs: *Socialists Debate their History from the First World War to the Third Reich: German Exiles and the British Labour Party*. In: Stefan Berger, Peter Lambert, Peter Schumann (eds.): *Historikerdialoge. Geschichte, Mythos und Gedächtnis im deutsch-britischen kulturellen Austausch, 1750–2000*. Göttingen 2003, pp. 361–382.

57 Hope M. Harrison: *Driving the Soviets Up the Wall. Soviet-East German Relations, 1953–1961*. Princeton 2003.

58 Norbert Frei, Dominik Rigoll (eds.): *Der Antikommunismus in seiner Epoche. Weltanschauung und Politik in Deutschland, Europa und den USA*. Göttingen 2017.

59 Bernd Rother: *Sozialdemokratie global. Willy Brandt und die Sozialistische Internationale in Lateinamerika*. Frankfurt am Main 2021.

would be interesting to examine further to what extent the long Cold War was an influential factor in its demise.

Outlook

This volume combines contributions by scholars from different fields and moves beyond the German studies framework. Some histories and cases here might be better known than others. In some cases, the German label is more clearly applicable than in others. Yet what unites all contributions is a willingness to emphasise the ‘trans’ and ‘German’ element in transnational Germans. If interwar labour activism appears more obviously and self-consciously transnational, our focus on individuals, groups, and colonists who flit in and out of German identity debates cast ‘German labour activism’ in a different light. Renditions of a German state and of Germany are intriguingly malleable and occasionally muted. ‘Germanness’ itself is highly contingent and, again occasionally, absent. That German identity often intersects with other identities and thus changes its meaning which puts it beyond – trans – the national framework, but never fully divorces it. ‘Transnational Germans’ transgress the national frames of Germanness, too frequently taken for granted.

Individuals / Subjektivitäten

Noras deutsches Baby

Über die Kategorisierung transnationaler historischer Akteurinnen

KATERINA PIRO

Der kleine Hermann, der im Winter 1940/41 im sowjetisch annektierten Litauen zur Welt kam, war ein herbeigesehntes Baby. Seine Mutter Nora Segal hatte während der Schwangerschaft eine Babyausstattung gekauft und ein schönes Kinderzimmer eingerichtet. Seine Großmutter Ida hatte Kinderwäsche gefertigt. Der werdende Vater Leo hatte seiner Frau liebevoll über den runden Bauch gestreichelt. Als sie über Kindernamen nachdachten, wählten sie einen deutschen Namen aus der Familie: Noras ältester Bruder, der mittlerweile in Kanada lebte, hieß ebenfalls Hermann. Manchmal summt die schwangere Nora die deutschen Kinderlieder ihrer eigenen Kindheit und so verbrachte Hermann die erste Zeit seines Lebens umgeben von der Liebe und Sprache seiner deutschen Familie. Als er wenige Monate alt war, irgendwann in der zweiten Hälfte des Jahres 1941, wurde er mit seiner Familie als litauische Juden ermordet.

Bei der Bearbeitung dieser Fallgeschichte für einen anderen Aufsatz¹ rieten mir die Referees Nora als Volksdeutsche und nicht als Deutsche zu bezeichnen, denn sie lebte nicht im Deutschen Reich. Doch Nora Segal hat ihren deutschen „nationalen Container“, wie er von den Herausgebern in der Einleitung beschrieben wird, immer bei sich gehabt und hat daraus auch identitätsstiftende Elemente an ihren kleinen Sohn weitergegeben. Ich wollte Nora nicht nachträglich ausgrenzen, indem ich ihr ein für mein Verständnis falsches, insbesondere von den Nationalsozialisten verwendetes Attribut anhängte.² So merkte ich, dass ich mich auf eine Suche begeben musste, um

1 Katerina Piro: Familiengründung und Zeitlichkeit im Zweiten Weltkrieg. In: Isabel Heinemann, Verena Limper (Hgg.): Die Biologische Uhr. Themenheft der Zeitschrift *Body Politics* 8 (2020) H. 12, S. 80–107.

2 Vgl. Doris L. Bergen: The Nazi Concept of ‘Volksdeutsche’ and the Exacerbation of Anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe, 1939–1945. In: *Journal of Contemporary History* 29 (1994) H. 4, S. 569–582; Jerzy Kochanowski, Maike Sach (Hgg.): Die „Volksdeutschen“ in Polen, Frankreich, Ungarn und der Tschechoslowakei. Mythos und Realität.

herauszufinden, wie Nora Segal, die ihr Leben in einer transnationalen Grenzregion verbrachte, am besten zu kategorisieren sei.³

Die Geschichte von Nora Segal und ihrer Familie ist ein Einzelbeispiel, das aber wichtige Themen über transnationale Biografien, Zugehörigkeiten und Kategorisierungen zum Vorschein bringt. In der Biografieforschung sind Migration, Exilerfahrung oder Transnationalität noch unterbelichtet.⁴ Dort, wo nach transnationalen, globalen oder kosmopolitischen Lebensläufen gefragt wurde, standen meistens Männer im Fokus,⁵ selten Frauen.⁶ Auch Kinder, insbesondere Kleinkinder wie Hermann Segal, werden von der historischen Forschung selten beachtet.⁷ Deshalb sollen Nora Segal und ihr Sohn hier im Fokus der Untersuchung stehen.

Nora Segal selbst hat keinen Bericht hinterlassen, wie sie sich selbst gesehen hat oder wie sie gesehen werden wollte. Sie wäre auch längst vergessen, hätte ihr Neffe Livio Isaak Sirovich nicht die Geschichte seiner Vorfahren recherchiert und diese 1995 publiziert.⁸ Diese Familienbiografie gibt Aufschluss darüber, wie Nora Segal im Nachhinein eingeordnet wurde. Zudem

Osnabrück 2006; vgl. auch John Swansons Überlegungen zu nationalitätsbezogener Terminologie in ders.: *Fassbare Zugehörigkeit. Deutsche im Ungarn des 20. Jahrhunderts*. Regensburg 2020, S. 13f.

- 3 Insbesondere zu Osteuropa ist bereits viel transnational geforscht worden, vgl. Jörg Hackmann, Peter Oliver Loew: *Transnationalität und Verflechtung im östlichen Europa. Forschungsgeschichte und -perspektiven*. In: dies. (Hgg.): *Verflechtungen in Politik, Kultur und Wirtschaft im östlichen Europa. Transnationalität als Forschungsproblem*. Wiesbaden 2018, S. 7–20.
- 4 Desley Deacon, Penny Russell, Angela Woollacott: Introduction. In: dies. (Hgg.): *Transnational Lives. Biographies of Global Modernity, 1700 – Present*. Basingstoke 2010, S. 1–11, hier: S. 2; Hannes Schweiger: *Lebensläufe über Grenzen*. In: Christian Klein, Falko Schnicke (Hgg.): *Legitimationsmechanismen des Biographischen. Kontexte – Akteure – Techniken – Grenzen*. Bern 2016, S. 159–182, hier: S. 160.
- 5 Im Sammelband von Madeleine Herren und Isabella Löhr wurde keine Frau porträtiert, vgl. Dies. (Hgg.): *Lives Beyond Borders: A Social History 1880–1950*. *Comparativ* 23 (2013) H. 6.
- 6 Einige Beispiele in: Deacon, Russell, Woollacott (Hgg.): *Transnational Lives*. Außerdem: Sabine Kienitz: *Weggehen ohne anzukommen. (Aus-)Wanderungserfahrungen von Frauen in mikrogeschichtlicher Perspektive*. In: Mathias Beer, Dittmar Dahlmann (Hgg.): *Migration nach Ost- und Südosteuropa vom 18. bis zum Beginn des 19. Jahrhunderts. Ursachen, Formen, Verlauf, Ergebnis*. Stuttgart 1999, S. 121–136.
- 7 Auf dieses Desiderat machte jüngst Verena Limper aufmerksam, vgl. Dies.: *Flaschenkinder. Säuglingsernährung und Familienbeziehungen in Deutschland und Schweden im 20. Jahrhundert*. Köln 2021, hier: S. 10f. Zu Kindern im Krieg: Nicholas Stargardt: *Witnesses of War. Children's Lives under the Nazis*. London 2005.
- 8 Livio Isaak Sirovich: *Cari, non scrivete mi tutto. Gli Isaak: Una famiglia in trappola tra Hitler e Stalin*. Milano 1995. Auf Deutsch erschienen als ders.: *Ihr Lieben, schreibt mir nicht alles. Eine jüdische Familie in Litauen 1935–1941*. München 2001. Alle folgenden Angaben zu Nora und ihrer Familie sind der deutschen Übersetzung des Buches sowie einer Sammlung Familienbriefe der Isaaks entnommen.

ist eine kleine Anzahl ihrer Briefe im Familienbesitz erhalten.⁹ Gerade Briefe stellen eine hervorragende Quelle dar, um die alltagskulturelle Identität anhand von Selbstkonstruktionen und Alltagspraktiken in ihrem historischen Kontext zu untersuchen.¹⁰

Im Folgenden wird der Lebenslauf von Nora und Hermann Segal anhand ihrer geografischen Verortung, ihrer sich wandelnden Staatszugehörigkeit und ihrer Sprache untersucht und dabei die nationalen oder transnationalen Aspekte herausgearbeitet. Untersucht wird insbesondere der „nationale Container“, der trotz Entwurzelung, Heimatverlust und Verfolgung sehr konsistent blieb. In einem weiteren Schritt werden die Möglichkeiten der nachträglichen Kategorisierung von Lebensläufen in einem transnationalen Kontext besprochen.

Verortung, Staatsangehörigkeit und Sprache in einer Grenzregion

Eine Reihe von Forschenden hat auf die zentrale Bedeutung der räumlichen Dimension von transnationaler Forschung aufmerksam gemacht.¹¹ Deshalb seien hier einige Stationen oder Eckdaten aus Nora und Hermann Segals Leben genannt, bei denen jeweils die räumliche Verortung eine wichtige Rolle spielte: Nora wurde am Ende des Ersten Weltkriegs als jüngstes Kind einer großen jüdischen Kaufmannsfamilie geboren – im ostpreußischen Ort Prökuls (lit. Priekulė) nahe des Kurischen Haffs an der baltischen Küste.¹² Sie besuchte im etwa 20 Kilometer entfernten Memel, das zu dieser Zeit bereits offiziell Klaipėda hieß, das Gymnasium, studierte dann mehrere Semester in Riga (lett. Rīga), bevor sie im Herbst 1938 den Kaufmann Leo Segal heiratete und zu ihm nach Tauroggen (lit. Tauragė) zog. Als im Dezember 1940 der gemeinsame Sohn Hermann zur Welt kam, lebte das Paar im sowjetischen Paneweschis (lit. Panevėžys), ihrem letzten bekannten Aufenthaltsort.

9 Die Familienkorrespondenz reichte von 1936 bis 1941. Die Adressatin war Noras ältere Schwester Ruth Isaak, später verheiratete Siro, die seit 1937 in Triest (it. Trieste, sl./srb./kr. Trst) lebte. Livio Isaak Sirovich aus Triest hat mir dankenswerterweise Einsicht in die Abschriften der Briefe zu Forschungszwecken ermöglicht (11.3.2020). Bei wörtlichen Zitaten nenne ich das Datum des Briefes. Auszüge aus den Briefen hat er in seiner Familienbiografie verarbeitet, siehe oben.

10 Zu Briefen als Medien der Selbstdarstellung vgl. Rebecca Earle (Hg.): *Epistolary Selves: Letters and Letter-Writers. 1600–1945*. Aldershot 1999.

11 Michael G. Müller, Cornelius Torp: *Conceptualizing Transnational Spaces in History*. In: *European Review of History* 16 (2009), S. 609–617; Glenn Penny, Stefan Rinke: *Germans Abroad: Respatializing Historical Narrative*. In: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 2015, S. 173–196. Zum Spatial Turn im allgemeinen, vgl. Doris Bachmann-Medick: *Cultural Turns. Neuorientierungen in den Kulturwissenschaften*. 5. Auflage. Hamburg 2014, S. 284–328.

12 Nora Segal hieß bis zu ihrer Heirat im Herbst 1938 Nora Isaak.

Wie in Grenzregionen üblich, haben alle hier genannten Orte immer wieder zu unterschiedlichen Nationalstaaten gehört und entsprechend diverse Namen gehabt. Als Nora geboren wurde, gehörte Prökuls zum „hintersten Winkel des Deutschen Reiches“.¹³ Doch bereits ab 1920, nach einem Passus im Versailler Friedensvertrag, befand sich der Ort in einem neu definierten Territorium zwischen Deutschland und dem ebenfalls neuen Staat Litauen, mit Frankreich als Verwaltungsmacht.¹⁴ 1923 wurde der Landstrich von Litauen annektiert und in den folgenden Jahren in diesen Staat integriert.¹⁵ Tatsächlich bezeichnete Noras Familie ihre Heimat seitdem selbst als „das Gebiet“.¹⁶ Der Heimatort hieß nun offiziell Priekulė. Im März 1939 wurde das Memelgebiet von Deutschland zurückgefordert und, unter politischem Druck, tatsächlich von Litauen abgegeben.¹⁷ Somit gehörte Prökuls in den folgenden Jahren wieder zum Deutschen Reich. Tauroggen, wo der Kaufmannssohn Leo Segal mit seiner Familie lebte, gehörte bereits seit 1918 zu Litauen. Von Prökuls lag dieser Ort nur rund 50 Kilometer weit entfernt, befand sich jedoch außerhalb des sogenannten Memelgebiets. Tauragė hatte als Tauroggen lange zu Preußen und dann als Taurogi zum russischen Zarenreich gehört, bevor es in den litauischen Staat integriert wurde. Paneweschis, die Stadt in der Herrmann Segal zur Welt kam, gehörte ebenfalls lange zum Zarenreich, seit 1918 als Panevėžys jedoch zum unabhängigen Litauen. Im Sommer 1940 okkupierte die sowjetische Armee Litauen und gliederte das Land in die Sowjetunion ein, woraufhin Tauragė und Panevėžys als Taurogi und Paneweschis zu sowjetischen Städten wurden. Als Litauen 1941–1944 unter deutscher Besatzung war, hieß dieser letzte bekannte Aufenthaltsort der Segals Ponewiesch.

13 Ulla Lachauer: Erdmutter Gerolis, Moorbäuerin. In: *Bios. Zeitschrift für Biographieforschung und Oral History* 1993, S. 145–161, hier: S. 152; vgl. Neil Gregor, Nils Roemer, Mark Roseman (Hgg.): *German History from the Margins*. Bloomington 2006; Helmut Walser Smith: *An Preußens Rändern oder: Die Welt, die dem Nationalismus verloren ging*. In: Sebastian Conrad, Jürgen Osterhammel (Hgg.): *Das Kaiserreich transnational. Deutschland in der Welt 1871–1914*. Göttingen 2014, S. 149–169.

14 Vgl. Vasilijus Safronovas: *The Creation of National Spaces in a Pluricultural Region. The Case of Prussian Lithuania*. Boston 2016, S. 288 f.

15 Vgl. Marianna Butenschön: *Litauen*. München 2002, S. 94f.

16 Vgl. diverse Familienbriefe, z. B. Nora Segal an Ruth Siro vom 4.11.1938; Leo Isaak an Ruth Siro vom 6.12.1939. Christoph Dieckmann bezeichnet das Memelgebiet als „Klaipėda-Gebiet“. In: ders.: *Deutsche Besatzungspolitik in Litauen 1941–1944*. Göttingen 2011, S. 111.

17 Der Anschluss des Memellandes ist weit weniger bekannt als der Anschluss des Sudetenlandes sowie Böhmen und Mährens 1938/39. Bislang fehlt hierzu eine Monografie. Vgl. Gerd Schultze-Rohnhof: 1939, Der Krieg, der viele Väter hatte. München 2005, S. 216–227.

Für die hiesigen Bewohner war es nicht neu, dass Grenzen verändert und offizielle Zugehörigkeiten neu definiert wurden. Noras Mutter Ida kam aus dem russisch-kurländischen Mitau (lett. Mitawa, russ. Jelgava), das seit 1918 im unabhängigen Staat Lettland lag. Noras Großvater väterlicherseits kam aus derselben Region wie Leo Segal, zog jedoch ins ostpreußische Prökuls, um sich vor den anti-jüdischen Pogromen im zaristischen Russland zu schützen.¹⁸ Desley Deacon, Penny Russell und Angela Woollacott benennen zwei unterschiedliche Phänomene, die die Familienmitglieder über die Jahre in dieser Region erlebten: „bodies crossing boundaries“ einerseits und „boundaries crossing bodies“ andererseits.¹⁹ Dass zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts gleich mehrere Generationen solche Erfahrungen machten, sehen Deacon, Russell und Woollacott als Ausdruck der Moderne und sprechen von einer „pervasiveness of transnational lives“.²⁰

Prökuls und Tauroggen, wie die Isaaks und Segals die Orte in ihren Briefen fast ausnahmslos nannten und wie sie im folgenden Text genannt werden, gehörten zum selben „transnationalen sozialen Raum“.²¹ Für Außenstehende war dieser Raum als solcher insbesondere an der Sprache erkennbar. Sprache hat nach Yves Bizeuls Schema der Identitätsmarker oder Zugehörigkeiten eine zentrale Bedeutung. Nora Isaak und Leo Segal sprachen beide hauptsächlich Deutsch.²² Nora sprach es zu Hause, in der Schule und im Geschäft. Die überlieferten Briefe der Familie sind alle auf Deutsch verfasst. Allerdings spielten auch Jiddisch und Litauisch eine Rolle: In den überlieferten Briefen von Ida Isaak fallen jiddische Ausdrücke und die fehlerhafte deutsche Grammatik auf. Die Hochzeitsanzeige von Nora und Leo wiederum war zwar auf Deutsch verfasst, aber mit der auf litauisch geschriebenen Prökulser Adresse bedruckt.²³

Nora Segals Selbstverständnis war mehr als das ihres Mannes von einem deutschen Nationalismus her geprägt. Einerseits hatte das Memelgebiet bis zum Ende des Weltkriegs tatsächlich zum Deutschen Reich gehört, andererseits wurden die Menschen dort auch in den 1920er- und 1930er-Jahren von

18 Vgl. Werner Bergmann: Tumulte – Excesse – Pogrome. Kollektive Gewalt gegen Juden in Europa 1789–1900. Göttingen 2020, S. 426f.; über die Lebenswege jüdischer Russen in Preußen vgl. Ruth Leiserowitz: Sabbatleuchter und Kriegerverein. Juden in der ostpreußisch-litauischen Grenzregion 1812–1942. Osnabrück 2010, S. 316f.

19 Deacon, Russell, Woollacott: Introduction, S. 9.

20 Ebenda, S. 6f.

21 Vgl. Thomas Faist, Margit Fauser, Eveline Reisenauer: Das Transnationale in der Migration. Eine Einführung. Weinheim 2014, S. 60f.

22 Vgl. Yves Bizeul: Kulturelle Identität, ein umstrittenes, aber unentbehrliches Konzept. In: ders., Dennis Bastian Rudolf (Hgg.): Gibt es eine kulturelle Identität? Baden-Baden 2020, S. 25–50, hier: S. 31.

23 Vgl. Sirovich: Ihr Lieben, S. 130.

aus Deutschland heraus agierenden Organisationen entsprechend beeinflusst.²⁴ In der Schule lernten Kinder wie Nora, dass Deutschland weiterhin von der Maas bis an die Memel reichte,²⁵ was auch der 1928 erschienene Familienatlas der Isaaks zeigte.²⁶ Viele weitere Lerninhalte aus Noras Schulzeit waren auf Deutschland bezogen, wie die Angaben zu ihrem Abitur belegen: Unter anderem wurde sie im Jahr 1937 im Mündlichen über Goethe und Hebbel geprüft.²⁷

Nora Segals Wahl des Studienortes Riga scheint zunächst keinen klaren Bezug zu Deutschland aufzuweisen, doch man muss genauer hinschauen. Während sich ihre älteren Geschwister, Cousinsen und Cousins in den 1920er-Jahren bei der Wahl ihrer Studienorte tatsächlich nach Deutschland orientiert hatten und in Berlin, Köln oder Freiburg studierten,²⁸ standen Nora diese Optionen aufgrund der NS-Rassenideologie nicht mehr offen.²⁹ Sie wählte Riga, weil die Heimat ihrer Mutter und entfernte Verwandte in der Nähe waren, außerdem gab es in der lettischen Hauptstadt mit dem Herder-Institut eine deutsche Hochschule.³⁰ Dort konnte sie noch 1937/38 als „good girl, good German“ studieren.³¹

Nora Segal wollte Dolmetscherin werden,³² doch nach nur zwei Semestern verließ sie die Hochschule ohne Abschluss, um zu heiraten. Diese Entscheidung fiel in eine für die jüdische Bevölkerung im Memelgebiet immer schwierigere Zeit. Hier lohnt es sich nun, die Themen Verfolgung und Staatszugehörigkeit in den Blick zu nehmen.

24 Vgl. Vasilijus Safronovas: Kampf um Identität. Die ideologische Auseinandersetzung in Memel/Klaipėda im 20. Jahrhundert. Wiesbaden 2015, S. 36–130; Cornelia Eisler: Minderheiten als volkswundliches Kompetenzfeld? Das Konzept des ‚Grenz- und Auslandsdeutschtums‘ in der Weimarer Republik. In: dies., Silke Göttsch-Elten (Hgg.): Minderheiten im Europa der Zwischenkriegszeit. Wissenschaftliche Konzeptionen, mediale Vermittlung, politische Funktion. Münster 2017, S. 43–66, hier: S. 48.

25 Schulbücher im Memelgebiet nutzten entsprechende Landkarten. Ebenda, S. 294f. Zur ideologischen Nutzung von Landkarten, siehe: Maciej Gorny: Vaterlandszeichner. Geografen und Grenzen im Zwischenkriegseuropa. Osnabrück 2019.

26 Noras Schwester Ruth Siro hat diesen Atlas, der 1928 erschienen war, in die Emigration mitgenommen. Vgl. Sirovich: Ihr Lieben, S. 35.

27 Brief von Nora Segal an ihre Schwester Ruth Siro vom 3.3.1937.

28 Sirovich: Ihr Lieben, S. 22 und S. 259.

29 Vgl. Michael Grüttner: Studenten im Dritten Reich. Paderborn 1995, S. 212f.

30 Sirovich: Ihr Lieben, S. 111; Peter Wörster: Institutum Herderianum Ricense. Zur Geschichte des Herder-Instituts Riga. In: Baltica. Vierteljahresschrift für baltische Kultur 4 (2006), S. 3–21.

31 Jennifer Drake Askey: Good Girls, Good Germans. Girls' Education and Emotional Nationalism in Wilhelminian Germany. Rochester 2013; Zur Mädchenbildung vgl. Elke Kleinau, Claudia Opitz: Geschichte der Mädchen- und Frauenbildung. Frankfurt am Main 1996.

32 Vgl. Brief von Nora Segal an Ruth Siro vom 3.3.1937.

Als Nora ein kleines Mädchen war, wurde im Memelgebiet ein Zensus abgehalten. Von den rund 140.000 Einwohnern gaben 42 Prozent ihre Nationalität als Deutsch und zusätzliche 24 Prozent als Memelländer an. 3,4 Prozent, also knapp 5.000 Menschen besaßen tatsächlich die deutsche Staatsbürgerschaft, womit sie damals in Litauen als Ausländer und in Deutschland als sogenannte Reichsdeutsche galten.³³ Die Isaaks werden zur letzteren Kategorie gehört haben, da Leo Isaak erst während der Verfolgung 1939 versuchte, die litauische Staatsbürgerschaft zu erlangen. Leo Isaak war ein ehemaliger Weltkriegssoldat und aktives Mitglied im Reichsbund Jüdischer Frontsoldaten.³⁴ Insbesondere diese „Generation der jüdischen Kriegsteilnehmer entwickelte einen starken Nationalismus und ein sehr verankertes Heimatgefühl“, so Ruth Leiserowitz.³⁵ Noch 1937 schickte Leo Isaak seine erwachsenen Kinder, darunter Nora, zu einem von den Frontsoldaten veranstalteten Ball.³⁶ Doch zu dieser Zeit kam es im Memelgebiet bereits zur Verbreitung von NS-Propaganda sowie Ressentiments und Ausschreitungen gegen Litauer und Juden.³⁷ Offizielle Ausgrenzungen, ähnlich der Berufsverbote oder Rassegesetze im Deutschen Reich, gab es im Memelgebiet und in Litauen zwar noch nicht,³⁸ doch langjährige protestantische Freunde wandten sich von Nora und ihrer Familie ab.³⁹ Das führte unter anderem dazu, dass bereits in den frühen 1930er-Jahren die Jugendlichen dieser Familien ihre Zukunft im Ausland suchten und die Heimat verließen, so auch Noras ältere Schwestern und Cousins. Ihre Situation und ihr rechtlicher Status in Palästina waren prekär, auch deshalb war die Familie erleichtert, als Noras Schwester Ruth in Triest (it. Trieste, sl./srb./kr. Trst) einen Italiener heiratete. Heirat war insbesondere für Frauen ein bewährtes Instrument, um ihren sozialen und rechtlichen Status zu verbessern,⁴⁰ denn Frauen hielten entweder die Staatsangehörigkeit ihres Vaters oder ihres Mannes.⁴¹ Bereits Noras Mutter Ida hatte nach der

33 Vgl. Safronovas: *The Creation of National Spaces*, S. 305f.

34 Vgl. Ulrich Dunker: *Der Reichsbund jüdischer Frontsoldaten, 1919–1938*. Düsseldorf 1977; Deborah Hertz: *How Jews became Germans. The History of Conversion and Assimilation in Berlin*. New Haven, Conn. 2007.

35 Leiserowitz: *Sabbatleuchter*, S. 317; zu jüdischen Frontkämpfern aus dieser Region, vgl. ebenda, S. 259f.

36 Vgl. Brief von Nora Isaak an Ruth Siro am 3.7.1937.

37 Safronovas: *The Creation of National Spaces*, S. 314f.

38 Vgl. Leiserowitz: *Sabbatleuchter*, S. 313f.

39 Ruth Siro hat ihrem Sohn Livio davon berichtet, vgl. Sirovich: *Ihr Lieben*, S. 39f.

40 Vgl. Katerina Piro: *Liebe macht mobil. Bürgerliche Heirat, räumliche Mobilität und Geschlecht im 19. Jahrhundert*. In: Maren Bagge, Nicole Strohmann (Hgg.): *Kulturelles Handeln. Macht. Mobil. Interdisziplinäre Studien zur gender- und musikbezogenen Mobilitätsforschung*. Köln 2022, S. 151–165; Christoph Lorke: *Liebe verwalten. „Ausländerehen“ in Deutschland 1870–1945*. Paderborn 2020, S. 57–240.

41 Vgl. Arne Duncker: *Gleichheit und Ungleichheit in der Ehe*. Köln 2003, S. 767f.

Jahrhundertwende mit der Heirat Leo Isaaks ihre Staatsangehörigkeit geändert. Auch in diesem Bezug gab es also eine „pervasiveness of transnational lives“ in der Familie.⁴²

Möglicherweise hat sich Nora Isaak auch deshalb für Leo Segal als Ehepartner entschieden, weil er außerhalb des mittlerweile vom Nationalsozialismus verseuchten Memelgebiets lebte und die litauische Staatsbürgerschaft besaß. Viele Menschen, insbesondere Frauen, die als jüdisch galten, gingen während der 1930er- und 1940er-Jahre aus pragmatischen Gründen sogenannte „marriages of convenience“ ein,⁴³ denn eine entsprechende Staatsbürgerschaft konnte „Schutz und Freiheit“ bieten.⁴⁴ So wurde Nora mit der Heirat Litauerin. Tatsächlich konnte sie, dank ihres neuen Wohnortes und rechtlichen Status, ihren Eltern Zuflucht und Unterstützung anbieten, als diese wenig später, im März 1939, aus dem nun von Deutschland annektierten Memelgebiet flüchten mussten. Um in Litauen nicht als ausländischer Deutscher zu gelten, versuchte Leo Isaak aus ähnlich pragmatischen Gründen, für sich und seine Frau die litauische Staatsbürgerschaft zu erlangen.⁴⁵ Pragmatismus im Umgang mit nationaler Zugehörigkeit muss also als Merkmal transnationaler Lebensläufe gelten.⁴⁶

Als Hermann Segal Ende 1940 in Panevėžys, das mittlerweile offiziell auf russisch Paneweschis hieß, zur Welt kam, wurde er aufgrund der Machtverschiebungen in Litauen bereits als Sowjetbürger betrachtet.⁴⁷ Die Gratulationen zu seiner Geburt kamen per Post aus Italien, Kanada und Palästina, denn nachdem alle Familienmitglieder aus dem Memelgebiet geflohen waren, spannte sich das transnationale Netzwerk der Isaaks/Segals nun von

42 Deacon, Russell, Woollacott: Introduction, S. 6.

43 Vgl. Irene Messinger: 100 Marriages of Convenience into Exile. A Biographical Approach Analysing the Agency of Persecuted Women during the Nazi Era. In: *Zeitgeschichte* 44 (2017) H. 2, S. 98–113. Irene Messinger fokussiert auf Eheschließungen in Österreich. Forschungen zu anderen Gebieten stehen noch aus.

44 Vgl. Dieter Gosewinkel: *Schutz und Freiheit? Staatsbürgerschaft in Europa im 20. und 21. Jahrhundert*. Berlin 2016, S. 253f.

45 Vgl. Brief von Leo Isaak an Ruth Siro vom 10.2.1940. Nach Ruth Leiserowitz „benötigten die Memeler Juden neue Pässe, denn die memelländischen Pässe verloren Ende 1939 ihre Gültigkeit“. In: dies.: *Sabbatleuchter*, S. 329. Zur Staatenlosigkeit von Juden in Österreich, vgl. Hannelore Burger: *Heimatrecht und Staatsbürgerschaft österreichischer Juden*. Vom Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts bis in die Gegenwart. Wien 2014, insbesondere S. 141f. Vgl. Doerte Bischoff, Miriam Rürup (Hgg.): *Ausgeschlossen. Staatsbürgerschaft, Staatenlosigkeit und Exil*. München 2018; Julia Angster, Dieter Gosewinkel, Christoph Gusy: *Staatsbürgerschaft im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*. Tübingen 2019.

46 Vgl. den Beitrag von Jan Rybak in diesem Band.

47 Vgl. Jacqueline Bhabha: *The ‚Mere Fortuity‘ of Birth? Children, Mothers, Borders and the Meaning of Citizenship*. In: Seyla Benhabib, Judith Resnik (Hgg.): *Migrations and Mobilities. Citizenship, Borders, and Gender*. New York 2009, S. 187–227.

Nordamerika, über den Nahen Osten bis nach Südeuropa. Auf die Bedeutung transnationaler Netzwerke, insbesondere in Krisenzeiten, hat unter anderem H. Glenn Penny aufmerksam gemacht.⁴⁸ Doch Noras Mutter Ida Isaak empfand insbesondere die räumliche Entfernung ihrer Kinder als Belastung. „[M]ein Herz blutet,“ schrieb sie einer Tochter, „daß meine lieben Kinderchen sind alle so zerstreut.“⁴⁹ Auch Nora Segal empfand die zunehmende Transnationalität der Familie als emotionale Belastung, insbesondere in der Zeit, als sie Mutter geworden ist. Im November 1940 schrieb sie ihrer Schwester voller Wehmut nach Italien: „jetzt leben wir jeder woanders.“⁵⁰ Tatsächlich lebten seit 1939 keine Familienmitglieder mehr in ihrer ursprünglichen Heimat.

Solange während des Krieges Briefverkehr möglich war, kommunizierten die Isaaks und Segals miteinander: Sie schrieben Karten und Briefe oder schickten Pakete. Die Briefe der Familie waren allesamt auf Deutsch verfasst. Wie hätte es auch anders sein können, blieben doch die neuen Sprachen wie Russisch oder Italienisch zunächst herausfordernd und fremd. Häufig wurden die Briefe gemeinschaftlich aufgegeben, Zettel oder Grüße beigefügt und Informationen über weitere Familienmitglieder ausgetauscht. Auch nach dem Krieg trafen sich Familienangehörige aus aller Welt, um die letzten Briefe gemeinsam zu lesen, zu besprechen und den Verlust der Angehörigen, die den Holocaust nicht überlebt hatten, gemeinsam zu verarbeiten.⁵¹ Tatsächlich werden Auswandererbriefe als eigenes Genre der brieflichen Kommunikation wahrgenommen;⁵² offensichtlich spielte die schriftliche Kommunikation in transnationalen Lebensläufen eine besonders wichtige Rolle. Unter anderem boten Briefe allen Familienmitgliedern der Isaaks und Segals die Möglichkeit, die deutsche Sprache, die im Alltag vielleicht keine große Rolle mehr spielte, zu erhalten. Erst Livio Isaak Sirovich, Noras 1949 in Italien geborener Neffe, brauchte eine Übersetzerin, um die deutsche Familienkorrespondenz zu verstehen.⁵³

48 Vgl. H. Glenn Penny: *German History Unbound. From 1750 to the Present*. Cambridge 2022.

49 Brief von Ida Isaak als Beilage eines Briefes von Nora Segal an Ruth Siro am 5.11.1940.

50 Brief von Nora Segal an Ruth Siro am 5.11.1940.

51 Vgl. Sirovich: *Ihr Lieben*, S. 79.

52 Vgl. Ursula Lehmkuhl: *Auswandererbriefe*. In: Gesa Steinbrink, Marie-Isabel Matthews-Schlinzig, Jochen Strobel, Jörg Schuster (Hgg.): *Handbuch Brief*. Berlin 2020, S. 631–645.

53 Vgl. Sirovich: *Ihr Lieben*, S. 9f. Die Übersetzung der Familienbriefe vom Deutschen ins Italienische übernahm Helga Pfeifer, ebenda, S. 296.

Der „nationale Container“ im Ausland

In diesem Abschnitt sollen weitere Elemente aus dem „nationalen Container“ untersucht werden, die Nora Segal und ihre Familie aus dem Memelgebiet ins Ausland mitgebracht hatten: ins sowjetische Paneweschis, nach Kanada, Palästina oder Italien. Dieser „nationale Container“ setzt sich neben Elementen wie der Sprache, die oben bereits besprochen wurde, insbesondere aus alltagskulturellen Praktiken zusammen, zu diesen werden Glauben, Bräuche, oder Traditionen ebenso gezählt wie Mode, Musikgeschmack oder Essgewohnheiten.⁵⁴ Im Folgenden sollen drei alltagskulturelle Praktiken betrachtet werden: Zum einen die Namenswahl, die Erziehung und zuletzt die Koch- beziehungsweise Esskultur, mit denen sich die Familie außerhalb des deutschen Nationalstaates und auch außerhalb ihrer deutschen Grenzregion einen sogenannten deutschen Raum schuf.⁵⁵

Nora und Leo Segal wählten für ihr Baby einen ausgesprochen deutsch klingenden Vornamen. Um diese Entscheidung zu verstehen, bedarf es einer historischen Einordnung. Denn die Namenswahl für ein Kind ist nie reine Privatangelegenheit: Es gibt gesellschaftliche oder sogar politische Implikationen und Normen.⁵⁶ Noras älterer Bruder hieß ebenfalls Hermann. Hermann Isaak war gemeinsam mit Frau und Kind noch im Jahr 1939 die Flucht aus dem Memelgebiet über Litauen nach Kanada gelungen. Von den zurückgebliebenen Eltern und Geschwistern wurde er vermisst, der Briefkontakt mit Kanada war langwierig und deshalb problematisch. Möglicherweise wollten Nora und Leo den Familienzusammenhalt durch die Namenswahl symbolisch stärken und den emotionalen Verlust des Bruders mildern. Eine Namenswahl nach dem Vorbild von Verwandten war in Deutschland bis weit ins 20. Jahrhundert üblich.⁵⁷

Doch die Familie lebte mittlerweile in Paneweschis in einer sowjetischen Gesellschaft. So konnte man im Jahr 1940 eigentlich davon ausgehen, dass ein Kind mit einem Namen, der dessen deutsche Herkunft betonte, es dort nicht einfach haben würde. Noras Vater hatte genau zu dieser Zeit selbst Probleme mit seinem Vornamen: Leo Isaak hatte als Kind Judel Mendel geheißen und seinen Namen als Erwachsener geändert. Sein deutscher Name kann als

54 Vgl. Birgit Glorius: Transnationale Perspektiven. Eine Studie zur Migration zwischen Polen und Deutschland. Bielefeld 2007, S. 175.

55 Vgl. Penny, Rinke: Germans Abroad.

56 Vgl. Michael Wolfssohn, Thomas Brechenmacher: Die Deutschen und ihre Vornamen. 200 Jahre Politik und öffentliche Meinung. München 1999; Oliver Lorenz: Die Adolf-Kurve 1932–1945. In: Götz Aly (Hg.): Volkes Stimme. Skepsis und Führervertrauen im Nationalsozialismus. Frankfurt am Main 2006, S. 22–37.

57 Vgl. Michael Mitterauer. Traditionen der Namengebung. Wien 2011, S. 159f.

„Symbol für den staatsbürgerlichen Qualitätssprung“ gedeutet werden.⁵⁸ Sogar seine Kinder hatten Leo Isaaks ursprünglichen Namen nicht gekannt, so wichtig war ihm seine deutsche Identität.⁵⁹ Im sowjetisch okkupierten Litauen war er jedoch gezwungen den alten Namen wieder zu nutzen,⁶⁰ möglicherweise aufgrund der fehlenden litauischen Staatsbürgerschaft.⁶¹

Nora und Leo Segals Namenswahl muss als familien- und herkunftsbetonender Eigensinn betrachtet werden: ein Konnex zu ihrem früheren deutschen Leben. Doch für Hermann Segal kam es nie zu einem identitätsstiftenden oder stigmatisierenden Moment aufgrund seines deutschen Vornamens.⁶² Von den Eltern und Großeltern wurde er liebevoll mit Kosenamen verwöhnt. Hätte er den Holocaust überlebt, hätte er möglicherweise seinen Namen geändert – wie es schon sein Großvater getan hatte – auch dies als „pervasiveness of transnational lives“.⁶³

Auch die Erziehung kann als identitätsstiftende kulturgebundene Praxis verstanden werden.⁶⁴ Nora Segals Briefe an die Schwester in Italien über ihre Schwangerschaft und Hermanns erste Lebensmonate lesen sich, als hätte sie die gängigen deutschen Erziehungsratschläge dieser Zeit verinnerlicht. Sie schrieb: „Ich erziehe ihn aber ziemlich streng, gewiegt wird er nicht, bekommt nie außer der Zeit Essen und wird auch nicht aufgenommen, wenn er schreit. Kinder werden schnell verwöhnt.“⁶⁵ Nora verhielt sich im Gleichklang mit anderen deutschen Müttern dieser Zeit, die wenig Nähe zuließen.⁶⁶ Als Nora

58 Dietz Bering: *Der Name als Stigma. Antisemitismus im deutschen Alltag 1812–1933*. Stuttgart 1987, S. 43. Im NS-Staat galt der Vornamenzwang für als jüdisch geltende Menschen seit 1938, vgl. Zweite Verordnung zur Durchführung des Gesetzes über die Änderung von Familiennamen und Vornamen vom 17. August 1938, RGBl I, 1044. In: <www.ns-quellen.at>, 17.9.2022. Eine Monografie zu diesem Thema stellt bislang ein Desiderat dar.

59 Vgl. Sirovich: *Ihr Lieben*, S. 191.

60 Brief von Leo Isaak an Ruth Siro vom 18.5.1941.

61 Zum sowjetischen Antisemitismus vgl. Louis Rapoport: *Hammer, Sichel, Davidstern. Judenverfolgung in der Sowjetunion*. München 1992.

62 Vgl. Friedhelm Debus: Identitätsstiftende Funktion von Personennamen. In: Nina Janich, Christiane Thim-Mabrey (Hgg.): *Sprachidentität – Identität durch Sprache*. Tübingen 2003, S. 77–90.

63 Deacon, Russell, Woollacott: Introduction, S. 6; Hermann Segals Cousin Livio Isaak Sirovich hat als Erwachsener seinen Nachnamen geändert, vgl. Sirovich: *Ihr Lieben*, S. 12.

64 Heidi Keller, Bettina Lamm: Parenting as the Expression of Sociohistorical Time: The Case of German Individualisation. In: *International Journal of Behavioral Development* 29 (2005) H. 3, S. 238–246.

65 Brief von Nora Segal an Ruth Siro vom 27.1.1941. Vgl. Miriam Gebhardt: *Die Angst vor dem kindlichen Tyrannen. Eine Geschichte der Erziehung im 20. Jahrhundert*. München 2009, insb. S. 69f.

66 Vgl. Sigrid Chamberlain. Adolf Hitler, die deutsche Mutter und ihr erstes Kind. Gießen 2000. Zur Nähe in der Eltern-Kind-Beziehung, S. 23f.