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Source: Scheider, *The Fate of the Germans in Romania*, Map II.

GERMAN SETTLEMENT AREAS IN ROMANIA

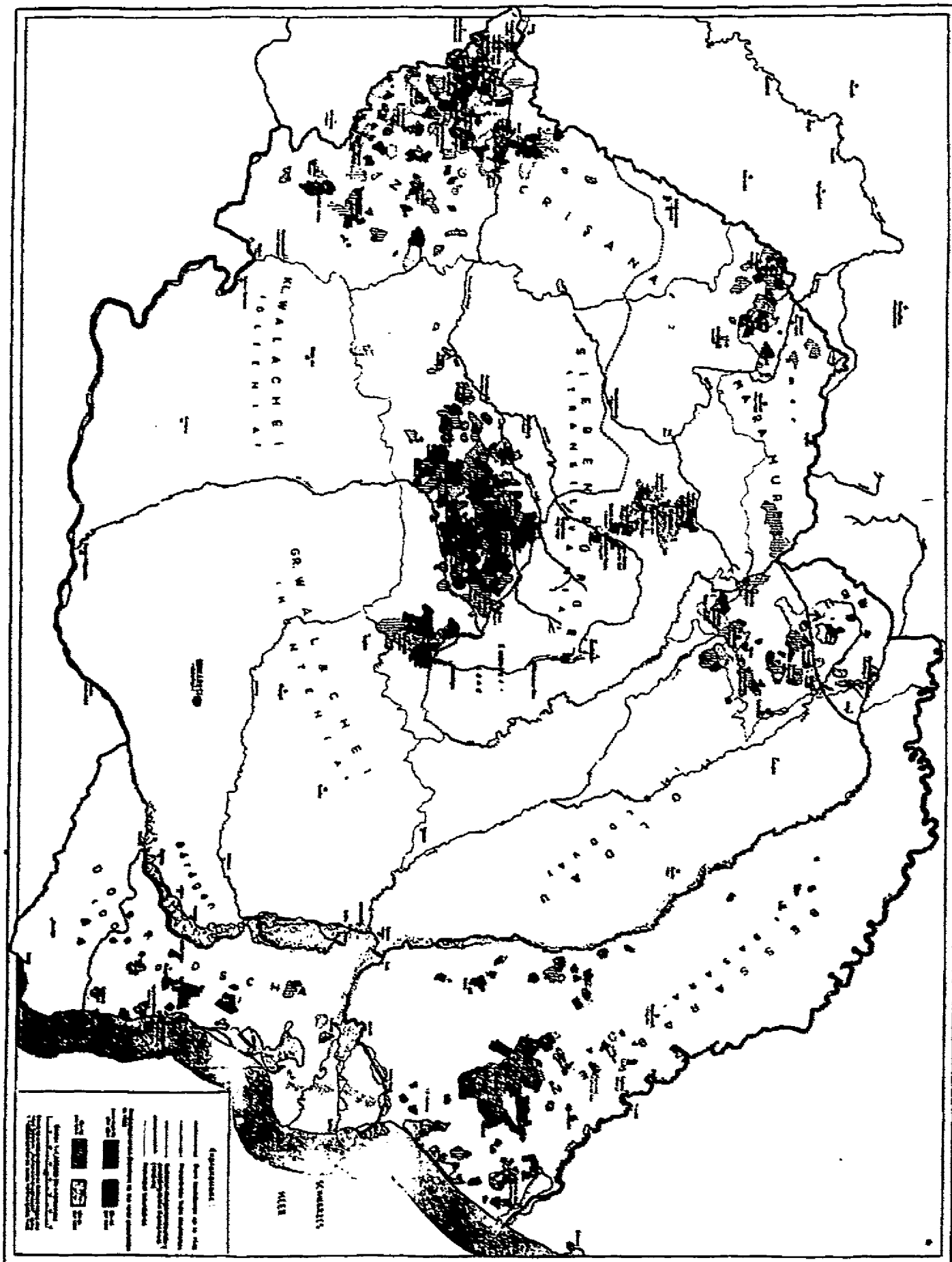


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GLOSSARY

Auslandsdeutschen: German term to describe Germans abroad. In some contexts, it is broad enough to include German citizens temporarily resident abroad as well as ethnic Germans who have never been residents of Germany.

Gleichschaltung: Commonly translated as "co-ordination," *gleichschaltung* also implies synchronisation and unification. As a historic term, it describes the co-ordination carried out in Germany during the first years of the Nazi regime to ensure that all German institutions and structures were brought into line with Nazi ideology.

Grenzdeutschen: Literally "border Germans," *Grenzdeutschen* are those ethnic Germans who live along the German frontier. In general, they were citizens of Germany until the land on which they lived was amputated due to the Treaty of Versailles.

Inseldeutschen: Literally "island Germans," *Inseldeutschen* refers to ethnic Germans abroad who live in enclaves, or islands, of other Germans surrounded by other ethnic groups.

Volksdeutschen: A German term, generally translated as "ethnic German," describes those who are ethnically or culturally German but who live beyond the borders of the German state. Also commonly refers to those same Germans who are presently resident in Germany.

Volk: Literally translates as "folk," but this term has definite political and racial overtones. It includes the terms "people," "nation," "race," and "populace," and is strongly associated with ethnic and racial nationalism which is often called "*völkisch*."

A NOTE ON GERMAN USAGE

When writing in English about the ethnic Germans of the world, it has been generally accepted to use the terms "Volksdeutsche" and "Auslandsdeutsche" in the nominal, adjective and objective cases. The terms are also often used with no differentiation between the singular and plural cases. In order to conform with actual German usage and to convey the case and number of the words used, I will add the "-en" ending to connote the plural and capitalise to convey the noun case. In the adjective case, case endings will be omitted and capitalisation will not be used.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper has been two years in the making and, of course, I have many to thank. First and foremost, I am greatly indebted to Professor Young for his assistance and guidance throughout this entire project. Professors Vance and Mills, whether they knew it or not, have also contributed greatly to this thesis and to my experience of the past two years.

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Studying at a small university presents a number of hurdles for those pursuing obscure topics. Consequently, I came to rely upon the skills of the Interlibrary Loans Department of the Patrick Power Library at Saint Mary's University. A special thank-you, therefore, to Sandra Hamm for her assistance.

Finally, I am grateful to Betsy Hogan for her support and patience during the many times that this project was consuming much of my time and attention. Thank you.

INTRODUCTION

The question of nationality and group allegiance has been of critical importance in the understanding of Balkan history for centuries. More recently, the events in the region since 1989 have put the phenomenon under renewed scrutiny. The terms "Balkanisation" and "ethnic enclaves" have gained currency in discussions surrounding the shattered former Yugoslavia and the Western world has been forced to contemplate how two cohabiting peoples who share the same language and much of the same history could put such animosity between themselves and their neighbours.

The history of the region has also been profoundly shaped this century by two intense manifestations of German nationalism. Both world wars resulted in significant transfers of territories and populations throughout the Balkans in which lived millions of ethnic Germans who were culturally alien from their neighbours. Regardless of the wavering and inconsistent contact between these Germans and their compatriots in Germany, the Slavic, Magyar and Romanian populations have generally seen these ethnic

Germans as outposts of the German Reich. Though several generations—in some instances many generations—separated them from the ancestors who left Germany, much of the experience of the Germans in the region during this century was intimately tied to the Vaterland regardless of whether or not they saw themselves as members of the German Volk.

The experience for the German minority of Romania in this century was closely linked to both the Reich and Romania. As Germany recovered from the First World War and became a clearly ascendant state, the situation for Germans in Romania likewise improved. But then, the crushing defeat of the Nazi Reich was likewise felt in no uncertain terms by this population which was either deported to the labour camps of the Soviet Union or forced to flee to the West.

The actions of ethnic Germans have everywhere come under scrutiny as accusations of fifth-column activities gained currency before, during and after the Second World War. These accusations were only enhanced by the fact that the German nationalism that brought the conflict about was based on an ideology that argued that racial/national ties are infinitely stronger than those that come through

citizenship based on birthright. The loyalty of simple citizenship was further weakened by the fact that the redrawing of the European map following the First World War meant that millions of people woke up and found themselves to be citizens of different countries than they were the night before. The ethnic concept of "nation" as opposed to country was generally accepted and a large measure of loyalty to "one's people" was assumed.

In the Romanian case, the accusation of being a fifth-column was credible because the ethnic German community in that country became generally nazified. In consequence of a massive effort on the part of Reich Germans and the German government to re-awaken the Germanness of this community, occasional ethnic arrogance gave way to a fervid nationalism. The population embraced most of the fundamental doctrines of Nazism: the concept of *Herrenvolk*, the importance of the ethnic community and the mystical blood connection between members of the *Volk*. The members of this community submitted to Hitler as their *Führer* and they reorganised their political organs to be in line with the Nazi teachings. The ultimate symbol of fifth-column activity

was there for all to see: members of Romania's ethnic German community raised and saluted the swastika, a emblem that they called the flag of the German people.

Following the war, the German community in Romania was substantially destroyed. The advancing Russian forces accused the Germans of collaboration, as did many Romanians. In order to rid the country of the supposedly disloyal fifth-columnists, hundreds of thousands of ethnic Germans were uprooted and forced to migrate to Germany, a land that was more foreign to them than Romania. Further thousands were deported, along with Reich Germans, to the mines of the Soviet Union as slave labourers. Certainly this was not the treatment that one would reserve for loyal citizens.

If the members of Romania's German community were loyal to the supposed Volk community of Germans everywhere, were they not automatically disloyal to the land in which they lived? The purpose of this thesis is to explore these often contradictory loyalties and the peculiar situation of the Romanian Germans before and during the Second World War. These ethnic Germans had an important role in the relationship between Romania and the German Reich and their

presence was important in the shaping of German policy toward the entire Balkan region. I hope to demonstrate and explain the diverse forces that were pulling and pushing them toward both of their "homelands" and to show that the ethnic Germans were no more resistant to fascist and racist doctrine than their fellow Romanians.

The peculiar Romanian context is critical to the understanding of the history of this group and their divided loyalties. In the end, one cannot be judged to have been disloyal to a state if one's actions were in full accord with the wishes of that state. To say otherwise would be to change the meaning of loyalty and condemn an entire people after the fact. The tragedy of this story was that a unique community was shattered and thousands of lives were lost because this exact condemnation did take place in an atmosphere of remarkably strong anti-German sentiments. The ethnic Germans of Romania were only as culpable as their Romanian neighbours.

CHAPTER 1

THE VOLKSDEUTSCHEN OF GREATER ROMANIA

Following the end of the First World War, Romania found itself in an enviable position. The settlement split the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, resulting in the transfer of thousands of square kilometres of former Hungarian lands to Romania. Compared to 1915, Romanian territory had increased by 157,957 square kilometres to 295,049.¹ Territorial increases were accompanied by an increase in population that fundamentally transformed the character of the Romanian state. The new "Greater Romania" was no longer an ethnically homogenous nation. Rather, significant minority populations were added to the original population of almost eight million. Among the new Romanians were hundreds of thousands of Germans who had lived for generations on the soil of Transylvania, the Banat and Dobrudja.

¹ Theodor Scheider, Ed., *The Fate of the Germans in Rumania* (Bonn: Federal Ministry for Expellees, Refugees and War Victims, 1961), p. 3.

Despite the fact that, in recent history, the Germans of Romania never comprised a majority in their respective provinces and despite their geographic separation from the Reich, their German language and culture had been maintained. Furthermore, the German population had left an indelible mark on the character of the region, the countryside and the towns.

As the territories of East-central Europe were wrested from Ottoman control, the conquering monarchs were keen to settle the new lands. Not only were populations a source of tribute and a supplement to the wealth of the kingdom, but in the borderlands the mere presence of loyal settlers asserted the dominion of the sovereign. According to Sophie Welisch, Germans were particularly desirable as settlers because of the particular skills that they would often bring with them. German farmers were seen by some to be "more ambitious and progressive than others."² Conversely,

² Sepp Janko, *Weg und Ende der deutschen Volksgruppe in Jugoslawien* (Graz-Stuttgart: Leopold Stocker Verlag, 1982), p. 13. Quoted in Sophie A. Welisch, "The Bukovina-Germans during the Habsburg Period: Settlement, Ethnic Interaction, Contributions," *Immigrants and Minorities* V(1), p. 76.

migrants had many incentives to agree to resettlement. The future *Auslandsdeutschen* were leaving behind "overpopulation, insufficient land, widespread poverty, poor harvests and hunger, military recruitment and lack of mobility in the service professions."³ To encourage migration, offerings of land were supplemented by exemptions from taxation and military service.

The members of the German *Volksgruppe* in post-Trianon (1920) Romania can be divided into three main populations. The oldest population, the Saxons, had been resident in Transylvania since the twelfth century. Upon the invitation of King Geisa II, settlers from many parts of the German states migrated to the "King's Land" between the Tarnava Mare and Olk Rivers. Special territorial, political and confessional autonomy was granted to the Germans through the 'Golden Charter' issued by King Andreas in 1224. Other German peasants were also brought in by King Geisa and a temporary outpost for knights of the Teutonic Order was

³ Welisch, "The Bukovina-Germans during the Habsburg Period," p. 80.

established at the beginnings of the thirteenth century. This outpost was the nucleus for what was to become the German town of Kronstadt (now Brasov).⁴

In the following centuries, the special autonomy granted by the 'Golden Charter' was repeatedly reaffirmed and was extended to cover all German communities which were amalgamated under the leadership of an elected Saxon count in the "University of the Nation." Although their special political status was finally extinguished with the territory's incorporation into Hungary (1868), the Transylvanian Saxons managed to maintain their group consciousness. This was mostly due to the strong support received from their autonomous Lutheran Church.⁵

Following the incorporation of Transylvania into Hungary, the ethnic Romanians and Germans of the region came under a regime of extreme Magyarisation. Of primary importance was the regulation of language. The Hungarian

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁵ *Ibid.*

authorities demanded Magyar as the state language, much to the dismay of the Germans and Romanians.

Until nearly the middle of the nineteenth century the official language in Hungary for many purposes was Latin, which was understood, and often spoken, by nearly all the more cultivated classes. But the lower and middle classes spoke the language of the race to which they belonged, and the bulk of the population was illiterate. With the rise of the feeling of nationalism among the non-Magyar peoples, and the institution of a State system of education, the language question became one of the chief political questions in Transylvania.⁶

The obstinacy with which the Saxons clung to their language and culture was a considerable barrier to the Hungarian attempts at Magyarisation. The destruction of the Saxon University took away many of the rights previously enjoyed by the Germans of Transylvania but the Hungarians were never able to extinguish their cultural and linguistic autonomy.

The second large *volksdeutsch* group in Greater Romania was the German element of the Banat. Commonly known as Swabians, this group was of much more recent origin than the Saxons. They arrived in the region as part of a "lavish settlement scheme" begun by the Austrian authorities

⁶ Great Britain, Foreign Office Historical Section, *Peace Handbooks*, Vol. 6: *Transylvania and the Banat*. (Reprint Ed.; Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources, 1973), p. 19.

following the peace of Passarowitz (1718) and extending through the eighteenth century. In exchange for their colonisation, the Swabian settlers were afforded great concessions. Vienna offered "in most cases . . . farm equipment, livestock and enough food to meet their needs until the next crops . . . The newcomers were allowed to bring with them their own clergymen and teachers; they could build their own schools and churches in which the language of instruction and worship was, of course, German."⁷ They were to be the largest group of *Volksdeutschen* in Romania. In contrast to the Protestant Saxons, the Swabians were mostly Catholics who had come originally from Württemberg, Breisgau, Alsace and Lorraine. Mostly peasants (80 percent), they enjoyed a higher standard of living than most of their neighbours while the remaining portion of the population was mainly middle-class town-dwellers. According to G.C. Paikert, one and a half million of the two million

⁷ G.C. Paikert, *The Danube Swabians: German Populations in Hungary, Rumania and Yugoslavia and Hitler's Impact on their Patterns* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1967), p. 25.

Volksdeutschen in Hungary before the First World War were descendants of these eighteenth century immigrants.⁸

Other communities of Volksdeutschen were located throughout old Romania, including Bukovina, Dobrudja and Bessarabia.⁹ According to Sophie Welisch, the Bukovina Germans arrived following the acquisition of the territory of Buchenland by the Austrian Empire from the Moldavians in 1775. This territory, the eastern-most crown land of the Austrian Empire, has historically been a cross-roads between Europe and Asia, East and West. In addition to the German population, Bukovina was a mosaic of other ethnic groups. Romanians, Ukrainians, Poles, Jews, Armenians, Gypsies and others were well represented. Religious diversity was also the order of the day as members of the Ukrainian and Romanian Orthodox, Lutheran, Jewish and Greek Catholic faiths worshipped virtually unmolested.¹⁰

⁸ Ibid., p. 29.

⁹ Georges Castellan, "The Germans of Rumania," *Journal of Contemporary History* VI(1), p. 53.

¹⁰ Welisch, "The Bukovina-Germans during the Habsburg Period," p. 73.

The arrival patterns of the Bukovina Germans were not the organised streams of migrants that had been seen in other newly conquered territories. Though migration was certainly encouraged by Austria, the settlement was neither systematic nor centrally directed. The mixed migration of Bohemians from the North and Swabians from the South meant that this *volksdeutsch* group was not able to form closed village communities, as had been the case in Transylvania. The fact that German was the language of administration, however, meant that their language and culture were more easily preserved considering their small proportion of the population in the area.¹¹

Similar to Bukovina, Bessarabia is a border territory on the threshold of Asia. Originally acquired by Russia through conquest, Bessarabia was part of the colonisation schemes of Catherine II (1762-1796). The German element came mostly from the Grand Duchy of Warsaw and from Württemberg. Between 1814 and 1842, they founded 24 peasant villages. Descendants of the original settlers formed further branch

¹¹ Scheider, *The Fate of the Germans in Rumania*, p. 10.

settlements as their population increased rapidly, though they composed a very small minority of the population in Bessarabia. Despite their very small numbers, most of the Bessarabian Volksdeutschen were much more prosperous in their agricultural endeavours than their Romanian and Ukrainian neighbours.

CHAPTER 2

DEUTSCHTUM IN GREATER ROMANIA, 1919-1933

Romania's participation in the First World War is a confusing series of flip-flops. At the outset of the conflict, Romania pursued a policy of armed neutrality, mainly due to the amount of German investment in country. In 1916, Romania then entered the war on the Allied side on the promise of territorial awards. Facing "untold human and economic loss and political turmoil . . . [and] the disintegration of the Romanian army," Romania signed an armistice in December 1917.¹² Once the defeat of Germany became imminent, Romania re-entered the conflict.¹³ As promised, Romania was awarded significant territories from Austria-Hungary and Russia. Mostly at Hungary's expense, Romania ballooned from 137,905 km² in 1914 to 294,967 km² in 1920 with the addition of Transylvania, part of the Banat

¹² Glenn E. Torrey, "Romanian Leaves the War: The Decision to Sign an Armistice, December 1917," *East European Quarterly*, XXIII(3), p. 105.

¹³ Joseph S. Roucek, "Romania in Geopolitics," *The Ukrainian Quarterly* 1983, XLIX(1), p. 43.

region, Bessarabia and Southern Dobrudja. Romania's population grew substantially thanks to this award.¹⁴ The reward for Romania's opportunism was substantial.¹⁵

Table 1 - Ethnic Composition of the Regat, 1920

Ethnic group	Population	(%)
Romanian	6,546,400	90.5
Jewish	241,100	3.3
Hungarian	147,400	2.1
Gypsy	83,000	1.1
Bulgarian	60,200	0.8
Russian	42,300	0.6
Turkish and Tatar	42,200	0.6
German	27,100	0.4
Serbian	4,600	0.1
Other	40,600	0.5
Total	7,34,900	100.0

Source: Alfred Bohmann, *Menschen und Grenzen*, Vol.II (Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1969), p. 109.

The award following the First World War

dramatically transformed Romania. The Regat, as pre-war Romania is called, was a single nation state with very few minorities. The Dobrudja Germans, who numbered under fifty thousand in 1919, were the only *volksdeutsch* minority

¹⁴ Alfred Bohmann, *Menschen und Grenzen: Bevölkerung und Nationalitäten in Südosteuropa*, Vol.II (Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1969), p. 100. Bela Vago, *The Shadow of the Swastika: The Rise of Fascism and Anti-Semitism in the Danube Basin, 1936-1939* (Farnborough, Hants: Saxon House for the Institute of Jewish Affairs, 1975), pp. 429-431.

¹⁵ Barry Crosby Fox, *German Relations with Romania, 1933-1944* (Ph.D. Diss. Western Reserve University, 1964), p. 4.

inhabiting the Regat. The addition of the newly acquired territories virtually doubled the population and added millions of non-Romanians. The peace treaties included extensive provisions for minority rights and the Great Assembly of Alba Julia (18 November 1918 - 1 December 1918) that promulgated the annexation of the Banat and Transylvania to the Regat promised "complete national freedom for all cohabiting peoples." Within a year, the national assembly of the Saxons met to lend their support to the annexation. According to Georges Castellán, their reasons were three-fold. First, both the Saxons and the Romanians of Transylvania had opposed the Hungarian policy of Magyarisation. Secondly, the *Volksdeutschen* preferred the Romanian monarch of Hohenzollern descent to a Hungarian republic. Finally, joining Romania gave the Saxons the opportunity of being on the 'winning side.'¹⁶

¹⁶ Castellán, "The Germans of Rumania," p. 55.

Table 2 - The German community in Romania, 1919/20

Region	Population	German population	(%)
Regat (with Dobrudja, 1912)	7,222,000	29,400	0.4
Bessarabia (1920/21)	2,629,000	79,000	3.0
Bukovina (1919)	811,700	68,100	8.4
Sathmar/Maramures (1920)	1,168,500	47,100	4.0
Transylvania (1920)	2,633,700	224,100	8.5
Banat and Arad (1920)	1,311,000	268,200	20.5
Greater Romania	15,775,900	715,900	4.5

Source: Bohmann, *Menschen und Grenzen*, Vol. II, p. 112.

Each *volksdeutsch* community voiced its opinion of the annexation. The Swabians were more hesitant than the Saxons because their Catholicism had brought them closer to their Hungarian neighbours. In the end, however, the less well-to-do peasants were unimpressed with Bela Kun's 'soviet' republic of March to August 1919 and the Swabians consented to annexation on 14 August 1919. The Bessarabian *Volksdeutschen* were initially impressed with the concept of the 'Autonomous Republic of Moldavia,' but the rapid approach of the Red Army convinced them of the advantages of joining Romania. In Bukovina, the *Volksdeutschen* likewise chose the domination of Romanians over that of Poles and Ukrainians.¹⁷

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 55-56.

The government of Romania promised to protect the rights of the new minorities by a Convention for the Protection of Minorities signed on 9 December 1919 in Paris. The new Romanian constitution of 30 March 1923 codified these rights. Of all the minorities of the new territories, the *Volksdeutschen* had the best relations with the dominant Romanians. As if to avenge their treatment before the Paris Peace settlement, the Romanians focused their animosity toward the Magyar minority. The Germans, in contrast, were particularly well treated. While they were by no means politically autonomous, they were represented politically by their own parties. Representatives of the *Deutsche Partei* served in the Romanian Parliament in Bucharest and ethnic Germans acquired positions of prominence in the government. The old Saxon parliament, the *Sachsensatzung*, was reconstituted in 1919, and other similar bodies were created among other German communities. A federation of German organisations, the *Verband der Deutschen in Rumänien*, was established in September 1921.

VOLKSDEUTSCH CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS**Faith Communities**

For the Germans of Romania, the single most important institution when it came to the preservation of their culture and identity was their church. While ethnicity is an ephemeral entity that is subject to wide interpretation, most *Volksdeutschen* were of a completely different confession than their immediate neighbours and of course from the dominant Romanian culture. The only exception was the mostly Catholic Swabian community which shared its faith with its Magyar neighbours and was part of the established church in pre-Trianon Hungary. For the Saxons of Transylvania, their autonomous Lutheran church was the focus of much of their identity. From the reformation onwards, the bishops of the church served as the *porte-parole* for the Saxons and the church itself was the cradle of German nationalism. According to G.C. Paikert, the Evangelical Lutheran Church "proved to be during the long Magyar rule virtually impregnable to the inroads of Magyarisation and it preserved the same unbending attitude in the ensuing

Romanian era."¹⁸ The disparate Protestant churches of Greater Romania were brought together under a bishopric based in Sibiu (Hermannstadt) with the founding of the "Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Romania" in 1926/27.¹⁹ As with the Saxons, the Germans of Bessarabia were overwhelmingly members of the Protestant church but their sparsely distributed settlements meant that their church was not as influential as was the case in Transylvania.

Sophie Welisch, who has widely published on the subject of the Bukovinan German community, reports that the situation there reflected the nature of the German settlement in the region. The initial trickle of German settlers that started during the thirteenth-century was cut off under the Voivode, Stephen the Great (1459-1504). As a consequence, the Germans were largely "assimilated into the native population, intermarried, and converted to Eastern Orthodoxy or simply emigrated." Later Catholic settlers came

¹⁸ Paikert, *The Danube Swabians*, pp. 247-248.

¹⁹ Scheider, *The Fate of the Germans in Rumania*, pp. 22-23.

from Austria and many Protestants also settled the area as a result of Joseph II's Patent of Toleration of 1781 that allowed non-Catholics "private exercise" of their faith without a recognition of equality.²⁰

Schools

The education of youth has always been of critical importance to nationalists. In the case of linguistic minorities, primary and secondary education in the mother tongue was seen to be the key for the preservation of their culture. When Hungary passed its education act in 1868, "95.4 percent of all schools were conducted by the churches and only 3.8 percent by the State or municipalities."²¹ In the German communities, much of the control over education was in the hands of the churches. As the *volksdeutsch* communities were concerned with maintaining their cultural integrity, the schools were regarded as the perfect medium

²⁰ Welisch, "The Bukovinan-Germans during the Habsburg Period," p. 74. Imrgard Hein Ellingson, "German Immigration to the Austrian Empire in the 1770s and 1780s," *Journal of the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia*, X, p. 21.

²¹ Paikert, *The Danube Swabians*, p. 44.

for transmitting their values and for inculcating German national consciousness.

The *Volksdeutschen* of Hungary had an ally in Act XLIV, also of 1868. Drafted at the time of the Austro-Hungarian union, or *Ausgleich*, this act was one of the fundamental laws that governed the national lives of Hungary's minority communities. Paragraphs 14-17 regulated the language of the churches, allowing freedom to choose the language of services, and more importantly, the language of their educational endeavours. In 1869, 1,232 grammar schools existed in Hungary in which instruction was carried on exclusively in the German language. Combined German-Magyar instruction took place in an additional 957 schools. Within just over a decade, the numbers of such schools had dropped to 867 and 919, respectively. Of the 447 fully-German schools that remained in 1913, the majority were operated by the Protestant Transylvanian Saxons. Overall, "there was simply no national consciousness of any significance existing among these people [i.e. the Swabians]; their

national reawakening had not come yet."²² This situation changed for the Swabians when the Hungarian policy toward national minorities took a decidedly illiberal turn. While the autonomy of the churches was not disturbed, the state decided to greatly expand the public education system in order to wrest educational power away from the churches. From only seventeen such schools in 1873, the number grew to 3,296 by 1913. The results of this partial reversal of policy pale, however, in comparison with Act XXVII of 1907 which represented a complete about-face from the liberalism and tolerance that was represented by the acts of 1868.²³ The German schools in the Banat and Satu Mare districts had become casualties of the comprehensive Magyarisation policies of the Hungarian regime. Under the Romanians, however, greater independence was demanded and the numbers of German-language, Protestant elementary schools swelled to 250.²⁴

²² *Ibid.*, p. 45.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

²⁴ Scheider, *The Fate of the Germans in Rumania*, pp. 24.

Notwithstanding the liberalism of Act XLIV, the Swabians were easily assimilated. The experience of German Catholics was somewhat similar. While subjects of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, they were members of the established church. Clergy were drawn from the general population and had been educated in Hungarian seminaries. In contrast to the German Protestants, many of the Catholic clerics were ethnic Hungarians. Because of this, according to Paikert, the Swabians were particularly vulnerable to Magyar attempts at assimilation.

In the multinational region of Bukovina, where there was greater ethnic diversity than in the other regions of Greater Romania, the Germans were in an enviable position. While certainly not in the majority, they lived largely in dense enclaves and formed a significant minority in the larger communities. The Austrian state provided education in "the native tongue if a minimum of 40 pupils of a given nationality were in attendance for a consecutive three-year

period."²⁵ This meant that in one average town, instruction was carried out in German, Romanian and Ukrainian. By 1914, the German community of Bukovina claimed

one German university, six purely German gymnasia, two German sections at foreign-language gymnasia, four girls' middle schools, one teacher training institute, four technical schools, seventy-three public and fourteen private German elementary schools as well as German parallel classes in mixed-language elementary schools in numerous communities.²⁶

Following the collapse of Austria following the First World War, many of the successor states were obliged to sign treaties that specifically enumerated their obligations toward national minorities. This included Romania, which signed the International Convention on the Protection of Minorities. Romania was committed to give the Transylvanian Germans special autonomy with regard to scholastic and religious matters. Ultimately, treatment at the hands of the Romanians was much improved compared to the situation under the Hungarians. Paikert concludes that the German minority group had greater access to German education than before.

²⁵ Welisch, "The Bukovina-Germans during the Habsburg Period," p. 88.

²⁶ Erich Prokopowitsch, "Der Kampf um die Bukowiner deutsche Schule während der rumänischen Herrschaft 1919 - 1940," *Südostdeutsche Vierteljahrblätter*, XIV(3), p. 149. Quoted in *Ibid*.

"This held particularly true for the Swabians domiciled in the erstwhile Hungarian regions, who were given, mainly for political reasons (Hungarian revisionism), quite favourable treatment."²⁷

Nevertheless, according to Theodor Scheider, Romanian educational policies toward the minorities were generally hostile under the direction of Dr. Constantin Algelescu, the Liberal Minister of Culture between 1922 to 1926 and 1933 to 1937. The liberal provisions of the bill of 24 June 1924 providing for separate secular elementary schools in parishes with where minority languages were spoken were ignored in many cases. Furthermore, Scheider cites barriers that were placed in the way of German education in Romania, including Romanian language competency tests for teachers and the compulsory use of Romanian for certain school subjects.

When all the old parish and private schools were taken over by the State, church schools provided the only way out. On the basis of a bill (*Partikularschulgesetz*) dated 22 December 1925, the churches were able to set up and support

²⁷ Paikert, *The Danube Swabians*, pp. 248-249.

their own schools in which the State had only limited powers of supervision.²⁸

For this reason, the German group in the Banat, in a departure from their pre-1919 ways, began setting up denominational schools to maintain their educational autonomy. Furthermore, their cultural and educational distinctness was encouraged as part of the government policy of weakening the Magyar element in the border regions.²⁹ Simply, the Romanians preferred Germanised Germans to Magyarised Germans who might side with Hungary in any future territorial dispute.

Much of the negative treatment of the *Volksdeutschen* of Romania can be attributed to the fact that the German community were incidental bystanders who were adversely affected by measures that were meant for the Magyar minority. This is particularly true when the illiberal measures were the result of general policies. On one hand, there was little interference with the day-to-day operation of secondary schools by the state. On the other hand, the

²⁸ Scheider, *The Fate of the Germans in Rumania*, pp. 25-26.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

bill of 25 March 1925 placed a large obstacle in the way of university-bound minorities. The bill demanded that the "Baccalaureate," a compulsory examination in Romanian before Romanian examiners, be passed as a requirement for university entrance.³⁰

The nature of the relationship between the German ethnic group and the Romanian state changed as the relationship between Germany and Romania changed. The closer that two states became, particularly in the 1930s, the easier it was for the Volksdeutschen to keep their cultural institutions.

The German Press

In pre-war Hungary, the ethnic Germans had a long history of newspaper publishing. The *Ofnerischer Mercurius* was first published in 1731, more than half a century before the first Magyar newspaper. In fact, German language papers outnumbered Hungarian and Latin papers throughout the remainder of the eighteenth century.³¹ This reflected the

³⁰ Scheider, *The Fate of the Germans in Rumania*, p. 27. Castellan, "The Germans of Rumania," pp. 57-58.

³¹ Paikert, *The Danube Swabians*, p. 60.

higher level of sophistication and education among the German town-dwellers.

Table 3 - The German, Minority and Romanian Press in Romania, 1930-1941

Year	German-language	Total Minority	Romanian-language	Total (all languages)
1930	112	456	1306	1762
1931	114	481	1440	1921
1932	120	477	1570	2047
1933	122	539	1646	2185
1934	141	559	1681	2240
1935	139	549	1802	2351
1936	126	517	1778	2295
1937	124	429	1914	2343
1938	113	362	1684	2046
1939	96	301	1355	1656
1940	92	344	1139	1483
1941	61	138	832	970

Source: Nicolae Dascalu, "La presse des minorités dans la Roumanie d'entre les deux guerres (1919-1939). Analyse statistique," *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire* XX(1), pp. 121,122.

Another indication of the vitality of the German Volksgruppe in Greater Romania was the existence of a lively and vibrant press. Just in terms of numbers, the minority press was a comparably large segment of the overall press in Romania between the wars. Nicolae Dascalu's statistical study of the minority press in Romania provides important insights into the German language media. In the year of unification, the library of the Romanian Academy reported

the addition of 26 German language periodicals to its collection out of a total of 754 in all languages. More than ten percent of the additions were minority publications.³² By 1930, the numbers were considerably greater. Table 3 shows the development of the German press through the 'thirties compared to the minority press as a whole and the Romanian language serials.

As one would assume, the production of these German language periodicals took place in the towns and provinces where ethnic Germans lived in high concentrations. Understandably, Transylvania accounted for more than half of the publications in 1933 while the remainder were distributed among twenty-nine other localities. In 1935, the publication of 149 German-language newspapers and reviews was mainly divided among the five towns with the greatest concentration of Germans: 52 in Cernauti (Czernowitz), 40 in

³² Nicolae Dascalu, "La presse des minorités nationales dans la Roumanie d'entre les deux guerres (1919-1939). Analyse statistique." *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire* XX(1): p. 114.

Timisoara (Temeschburg), 14 in Brasov (Kronstadt) and 9 in Bucharest.³³

The German newspapers were very influential in their communities. Among the most notable daily newspapers were the *Kronstädter Zeitung*, founded in 1836, and the *Siebenbürgisch Deutsches Tageblatt*, which was founded in 1873 in Sibiu (Hermannstadt). Many other dailies and weeklies supplemented these two important publications. Notable, however, is that as with most of the minority press in Romania between the two wars, there were no German language publications with a distribution that spanned the entire country. This accounts for the disproportionately large number of German-language publications given the minority's very small size. Rather than having a few publications reaching most of the disparate *volksdeutsch* communities, dozens of journals and newspapers existed to serve each small market.

According to Sophie Welisch, Bukovina was home to the "most sophisticated" journalistic tradition in South-Eastern

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

Europe and the German press was pre-eminent in this province. At the apex of Bukovina journalism was the German publication the *Czernowitzer Zeitung* which began publication in 1868. Soon thereafter, the *Bukowiner Rundschau*, *Bukowiner Nachrichten*, the *Bukowiner Volksblatt*, *Der Volksfreund*, the *Volkspresse* and *Vorwärts* were established. Of special note is the fact that two of the five German language Bukovinan daily newspapers in existence on the eve of the First World War were published by Jews and directed to a Jewish readership. In addition to the dailies, there were trade, literary and scientific journals, each with a reach well beyond the boundaries of the province.³⁴

VOLKSDEUTSCH POLITICAL ORGANISATION

Following the military collapse of the dual monarchy in 1918, a "National Assembly" of Hungary's ethnic Romanians met at Alba-Julia (Karlsburg) for a historic congress. The resulting declaration, issued on 31 November 1918, stated the affiliation of the ethnic Romanians with the Romanian

³⁴ Welisch, "The Bukovina-Germans during the Habsburg Period," p. 90.

state. At the same time, the assembly proclaimed the equality of all cohabiting peoples in the new greater Romanian state. Within months, on 9 January 1919, the Saxon Diet convened and gave its assent to the declaration, thereby aligning the Saxon community with Romania in the question of Transylvania's fate. Likewise, the other groups of ethnic Germans in "Greater Romania" declared their approval of the annexation of Bessarabia and Bukovina.³⁵ This was not the first time that the communities used political organisation to voice their opinion and it certainly was not to be the last.

The previously privileged position of the autonomous Saxon community within Hungary gave it a unique heritage with regard to the politicisation of the ethnic German community. From the nineteenth century, the Saxon community had the *Sachsensatzung*, or the Saxon Diet to look back upon. In October 1876, the *Sächische Volkspartei*, a political party

³⁵ Scheider, *The Fate of the Germans in Rumania*, p. 29-30.

of the Saxons, was formed.³⁶ Though the "Saxon Diet" had lost all of its real power following the union of Austria-Hungary, it never ceased to exist as an institution. The sitting of the Diet in 1919 followed more than twenty years of inactivity. Reconvened under the name German-Saxon People's Council for Transylvania, it was the continuation of the old "University of the Nation." The Saxon community's long tradition of political autonomy and organisation meant that it was only natural for it to assume a position of leadership among the ethnic German groups of Greater Romania.³⁷

The other German communities had no long political tradition to look back upon and only had rudimentary political institutions to act as a *porte-parole*. It was only when they were required to speak with one voice to the Romanian state that they organised politically. The Bessarabian Germans formed the German People's Council for

³⁶ Harald Roth, *Politische Strukturen und Strömungen bei den siebenbürger Sachsen, 1919-1933* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 1994), p. 22-23.

³⁷ Scheider, *The Fate of the Germans in Rumania*, p. 30.

Bessarabia in 1919 from the two year old district committee of the All-Russian Association of Russian Citizens of German Nationality. The situation was similar in Bukovina; the German People's Council, the *Volksrat*, was elected by district committees of the People's Community, which were based upon the elected parish councils. The *Volksrat* system was reorganised in 1920 into the form that persisted throughout the inter-war period. Each German male voted every four years for his local council, the *Ortsrat*. Each *Ortsrat* chose the district representatives who, in turn, elected the 150 representatives who sat on the Bukovina German *Volksrat*.³⁸

The situation in Satu Mare, along the North-western frontier, was notable because the *volksdeutsch* community there had been the subject of strong attempts at Magyarisation. In this region, the local branch of the German-Swabian People's Community was responsible for the "re-awakening of the German ethnic element which had been

³⁸ Sophie A. Welisch, "The Bukovina-Germans in the Inter-war Period," *East European Quarterly*, XIV(4), p. 426.

almost completely submerged." As this province was one claimed by Hungary, even the Romanian authorities encouraged the German re-awakening as a counter to Hungarian revisionist claims.³⁹

At the time of the creation of Greater Romania, each disparate German community had either its own *Volksrat* or another similar organisation. The German community, however, had no political structure to unite them as a singular entity within Romania. As all the German communities had much in common, especially when it came to dealing with the Bucharest government, the regional *Volksräte* established in 1921 an umbrella organisation to speak for all of Romania's *Volksdeutschen*: the *Verband der Deutschen in Rumänien*.⁴⁰ Established in Cernauti (Czernowitz) in Bukovina, the VDR loosely co-ordinated the disparate groups but did little of the hands-on work of helping the individual communities.

Ethnic Germans formed a number of political parties in the first years after the war. Two regional parties had been

³⁹ Scheider, *The Fate of the Germans in Rumania*, p. 31.

⁴⁰ Welisch, "The Bukovina-Germans in the Inter-war Period," p. 426.

established in 1919 to press for the interests of the Swabians. But the *Deutsch-Swäbische Volkspartei* (DSVP) and the *Schwäbische Autonomie-Partei* (SAP) joined together within a year to form the *Deutsche Partei* (DP) which established itself with all *volksdeutsch* communities.⁴¹ The *Volksdeutschen* of Romania benefited from electoral agreements concluded between the *Deutsche Partei* and various government political parties. From the elections of 1920 onward, a significant number of ethnic Germans were elected to both houses of parliament as members of the German Party. Relations between the DP and the Romanian political parties were very good and though the *Volksdeutschen* were never able to get the government to honour the Alba-Julia (Karlsburg) Declarations of 1918 regarding the rights of cohabiting

⁴¹ Mads Ole Balling, *Von Reval bis Bukarest: Statistisch-Biographisches Handbuch der Parlamentarier der deutschen Minderheiten in Ostmittel- und Südosteuropa 1919-1945*, Vol.2 (Copenhagen: Dokumentation Verlag, 1991), pp. 570-571.

peoples, the Germans enjoyed a position of privilege relative to the other minorities.

CHAPTER 3

AUSLANDSDEUTSCHTUM AND THE GERMAN STATE

Even long before the Pan-German League opened its doors in the 1890s, organisations existed with the sole purpose of assisting the far-flung *Auslandsdeutschen* of the world. Allen Cronenberg, in his dissertation regarding *völkisch* ideology and German foreign policy, traces the history of these movements.⁴² The first such organisation can be found in the 1860s, when the German population of the Tyrol were transferred to Italy. Late in that decade, the *Deutsche Schulgesellschaft* (German School Society) was established in Innsbruck to help the Tyrolian Germans resist Italianisation. Propaganda regarding this minority spurred the creation of a similar organisation in Vienna, variously known as the German Reading Society (*Deutscher Leseverein*), the German Society (*Deutscher Verein*) or simply as the German Club (*Deutscher Klub*). A trend was certainly in the

⁴² Allen Thomson Cronenberg, Jr, *The Volksbund für das Deutschtum im Ausland: Völkisch Ideology and German Foreign Policy, 1881-1939* (Ph.D. Diss. Stanford University, 1970).

offing and the simple school societies were soon accompanied by "protective associations" such as the Federation of Germans in Bohemia (*Bund der Deutschen in Böhmen*).⁴³

After the constitution of the *Deutscher Schulverein*, in a Viennese tavern in May 1880, the movement grew rapidly. According to Cronenberg, the movement claimed 120,000 members in the Dual Monarchy within its first seven years. Its mission was simple: to ensure that ethnic German children growing up along the frontiers of Germandom and in mixed population areas were no longer lost to the *Volk*. This undertaking was seen as "non-political" but it ran into opposition from the Austro-Hungarian administration. The *Schulverein* was restricted to operating only within the Habsburg Monarchy and was forbidden to engage in political activities. In spite of the protestations of *Schulverein* authorities, Emperor Francis Joseph felt that the movement was "deeply immersed in political ventures" and expressed the opinion in 1883 that it should be dissolved.⁴⁴

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 1-10.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

Nevertheless, the *Schulverein* survived, narrowly escaping being labelled a political faction by the Austrian authorities and banned.

The *Deutscher Schulverein* came to the German Reich through an arm's length arrangement in order to satisfy the Austrian condition that prohibited the creation of associations with branches outside of the Austrian frontiers. Furthermore, *völkisch*-minded Reich Germans were interested in *Volksdeutschen* beyond the frontiers of the Dual Monarchy in addition to their kindred within those borders. This difference of priorities was not sufficient to cause the rift between the two branches of the *Schulverein*. In August 1881, the Reich German group at once constituted themselves as an *Ortsgruppe* of the *Deutscher Schulverein* and as an independent organisation. Ultimately, the unwillingness of the Reich Germans to submit to supervision by Austrians led to the establishment of the *Allgemeiner Deutscher Schulverein*, or the General German School Association.

Unlike the *Deutscher Schulverein*, the ADS was highly decentralised and managed to penetrate all the major German cities in within a short time. Though it never rivalled the large popular organisations of the time, such as the *Flottenverein* or the Pan-German League, the *Allgemeiner Deutscher Schulverein* grew quickly and became a popular organisation. A great boost came with the establishment of an associated *Frauengruppe* for women in Wiesbaden in 1885, a move that brought remarkable involvement in *volksdeutsch* affairs on the part of women. The *Frauengruppe* became such a significant element in the ADS that a separate administration was established for them in 1912. In 1892, the ADS received another great boost when the *Burschenschaften*, the university fraternities, joined the ADS *en masse*.⁴⁵

Another marked departure from the Vienna-based *Deutscher Schulverein* took place in 1889 when the ADS, recognising its expanding role, changed its name to the *Allgemeiner Deutscher Schulverein zur Erhaltung des*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

Deutschtums im Auslande (German General School League for the Preservation of Germanism Abroad). The final development in this series of progressive changes took place with the abandonment of the notion of simply being a school association. In 1908, the ADS became the *Verein für das Deutschtum im Ausland*. Instead of simply concerning itself with the threatened *Deutschtum* in the Habsburg Empire, the VDA also looked across the Atlantic Ocean to help the millions of Germans who had emigrated to the new world.⁴⁶

BEFORE THE NAZI SEIZURE OF POWER

Verein für das Deutschtum im Ausland

Throughout its history the VDA was one of the most important Reich German organisations for the Romanian *Volksdeutschen*. Though there was often little interest in *volksdeutsch* affairs in Germany, the VDA and its predecessors operated a vigorous propaganda campaign that was accompanied by all the requisite media organs. Their monthly, *Das Deutschtum im Ausland*, had a limited readership of 20,000 and their *Handbuch des Deutschtums im Ausland* sold

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

out its full run of 2000 copies in 1904. Even more impressive was *Deutsche Arbeit*, an independent magazine that had a very close relationship with the VDA through one of its writers, a Hermann Ullmann. Ullmann was a Bohemian German who staunchly promoted the *Volksdeutschen* of *Mitteleuropa* in the pages of the publication.⁴⁷

The First World War was a pivotal event for the VDA and for the *völkisch* movement in general. During the war, the VDA, like most other *völkisch* groups, hoped that Germany would expand its frontiers to include the territories of the *Grenzdeutschen* of the east. As this appeared to happen and the German armies began turning back the Russian forces, the VDA was given an explicit role in the war. Many of the liberated areas contained significant numbers of *Volksdeutschen* and "ethnic Germans called upon the VDA to assist in establishing, building or expanding German schools."⁴⁸

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

Beyond school-building measures, the VDA became much more vocal as it moved beyond its previous activities in school assistance and consciousness-raising. The movement switched to advocating and lobbying for specific political and military objectives during the First World War. As part of the movement loosely termed the "War Aims Movement" (*Kriegszielbewegung*), the VDA associated itself with the major radical right organisations in Germany, (including the Pan-German League, the Army League, the Navy League and the Association Against Social Democracy as well as industrial groups) in order to promote an open debate on Germany's war aims. On 20 May 1915, their group issued the Petition of the Six Economic Organisations hoping

that our German Fatherland shall emerge from its fight for existence—which has been forced upon it—greater and stronger, with secured frontiers in the west and in the east and with the European colonial extensions of territory necessary for the maintenance of our sea power as well as for military and economic existence.⁴⁹

Furthermore, the Petition demanded tariff protection, war indemnities and enormous territorial accessions. The group

⁴⁹ Hans Wilhelm Gatzke, *Germany's Drive to the West (Drang nach Westen): A Study of Germany's Western War Aims During the First World War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1950), pp. 43-44.

even called for the occupation of the Belgian and French coastlines to guarantee unfettered access to the Atlantic. Approximately one month later, a "Petition of the Intellectuals" was circulated, expressing very similar objectives but without the taint of economic self-interest.

Unfortunately for the *völkisch* ideologues of the first decades of this century, the war did not result in a German dominated *Mitteleuropa* for which they had been hoping. No longer could nationalists hope that the *Reich* would expand to include all the disparate *volksdeutsch* groups.

Paradoxically, however, the immense damage done to the German state brought the VDA to its heyday. When the peace conferences were over and the treaties were signed, the millions of pre-war *Volksdeutschen* were joined by millions more *Grenzdeutschen* from the lands that had been severed from the *Reich*. The 'undefended' German minority groups were in a particularly vulnerable position following the war because of a strong surge of anti-German feeling throughout

the continent.⁵⁰ For the *auslandsdeutsch* movement, this was a critical time. The increase in the VDA's charges also brought increased awareness of the plight of the *Auslandsdeutschen* among *Reich* Germans.

During the Weimar era, the VDA spent its energies offering tangible help to the disparate *volksdeutsch* communities. Beyond cash transfers to help German Schools, the VDA offered stipends and scholarships to help *auslandsdeutsch* students pursue higher education in Germany. Furthermore, it actively recruited *Reich* German teachers to take leaves of absence to teach in *auslandsdeutsch* schools. Its most successful endeavour, however, was its activities in Germany, working within the home schools. In 1922, the VDA approached educational authorities throughout Germany requesting that greater emphasis be placed on the study of *Auslandsdeutschtum*. The result was equivocal: in 1923, the *Reich* School Committee stated that schools "were duty bound to include the study of Germans abroad in the curricula."⁵¹

⁵⁰ John Hiden, "The Weimar Republic and the Problem of the *Auslandsdeutsche*," *Journal of Contemporary History*, XII, p. 273.

⁵¹ Cronenburg, *The Volksbund für das Deutschtum im Ausland*, p. 65.

This did not, however, mean that the study of the *Auslandsdeutschen* became widespread. Some schools adopted this recommendation while others either ignored it or wilfully defied it. In fact, the Prussian Minister of Science, Education and Culture forbade teachers encouraging their students to join the VDA or even to participate in VDA activities on 30 August 1930. According to Cronenberg, this put an end to the functioning of the VDA's very important school groups.⁵²

Nevertheless, the Weimar era was the heyday of work for the *Volksdeutschen*. In addition to the VDA, dozens of organisations sprang up to raise awareness of the *Auslandsdeutschen* and to provide them with assistance in their efforts to stave off attempts at assimilation. Ranging from lobby organisations such as the VDA to think tanks such as the *Forschungsstelle Schwaben im Ausland* (Research Group

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 67.

for Swabians Abroad),⁵³ the magnitude of interest is impressive.

Deutsches Ausland-Institut

Among the many sister organisations of the VDA, the *Deutsches Ausland-Institut* was the most important and the most influential. While the VDA and the Pan-Germanists were primarily preoccupied with public agitation and activities abroad, the DAI operated as an academic "think tank." In fact, the headquarters of the DAI, the *Haus des Deutschtums* after 1925, was the focal point for much of the contemporary research into the millions of *Volksdeutschen*.

Scientific and academic study of Germans outside the Reich was generally reserved to specialised institutions which provided the literature and research for the lobby groups. Before the First World War, this function was performed by the *Zentralstelle zur Erforschung des Deutschtums im Ausland* (Central Bureau for the Investigation of Germanism Abroad), an independent institute that worked

⁵³ Mentioned in Thomas Spira, *German-Hungarian Relations and the Swabian Problem, From Károlyi to Gombös 1919-1936* (New York: Columbia University Press for East European Quarterly, 1977), p. 153.

closely with the VDA. Later pre-war organisations, such as the *Institut für Auslandkunde, Grenz- und Auslandsdeutschtum* (Institute for the Science of Germans Abroad), fed the relatively limited need for such studies.⁵⁴

The postwar surge in interest about *Auslandsdeutschtum* resulted in a rapid increase in the number of institutes and foundations devoted to studying Germans abroad and other minority communities. The most important was the *Deutsches Ausland-Institut*, which had its genesis in a travelling exhibition. In 1917, the institute was founded as "a central exchange for statistics and information on the problem of Germanism at home abroad."⁵⁵

Based in Stuttgart—because of the large amount of emigration from South-Western Germany—the DAI was rapidly known as the home of the most extensive collection of research materials on the subject. Though the DAI's *raison d'être* was academic and scientific study, the specialisation of the institute was inherently political. Throughout the

⁵⁴ Ralph F. Bischoff, *Nazi Conquest through German Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1942), p. 102.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

interwar period, the DAI and the VDA were generally seen to be partners in the struggle to reunite Germandom.⁵⁶

The Weimar government

In her important dissertation on the subject, Carole Fink agrees with most historians of this era in arguing that the ultimate objective of the Weimar government was the revision of the Treaty of Versailles. This objective was the primary motivating factor of Weimar's policies and the government was fundamentally revisionist before the ink was dry on the treaty.⁵⁷ The amputation of vast amounts of German territory through the Treaty of Versailles was something that all the Weimar governments worked very hard to reverse. Treaty revision as a primary objective was shared by both the Weimar government and Hitler's subsequent regime. The Weimar government was well prepared to use the presence of ethnic Germans and economic subvention to achieve territorial revision for the lost territories.

⁵⁶ Ibid. U.S., Department of State, *National Socialism: Basic Principles, their Application by the Nazi Party's Foreign Organisation, and the Use of Germans Abroad for Nazi Aims* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1942), pp. 121-122.

⁵⁷ Carole Fink, *The Weimar Republic as the Defender of Minorities, 1919-1933* (Ph.D. Diss. Yale University, 1968).

Hitler, in contrast, had clear contempt for diplomacy when it failed to achieve his objectives. Furthermore, his objectives went well beyond the reclamation of territory desired by Weimar.

The Weimar government felt that a large portion of their claim to the detached lands in the east rested upon the fact that these lands were occupied by ethnic Germans. This was, after all, the period when the principle of national self determination was at its apogee and when populations were being asked to decide their own fates. Unfortunately, the ethnic Germans scattered throughout Eastern and Central Europe were not asked to which nation they felt they belonged. The prospect for reunion with the Reich was a distant dream, but one that the Weimar Republic worked toward. The *Auslandsdeutschen* of Eastern Europe were assets that could be exploited by the Weimar governments to further their foreign policies in general and their demands for territorial revision in particular.

The nation-building in South-Eastern Europe that followed the First World War meant that German groups

throughout the region were vulnerable to aggressive attempts on the part of the local governments to assimilate them into the dominant group. Simply, this was a threat to the objectives of Weimar's revisionism and the German government was prepared to work against any movements toward assimilation. Overtly, the Weimar government assumed the mantle of champion for all minorities. Once admitted to the League of Nations, Germany became a stalwart advocate for minority rights and was very vocal on the subject. In the interest of consistency, the Weimar government even advocated improving the conditions within the *Reich* for minorities:

The well-known fact that no other country in the world is interested in the solution of this question to the same extent as Germany, explains the widely prevalent attempt to make it difficult for us to intercede on behalf of minorities and the concern with how best to put Germany in the wrong over this. Thus, the position of the Auswärtiges Amt must be that, in order to counter the efforts to 'denationalise' the nine million Germans living outside our borders in Europe, it is unavoidable that we ourselves do something for the minorities living in our own state."⁵⁸

⁵⁸ "Memorandum on the meeting between German government departments on 10 February 1926 to consider the need for regulating the cultural rights of the national minorities in the *Reich*," Germany, Auswärtiges Amt, *Akten zur deutschen Auswärtigen Politik 1918-1945*, Series B, Vol. I, 1 (Göttingen 1966), pp. 202-207.

Acting as an advocate of the rights of all minorities was a cover for the efforts of the Weimar government to preserve the Germanness of the *Auslandsdeutschen*. The very nature of *volksdeutsch* work meant that it would be unacceptable for the German government to be seen working in foreign countries with the disparate German groups. Regardless of nationalistic sentiments to the contrary, the *Auslandsdeutschen* were citizens of a foreign state. Actions on the part of the German government would have been interference in the internal affairs of another country. Though it strongly desired to halt the assimilation of ethnic Germans and even the integration of territory into the successor states, any work to this end had to be carried out unofficially and *sub rosa*.

Luckily for the Weimar regime, the infrastructure to work toward these ends was already in place. The VDA, the DAI and the many other *Völkstum*-minded organisation were more than willing to co-operate with the government and offered assistance. The co-ordination of official and

private efforts had three principal elements, according to

John Hiden:

Firstly, the private organisations themselves achieved a measure of integrated effort, and rough lines of demarcation slowly appeared. Secondly, this trend was actively encouraged and influenced by the government, in the interests of limiting the areas of potential conflict between the movement and the overall requirements of German foreign policy. Thirdly, certain 'private' organisations were, in effect, transformed into 'concealed' official bodies.⁵⁹

Of the *volksdeutsch* organisations, the *Deutsche Stiftung* came the closest to being a "concealed official body." It was originally formed in 1919 to assist in keeping the territories in the East from falling to Poland. Once the map was redrawn, and its goal had not been achieved, the *Stiftung* found itself with the task of maintaining the Germans in Poland.

Semi-official control of the *Stiftung* was achieved through regular meetings between government officials from the Foreign Office, the Interior Ministry, the Finance Ministry, and the organisation's directors. Furthermore, the *Stiftung* was subject to parliamentary oversight through an

⁵⁹ John Hiden, "The Weimar Republic and the Problem of the *Auslandsdeutsche*," p. 274.

advisory body that included representatives from most of the major political parties. The most important element of government control, however, came from control over the purse strings. Throughout the 'twenties, the *Stiftung* was a channel for government money that had been carefully laundered through an "intricate network" that included a private bank in the Netherlands.⁶⁰ As its mandate was expanded to include all the *Auslandsdeutschen* of Europe, it received and channelled abroad greater and greater sums of money. The peak came in 1926 following Stresemann's "Memorandum concerning the availability of 30 million RM for granting credit to settled German groups abroad in Europe."⁶¹

Despite having control over a large portion of the movement's funds, the Weimar government was not able to completely control the *völkisch* movement for its own ends. The case, rather, was that the humanitarian, cultural and economic concerns of the VDA, the DAI and the *Stiftung*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 277.

⁶¹ Germany, Auswärtiges Amt, *Akten zur deutschen Auswärtigen Politik 1918-1945*, Series B, Vol. I, 1, pp. 430-433.

coincided with the government's tactical manoeuvring. The vast sums of money injected by the Weimar government were more than significant in the work of the völkisch movement and helped to give it a boost at the time when it was undertaking to assist more ethnic Germans than ever before. To suggest, however, that the movement had somehow "sold out" to the government or that it had been transformed into a stable of lackeys for the Weimar Regime is completely erroneous. The arrangement was mutually beneficial and neither side had the upper hand.

AUSLANDSDEUTSCHEN AND THE THIRD REICH

Official Reich Policy

Nazi Volkstumspolitik

Few assertions are more of an understatement than saying that race and nationality played an important role in the Nazi *Weltanschauung*. Though the infamous and heinous racism of the movement needs little comment upon, it is critical to one's understanding of Nazism and its appeal to millions of people to look at the less vicious aspects of Nazi racial doctrine. Of prime importance to this is an

understanding of the concept of nation as espoused by the National Socialists and the position of the *Auslandsdeutschen* within this amorphous body.

Nazi racial doctrine was not a unique fabrication of a select number of racialists. Indeed, it had a long history that stretches back into the nineteenth century. While vitriolic anti-Semitism and anti-Slavism were factors that attracted many of the Party's adherents, it was probably the more conventionally nationalistic aspects of Nazi doctrine that appealed to most of those who supported Hitler and his movement. The following extract suggests not only selective memory, but also one of the prime attributes that attracted hundreds of thousands to the ranks of the National Socialists:

When discussing the Nazi years with Germans who had lived through them, one so frequently encounters an explanation for supporting the Nazi cause that runs something like this: "Yes, it was terrible what the Nazis did to the Jews, BUT they did so many good things for us Germans." It was this side of National Socialism, its professed preoccupation with German welfare, rather than the destruction of the Jews and other non-Germans, which for the average German was the

essence of National Socialism and its most appealing trait.⁶²

Hitler and his cohorts were politically very shrewd: they did not preach blind hatred to audiences who would not be energised by such rhetoric. Unfortunately, it seems that many were too willing to avert their attention from the ugliness that characterised the movement.

A critical element of Nazi doctrine was its racist conception of history. Just as doctrinaire Marxists believe that human history is a long succession of class struggles, Nazis believed that history is a similar struggle between races. The superior *Menschen* were locked in a life and death struggle with the *Untermenschen*, and the outcome far from pre-ordained. Of course, the Germans and select other "Germanic" races were believed to be among the *Herrenvolk*, in contrast to the supposedly inferior Jews, Slavs, Africans, Gypsies and Asians. The prime danger to the German Volk was miscegenation, the mingling of "inferior" blood with that of Germans. The response to this perceived crisis

⁶² Valdis O. Lumans, "The Nazi Racial Doctrine and Policies: An Interpretation," *Proceedings of the South Carolina Historical Association* 1982, p. 64.

was two-pronged. On one hand, the Nazis worked to eliminate and subjugate the supposedly inferior races, isolating them from civil society and from the gene pool. On the other hand, they endeavoured to help those deemed to be German to maintain their culture and their connection with the nation.

To Nazi ideologues, race was believed to be an over-arching, almost mystical entity that connected each German to each other and to the *Volksgemeinschaft*, or folk-community. This connection, they believed, was the strongest bond that could connect two people and took precedence over all other connections of class, occupation or citizenship. The redrawing of the map of Europe following the First World War dislodged millions of Germans from the *Reich* but the National Socialists did not believe that the ties of race and nationality could ever be extinguished. Moreover, the Germans of Czechoslovakia, for example, were not seen to be Czechs of German descent but rather were Germans first and foremost. Friedrich Lange, a prominent Pan-Germanist writing in 1937, provides one strong example of this conception:

. . . blood is stronger than a passport! . . . We will never call the German people who are citizens of foreign countries aliens but racial comrades! German

people will always remain our racial comrades even if foreign citizenship is forced upon them, just as members of an alien race can never become German racial comrades by means of conversion. We will always remember that we, Germans, are not only citizens of the largest German state, of the German Reich, but that we are also special comrades of more than 30 million Germans outside our borders.⁶³

The Nazi nationalists argued that allegiance to one's race comes before any other loyalty and that fidelity to the German race was not dependant upon one's political outlook. Of course, the awakening of devotion to the principles of National Socialism was expected to go hand-in-hand with the awakening of national consciousness among the ethnic Germans:

The German folk-community includes not only all those who are members of the NSDAP, it includes all who by origin, language, and culture belong to the German folk-community and in accordance with the rigid law of nature acknowledge their allegiance to the German folk-community. The German folk-community includes [the members of the folk] . . . also without regard to what former political direction or party the individual may have formerly adhered to, and without regard to how the individual formerly considered National Socialism and Adolf Hitler, formerly at a time when he was not yet enlightened about the essence of National Socialism and the NSDAP, about Adolf Hitler and his intentions. The one and only presupposition is that the folk-member today pledges allegiance to the German folk-community and lets all his thinking, feeling, and acting be directed toward that which the flag of the German folk-community, the flag of the

⁶³ Quoted in U.S., Department of State, *National Socialism*, p. 70.

National Socialist German Reich, the Adolf Hitler flag commands him.⁶⁴

National Socialist Volkstumspolitik was inextricably linked with the general Weltanschauung of the Nazi party, including the critical notions of nation and race. The supposed interconnectedness of all Germans was fundamental to much of the appeal of German Nationalism among the *Volksdeutschen*. That the next step of national "reawakening" toward Nazism would happen was assumed and the Nazi party worked to make it happen.

The Policy of Lebensraum

Much of German foreign policy after 1933 was influenced by the infamous policy of *Lebensraum*. Throughout the Nazi era, *Lebensraum* was a very elastic doctrine that was sufficiently malleable to account for many of Germany's actions toward Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. In simple terms, Hitler and his ideologues blamed Germany's lack of 'living space' for its economic woes. Compared to the U.S.,

⁶⁴ Fritz Reinhardt, *Vom Wesen der Volksgemeinschaft* (published in *Grundlagen, Aufbau und Wirtschaftsordnung des nationalsozialistischen Staates*. Berlin, 1936.), Vol. I, group 1, no. 8, p. 2. Quoted in *Ibid.*, pp. 71-72.

the U.S.S.R. or England, Hitler argued, Germany possessed a very large population that was crammed into a small area. In a Reichstag speech directed squarely at President Roosevelt and the United States, Hitler asserted that

You have the good fortune to have to feed scarcely fifteen people per square kilometre in your country. You have at your disposal the most unlimited mineral resources in the world. As a result of the large area covered by your country and the fertility of your fields, you are able to insure for each individual American ten times the amount of commodities possible in Germany.

In spite of the fact that the population of your country is scarcely one-third greater than the number of inhabitants in Greater Germany, you possess more than fifteen times as much living space.⁶⁵

To make matters even worse, Hitler argued, the Treaty of Versailles and its territorial adjustments greatly decreased the 'living space' of the German people. This was one critical component of the treaty that Hitler sought to revise. However, he was never explicit in proffering a clear solution to the problem. The implication of the *Lebensraum* doctrine was that the *Reich* would use armed expansion to ensure that the German people would never be strangled by a

⁶⁵ Adolf Hitler, "Reichstag Speech of 28 April 1939," *My New Order*, Translated and edited by Raoul de Roussy de Sales (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1941), p. 677.

limited supply of foodstuffs and other resources. The annexation of Czechoslovakia and the occupation of Poland were evidence of this, not to mention the fateful invasion of Russia.

The Policy of Germanisation

Hand-in-hand with the doctrine of *Lebensraum* went the Nazi plan to Germanise South-Eastern Europe. According to Ihor Kamenetsky's analysis of *Lebensraum* policies, the Nazi government intended to Germanise the South-East by first conquering the area and then applying their racial policies throughout the region. Among the first stages in this exercise was the establishment of German colonies throughout the area. The colonists were to be "racially pure" Germans who would form the foundation for a future germanised zone. According to this great plan, in the words of historian Robert Koehl, "eastern Europe was to be colonised by Germans as if it were still the medieval frontier land of civilisation."⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Robert L. Koehl, *RKFDV: German Resettlement and Population Policy, 1939-1945: A History of the Reich Commission for the*

Nazi racialists who fancied themselves to be scientists determined the "Germanic" characteristics of the other ethnic groups in Europe. Some, such as the Estonians, were deemed by to be "racially akin to the Germans" and therefore needed no Germanisation. Rather, they were equals who could be easily integrated into the Reich once their politics were in line with the Nazi system. Members of the second tier ethnic groups, those who were determined to be partially Germanic—the Czechs, Latvians and Lithuanians—could attempt individually to prove their Germanic endowment. Otherwise, they were to be excluded from the ruling people. Below the second tier were those who were seen to be "racially alien" from the Germans. This included the Poles, Jews, Ukrainians, Belorussians and the Gypsies. Members of these ethnic groups were to feel the negative side of the Germanisation effort. In the words of Ihor Kamenetsky,

Since the colonies to be established in the *Lebensraum* were to be purely *Germanic* the peoples indigenous to the territories must be treated with that objective in mind. The treatment applied to all members of a particular nation. Only those who were individually picked as having Germanic

traits were eligible for Germanisation, and only they could escape the harshness of the German *Lebensraum* policy.⁶⁷

For this undertaking, the indigenous *Volksdeutschen* were of critical importance. The *Reichskommissariat für die Festigung deutschen Volkstums* (Reich Commission for the Strengthening of Germandom), known as the RKFDV, found it necessary to establish formal criteria for the registration of ethnic Germans and for determining their "germanness." The result was the *Volksliste*, a record of racial descent that divided the ethnic Germans into four classes. Class I was composed of those ethnic Germans who had been active members of Nazi organisations abroad. Regular Nazi party membership was immediately offered to the Class I *Volksdeutschen*, but more importantly, they were automatically granted German citizenship. Class II ethnic Germans were those who had been actively involved in German cultural organisations but not Nazi associations. German citizenship was granted immediately, but they were not eligible for instant party membership. Class III Germans

⁶⁷ Ihor Kamenetsky, *Secret Nazi Plans for Eastern Europe: A Study of Lebensraum Policies* (New York: Bookman Associates, 1961), p. 83.

were those who did not associate formally with Germandom, but who were preserving German culture within their families. Accordingly, Class III status meant that German citizenship was provisional for ten years to determine their loyalty to the *Volks*. The final rank, Class IV, was for those labelled to be "German Renegades" who had been assimilated into the alien culture and who actively participated in foreign political and cultural life.⁶⁸ The fate that befell the *Volksdeutschen* of Eastern Europe was completely determined by the Nazi state.

Official Volksdeutsch Organs in the Third Reich

Before the Nazi seizure of power in 1933, few National Socialists had paid much attention to the *Auslandsdeutschen* question in any serious way. Within the upper ranks of the party, no person had emerged as the main ideologue or authority on *volksdeutsch* matters and there was, therefore, no natural person to take on the mantle of *volksdeutsch* affairs when the party took power. When the potential power inherent in this arena became clear, numerous factions began

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 84-86.

staking claims. According to Valdis Lumans "the *Volkstum* arena reflected the general condition of the Third Reich, an organisational nightmare of jealous personal rivalries, overlapping authorities, and duplication of labour and resources."⁶⁹ In addition to the private organisations, those competing to champion the *Volksdeutschen* among Nazi officialdom were the *Auslands-Organisation* of the NSDAP, the *Außenpolitisches Amt*, also of the NSDAP, the Foreign Office and the largely ineffective *Volksdeutscher Rat*.

The *Auslands-Organisation* of the NSDAP

Structurally, Nazi party was divided into districts, or *Gaue*, to reflect the different regions of Germany. On its face, this system excluded those Nazi party members who were *Reich* citizens that lived abroad. Therefore, on 1 May 1931, the NSDAP founded a foreign section to unify and organise those party members who lived outside of Germany. These Germans must be explicitly distinguished from the *Volksdeutschen* who were not citizens of the German *Reich* and

⁶⁹ Lumans, *Himmler's Auxiliaries*, p. 32.

were, therefore, ineligible to join the Nazi Party.⁷⁰

Officially, the *Auslands-Organisation* was the equivalent of a *Gau*, but it had a more elaborate structure to reflect its unique circumstances. Still, the AO was limited to acting as a liaison between Reich Germans abroad and the Party and had no role to play in *volksdeutsch* affairs. This mandate, however, was disputed by the AO chief, Ernst Bohle. According to Valdis Lumans, "Bohle interpreted the ambiguous term *Auslandsdeutsche* to include *Volksdeutsche* as well as Reich Germans."⁷¹ This was despite the official Party line that "the AO will keep itself away from all non-German affairs."⁷²

In addition to meddling in *volksdeutsch* affairs, the AO was also known as a tool of subversion overseas and accounted for much of Nazi Germany's fifth column activities abroad. This is logical considering that it was an

⁷⁰ "Affidavit of Ernst Wilhelm Bohle," International Military Tribunal, Trial of the Major War Criminals, X, p. 12.

⁷¹ Lumans, *Himmler's Auxiliaries*, p. 35.

⁷² Original reads: "Von allen nichtdeutschen Angelegenheiten hält sich die AO fern." Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiter-Partei, *Organisationsbuch der NSDAP*, München: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, 1943, p. 143.

organisation of stalwart Nazi German citizens scattered around the world.

The Außenpolitisches Amt of the NSDAP

As with the AO, the Außenpolitisches Amt was a Nazi Party organ that sought a role in volksdeutsch affairs. Officially, the APA was established to work with the German Auswärtiges Amt, or Foreign Office, to formulate the Reich's Foreign Policy. The APA was led by the Party's most prominent ideologue and pre-eminent racialist, Alfred Rosenberg. Rosenberg came to Germany from Estonia's volksdeutsch community and aspired to a position of prominence with the Foreign Office. When the job of Foreign Minister was denied to him, he settled for creating the APA, a position that still allowed him a hand in the formulation of foreign policy. His personal background led him to regard himself as an authority on the ethnic Germans and he therefore attempted to reach beyond his mandate into volksdeutsch affairs.

The German Foreign Office

By their very nature, *volksdeutsch* affairs had a natural importance for the foreign affairs of the German Reich. As it was a very sensitive arena that involved Reich Germans interfering with the internal affairs of foreign states, the German Foreign Office was keen to prevent overzealous *Volkstumkämpfer* from adversely affecting the Reich's official diplomatic relations. Even before the "co-ordination" of the early Nazi era (1933-1935), the Foreign Office had sought a voice in these matters through the *Deutsche Stiftung*.

The Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle

The many disparate *völkstum* organisations, both official and nominally private, were operating in an arena that closely touched upon Hitler's favourite arena: foreign affairs. Even though the *volksdeutsch* movement had been "co-ordinated," it was felt that there must be oversight to ensure that the actions of the non-*altkämpfer* leaders were consistent with the wishes of the Nazi leadership. Thus, the *Volksdeutsche Parteidiensstelle* was born as a division of

the Nazi Party to oversee ethnic German affairs and to act as a liaison between the party, the state and the *völkstum* associations. It became known simply as the Büro Kursell, after its leader, Otto von Kursell, who was well connected among both the NSDAP and the *volksdeutsch* movement. Not coincidentally, Kursell was also a member of the SS.

Into the political feuding over the *Volkstum* movement between Ribbentrop, Hess and Bohle entered Heinrich Himmler. Himmler, as leader of the SS, was Kursell's superior, a fact that he was prepared to exploit. While the Büro Kursell was a party office, Himmler was keen to use Kursell's SS connection to pull the Büro under the supervision of the SS and under his personal control. According to Valdis Lumans,

Himmler's most important consideration was probably political. Extending his authority over the estimated ten million *Volksdeutsche* of Europe—equivalent in number to the population of a medium-sized European state—would strengthen his position within the Reich. . . .

One final consideration that probably occurred to Himmler was ideological. . . . He very well may have recognised the *Volksdeutsche* as a valuable source of racial "material" for building the new order. The vision of Germanic peasant soldiers colonising the East under a feudal-like knightly order had been floating around in his head for some time."³

³ Lumans, *Himmler's Auxiliaries*, pp. 38-39.

The SS connection was critical in cementing Himmler's predominance over Volkstum affairs. In late 1936, Himmler attempted to use his SS authority to influence Kursell's work among the Sudeten Germans. When Kursell refused and appealed to Hess, Himmler used somewhat exaggerated allegations to demand Kursell's resignation from the SS. Though his membership in the SS was honorary, being stripped of it was enough to seal his fate. According to Lumans,

Kursell's expulsion from the SS and his firing as chief of VoMi demonstrated how Himmler could use the SS membership of certain well-placed individuals to extend his influence and power. He did not need direct jurisdiction over an organisation or office to have his way with it. Insertion of SS personnel sufficed. A loyal SS man would obey Himmler, and as Kursell's case demonstrated, a disloyal one would be defrocked of his black uniform, an increasingly desirable addition to any Berlin wardrobe. Dismissal from the SS carried with it a stigma that, for anyone but the highest of the Nazi faithful, could derail a promising career or lead to even more serious consequences.⁷⁴

Kursell was replaced with another SS officer, Werner Lorenz, and Himmler's predominance in Volkstumarbeit was well secured.

The chain of command for volksdeutsch affairs was a confusing web of interconnecting offices. The VoMi became

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 41.

responsible for overseeing all work with and for ethnic Germans. Lorenz, as head of the VoMi was officially responsible to Rudolf Hess, to whom Hitler had granted absolute authority in this area. In practice, however, Lorenz reported to Ribbentrop in his capacity as foreign policy advisor to Hess. Though Himmler had given Lorenz a temporary leave of absence from the SS, Himmler still had much authority over the VoMi head. In the chain of command, only the triumvirate of Ribbentrop, Hess and Himmler stood between Lorenz and Hitler.

According to Lumans, who has studied the VoMi, the appointment of Lorenz was a turning point in the work of the *volksdeutsch* movement. Under Kursell, the VoMi acted as a moderating influence which, rather than agitating for greater action on the part of the movement, worked toward moderation. It can be accurately stated that his work was critical for the consolidation of *volksdeutsch* efforts, both within the *Reich* and among the far-flung ethnic communities. This, however, reflected equally the general outlook of the Nazi regime. Though the long-term objectives of the party

demanded a violent conflict with other European powers, the period of time between the seizure of power and 1936 was marked by consolidation and outward non-aggression. It was an era of "relative legality and 'peace talk' during which Germany professed to be searching for an honourable, stable principle of international relations to put in the place of the unworkable system of Versailles."⁷⁵ The VoMi after 1937, however, was much more activist under Lorenz. It was not until the war years that the VoMi guided the movement toward actual, hands-on involvement in the day-to-day lives of the disparate *volksdeutsch* groups. In fact, the VoMi was critical in completely transforming and, in some cases, uprooting entire communities.⁷⁶

Following the invasion of Poland, Hitler stood up in the *Reichstag* and announced to the world that his territorial ambitions had been met and that he would even resettle the *Volksdeutschen* of Poland to the *Reich* to remove

⁷⁵ Koehl, *RKFDV*, p. 38.

⁷⁶ Lumans, *Himmler's Auxiliaries*, p. 43.

a potential source of conflict with the U.S.S.R.⁷⁷ It was the *Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle* that would carry out the relocation and set the stage for further moves by the ethnic Germans of Eastern Europe.

The Reichskommissariat für die Festigung deutschen Volkstums

Although Hitler had given Hess and the VoMi pre-eminence in the *volksdeutsch* arena, Himmler ensured that his influence in this area continued to grow. For a number of years before the war, Himmler had been working toward his fantasy of feudal German knights conquering the eastern territories. The tool for this was the *Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamt* (Race and Settlement Main Office), RuSHA, which was established in 1931 as a research and propaganda office of the SS. The racial section was responsible for pseudo-scientific race research and for the screening all SS applicants, their wives and their fiancées. The settlement office undertook agricultural research and sought to inculcate "back to the soil" values among SS members who

⁷⁷ Hitler's Speech, 6 October 1939, in Loaber, *Diktierte Option*, no. 72, pp. 79-81. Cited in Lumans, *Himmler's Auxiliaries*, p. 131.

were expected to be the vanguard of the agrarian-knighthood.⁷⁸

The underlying motive of all Weimar dealings with the *Volksdeutschen* had to do with the notion that by supporting the ethnic Germans and encouraging them to remain where they were, the German people would thereby have an increased claim to the territory on which they resided. This notion, held by the VDA, generally continued into the Nazi era and was particularly true with regard to the *Grenzdeutsche* inhabiting contested border areas. The only exception was that, after the Nazi *gleichschaltung*, or co-ordination, through which non-governmental organisations were forced to conform with Nazi principles and policies, all activities that involved ethnic Germans took a definite back seat to foreign policy considerations. The Reich abandoned South Tyrol to Italy in 1938 because of an overriding need to strengthen the Rome-Berlin relationship. The ethnic Germans of South Tyrol were hardly enthusiastic about the Reich's about-face, particularly because organisations such as the

⁷⁸ Koehl, *RKFDV*, p. 42.

VDA and the VoMi had exhorted them to maintain their Germanness to the point of chauvinism. Ironically, it was the VoMi which was asked to pacify the Tyrolese Germans lest their vocal disappointment sour German-Italian relations. This was insufficient to satisfy Mussolini and it appeared that nothing short of "repatriation" to the Reich would appease him. After many tactical delays, Himmler was given the responsibility for the inglorious withdrawal of the Tyrolese Germans.⁷⁹

The invasion of Poland in 1939 gave Himmler the opportunity to test his prototype of *Wehrbauern*, or farmer militia. Over the course of the ten years before the invasion, Polish authorities had evicted ethnic Germans who lived along their western frontier and replaced them with Polish settlers. Himmler's plan was to settle armed villages opposite the Polish villages and to "encourage" the Poles to resettle further east. The settlers were to be ethnic Germans and thereby Himmler was given a mandate to greatly expand his involvement with the ethnic Germans of Eastern

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

Europe. When Poland was divided between Germany and the U.S.S.R., there were thousands of ethnic Germans who lived in the eastern portion. Through a decree of 7 October 1939, Himmler was commissioned by the *Führer* to resettle the ethnic Germans who lived in the new Soviet zone of Poland:

- (1) to bring back those German citizens and ethnic Germans abroad who are eligible for permanent return to the Reich;
- (2) to eliminate the harmful influence of such alien parts of the population as constitute a danger to the Reich and the German community;
- (3) to create new German colonies by resettlement, and especially by the resettlement of German citizens and ethnic Germans coming back from abroad.⁸⁰

Caring for the resettled Germans was the joint responsibility of the RKFDV and the VoMi. Three types of camps were set up by the Liaison Office to accommodate settlers and evacuees. The first type were simple transit camps for the use of evacuees as they made their way from the Soviet zone to the annexed territories and to the Reich. Observation camps were scattered throughout the Old Reich and the conquered territories for the racial vetting of

⁸⁰ "NO 3075: Decree by the *Führer* and Reich Chancellor for the Consolidation of German Folkdom," Koehl, *RKFDV*, Appendix I, p. 247.

ethnic Germans. The final type was the receiving camp to accommodate settlers in their new home areas.⁸¹

Unofficial Volksdeutsch Organs in the Third Reich

The Verein für das Deutschtum im Ausland

As it appeared obvious that the Nazi *Gleichshaltung* would be extended over *volksdeutsch* affairs, the VDA tried to implement their own co-ordination with the new regime in order to preclude having changes forced upon them. The conservative nationalists who made up the VDA changed the name of the organisation to the more *völkisch* sounding name of the *Volksbund für das Deutschtum im Ausland*. A new activist leader, Hans Steinacher, was appointed in the first few years of the Nazi regime and the organisation was reorganised along the lines of the *Führerprinzip*. In place of the complex web of clubs and societies, a simplified hierarchy was introduced. From the centre, the VDA branched out into twenty-five state and provincial alliances. These alliances were made up of district alliances, which were, in turn, composed of four to six districts which roughly

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 66-67.

corresponded to government districts.⁸² Their efforts were successful and the Deputy Führer, Rudolph Hess, gave them his approval.⁸³

The next stage of *Gleichschaltung* came as the VDA and its sister organisations were brought under the control of the Nazi Party through the VoMi. Ultimately, Hess wrote in a circular order on 3 February 1939 that

The VDA is solely responsible for racial work beyond the frontiers. I hereby forbid the Party, its organisations, and affiliated associations from all racial work abroad. The only competent body for this task is the agency for racial Germans and the VDA as its camouflaged tool. . . . In this task the VDA must be supported in every way by the Party offices. Any outward appearance of connection with the Party is, however, to be avoided Their nature is determined by considerations of foreign policy and the associations must bear this in mind when representing them in public.⁸⁴

⁸² Bischoff, *Nazi Conquest through German Culture*, p. 92.

⁸³ Lumans, *Himmler's Auxiliaries*, pp. 33-34.

⁸⁴ "Document 837-PS/GB-265: Secret order by Hess, 3 February 1939, concerning the regrouping of the 'League for Germans Abroad' for the propagation of German nationalism outside Germany and of the 'League German East' to cover border regions for the same purpose," International Military Tribunal, *Trial of the Major War Criminals*, XXVI, p. 361.

CHAPTER 4

ROMANIAN VOLKSDEUTSCHEN IN THE PRE-WAR ERA, 1933-1940

Between the two world wars, Romania's value as an ally was very uncertain. Among its few assets, Romania possessed the most significant oil deposits in Europe. Geopolitically, Romania was stuck between a rock and a hard place. With its position as a buffer between the West and Russia, Romania held a strategic position on the eastern edge of Europe. While this increased the importance of Romania in international political terms, it only added to Romanian insecurity. Romania's western frontier, however, was not immutable. Hungary, one of the losing powers in the First World War, resented Romania for the territories lost to Romania and supported revisionist claims against this land. Sandwiched between the Soviet Union and Hungary, Romania was eager to make allies that would not only secure its frontiers, but secure its future existence. Motivated by the geopolitical, strategic and, above all, economic importance

of the country, Hitler's government set out to court Romania initially as an ally and, ultimately, as a satellite state.

Romania's actions in the First World War also demonstrated its difficult strategic position. At the outset of the conflict, Romania pursued a policy of armed neutrality, mainly due to the amount of German investment in country. In 1916, Romania then entered the war on the Allied side on the promise of territorial awards. Facing defeat, Romania then sued for peace in 1918. When the imminent defeat of Germany became obvious, Romania re-entered the war.⁸⁵ As promised, Romania was awarded significant territories from Austria, Hungary and Bulgaria. Overnight, Romania virtually doubled in size and population with the addition of Transylvania, part of the Banat region, Bessarabia and Southern Dobrudja. The reward was substantial, but the opportunistic and conniving war-time diplomacy of Romania cost the country the trust of the other European states.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Roucek, "Romania in Geopolitics," p. 43.

⁸⁶ Fox, *German Relations with Romania*, p. 4.

Romania was soon to discover that territorial expansion was hardly a panacea or an assurance of an improved standard of living. The political system, a parliamentary monarchy in which the prime minister was appointed by the crown, was prone to corruption and election-rigging. The *raison d'être* for the parliament often seemed to be to simply support the King's choice of premier. When the monarch appointed a premier who was not supported by a majority of parliamentarians, the King would simply call an election and the King's wishes were invariably affirmed by the electorate.⁸⁷ In the words of Henry L. Roberts,

Romanian elections were notorious for their corruption, their ballot stuffing and general unreliability as measures of public sentiment In most cases elections were "made" in advance.⁸⁸

Once appointed, Premiers then only served at the pleasure of the King and were often dismissed. Instability was

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 20.

⁸⁸ Henry L. Roberts, *Romania, Political Problems of an Agrarian State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1951), n.p. Quoted in Vago, *The Shadow of the Swastika*, p. 23

inevitable as the result was a long succession of governments.⁸⁹

Throughout the inter-war period, governments in Bucharest were entirely alienated from the experiences and demands of the population. Token land reform was undertaken only insofar as it would squelch the threat of a peasant revolution. The main priority of the government was the rapid industrialisation of Romania and consequently the country was thrown open to foreign capital to assist in this undertaking. Romania's greatest natural resource, however, was already dominated by foreign interests. According to the terms of the Treaty of San Remo following World War I, Romanian oil holdings were wrested from the previous German owners and redistributed among English, French, American, Italian and Belgian companies. Less than ten percent of this vital resource remained in Romanian hands.⁹⁰ Oil, however, accounted for a very high percentage of Romania's exports.

⁸⁹ Hugh Seton-Watson, *Eastern Europe between the Wars, 1918-1941* (New York: Harper Torch, 1967), pp. 203-217.

⁹⁰ Fox, *German Relations with Romania*, pp. 13-14.

While oil is certainly important to industrialisation, Romania was far from an industrial country between the wars. On the contrary, Romania had been an agrarian state for centuries and the peasants continued to scratch a meagre living out of the soil. Aside from oil, foodstuffs were Romania's second greatest export followed, distantly, by industrial products. However, it was not industry that Germany demanded from Romania.

GERMAN-ROMANIAN RELATIONS, 1933-1940

In the initial years of Hitler's rule, German-Romanian relations remained cordial, though the two countries found themselves in opposite camps on some of the major issues. Hitler's ascendancy in Germany was based partially on his platform of revising or abolishing the treaties that had handicapped Germany following the First World War and he sought out similarly-inclined statesmen for his allies. In stark contrast to Germany, Romania had benefited tremendously from the peace settlement and had absolutely no interest in treaty revision. At this time, the single ambition of Romanian foreign policy was to keep what Romania

had been awarded. Any talk of revision was anathema to the Romanian government, and it particularly had much to fear from German revisionism. The aspirations of the Nazi regime were therefore fundamentally contrary to the primary tenet of Romanian policy.

From the German perspective too, Romania was certainly not an automatic ally. The historic tie between Bucharest and Paris was but one factor that made Romania a more natural partner for the western powers. As a "romance island in a sea of Slavs," the cultural, political and dynastic connections were already there. Furthermore, Romania's decision to side with France and Britain during the First World War made it possible that they might do so again. But as this decision was made with an eye to territorial aggrandisement, similar promises by Germany in the future could reasonably be expected to achieve similar results. During the first part of the 1930s, there was no natural political affinity between Bucharest and Berlin; a rapprochement was not forthcoming until 1935.⁹¹

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 19-22.

As part of his New Order, and as a prelude to the Germanisation of the region, Hitler desired to establish complete German hegemony over South-Eastern Europe. To achieve these aims, the German government acted to erect what William Grenzebach has called "Germany's informal empire in East-central Europe." Though Germany was hobbled by the effects of Versailles, its economy was not destroyed to such a degree as to remove it as a economic force in Europe. In fact, Germany's greatest rival in the region, the U.S.S.R., was greatly damaged by the war and the revolution. So relative to its competitors, Germany was in a better position following the war.⁹²

All the industrial countries suffered greatly during the depression and Germany was particularly hard hit. Furthermore, Germany suffered under the burden of reparations payments (to 1931) and a shortage of hard currency. Because most of the countries with which Germany wanted to trade were in a similar position *vis-à-vis*

⁹² William S. Grenzebach, Jr., *Germany's Informal Empire in East-central Europe: German Economic Policy toward Yugoslavia and Rumania, 1933 - 1939*, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1988, p. 5.

convertible currency, Germany was able to use its economic expertise to pull the South-Eastern countries closer and closer. In order to trade with the western powers, countries in South-Eastern Europe were generally obliged to use their precious hard currency in exchange. Germany alleviated this pressure by entering into liberal barter arrangements by which trading partners generally supplied raw materials in exchange for finished goods. While the exchanges were generally advantageous to all the partners involved, the targets of Germany's commerce were becoming more dependent upon Germany

As in other countries, the success of the National Socialists in Germany provided encouragement to other anti-Semitic and morbidly nationalistic organisations in Romania. Anti-Semitism was endemic among ethnic Romanian nationals, and pro-German sentiments were at a high level among the country's significant German minority.

ROMANIAN VOLKSDEUTSCHEN, 1933-1940

The period between 1919 and 1933 was one of consolidation and growth for the *Volksdeutschen* of Romania.

The German minority enjoyed a privileged position as the "minority of choice" of the Romanian government. Their lack of irredentist claims and their prosperity made them of little bother to the government. Throughout the 'twenties, the situation was very stable for the Germans. However, they were not immune to the tide of ethnic nationalism that was sweeping the continent.

The programme of the National Socialist movement which prepared to take over power in the Weimar Republic at the beginning of the 'thirties, and which in its nationalist conceptions reflected to some extent the linguistic and ethnic struggles of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, appealed strongly to the "nationalist" wing amongst the ethnic Germans. Hitler's coming to power in Germany, seen from the distance and the isolated existence of the ethnic Germans, presented itself in glorified form as a great national revolution. Terms like "people's community", "blood and soil", "purity of race, language and customs", merely seemed to reaffirm old and long propagated tenets of the philosophy of ethnic Germans as they had been formulated in the struggle for the national survival particularly by the Saxons of Transylvania.⁹¹

As would be expected, among the first stirrings of National Socialist sentiments within the German minority came from Transylvania. Fritz Fabritius, a Saxon and a former captain in the army of the Dual Monarchy, organised the *Nationale Selbsthilfebewegung der Deutschen in Rumänien*

⁹¹ Scheider, *The Fate of the Germans in Rumania*, p. 33.

(Movement for National Mutual Assistance of Germans in Romania), or the NSDR, in the early 1920s. According to Georges Castellan, Fabritius had been in contact with Hitler since 1920.⁹⁴ One must bear in mind, however, that Hitler and his National Socialists were largely insignificant at that point. Fabritius' movement's ideology at the time was more heavily influenced by old-style Pan-Germanism than by Nazism.⁹⁵ The connection with Nazism, however, would become more and more explicit with time.

By the 1930s, the NSDR had become a viable force on the *volksdeutsch* political scene in Romania. At the Saxon Diet on 1 October 1933, Fabritius' compatriots were able to eject the liberal leadership by mustering 62 percent of the votes to his side. Within a year, the NSDR was victorious in the elections for the Bessarabia Volksrat and had renamed itself to make its ideology unambiguous: the *National-sozialistische Erneuerungsbewegung der Deutschen in Rumänien*

⁹⁴ Castellan, "The Germans of Rumania," p. 59.

⁹⁵ Scheider, *The Fate of the Germans in Rumania*, p. 34.

(National Socialist Revival Movement of Germans in Romania), abbreviated as NSEDR.⁹⁶

The gradual rise of the NSDR and the NSEDR was largely thanks to two separate phenomena. First, Fabritius was able to look toward the rise of the nationalists in Germany and adopt many of the slogans that appealed to the sense of belonging to a larger, almost mythical nation. Life as a member of a minority group involves almost constant reminders of being different from one's neighbours and of organic solidarity with one's peers. The *Volksdeutschen* of Romania experienced this and were shown that they too could participate in the ascendancy of the German people.

The second factor was one that greatly accelerated the process. Between the two wars, Romania was in a state of almost perpetual crisis. The addition of great blocs of territory in 1919/20 was not without its price. Instead of experiencing stability and consolidation, Romania was under constant threat from bordering countries that questioned the

⁹⁶ Castellan, "The Germans of Rumania," p. 59. Scheider, *The Fate of the Germans in Rumania*, p. 34. Paikert, *The Danube Swabians*, p. 252.

legitimacy of the territorial transfers and actively campaigned for revision. In the words of Eugen Weber, "the elation of the post-war years was mitigated by the presence of vindictive neighbours who claimed the territories that had just been annexed."⁹⁷

To make matters worse for the German minority, the governments in Bucharest were unprepared to make significant concessions to minorities. While the target was certainly not the Germans, the Romanians were simply not prepared to adopt policies that would assist the Hungarians at the same time. The demands of the ethnic Germans from the early 'twenties were still unfulfilled by the 'thirties despite their considerable co-operation and participation within the political parties. Many Germans failed to see that any important benefit had come from co-operation with the Romanian government and were willing to try a more forceful approach. The NSEDR, many thought, would lead the vanguard.

⁹⁷ Eugen Weber, *Varieties of Fascism: Doctrines of Revolution in the Twentieth Century* (New York: D. Van Nostrand Company, 1964), p. 97.

Within the Saxon community, the NSEDR found most of its support among the same segment of the population that was, at the same time, supporting Hitler in Germany: primarily young people, the petite bourgeoisie, farmers and teachers. The intelligentsia, upper middle classes and the churches were more conservative in their outlook and were less interested in the radicalism of the so-called Revivalists of the NSEDR. The Catholic *volksdeutsch* communities, as in Germany, they were largely disinterested in the Nazi message. This is not to suggest that there was no interest among the Swabians, nor among Catholics. Castellan reports that in 1934, the Bishop of Timisoara visited Hitler to vouch for the allegiance of the Swabians.⁹⁸ In general, however, the Swabians opposed Fabritius' ascendancy.

At the same time as the Nazis were coming to power in Germany and as the NSEDR was gaining credibility as a political force in Romania, the face of politics in Romania was changing. Morbidly anti-Semitic and nationalistic organisations emerged in the 'twenties, forcing their way

⁹⁸ Castellan, "The Germans of Rumania," p. 59.

onto the scene and having a considerable effect on the body politic. The foundation of this radical ideology was a native Romanian nationalism that emphasised their "self-consciousness as a nation, by stressing their Latinity, their Christianity and their traditional rural way of life."⁹⁹ The rhetoric of the Romanian nationalists placed these supposed assets in stark contrast to the sizeable Jewish population, whom they associated with communism, Russian imperialism and the urban *bourgeoisie*. During this time of transition and instability, the older Romanian nationalism was pushed to the extremes and virulent anti-Semitism showed its face. This anti-Semitism was an important affinity between Hitler's Nazis and the Romanian nationalists.

During the 'twenties, Romanian nationalists began to organise and make their presence known. Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, an academic, founded the League of National Christian Defence in 1923 as a political party. While in

⁹⁹ Zev Barbu, "Rumania" in S.J. Woolf, ed., *Fascism in Europe* (New York: Methuen, Inc., 1981), p. 152.

jail for the execution of a supposed police informant, Codreanu claimed to have been visited by the Archangel Michael. The Archangel, he reported, "urged him to dedicate his life to God as revealed by the Romanian Christian tradition."¹⁰⁰ The result was the Legion of the Archangel Michael. Codreanu's Legion attempted to appeal to a broad segment of the population by preaching strong anti-Semitism with a demand for a "new man." Unfortunately for Codreanu, the Legion managed to attract only those peasants who were not associated with the political mainstream and many students.¹⁰¹ As a true mass movement was not in the offing, Codreanu founded the Iron Guard as a subsidiary of the Legion in 1930 to broaden his constituency to include the working classes.

The Iron Guard and Romanian fascism are generally seen to be synonymous. The Iron Guard was undoubtedly the largest and most visible ultra-right organisation in Romania at the time. Codreanu had already shown little hesitation to use

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

bloodshed and rowdyism to convey his message and the Iron Guard carried on this tradition. Large groups of guardist thugs routinely caused disturbances throughout the country. The high visibility of the organisation made it an easy target of the government. Almost immediately after it was founded, the government banned it. Later, it was legalised and then banned again in 1933. In response, three guardists assassinated the Liberal Premier, Ion Duca, who had been responsible for outlawing the movement.¹⁰²

At the same time as Codreanu's organisations and the NSEDR were ascendant, the structures of Romanian government were in a state of chaos. In 1925, Prime Minister Bratianu forced Crown Prince Carol to renounce his claim to the throne, leaving his ten-year-old son Mihai to succeed King Ferdinand when he died in 1927. In 1930, however, Carol returned and Mihai ceded the throne to him.¹⁰³

This instability in the royal house was supplemented by the inherent instability of Romanian parliamentary politics.

The king was also involved in parliamentary politics in another capacity. Acting behind the scenes, King Carol secretly supported the activities of the Iron Guard. He harboured authoritarian tendencies and hoped to use the

¹⁰² Fox, *German Relations with Romania, 1933-1944*, p. 27.

¹⁰³ Seton-Watson, *Eastern Europe*, pp. 203-217.

Guard as a proxy in his personal battles with the traditional parties. As the British Minister in Romania reported to the Foreign Office in 1936, "If King Carol had at times appeared to encourage the leaders of the right, it might well have been in the hope of exerting indirect pressure on the leaders of the National Peasant's Party and bringing them to a more tractable frame of mind "¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, he later observed that "the King's heart, though perhaps not his head, inclines him towards Fascist ideas."¹⁰⁵

Under the tutelage of Premier Tatarescu and Foreign Minister Titulescu, the Romanian government continued to maintain very close diplomatic relations between Romania and France. But actions in the diplomatic arena were being undermined in the marketplace as German interest in the economy grew steadily until Germany was the predominant foreign investor. In 1935, the governments of Berlin and Bucharest signed a trade agreement which set strict

¹⁰⁴ "Roare to Eden, 8 October 1936," Document No. 24 in Vago, *The Shadow of the Swastika*.

¹⁰⁵ "Annual Report on Romania, 1936," Document No. 29 in *Ibid.*

import/export quotas on each and every item defined. Payment, the agreement stipulated, was to be via bills of credit. Fully a quarter of Romania's substantial oil production was earmarked for export to Germany. However, for exports that exceeded the quotas, Romania demanded payment either in gold or in easily convertible currencies. The Reichsmark was not readily convertible and the German government promptly attempted to re-open negotiations. The Romanian government regularly imposed and eliminated seemingly arbitrary tariffs, a practice that angered German trade officials and made the economic relationship between the two states difficult. "The Nazis saw Southeast Europe as a vast source of natural resources for which Germany would supply industrial goods."¹⁰⁶ Therefore, the Berlin government, regardless of its obvious frustration, regarded these Byzantine practices as part of the price one had to pay for access to the rich resources of the region.

The year 1936 is a definitive turning point in Romania's history. The Bucharest government continued its

¹⁰⁶ Fox, *German Relations with Romania*, pp. 29-30.

tradition of alignment with the West and with France in particular until the dismissal of Foreign Minister Titulescu in August 1936. His dismissal was never adequately explained, though the new Foreign Minister, Victor Antonescu, told his British counterpart that it was because Titulescu "objected to the failure of the government to take stern measures against manifestations of anti-Semitism."¹⁰⁷ Whatever the reason for his removal from office, it represented a turning point in Romania's external relations. Titulescu's anti-German views were well known at the time, as was his preference for the Western powers. His replacement was much more inclined to seek a rapprochement with the Fascist governments in Italy and Germany.

During the 'thirties, Romania was in a precarious position *vis-à-vis* its neighbours. On one side, Hungary clearly wanted the return of the territories that it had lost and there was much question as to what lengths the Budapest government would go to retrieve it. The Soviet Union to the North-East had not recognised Romania's claim

¹⁰⁷ Vago, *The Shadow of the Swastika*, p. 28.

to Bessarabia, and Bulgaria wanted the return of the Dobrudja area. With many potential enemies and with little strength, Romania clearly needed strong friends who could help keep the angry neighbours at bay. Two alternative options presented themselves during this period of instability. One was to negotiate to become a party to the Franco-Soviet *rapprochement* as a counterweight against Hungary. An understanding over Bessarabia would, of course, be necessary for this to be accomplished. Unfortunately, alignment with the Soviet Union would be seen as a hostile act by Germany, and internally a huge portion of popular opinion was staunchly anti-Communist and would never support such a relationship. Alienating Germany would simply be counter-productive, as Hungary was well on its way to becoming a German client state and so keeping Hungary on a short leash would not be as important a matter as before. If maintaining the structural integrity of the new Romanian state was the most important priority for the Bucharest government, an alignment with Germany was most logical. Though it would alienate the U.S.S.R., Germany would be able

to restrain Hungary who was a more urgent danger than the Soviet Union. Furthermore, Germany was a country ascendant and trade relations had gotten to such a point that good relations with the Reich were already an economic necessity.

Having much to fear from the thugs of the Iron Guard, the King sought to steal much of its thunder by mobilising the youth of Romania to a strongly royalist position. The *Straja Tarii* (Sentry of the Fatherland), founded in the autumn of 1937, aimed directly at the main constituency of the guardist youth organisations. His next initiative to undermine the Iron Guard had disastrous consequences for Romania. The December 1937 elections were not expected to return the ruling Liberals to power as most observers did not think that they would be able to muster the requisite 40 percent of the votes to form a government. Following a particularly vitriolic, heated and often violent election, the ruling Liberals and their partners received only 36 percent of the votes. The National Peasant Party came next with almost 21 percent, followed by the Iron Guard's near 16 percent. King Carol asked the leaders of the ultra right-

wing National Christian Party, Octavian Goga and Professor Cuza to form a minority government.¹⁰⁸ The ultimate result was foreshadowed by Sir Orme Sargent of the British Foreign Office:

King Carol has appointed M. Goga in order to steal the thunder of the Iron Guard, just as Hindenburg appointed von Papen in the hopes of out-manoeuvring Hitler. If so, the precedent is not a very encouraging one¹⁰⁹

The election of 1937 was the beginning of the last act of Romanian parliamentary democracy between the two world wars.

Goga's first months as government leader were marked by unprecedented instability as his National Christian Party was given the reins of power when they least expected it and were totally unprepared for the responsibility. Their senior officials had absolutely no experience in the affairs of state and the street-level hooligans even intensified their thuggery, perhaps emboldened by the new government's believed support for their cause. Instability likewise reigned with regard to external relations as the new Foreign Minister, Istrate Micescu "was well disposed toward the

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 32-33.

¹⁰⁹ "Minutes by Sir Orme Sargent, 1 January 1938," Document No. 59 in *Ibid.*

Axis, but he was anxious about the country's independence from Nazi Germany and was reluctant to stir up a hornet's nest in Romania by reversing the two-decades-old pro-Western orientation in foreign policy."¹¹⁰ A further nail was put in the coffin of Romanian democracy with the appointment of the new Defence Minister, General Ion Antonescu.

This period of extreme political instability was also one of radical transformation for the community of Romanian *Volksdeutschen*. Generally allied with the governing Liberals, the traditional political elites of the ethnic group were worried by the rise of the right in the country at large and especially within their community. Though they were wary of the right, of greater importance to the old leadership was the preservation of the *Volk* and the appearance of unity. Therefore, in order to avoid open conflict within the German community, most of the traditional elite joined the National Socialist movement. However, the *Deutsche Partei* under Hans Otto Roth remained

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

allied with the Liberal party until the end of the parliamentary system in 1938.

The *Verband der Deutschen in Rumänien* (Union of Germans in Romania), which had been established in 1921, was completely reorganised by 1935 and was replaced with the *Volksgemeinschaft der Deutschen in Rumänien* (People's Community of Germans in Romania). The "People's Programme" of action of that same year demanded that the People's Community

be established on the basis of the National Socialist leadership principle. It further demanded that the National Socialist ideology should permeate all spheres of life of the ethnic groups, their associations and clubs, their neighbourhood organisations, co-operatives, professional corporations, etc. and all branches of education.¹¹¹

Antonescu's arrival in government and Goga's actions as Premier would facilitate this. During the few short months of his government, Goga took a bold step in the relationship between the Romanian government and the German ethnic community. On 6 February 1938, Fabricius and his *Volksgemeinschaft* were recognised as the sole representatives of the *Volksdeutschen* to the Romanian

¹¹¹ Scheider, *The Fate of the Germans in Rumania*, p. 35.

government. The Germans of Romania were certainly a heterogeneous bloc politically and the infighting had continued among them until well after the elections. The decision to choose the *Volksgemeinschaft* as the sole representative, if one was truly necessary, was based on the political agreement that existed between the right-wing Fabricius and the clearly fascist Goga regime. The regime, however, did not last long.

THE DICTATORSHIP OF KING CAROL

Within a month, on 10 February, King Carol dissolved parliament and outlawed all the previously existing political parties. Premier Goga was dismissed, replaced by the Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Miron Cristea. The King decreed a new constitution that was based on one single party, his newly formed Front of National Renaissance, and the electoral system was completely reformed along corporativist lines. In effect, Carol had shown his authoritarian inclinations and had implemented a royal dictatorship.¹¹²

¹¹² Vago, *The Shadow of the Swastika*, p. 43.

In response, Codreanu voluntarily disbanded the Iron Guard and was arrested with some of his followers on a variety of charges including treason, terrorism and conspiracy. Within a year of his ten year sentence, it was announced that he had been shot while trying to escape. In truth, he and a dozen others had been murdered by the gendarmes on the orders of Premier Cristea, the former Patriarch.¹¹³ Goga's National Christian Party gave the king little trouble when ordered disbanded.¹¹⁴ The German *Volksgemeinschaft* was dissolved along with all the other political parties. Overall, King Carol's actions were accepted and the process of dissolving democracy in Romania went smoothly.

The pro-German orientation that had been reflected by the increase in trade and the extension of German political influence was threatened by the royal dictatorship of King Carol. The early days of the royal dictatorship reflected an ambiguous approach toward German-Romanian relations. The

¹¹³ Carsten, *Rise of Fascism*, pp. 188-189.

¹¹⁴ Vago, *The Shadow of the Swastika*, p. 43.

arrest of Codreanu and the general crackdown on the Iron Guard could be seen as an attempt to undermine Nazi influence in Romania. That he was attempting to undermine German influence was made apparent during the trial of Codreanu in which the government introduced evidence of official and unofficial contacts between the Iron Guard and Nazi Germany. The king asserted that these contacts were, in effect, "directed as against himself."¹¹⁵ Of course the German government vehemently denied that any such contacts existed. At the same time, however, letters were drafted instructing the *Außenpolitisches Amt* of the Nazi Party, the *Auslands Organisation*, the *Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle*, and the Propaganda Ministry to break all ties with the Legion.¹¹⁶

According to Barry Fox,

Romania was still following its ambiguous policy of offering friendship to Germany while antagonising her by continued close ties with Britain and France and by trying to break up the Iron Guard. Very little in Romanian policy could have comforted the Germans or made them want the situation to continue indefinitely.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ "Fabricius to the Foreign Ministry, 22 May 1938," *Documents on German Foreign Policy* [Hereinafter cited as DGFP], Series D, V, p. 282.

¹¹⁶ "Foreign Ministry Circular, 23 May 1938," *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Fox, *German Relations with Romania*, p. 62.

German actions elsewhere in Europe changed the situation dramatically and forced Carol to change his policy. Up to this point, he had been attempting to keep all his options open by currying good relations with the western powers and with Germany. Munich (September 1938) and the subsequent dismemberment of Czechoslovakia had a tremendous effect on Romania. If assistance from Britain and France had ever been a realistic possibility before, it was now plain that the western powers would not come to the rescue of Romania should the situation on its borders become intolerable. In the words of the German Minister in Bucharest, Wilhelm Fabricius,

King Carol is becoming increasingly aware that assistance from France is becoming more and more remote and that good relations with Germany might also protect him against Hungarian revisionist claims. But he does not believe that he can take a decisive step toward closer relations with Germany until we protect Romania against Soviet Russia.¹¹⁸

Fabricius was right. Immediately threatened by Soviet Russia and a hostile Hungary and tied to the impotent Western powers, the only realistic defence was closer relations with

¹¹⁸ "Fabricius to the Foreign Ministry, 29 September 1938," *DGFP*, Ser. D, V., p. 308.

Germany. The importance of this was further punctuated during a meeting between King Carol and Hitler in November 1938 in which the Führer stated that Germany would not intervene should Hungary resort to arms in its claim to Transylvania.¹¹⁹ Whether Hitler meant this as a threat can be debated, but King Carol must have seen the import of this statement.

Meanwhile, German involvement in the Romanian economy increased at a dramatic pace. The trade agreement of 1939 saw to it that Romania's critical agricultural and lumber industries were to be completely adapted to meet Germany's needs. Furthermore, the two countries agreed to increased German prospecting for and extraction of mineral resources, a German interest in Romanian banks and the development of a joint German-Romanian oil industry. Following incremental changes throughout the preceding decade, this treaty was an engraved invitation to a German take-over of critical

¹¹⁹ "Memorandum by Ribbentrop on the conversation between Hitler and Carol, 24 November 1938," *Ibid.*, pp. 338-342.

segments of the Romanian economy. One German negotiator of this treaty observed that

The events of the year 1938 have led to a profound change in political attitudes in Romania. The conviction that it is necessary to co-operate with Germany to a certain extent has won general acceptance. This change can be attributed to the collapse of France's political prestige, the growth of Germany's power in 1938, the realisation that only Germany can provide effective protection against Russia, Romania's most dangerous enemy, and finally also to the consideration that Romania is economically dependent on Germany to an ever-increasing degree. [Emphasis added]¹²⁰

According to Barry Fox, "by March 1939, Romania was an economic step-child of Germany and although her leaders might attempt to resist the pull toward Germany, it was impossible."¹²¹

Just as the events following Munich precipitated a crisis in Romania, so did the German invasion of the rest of dismembered Czechoslovakia in March 1939. Great Britain undertook the frantic task of building an effective system of collective security. Along with the Polish government, Romania was asked for its opinion on the possibility of entering into negotiations regarding a guarantee of

¹²⁰ "Memorandum by the Deputy Director of the Economic Policy Department, 13 December 1938," *Ibid.*, pp. 352-353.

¹²¹ Fox, *German Relations with Romania*, p. 76.

Romania's frontiers and whether or not the Romanian government was amenable to possible protection by the Soviet Union. Eager to do anything to ensure his country's independence, Carol was in a difficult position. On the one hand, a guarantee by the Western powers would be desirable. On the other hand, however, Carol had to be extremely careful not to alienate the Germans.

From its position between a rock and a hard place, Romania quickly began negotiations with Britain and France to assure the future of the country. The pact proposed by the Western powers would bind Poland and Romania to Britain and France in a multilateral system of mutual guarantees. If, for example, Poland were attacked, Romania, Britain and France would fight for Poland. The same would happen for any of the other expected participants. Romania, however, presented a counter-proposal: an agreement that would dispense with the reciprocal agreements and instead would only provide for a guarantee of Romania's borders. On its face, Romania wanted a guarantee of assistance in case of emergency, but demanded the freedom to abandon the other

signatories in their emergencies. King Carol's government made this suggestion because it feared that the announcement of a reciprocal agreement would lead Germany to unleash Hungary and Bulgaria.¹²² According to Barry Fox, King Carol wanted the best of all possible worlds:

that the British, French, and perhaps the Russians, if Soviet participation were kept secret, would guarantee his throne against the Germans while the Germans would protect Romania against the Russians. With everybody protecting her from everybody else, Romania could retain her independence and turn some profit by selling oil to both sides.¹²³

On 13 April 1939, King Carol's wish was granted; Britain and France issued a joint guarantee of Romania's borders with no stipulation of reciprocity.¹²⁴ The German minister in Romania protested that this guarantee was "worthless" and only had value as British propaganda against Germany. Notwithstanding Romania's protests to the contrary to Germany, a rapprochement appeared to be taking place between Bucharest and London. In addition to the British

¹²² "Memorandum on Halifax's Conversation with Polish Foreign Minister Beck, 4 April 1939," *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939*, Third Series (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1950-1952), V, p. 8.

¹²³ Fox, *German Relations with Romania*, p. 83.

¹²⁴ "The Chargé d'Affaires in Great Britain to the Foreign Ministry, 13 April 1939," *DGFP*, Series D, VI, p. 232.

guarantee, Romania and Great Britain negotiated a trade agreement that included more than £3.5m in armaments purchases. This represented a violation of an earlier treaty of March 1939 that stated that Germany alone would equip the Romanian armed forces.¹²⁵

The whole series of events of the first half of 1939 resulted in a cooling of official relations between Germany and Romania and an accompanying German suspicion of Romania. On 11 July 1939, the German *Führer* ordered an immediate cessation of weapons sales to countries deemed to be either enemies or of doubtful fidelity. Romania was listed as doubtful.¹²⁶ When this directive was implemented and arms shipments were terminated, Romania reacted by turning off the oil that was destined for Germany. The German government decided, on balance, that Germany's need for the oil far outstripped any strategic consideration that would keep Romania from being allowed German arms.¹²⁷ In order to

¹²⁵ Fox, *German Relations with Romania*, pp. 95-96.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 97-98.

restore the flow of oil, Germany resumed its arms shipments to Romania.

Relations between the two countries remained somewhat cool through the latter half of 1939. Romania's trade practices had become an increasing source of annoyance to the German government. One month following Germany's invasion of Poland and the resulting outbreak of World War II, Romania unilaterally raised the price of its oil to a level that was seventy percent higher than it had been seven months before.¹²⁸ In February 1940, Romania more than doubled their export duties on oil products and imposed a vast array of new tariffs elsewhere. The Germans were outraged that oil costs had doubled since before the war. The following month, however, Romania bowed to German pressure and promised unlimited quantities of oil at pre-war prices.¹²⁹

Following the fall of France in June 1940 and while Britain was certainly not in any position to come to Romania's assistance, Russia and Hungary decided to take

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

advantage of the situation and press their claims for Romanian territory. The Soviet Union was first, demanding that Bessarabia be returned. Before entering into negotiations with Russia, Romania appealed to Germany for a promise of assistance in case of a Russian attack. The reply was of no comfort whatsoever: Germany still had a potent enemy to contend with in the west, it could not sacrifice its protection in the rear simply for the sake of Romania. Because Romania would be promised no protection, it was in Carol's best interests to acquiesce to any Russian demands.¹³⁰ The Romanian government peacefully ceded the territory of Bessarabia to the Russians.

According to Barry Fox, the situation of the *Volksdeutschen* of Bessarabia was not pleasant. The majority of Bessarabians would have chosen, if they had been asked, to join the U.S.S.R. over Romania. The German Military Attaché Lörnder believed that the "Jews, the Ukrainians, Russians, Bulgarians (who were very badly treated), and the

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 120-121. "Killinger to the Foreign Ministry, 23 June 1940," *DGFP*, Series D, X, p. 70.

Gagauzen would all vote for incorporation into the U.S.S.R. Also many Romanian Moldavians would vote for the U.S.S.R. in hope of land reform."¹³¹ The only ethnic group of Bessarabia that would have voted to remain with Romania was the Germans, for obvious reasons. They were certainly not interested in Communism and being generally more prosperous than their neighbours, they had little to gain from land reform.

The overall Reich policy regarding the *Auslandsdeutschen* of South-Eastern Europe was to leave them in place in order to act as a bridge between the German state and the state in which they were citizens. The situation in Bessarabia, like that in Poland before, was that the German ethnic group could become a source of conflict between the U.S.S.R. and Germany. In order to prevent that possibility, Ribbentrop asked the Soviets on 25 June 1940 if they could evacuate the *Volksdeutschen*. Molotov acceded to this request the next day.¹³²

¹³¹ Fox, *German Relations with Romania*, p. 120.

¹³² Lumans, *Himmler's Auxiliaries*, p. 172.

The evacuation of the Volksdeutschen of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina took place in the summer of 1940 and was, according to Lumans, the most ambitious of the evacuations from Soviet-controlled territory. Even before the request had been granted, a team of VoMi and RKFDV personnel were in the region collecting information on the German community. Most evacuees travelled via road and rail to Galati, in Romania and then via the Danube to the Reich. After the important racial and political processing, they were designated to resettle large areas of conquered Poland. "VoMi evacuated a total of 93,548 Germans from Bessarabia and another 43,568 from northern Bukovina. Of these, some 80,000 Bessarabians were eventually classified as racially and politically worthy of settlement in the east, but only some 23,000 Bukovina Germans were acceptable."¹³³

While the Bessarabian and North Bukovinan resettlements were under way, the Reich government entered into discussions with the Romanian government to resettle the ethnic Germans of Southern Bukovina and the Dobrudja. The

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

Reich was not expecting that these regions would be handed over to the Soviet Union, so the motivation for removal of these populations was very different than for the previous resettlement. Instead, Lumans reports, the relative poverty and low status of these Germans, especially when compared to the Saxons and Swabians, made them somewhat of an embarrassment for the German government. The evacuation was not as smooth as before, as the local authorities of Southern Bukovina interpreted this action as a prelude to Soviet invasion. The evacuation took place in the final quarter of 1940 and ultimately 52,107 settlers were rejected as racially unfit and returned to Romania.¹³⁴ Nevertheless, in a few short months of 1940, the population of Romania's German community was reduced by more than 150,000.

Russian satisfaction with the Bessarabian question gave Hungary and Bulgaria added incentive to press their demands upon the Romanian government. Romanians in general cared little about the Bulgarian claim to Dobrudja and the government ceded it with little argument. Transylvania,

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 174.

however, was an entirely different matter. The dispute was submitted to arbitration by the Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop and Italian Foreign Minister Count Ciano. The Vienna Award of 30 August 1940 gave Hungary a vast expanse of what had been Romanian territory.¹³⁵ The loss of half of Transylvania was a devastating blow. Even though Transylvania had not been a part of Romania until twenty years before, the union of the region to the old kingdom was seen as the one of the crowning moments in the history of the Romanian people. To put it mildly, very few Romanians were happy to see Transylvania and more than a million ethnic Romanians go.

¹³⁵ "Terms of the Vienna Award, 30 August 1940," *DGFP, Series D, X*, pp. 581-587.

CHAPTER 5

THE TWILIGHT OF ROMANIA'S VOLKSDEUTSCH
COMMUNITY, 1940-1945

THE ANTONESCU REGIME

Nationalism and anti-Hungarian feelings had always been widespread in Romania between the two wars, but they reached a fever-pitch in the latter half of 1940. After "giving" a large portion of the east to Russia and a vast portion of the west to Hungary, both without a fight, King Carol was seen by many people as having betrayed his country. Nicholas Nagy-Talavera reports that it was not uncommon to see people weeping in the streets of Bucharest on 30 August 1940: "The mood was a revolutionary one."¹³⁶ After all, the culmination of Romanian history, the dream of Great Romania, had been destroyed. On 3 September 1940, pro-fascist legionnaires led an uprising in Bucharest, Brasov and Constanta. To quell the attempted putsch, Carol appealed to General Ion Antonescu. A sometime opponent of the king, the veteran Romanian general

¹³⁶ Nicholas M. Nagy-Talavera, *The Green Shirts and the Others: A History of Fascism in Hungary and Rumania* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1970), p. 307.

was also one of the few people who could control the army and put down the uprising. Antonescu was appointed to the premiership and he promptly demanded Carol's abdication in favour of his son, Mihai.¹³⁷ At the age of eighteen, King Mihai was seen as someone who would maintain the dynasty without interfering in the actual affairs of state. This was correct; Antonescu was able to run the country with no further meddling from the throne.

On 14 September 1940, the new National Legionary State was established with Ion Antonescu as premier and with Horia Sima, the commander of the legionary/guardist movement, as the vice-premier. In addition to the premiership, Antonescu also declared himself to be "Chief of State, Minister of War, Minister of the Navy, Minister of Armaments, and Minister of the Interior."¹³⁸ Key cabinet positions were given to members of the Iron Guard, accentuating the fact that Romania was now clearly led by authoritarian,

¹³⁷ Hans Rogger, "Romania," in Hans Rogger and Eugen Weber, eds., *The European Right: A Historical Profile* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965), p. 559. Fox, *German Relations with Romania*, pp. 135-136. Nagy-Talavera, *Green Shirts and Others*, pp. 307-308.

¹³⁸ Fox, *German Relations with Romania*, p. 144.

militaristic fascists. As would be expected, one of the first acts of the new regime was to normalise its relations with Germany. Hitler reacted favourably to the events in Romania and congratulated Antonescu on his decision to move Romania closer to the Axis powers.¹³⁹

Antonescu went much further than his predecessors had when it came to relations with Germany. Fearing Russian action on the eastern frontier, he asked for a German military training mission and a promise to defend Romania's borders. There was little question that what he was asking for amounted to a German occupation of Romania: one division of German troops to ostensibly protect the Romanian oil fields at Ploesti and to help provide order during the first months of Antonescu's regime.¹⁴⁰ The entrance of the German troops in late September and early October 1940 marked the final stage in the German-Romanian relationship. From simple trading partners in the early 'thirties, Romania was an occupied German satellite state in late 1940.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

For the *Volksdeutschen* of Romania, the Vienna Award of 30 August 1940 added a large part of Transylvania to the Bessarabia, Bukovina and Dobrudja evacuations. In one fell swoop, the German ethnic group lost more than 200,000 members as Northern Transylvania and the Sathmar region were amputated. The more than half a million ethnic Germans that remained were easier to keep unified and regulated by both the Romanian authorities and the Reich Germans.¹⁴¹ Antonescu's subsequent actions ensured that this would be the case.

Antonescu's pro-German leanings translated into special status for the German minority in order to ingratiate himself with his German friends. By the end of 1939, the leadership of the German community was in the hands of a Dr. Wolfram Bruckner. Fabritius's replacement had even stronger ties to the Reich and "had in reality not been elected but practically appointed from Berlin."¹⁴² Within a year, even Bruckner had to go. The leader of the *Volksdeutsche*

¹⁴¹ Lumans, *Himmler's Auxiliaries*, p. 227.

¹⁴² Scheider, *The Fate of the Germans in Rumania*, p. 38.

Mittelstelle, SS Obergeruppenführer Werner Lorenz came to Brasov in September 1940 to personally install Andreas Schmidt as the new leader of Romania's German community.¹⁴³

Schmidt, not yet 30 years of age, was not very well known among the Germans of Romania. He was, however, very well connected in the right circles in the Reich. As a student in Berlin, he had made close contact with a number of influential Nazis, and had become the son-in-law of the Chief of the SS head office, Berger. In Schmidt, the German Reich had what they had hoped for; the ethnic group had become visibly subordinated to the VoMi and to Himmler's SS.¹⁴⁴ The *Deutsche Volkspartei* was renamed to explicitly reflect the orientation of the movement: the *NSDAP der Deutschen Volksgruppe in Rumänien*.

On 20 November 1940, Antonescu's regime took a large step forward in its relationship with both the German ethnic group and the German government. Building on an accord signed by both Antonescu and Ribbentrop that stipulated that

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

the Bucharest government would "place the members of the German ethnic group in Romania on an equal footing in every respect with the members of the Romanian nation," Antonescu issued a decree that was a milestone for the *Volksdeutschen* of Romania.¹⁴⁵ According to his decree, the German ethnic group in Romania was to be recognised as a "Romanian body corporate in law." Furthermore, all Romanian citizens professing to be of German nationality were to be listed on a national register in order to be included in this corporate body. The most important article of the decree, however, was the third, which read:

3. The national spokesman of the will of the German Ethnic Group in Romania shall be the "National Socialist German Labour Party (NSDAP) of the German Ethnic Group in Romania." It shall work within the framework of the National Legionary Romanian State.¹⁴⁶

The dual allegiance that the protocol and the decree proclaimed was exemplified by the article that allowed the Germans of Romania to "hoist the flag of the German People

¹⁴⁵ "The Ethnic Group Agreement: German-Romanian protocol of 30 August 1940," Scheider, *The Fate of the Germans in Rumania*, Annex 3.

¹⁴⁶ "The Ethnic Group Law: Decree-Law no. 830/1940 concerning the constitution of the German Ethnic Groups in Romania," Scheider, *The Fate of the Germans in Rumania*, Annex 4.

alongside the flag of the Romanian State."¹⁴⁷ Control over the ethnic Germans was accomplished by the section that allowed the *volksdeutsch* authorities to "issue provisions for the maintenance and consolidation of its national life and shall have binding force for its members."¹⁴⁸ In effect, the decree meant that the medium-term objective for all German minorities had been achieved in Romania: the German community became an autonomous state within a state.¹⁴⁹

Beyond the change of name, Schmidt completely reorganised the structure of governance for the ethnic German community. The NSDAP of the German ethnic group included homologues to the structures of the Reich German party: the *Einsatzstaffel* (SS), *Deutsche Mannschaft* (SA), *Deutsche Jugend* (Hitler Youth), *Deutsche Arbeiterschaft* (German Labour Front), and the *Landesbauernschaft* (Peasants' organisation). The German language press was "co-ordinated" and the two largest dailies were amalgamated to form the "*Süddeutsche Tageszeitung*."

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ Lumans, *Himmler's Auxiliaries*, p. 228.

In contrast to his predecessors, Schmidt was strongly indebted to the SS and the VoMi for his position and he served these two organisations above all others. Even before his appointment, Schmidt had played an important role in the recruitment of Romanian *Volksdeutschen* into the *Waffen-SS* and this role only grew as he took over control of the *Volksgruppe*. The SS had been keen to scoop up those ethnic Germans who had served in the Romanian army but had deserted in response to the unusually harsh treatment reserved for non-Romanian soldiers. Conditions in the Romanian armed forces were uniformly bleak throughout thanks to "widespread corruption, lack of discipline and organisation." Ethnic Germans, however, were also discriminated against as their Romanian counterparts were obviously preferred for advancement. In contrast, the German army was seen to be well-run, professional and victorious.¹⁵⁰ Clearly, the *Volksdeutschen* could look forward to better treatment in the German forces.

¹⁵⁰ Scheider, *The Fate of the Germans in Rumania*, p. 55.

Of course, the Romanian authorities were outraged at Schmidt's recruitment of deserters and the VoMi ordered the minority leadership to put an end to the defections. Despite the diplomatic fallout from the operation, Schmidt was ordered by his father-in-law to recruit 1,000 more men. They were smuggled out of the country without the knowledge of the Foreign Ministry and the VoMi. Faced with a *fait accompli*, Ribbentrop personally intervened with the Romanian government and asked for permission to "repatriate" 1,000 men to work in the *Reich* as agricultural workers. While this permission was supposed to be retroactive to cover the men who had already left Romania, the SS saw it as authorisation to remove 1,000 more. By mid-June 1940, they were sailing up the Danube to join the other "agricultural workers."¹⁵¹

The outrage of Ribbentrop and Antonescu was not enough to stem the tide of ethnic Germans who were deserting from the Romanian armed forces. "The stream turned into a flood in early 1943 after the Romanians shared in the devastating defeat at Stalingrad. Romanians retreated in disarray and in

¹⁵¹ Lumans, *Himmler's Auxiliaries*, pp. 228-229.

a mutinous mood. In the confusion, *Volksdeutsche* serving with the Romanian forces simply walked over to German units."¹⁵² Hitler personally ordered that the Germans serving in the Romanian army who found themselves cut off from their units were not to be returned to the Romanian command.¹⁵³

SS Chief Berger decided, in early 1943, that the time was ripe for a more general recruitment from among Romania's ethnic Germans. Himmler agreed and the Foreign Office was asked to negotiate a large-scale recruitment with the Romanian government. The result was an agreement signed on 12 May 1943 that allowed Romanian *Volksdeutschen* to volunteer for enrolment in the German armed forces or the SS without losing their Romanian citizenship. Those who were already serving in the Romanian armed forces were ruled to be ineligible for recruitment. The agreement was a one-time-only arrangement as it stipulated that those who opted for service with German fighting forces "must have left the country by 31 July 1943."¹⁵⁴ By the end of 1943, 54,000

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 230.

¹⁵³ Scheider, *The Fate of the Germans in Rumania*, p. 58.

¹⁵⁴ "The SS Agreement," *Ibid.*, Annex 8.

members of Romania's German community were serving in the *Waffen-SS*.¹⁵⁵ This was more than ten percent of all members of the German community in Romania.

The recruitment from among Romania's German population was not unopposed. Obviously, the Romanian authorities objected to the earlier recruitment as well as the widespread defection of Romanian troops to the German ranks. The German ambassador in Bucharest raised questions about these practices as he feared that those best suited to serve in the SS were also the biological foundation for the future of the ethnic group. Bruckner, while he was the leader of the *Volksgemeinschaft* had had similar fears. Himmler, on the other hand, had a tight grip on both the SS and the VoMi. To him, the VoMi was a tool that could be used to increase his power and to be used as a source of recruits for the SS. Himmler's desires were irresistible. There was little that could be done, particularly by a minor official or a foreign office bureaucrat, to stop or prevent the situation. Romania and Germany were both at war as members of the Axis. Men of

¹⁵⁵ Lumans, *Himmler's Auxiliaries*, p. 230.

fighting age had very little choice as to whether or not they were going to participate in the conflict. The choice that they were given, however, was which uniform they would wear. Regardless of where one's allegiance lay, Romania or Germany, choosing the SS uniform was simply logical for those interested either in military glory or simple self-preservation.

During this period, the situation among Romania's Germans was not ideal. A feeling that this German community was making more sacrifices than Germans elsewhere was spreading and Schmidt had become the focus of much dissatisfaction. His control over the Volksgruppe was based largely upon his connections with the SS and the VoMi and though he was originally from Romania, many felt that he was an outsider. His loyalty lay with the Reich institutions that had given him his position and not with the local community, many felt. Demands for his removal became more vocal particularly after it was alleged that he and the leadership of the party had been involved in the misappropriation of funds that had been meant for the

families of serving SS members.¹⁵⁶ The general level of satisfaction with the leadership of the community plummeted during the first years of the war and it was not to recover. It was plain that the communities' concerns were secondary to the needs of the Reich.

During the war, Romanian troops fought side-by-side with their German counterparts. Unfortunately for the German forces, Romanians generally saw their participation in the war against the Soviet Union as part of the long series of border struggles that had plagued the relations between the two countries for centuries. Once fighting beyond the borders of Bessarabia, the Romanian army reportedly lost its passion for battle. The slaughter that accompanied the Battle of Stalingrad, in which "two Romanian armies were chewed up by the Russians," had important repercussions on morale back in Romania and a defeatist attitude became prevalent. Antonescu even ordered his Security Chief, Christescu, to arrest anyone who displayed defeatism.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ Fox, *German Relations with Romania*, p. 241.

Antonescu's fear of conspiracy was evident in his response to rumours that Legionnaires had been infiltrated into Romania wearing SS uniforms to carry out a coup d'état. On 12 December 1942, the dictator ordered that all Romanian citizens, *Volksdeutschen* included, who were serving outside of the country were required to report their conditions within forty days under penalty of death. "Thus Antonescu hoped to have some knowledge of the Romanian *Volksdeutsche* in the *Waffen-SS* and what they were doing."¹⁵⁸ Antonescu's fear of conspiracy was a reasonable one, as rumours of plots and betrayals were gaining currency in Bucharest. In 1941, however, Antonescu's hold on power was assisted by the fundamental weakness of anyone who would have opposed him. His support was spread throughout the country-side where his urban-based competitors could not compete. Overall, his government received the passive support of the majority.

For the community of *Volksdeutschen*, the war was extremely destructive. The special status conferred on the ethnic Germans was offset by the degree to which they were

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 241-242.

used as pawns and as cannon fodder for the Nazi war machine. Antonescu was not particularly pleased with the situation as each Romanian citizen who joined the German SS was one less young man for his army. Furthermore, he questioned their allegiance. In this atmosphere, Himmler aggravated the situation by asking for another 20-30,000 recruits from among the Volksdeutschen. It took words of assurance from Hitler to calm Antonescu's objections. Germany was preparing for total war and every man of military capability must be made available, he stated, and any obstacles to this mobilisation could only hurt the war effort.¹⁵⁹ The 10,000 that were serving in the German forces in March of 1943 were thus greatly added to, bringing the total up to 50,000 by the year's end. These young men, for the most part, served on the brutal eastern front and almost 15 percent of their number either died in battle or as prisoners of war.¹⁶⁰

The approaching Russian forces and the close proximity of Allied forces in the Mediterranean made the possibility

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 258-259.

¹⁶⁰ Castellan, "The Germans of Rumania," p. 5.

of conflict on Romanian soil appear more and more likely as the reversals of 1943 led into a foreboding 1944.

Preliminary, unauthorised contacts had been made with the Allies by Mihai Antonescu (no relation to Marshal Ion Antonescu), who was serving as the Foreign Minister, but the Nazis did not think that anything would come of these discussions. Marshal Antonescu was experiencing his own divided loyalties. He had promised Hitler that he would never betray their friendship or their alliance.

Nevertheless, he had no desire to see Romania capitulate in humiliation to an Allied-dictated peace. As his predecessors had done in the latter half of World War I, Antonescu chose to betray his ally in order to maintain an advantage for Romania.

Throughout 1943, Romania began a gradual disengagement from both the war and from Germany. Mihai Antonescu continued his *sub rosa* contacts with representatives of the Allies, but he was unable to secure any favourable conditions of surrender. The official policy of "unconditional surrender" applied to all Axis powers,

Romania included. Sympathy for the German cause declined greatly among the general population, particularly as it was reported that German troops, retreating from the Russian lines, had participated in the looting of Romanian villages. Food shortages increased as Allied air raids kept produce in the warehouses and even the Volksdeutschen hoarded one third of their 1943 crop and were slaughtering their pigs.¹⁶¹

The general situation continued to deteriorate as Allied pressure on Romania increased and the German war machine was showing signs of weakness. The Russian forces had pushed the German lines in the South-East back to the Dniester River by July 1944 and the Soviet forces controlled the southern end of the river. Speaking with Antonescu, Hitler said that the troops might have to be regrouped along a line from Galati, Focani and the ridge of the Carpathians.¹⁶² Talk of moving the front line right into the heart of Romania was not what Antonescu was hoping to hear. But before the Axis powers could pull their troops back,

¹⁶¹ Fox, *German Relations with Romania*, p. 307.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 309.

Russian forces hit back at the German-Romanian line on 7 August 1944 with a massive tank, artillery and air attack. The line was broken and the Romanian city of Iasi fell to the Russians on 17 August.

KING MIHAI'S ROYAL COUP

News of the Soviet breakthrough reached King Mihai in Sinaia and he promptly decided to implement a royal coup d'état. He had planned to take power for some time, but the events on the front forced him to move up his schedule. The exact version of events is the subject of debate; however, it was carried out bloodlessly thanks to support from the military commanders. The result was the so-called royal coup of 23 August 1944: the dismissal of Antonescu and the prompt termination of hostilities on the Romanian front.

Surprisingly, the German army did not turn their arms against their former allies. Orders had come from Berlin to use military force to crush the coup, but the situation was not in Germany's favour. On the night that Antonescu was deposed, the highest German officials were locked up in the German embassy. Romania was not actually occupied by large

numbers of German forces, as was the case in Hungary. The military presence was mostly limited to air defence forces for the oil fields and the other German troops who were in garrisons scattered throughout the countryside were unable to seize control of the country. Military action against the coup was limited to a Berlin-ordered bombing attack on Bucharest that only served to give the King a pretext for declaring war on the Reich on 24 August 1944.¹⁶³

The news of the coup and the radical re-orientation of the Romanian government came as a complete surprise for the *volksdeutsch* community. Schmidt, the leader of the German community, was in Berlin at the time and the *Volksdeutschen* were left without any decisive leadership. Despite the fact that the tide had turned against the Axis forces more than a year earlier, no plan had been developed to deal with such a situation and there was no consensus on what to do. The leadership vacuum exacerbated this confusion. Scheider reports that hundreds of young students in Brasov took up

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 315-316. Scheider, *The Fate of the Germans in Rumania*, p. 64.

arms, under orders from the Volksgruppe leadership. Most communities, however, were urged to stay calm and to stay where they were. Nevertheless, many of the leaders of the ethnic community fled the country either with the retreating German troops or in their wake.¹⁶⁴

In the space of a few short days, the German community quickly lost its position of privilege. As the "nationals" of a now-enemy power, ethnic Germans were ordered to register, along with ethnic Hungarians, with the police. Special identification papers were issued to them and "all weapons, wireless sets, motor vehicles and bicycles had to be surrendered"¹⁶⁵ Those identified as leaders of the ethnic community who remained in the country were rounded up and interned. Strangely, the order for their arrest demanded that the "three leading personalities had to be arrested" in each locality. In some areas, this meant that elementary teachers who had not been involved in politics were arrested simply because they were among the leading personalities.

¹⁶⁴ Scheider, *The Fate of the Germans in Rumania*, pp. 65-66.

¹⁶⁵ Castellan, "The Germans of Rumania," p. 66.

The arrests continued following the conclusion of the armistice with the U.S.S.R. and virtually every respected potential leader of the German community was interned. Scheider estimates that up to two or three thousand arrests probably took place in the first months after the Romanian surrender. On the face of it, the Romanian authorities seemed to take strong measures against the German community. The reality, however, was that the treatment received by the *Volksdeutschen* was quite favourable compared to that of their counterparts in Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia.¹⁶⁶

With the surrender, the front line quickly moved West from Romania's eastern frontier. The German troops which had been garrisoned in Romania retreated into Hungary and set up a front on Romania's western frontier. Just as before, this region was home to a significant number of ethnic Germans and life was anything but easy in the zone of operations. SS General Phelps of the newly organised Transylvanian command ordered the evacuation of the German villages along the frontier. These evacuees were soon joined by others as the

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

SS led streams of fleeing ethnic Germans from the Banat, Sathmar and even from Yugoslavia. Approximately 100,000 people took the trek from their homes toward Austria.

The evacuations westward left the German community in Romania a shadow of its former self. The evacuation of Bessarabia, Dubrudja, and Bukovina subtracted more than 220,000 from their ranks. The 50,000 who had served in the *Waffen-SS* added to the estimated 100,000 who retreated in the days following Romania's surrender left the *Volksgruppe* with a population of approximately 300,000 in late 1944.

By the end of 1944, the Russians were firmly in control in Romania and large scale deportations to the Soviet Union began: all men between the ages of 17 and 45 and all women from 18 to 30 were ordered onto trains to an extremely harsh situation in the U.S.S.R. Horrendous conditions resulted in high mortality and fully 15 percent of the 75,000 deported never returned from forced labour in the Soviet mines. The Romanian *Volksdeutschen* were not alone in this situation; the Russians also deported Germans from the other territories that they occupied. It was only in 1950 that the

"repatriation" of these Germans to either East Germany, West Germany or Austria was completed.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 67-68.

CONCLUSION

When one drives through Transylvania today, the influence of the German community is unmistakable. The architecture and the town planning are obvious examples, reminiscent of small, medieval German towns. Many local museums showcase the rich cultural heritage of the area and the landscape has been shaped by centuries of farming. The massive Black Church dominates the centre of the city of Brasov (formerly Hermannstadt), a symbol of the Lutheran faith shared by thousands of Germans that can be seen for miles around. Surrounding the church, in the lanes and on the squares, shop signs are often found written with bold Germanic script. The language, however, is not German. Fifty years after the end of the war, the only German one hears in the cafés and restaurants comes mostly from tourists who come for the skiing.

After hundreds of years working the soil and building communities in Hungary and then Romania, the history of the Danube Swabians and the Transylvanian Saxons came to a

climax between the two world wars. Beginning as an autonomous society, these ethnic Germans started as servants of the princes who endowed them with the land. Later, they came under the dominion of the Hungarian kings and the dual monarchy. Meanwhile, their linguistic and cultural differences kept them distinct from their neighbours and the clannish notions of the region discouraged their assimilation into a larger Hungarian or Romanian society. Links between the German community and the German Reich were difficult to maintain, though the strength of the Lutheran church was testimony to the cultural and religious intercourse that did take place.

Toward the turn of this century, nationalists in the German Reich, prompted by the ideas of social Darwinism and racial ideology, began to seek out their supposed brethren. Tangible assistance in the form of funding for schools and individual exchanges reaffirmed and strengthened the link between the Reich and these outposts of German culture. If living as a linguistic and cultural minority had not left the *Volksdeutschen* with enough of a sense of "other-ness"

compared with their neighbours, the Pan-Germanists went to great lengths to accentuate this difference and to instil in them the chauvinistic nationalism that was on the rise in Germany.

By the first days of peace in 1919, the number of private societies that concerned themselves with *Auslandsdeutschtum* was at a record high. The loss of the war meant that the hopes of a German-dominated *Mitteleuropa* had been dashed and, ironically, the German nationalists believed that Germanism was threatened to an unprecedented degree. The acuity of the perceived threat lead to a spiralling increase in interest in the *Volksdeutschen* of South-Eastern Europe. At the same time, the revisionist governments of Weimar followed a policy that was based on the supposition that maintaining the Germanness of those cut off from the *Reich* would form the basis for Germany's claims for treaty revision. The preservation of the culture of the disparate Germans of Central Europe was now motivated by a combination of positive nationalism and political pragmatism.

When the Nazi Party came to power in 1933, it was nationalism that held the upper hand. The same ideas that had shaped the doctrine of the original Pan-Germanists were also to be found in the ideology of the National Socialists. If ever there was a case in which the blood link between Germans in the *Vaterland* and those abroad was to be upheld both as a means and an end, one would have expected it to have been during the era of the NSDAP. The *Auslandsdeutschen*, after all, were to be the tool of one of the prime objectives of the Thousand Year *Reich*: the German acquisition of *Lebensraum* and empire in Eastern Europe. While tentative steps were taken toward this objective in conquered Poland, this remained but a dream for the Nazis. In the meantime, Hitler and his deputies had other plans for the *Volksdeutschen* of Romania.

The circumstances that led to the dramatic radicalisation of politics in Germany during the twenties were also apparent on the political scene in Romania. The period between the wars was characterised by instability, economic dislocation and the polarisation of political

discourse. The activists of the left openly battled the thugs of the right on the streets and at rallies and by the time Hitler was consolidating his hold on Germany, Romania had taken a massive shift toward authoritarianism, nationalism, xenophobia and plain racism. The same historical forces that brought Hitler to power and gave the radical right such power throughout the continent were also operative in Romania.

In this atmosphere, the *Auslandsdeutschen* of Romania were experiencing a reawakening of their Germanness and a political unity that they had not experienced before. The Romanian government, with no prompting from Berlin, repaid the community for its support for the Karlsburg Resolutions of 1919 with a remarkable tolerance and in some cases actual encouragement of German nationalism. While thousands of their Romanian neighbours were marching in support of the Iron Guard and the other radical right parties, thousands of Germans were offering support to the Nazi inspired revivalist movement. It was but a small step, therefore, for Romanians to take to support Nazi-inspired Antonescu; just

as it was for ethnic Germans to support the Nazi-inspired *Volksgemeinschaft*.

The Romanian state did very little, if anything, to discourage the inculcation of German nationalism. In fact, the Liberal government and its right-wing successors actually encouraged the growth of Nazism and nationalism in the German community. The ultimate acts of supposed disloyalty, the flying of the swastika within Romania and the enrolment of Romanian citizens in the German SS, were done with the knowledge of the government of the day.

As Germany pulled Romania closer and closer until it was a virtual satellite state, Romania, at first, tried to steer a neutral course. But in the end, Romania hitched its hopes to Nazi Germany. To suggest that Romania's Germans were disloyal for doing the same is not to consider the powerful forces that were pulling their allegiance in many directions. The image of the pledge of allegiance to the *Führer* and the Romanian Legionary state speaks volumes. This split loyalty was not the contradiction that one might have supposed.

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As part of his New Order, and as a prelude to the Germanisation of the region, Hitler desired to establish complete German hegemony over South-Eastern Europe. To achieve these aims, the German government acted to erect what William Grenzebach has called "Germany's informal empire in East-central Europe." Though Germany was hobbled by the effects of Versailles, its economy was not destroyed to such a degree as to remove it as a economic force in Europe. In fact, Germany's greatest rival in the region, the U.S.S.R., was greatly damaged by the war and the revolution. So relative to its competitors, Germany was in a better position following the war.⁹²

All the industrial countries suffered greatly during the depression and Germany was particularly hard hit. Furthermore, Germany suffered under the burden of reparations payments (to 1931) and a shortage of hard currency. Because most of the countries with which Germany wanted to trade were in a similar position *vis-à-vis*

⁹² William S. Grenzebach, Jr., *Germany's Informal Empire in East-central Europe: German Economic Policy toward Yugoslavia and Rumania, 1933 - 1939*, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1988, p. 5.

convertible currency, Germany was able to use its economic expertise to pull the South-Eastern countries closer and closer. In order to trade with the western powers, countries in South-Eastern Europe were generally obliged to use their precious hard currency in exchange. Germany alleviated this pressure by entering into liberal barter arrangements by which trading partners generally supplied raw materials in exchange for finished goods. While the exchanges were generally advantageous to all the partners involved, the targets of Germany's commerce were becoming more dependent upon Germany

As in other countries, the success of the National Socialists in Germany provided encouragement to other anti-Semitic and morbidly nationalistic organisations in Romania. Anti-Semitism was endemic among ethnic Romanian nationals, and pro-German sentiments were at a high level among the country's significant German minority.

ROMANIAN VOLKSDEUTSCHEN, 1933-1940

The period between 1919 and 1933 was one of consolidation and growth for the *Volksdeutschen* of Romania.

The German minority enjoyed a privileged position as the "minority of choice" of the Romanian government. Their lack of irredentist claims and their prosperity made them of little bother to the government. Throughout the 'twenties, the situation was very stable for the Germans. However, they were not immune to the tide of ethnic nationalism that was sweeping the continent.

The programme of the National Socialist movement which prepared to take over power in the Weimar Republic at the beginning of the 'thirties, and which in its nationalist conceptions reflected to some extent the linguistic and ethnic struggles of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, appealed strongly to the "nationalist" wing amongst the ethnic Germans. Hitler's coming to power in Germany, seen from the distance and the isolated existence of the ethnic Germans, presented itself in glorified form as a great national revolution. Terms like "people's community", "blood and soil", "purity of race, language and customs", merely seemed to reaffirm old and long propagated tenets of the philosophy of ethnic Germans as they had been formulated in the struggle for the national survival particularly by the Saxons of Transylvania.⁹¹

As would be expected, among the first stirrings of National Socialist sentiments within the German minority came from Transylvania. Fritz Fabritius, a Saxon and a former captain in the army of the Dual Monarchy, organised the *Nationale Selbsthilfebewegung der Deutschen in Rumänien*

⁹¹ Scheider, *The Fate of the Germans in Rumania*, p. 33.

(Movement for National Mutual Assistance of Germans in Romania), or the NSDR, in the early 1920s. According to Georges Castellan, Fabritius had been in contact with Hitler since 1920.⁹⁴ One must bear in mind, however, that Hitler and his National Socialists were largely insignificant at that point. Fabritius' movement's ideology at the time was more heavily influenced by old-style Pan-Germanism than by Nazism.⁹⁵ The connection with Nazism, however, would become more and more explicit with time.

By the 1930s, the NSDR had become a viable force on the *volksdeutsch* political scene in Romania. At the Saxon Diet on 1 October 1933, Fabritius' compatriots were able to eject the liberal leadership by mustering 62 percent of the votes to his side. Within a year, the NSDR was victorious in the elections for the Bessarabia Volksrat and had renamed itself to make its ideology unambiguous: the *National-sozialistische Erneuerungsbewegung der Deutschen in Rumänien*

⁹⁴ Castellan, "The Germans of Rumania," p. 59.

⁹⁵ Scheider, *The Fate of the Germans in Rumania*, p. 34.

(National Socialist Revival Movement of Germans in Romania), abbreviated as NSEDR.⁹⁶

The gradual rise of the NSDR and the NSEDR was largely thanks to two separate phenomena. First, Fabritius was able to look toward the rise of the nationalists in Germany and adopt many of the slogans that appealed to the sense of belonging to a larger, almost mythical nation. Life as a member of a minority group involves almost constant reminders of being different from one's neighbours and of organic solidarity with one's peers. The *Volksdeutschen* of Romania experienced this and were shown that they too could participate in the ascendancy of the German people.

The second factor was one that greatly accelerated the process. Between the two wars, Romania was in a state of almost perpetual crisis. The addition of great blocs of territory in 1919/20 was not without its price. Instead of experiencing stability and consolidation, Romania was under constant threat from bordering countries that questioned the

⁹⁶ Castellan, "The Germans of Rumania," p. 59. Scheider, *The Fate of the Germans in Rumania*, p. 34. Paikert, *The Danube Swabians*, p. 252.

legitimacy of the territorial transfers and actively campaigned for revision. In the words of Eugen Weber, "the elation of the post-war years was mitigated by the presence of vindictive neighbours who claimed the territories that had just been annexed."⁹⁷

To make matters worse for the German minority, the governments in Bucharest were unprepared to make significant concessions to minorities. While the target was certainly not the Germans, the Romanians were simply not prepared to adopt policies that would assist the Hungarians at the same time. The demands of the ethnic Germans from the early 'twenties were still unfulfilled by the 'thirties despite their considerable co-operation and participation within the political parties. Many Germans failed to see that any important benefit had come from co-operation with the Romanian government and were willing to try a more forceful approach. The NSEDR, many thought, would lead the vanguard.

⁹⁷ Eugen Weber, *Varieties of Fascism: Doctrines of Revolution in the Twentieth Century* (New York: D. Van Nostrand Company, 1964), p. 97.

Within the Saxon community, the NSEDR found most of its support among the same segment of the population that was, at the same time, supporting Hitler in Germany: primarily young people, the *petite bourgeoisie*, farmers and teachers. The intelligentsia, upper middle classes and the churches were more conservative in their outlook and were less interested in the radicalism of the so-called Revivalists of the NSEDR. The Catholic *volksdeutsch* communities, as in Germany, they were largely disinterested in the Nazi message. This is not to suggest that there was no interest among the Swabians, nor among Catholics. Castellan reports that in 1934, the Bishop of Timisoara visited Hitler to vouch for the allegiance of the Swabians.⁹⁸ In general, however, the Swabians opposed Fabritius' ascendancy.

At the same time as the Nazis were coming to power in Germany and as the NSEDR was gaining credibility as a political force in Romania, the face of politics in Romania was changing. Morbidly anti-Semitic and nationalistic organisations emerged in the 'twenties, forcing their way

⁹⁸ Castellan, "The Germans of Rumania," p. 59.

onto the scene and having a considerable effect on the body politic. The foundation of this radical ideology was a native Romanian nationalism that emphasised their "self-consciousness as a nation, by stressing their Latinity, their Christianity and their traditional rural way of life."⁹⁹ The rhetoric of the Romanian nationalists placed these supposed assets in stark contrast to the sizeable Jewish population, whom they associated with communism, Russian imperialism and the urban bourgeoisie. During this time of transition and instability, the older Romanian nationalism was pushed to the extremes and virulent anti-Semitism showed its face. This anti-Semitism was an important affinity between Hitler's Nazis and the Romanian nationalists.

During the 'twenties, Romanian nationalists began to organise and make their presence known. Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, an academic, founded the League of National Christian Defence in 1923 as a political party. While in

⁹⁹ Zev Barbu, "Rumania" in S.J. Woolf, ed., *Fascism in Europe* (New York: Methuen, Inc., 1981), p. 152.

jail for the execution of a supposed police informant, Codreanu claimed to have been visited by the Archangel Michael. The Archangel, he reported, "urged him to dedicate his life to God as revealed by the Romanian Christian tradition."¹⁰⁰ The result was the Legion of the Archangel Michael. Codreanu's Legion attempted to appeal to a broad segment of the population by preaching strong anti-Semitism with a demand for a "new man." Unfortunately for Codreanu, the Legion managed to attract only those peasants who were not associated with the political mainstream and many students.¹⁰¹ As a true mass movement was not in the offing, Codreanu founded the Iron Guard as a subsidiary of the Legion in 1930 to broaden his constituency to include the working classes.

The Iron Guard and Romanian fascism are generally seen to be synonymous. The Iron Guard was undoubtedly the largest and most visible ultra-right organisation in Romania at the time. Codreanu had already shown little hesitation to use

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

bloodshed and rowdyism to convey his message and the Iron Guard carried on this tradition. Large groups of guardist thugs routinely caused disturbances throughout the country. The high visibility of the organisation made it an easy target of the government. Almost immediately after it was founded, the government banned it. Later, it was legalised and then banned again in 1933. In response, three guardists assassinated the Liberal Premier, Ion Duca, who had been responsible for outlawing the movement.¹⁰²

At the same time as Codreanu's organisations and the NSEDR were ascendant, the structures of Romanian government were in a state of chaos. In 1925, Prime Minister Bratianu forced Crown Prince Carol to renounce his claim to the throne, leaving his ten-year-old son Mihai to succeed King Ferdinand when he died in 1927. In 1930, however, Carol returned and Mihai ceded the throne to him.¹⁰³

This instability in the royal house was supplemented by the inherent instability of Romanian parliamentary politics.

The king was also involved in parliamentary politics in another capacity. Acting behind the scenes, King Carol secretly supported the activities of the Iron Guard. He harboured authoritarian tendencies and hoped to use the

¹⁰² Fox, *German Relations with Romania, 1933-1944*, p. 27.

¹⁰³ Seton-Watson, *Eastern Europe*, pp. 203-217.

Guard as a proxy in his personal battles with the traditional parties. As the British Minister in Romania reported to the Foreign Office in 1936, "If King Carol had at times appeared to encourage the leaders of the right, it might well have been in the hope of exerting indirect pressure on the leaders of the National Peasant's Party and bringing them to a more tractable frame of mind "¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, he later observed that "the King's heart, though perhaps not his head, inclines him towards Fascist ideas."¹⁰⁵

Under the tutelage of Premier Tatarescu and Foreign Minister Titulescu, the Romanian government continued to maintain very close diplomatic relations between Romania and France. But actions in the diplomatic arena were being undermined in the marketplace as German interest in the economy grew steadily until Germany was the predominant foreign investor. In 1935, the governments of Berlin and Bucharest signed a trade agreement which set strict

¹⁰⁴ "Hoare to Eden, 8 October 1936," Document No. 24 in Vago, *The Shadow of the Swastika*.

¹⁰⁵ "Annual Report on Romania, 1936," Document No. 29 in *Ibid*.

import/export quotas on each and every item defined. Payment, the agreement stipulated, was to be via bills of credit. Fully a quarter of Romania's substantial oil production was earmarked for export to Germany. However, for exports that exceeded the quotas, Romania demanded payment either in gold or in easily convertible currencies. The *Reichsmark* was not readily convertible and the German government promptly attempted to re-open negotiations. The Romanian government regularly imposed and eliminated seemingly arbitrary tariffs, a practice that angered German trade officials and made the economic relationship between the two states difficult. "The Nazis saw Southeast Europe as a vast source of natural resources for which Germany would supply industrial goods."¹⁰⁶ Therefore, the Berlin government, regardless of its obvious frustration, regarded these Byzantine practices as part of the price one had to pay for access to the rich resources of the region.

The year 1936 is a definitive turning point in Romania's history. The Bucharest government continued its

¹⁰⁶ Fox, *German Relations with Romania*, pp. 29-30.

tradition of alignment with the West and with France in particular until the dismissal of Foreign Minister Titulescu in August 1936. His dismissal was never adequately explained, though the new Foreign Minister, Victor Antonescu, told his British counterpart that it was because Titulescu "objected to the failure of the government to take stern measures against manifestations of anti-Semitism."¹⁰⁷ Whatever the reason for his removal from office, it represented a turning point in Romania's external relations. Titulescu's anti-German views were well known at the time, as was his preference for the Western powers. His replacement was much more inclined to seek a rapprochement with the Fascist governments in Italy and Germany.

During the 'thirties, Romania was in a precarious position *vis-à-vis* its neighbours. On one side, Hungary clearly wanted the return of the territories that it had lost and there was much question as to what lengths the Budapest government would go to retrieve it. The Soviet Union to the North-East had not recognised Romania's claim

¹⁰⁷ Vago, *The Shadow of the Swastika*, p. 28.

to Bessarabia, and Bulgaria wanted the return of the Dobrudja area. With many potential enemies and with little strength, Romania clearly needed strong friends who could help keep the angry neighbours at bay. Two alternative options presented themselves during this period of instability. One was to negotiate to become a party to the Franco-Soviet *rapprochement* as a counterweight against Hungary. An understanding over Bessarabia would, of course, be necessary for this to be accomplished. Unfortunately, alignment with the Soviet Union would be seen as a hostile act by Germany, and internally a huge portion of popular opinion was staunchly anti-Communist and would never support such a relationship. Alienating Germany would simply be counter-productive, as Hungary was well on its way to becoming a German client state and so keeping Hungary on a short leash would not be as important a matter as before. If maintaining the structural integrity of the new Romanian state was the most important priority for the Bucharest government, an alignment with Germany was most logical. Though it would alienate the U.S.S.R., Germany would be able

to restrain Hungary who was a more urgent danger than the Soviet Union. Furthermore, Germany was a country ascendant and trade relations had gotten to such a point that good relations with the Reich were already an economic necessity.

Having much to fear from the thugs of the Iron Guard, the King sought to steal much of its thunder by mobilising the youth of Romania to a strongly royalist position. The *Straja Tarii* (Sentry of the Fatherland), founded in the autumn of 1937, aimed directly at the main constituency of the guardist youth organisations. His next initiative to undermine the Iron Guard had disastrous consequences for Romania. The December 1937 elections were not expected to return the ruling Liberals to power as most observers did not think that they would be able to muster the requisite 40 percent of the votes to form a government. Following a particularly vitriolic, heated and often violent election, the ruling Liberals and their partners received only 36 percent of the votes. The National Peasant Party came next with almost 21 percent, followed by the Iron Guard's near 16 percent. King Carol asked the leaders of the ultra right-

wing National Christian Party, Octavian Goga and Professor Cuza to form a minority government.¹⁰⁸ The ultimate result was foreshadowed by Sir Orme Sargent of the British Foreign Office:

King Carol has appointed M. Goga in order to steal the thunder of the Iron Guard, just as Hindenburg appointed von Papen in the hopes of out-manceuvring Hitler. If so, the precedent is not a very encouraging one¹⁰⁹

The election of 1937 was the beginning of the last act of Romanian parliamentary democracy between the two world wars.

Goga's first months as government leader were marked by unprecedented instability as his National Christian Party was given the reins of power when they least expected it and were totally unprepared for the responsibility. Their senior officials had absolutely no experience in the affairs of state and the street-level hooligans even intensified their thuggery, perhaps emboldened by the new government's believed support for their cause. Instability likewise reigned with regard to external relations as the new Foreign Minister, Istrate Micescu "was well disposed toward the

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 32-33.

¹⁰⁹ "Minutes by Sir Orme Sargent, 1 January 1938," Document No. 59 in *Ibid.*

Axis, but he was anxious about the country's independence from Nazi Germany and was reluctant to stir up a hornet's nest in Romania by reversing the two-decades-old pro-Western orientation in foreign policy."¹¹⁰ A further nail was put in the coffin of Romanian democracy with the appointment of the new Defence Minister, General Ion Antonescu.

This period of extreme political instability was also one of radical transformation for the community of Romanian *Volksdeutschen*. Generally allied with the governing Liberals, the traditional political elites of the ethnic group were worried by the rise of the right in the country at large and especially within their community. Though they were wary of the right, of greater importance to the old leadership was the preservation of the *Volk* and the appearance of unity. Therefore, in order to avoid open conflict within the German community, most of the traditional elite joined the National Socialist movement. However, the *Deutsche Partei* under Hans Otto Roth remained

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

allied with the Liberal party until the end of the parliamentary system in 1938.

The *Verband der Deutschen in Rumänien* (Union of Germans in Romania), which had been established in 1921, was completely reorganised by 1935 and was replaced with the *Volksgemeinschaft der Deutschen in Rumänien* (People's Community of Germans in Romania). The "People's Programme" of action of that same year demanded that the People's Community

be established on the basis of the National Socialist leadership principle. It further demanded that the National Socialist ideology should permeate all spheres of life of the ethnic groups, their associations and clubs, their neighbourhood organisations, co-operatives, professional corporations, etc. and all branches of education.¹¹¹

Antonescu's arrival in government and Goga's actions as Premier would facilitate this. During the few short months of his government, Goga took a bold step in the relationship between the Romanian government and the German ethnic community. On 6 February 1938, Fabricius and his *Volksgemeinschaft* were recognised as the sole representatives of the *Volksdeutschen* to the Romanian

¹¹¹ Scheider, *The Fate of the Germans in Rumania*, p. 35.

government. The Germans of Romania were certainly a heterogeneous bloc politically and the infighting had continued among them until well after the elections. The decision to choose the Volksgemeinschaft as the sole representative, if one was truly necessary, was based on the political agreement that existed between the right-wing Fabricius and the clearly fascist Goga regime. The regime, however, did not last long.

THE DICTATORSHIP OF KING CAROL

Within a month, on 10 February, King Carol dissolved parliament and outlawed all the previously existing political parties. Premier Goga was dismissed, replaced by the Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Miron Cristea. The King decreed a new constitution that was based on one single party, his newly formed Front of National Renaissance, and the electoral system was completely reformed along corporativist lines. In effect, Carol had shown his authoritarian inclinations and had implemented a royal dictatorship.¹¹²

¹¹² Vago, *The Shadow of the Swastika*, p. 43.

In response, Codreanu voluntarily disbanded the Iron Guard and was arrested with some of his followers on a variety of charges including treason, terrorism and conspiracy. Within a year of his ten year sentence, it was announced that he had been shot while trying to escape. In truth, he and a dozen others had been murdered by the gendarmes on the orders of Premier Cristea, the former Patriarch.¹¹³ Goga's National Christian Party gave the king little trouble when ordered disbanded.¹¹⁴ The German *Volksgemeinschaft* was dissolved along with all the other political parties. Overall, King Carol's actions were accepted and the process of dissolving democracy in Romania went smoothly.

The pro-German orientation that had been reflected by the increase in trade and the extension of German political influence was threatened by the royal dictatorship of King Carol. The early days of the royal dictatorship reflected an ambiguous approach toward German-Romanian relations. The

¹¹³ Carsten, *Rise of Fascism*, pp. 188-89.

¹¹⁴ Vago, *The Shadow of the Swastika*, p. 43.

arrest of Codreanu and the general crackdown on the Iron Guard could be seen as an attempt to undermine Nazi influence in Romania. That he was attempting to undermine German influence was made apparent during the trial of Codreanu in which the government introduced evidence of official and unofficial contacts between the Iron Guard and Nazi Germany. The king asserted that these contacts were, in effect, "directed as against himself."¹¹⁵ Of course the German government vehemently denied that any such contacts existed. At the same time, however, letters were drafted instructing the *Außenpolitisches Amt* of the Nazi Party, the *Auslands Organisation*, the *Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle*, and the Propaganda Ministry to break all ties with the Legion.¹¹⁶

According to Barry Fox,

Romania was still following its ambiguous policy of offering friendship to Germany while antagonising her by continued close ties with Britain and France and by trying to break up the Iron Guard. Very little in Romanian policy could have comforted the Germans or made them want the situation to continue indefinitely.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ "Fabricius to the Foreign Ministry, 22 May 1938," *Documents on German Foreign Policy* [Hereinafter cited as DGFP], Series D, V, p. 282.

¹¹⁶ "Foreign Ministry Circular, 23 May 1938," *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Fox, *German Relations with Romania*, p. 62.

German actions elsewhere in Europe changed the situation dramatically and forced Carol to change his policy. Up to this point, he had been attempting to keep all his options open by currying good relations with the western powers and with Germany. Munich (September 1938) and the subsequent dismemberment of Czechoslovakia had a tremendous effect on Romania. If assistance from Britain and France had ever been a realistic possibility before, it was now plain that the western powers would not come to the rescue of Romania should the situation on its borders become intolerable. In the words of the German Minister in Bucharest, Wilhelm Fabricius,

King Carol is becoming increasingly aware that assistance from France is becoming more and more remote and that good relations with Germany might also protect him against Hungarian revisionist claims. But he does not believe that he can take a decisive step toward closer relations with Germany until we protect Romania against Soviet Russia.¹¹⁸

Fabricius was right. Immediately threatened by Soviet Russia and a hostile Hungary and tied to the impotent Western powers, the only realistic defence was closer relations with

¹¹⁸ "Fabricius to the Foreign Ministry, 29 September 1938," *DGFP*, Ser. D, V., p. 308.

Germany. The importance of this was further punctuated during a meeting between King Carol and Hitler in November 1938 in which the *Führer* stated that Germany would not intervene should Hungary resort to arms in its claim to Transylvania.¹¹⁹ Whether Hitler meant this as a threat can be debated, but King Carol must have seen the import of this statement.

Meanwhile, German involvement in the Romanian economy increased at a dramatic pace. The trade agreement of 1939 saw to it that Romania's critical agricultural and lumber industries were to be completely adapted to meet Germany's needs. Furthermore, the two countries agreed to increased German prospecting for and extraction of mineral resources, a German interest in Romanian banks and the development of a joint German-Romanian oil industry. Following incremental changes throughout the preceding decade, this treaty was an engraved invitation to a German take-over of critical

¹¹⁹ "Memorandum by Ribbentrop on the conversation between Hitler and Carol, 24 November 1938," *Ibid.*, pp. 338-342.

segments of the Romanian economy. One German negotiator of this treaty observed that

The events of the year 1938 have led to a profound change in political attitudes in Romania. The conviction that it is necessary to co-operate with Germany to a certain extent has won general acceptance. This change can be attributed to the collapse of France's political prestige, the growth of Germany's power in 1938, the realisation that only Germany can provide effective protection against Russia, Romania's most dangerous enemy, and finally also to the consideration that Romania is economically dependent on Germany to an ever-increasing degree. [Emphasis added]¹²⁰

According to Barry Fox, "by March 1939, Romania was an economic step-child of Germany and although her leaders might attempt to resist the pull toward Germany, it was impossible."¹²¹

Just as the events following Munich precipitated a crisis in Romania, so did the German invasion of the rest of dismembered Czechoslovakia in March 1939. Great Britain undertook the frantic task of building an effective system of collective security. Along with the Polish government, Romania was asked for its opinion on the possibility of entering into negotiations regarding a guarantee of

¹²⁰ "Memorandum by the Deputy Director of the Economic Policy Department, 13 December 1938," *Ibid.*, pp. 352-353.

¹²¹ Fox, *German Relations with Romania*, p. 76.

Romania's frontiers and whether or not the Romanian government was amenable to possible protection by the Soviet Union. Eager to do anything to ensure his country's independence, Carol was in a difficult position. On the one hand, a guarantee by the Western powers would be desirable. On the other hand, however, Carol had to be extremely careful not to alienate the Germans.

From its position between a rock and a hard place, Romania quickly began negotiations with Britain and France to assure the future of the country. The pact proposed by the Western powers would bind Poland and Romania to Britain and France in a multilateral system of mutual guarantees. If, for example, Poland were attacked, Romania, Britain and France would fight for Poland. The same would happen for any of the other expected participants. Romania, however, presented a counter-proposal: an agreement that would dispense with the reciprocal agreements and instead would only provide for a guarantee of Romania's borders. On its face, Romania wanted a guarantee of assistance in case of emergency, but demanded the freedom to abandon the other

signatories in their emergencies. King Carol's government made this suggestion because it feared that the announcement of a reciprocal agreement would lead Germany to unleash Hungary and Bulgaria.¹²² According to Barry Fox, King Carol wanted the best of all possible worlds:

that the British, French, and perhaps the Russians, if Soviet participation were kept secret, would guarantee his throne against the Germans while the Germans would protect Romania against the Russians. With everybody protecting her from everybody else, Romania could retain her independence and turn some profit by selling oil to both sides.¹²³

On 13 April 1939, King Carol's wish was granted; Britain and France issued a joint guarantee of Romania's borders with no stipulation of reciprocity.¹²⁴ The German minister in Romania protested that this guarantee was "worthless" and only had value as British propaganda against Germany. Notwithstanding Romania's protests to the contrary to Germany, a rapprochement appeared to be taking place between Bucharest and London. In addition to the British

¹²² "Memorandum on Halifax's Conversation with Polish Foreign Minister Beck, 4 April 1939," *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939*, Third Series (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1950-1952), V, p. 8.

¹²³ Fox, *German Relations with Romania*, p. 83.

¹²⁴ "The Chargé d'Affaires in Great Britain to the Foreign Ministry, 13 April 1939," *DGFP*, Series D, VI, p. 232.

guarantee, Romania and Great Britain negotiated a trade agreement that included more than £3.5m in armaments purchases. This represented a violation of an earlier treaty of March 1939 that stated that Germany alone would equip the Romanian armed forces.¹²⁵

The whole series of events of the first half of 1939 resulted in a cooling of official relations between Germany and Romania and an accompanying German suspicion of Romania. On 11 July 1939, the German *Führer* ordered an immediate cessation of weapons sales to countries deemed to be either enemies or of doubtful fidelity. Romania was listed as doubtful.¹²⁶ When this directive was implemented and arms shipments were terminated, Romania reacted by turning off the oil that was destined for Germany. The German government decided, on balance, that Germany's need for the oil far outstripped any strategic consideration that would keep Romania from being allowed German arms.¹²⁷ In order to

¹²⁵ Fox, *German Relations with Romania*, pp. 95-96.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 97-98.

restore the flow of oil, Germany resumed its arms shipments to Romania.

Relations between the two countries remained somewhat cool through the latter half of 1939. Romania's trade practices had become an increasing source of annoyance to the German government. One month following Germany's invasion of Poland and the resulting outbreak of World War II, Romania unilaterally raised the price of its oil to a level that was seventy percent higher than it had been seven months before.¹²⁸ In February 1940, Romania more than doubled their export duties on oil products and imposed a vast array of new tariffs elsewhere. The Germans were outraged that oil costs had doubled since before the war. The following month, however, Romania bowed to German pressure and promised unlimited quantities of oil at pre-war prices.¹²⁹

Following the fall of France in June 1940 and while Britain was certainly not in any position to come to Romania's assistance, Russia and Hungary decided to take

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

advantage of the situation and press their claims for Romanian territory. The Soviet Union was first, demanding that Bessarabia be returned. Before entering into negotiations with Russia, Romania appealed to Germany for a promise of assistance in case of a Russian attack. The reply was of no comfort whatsoever: Germany still had a potent enemy to contend with in the west, it could not sacrifice its protection in the rear simply for the sake of Romania. Because Romania would be promised no protection, it was in Carol's best interests to acquiesce to any Russian demands.¹³⁰ The Romanian government peacefully ceded the territory of Bessarabia to the Russians.

According to Barry Fox, the situation of the *Volksdeutschen* of Bessarabia was not pleasant. The majority of Bessarabians would have chosen, if they had been asked, to join the U.S.S.R. over Romania. The German Military Attaché Lörnder believed that the "Jews, the Ukrainians, Russians, Bulgarians (who were very badly treated), and the

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 120-121. "Killinger to the Foreign Ministry, 23 June 1940," *DGFP*, Series D, X, p. 70.

Gagauzen would all vote for incorporation into the U.S.S.R. Also many Romanian Moldavians would vote for the U.S.S.R. in hope of land reform."¹³¹ The only ethnic group of Bessarabia that would have voted to remain with Romania was the Germans, for obvious reasons. They were certainly not interested in Communism and being generally more prosperous than their neighbours, they had little to gain from land reform.

The overall Reich policy regarding the *Auslandsdeutschen* of South-Eastern Europe was to leave them in place in order to act as a bridge between the German state and the state in which they were citizens. The situation in Bessarabia, like that in Poland before, was that the German ethnic group could become a source of conflict between the U.S.S.R. and Germany. In order to prevent that possibility, Ribbentrop asked the Soviets on 25 June 1940 if they could evacuate the *Volksdeutschen*. Molotov acceded to this request the next day.¹³²

¹³¹ Fox, *German Relations with Romania*, p. 120.

¹³² Lumans, *Himmler's Auxiliaries*, p. 172.

The evacuation of the *Volksdeutschen* of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina took place in the summer of 1940 and was, according to Lumans, the most ambitious of the evacuations from Soviet-controlled territory. Even before the request had been granted, a team of VoMi and RKFDV personnel were in the region collecting information on the German community. Most evacuees travelled via road and rail to Galati, in Romania and then via the Danube to the Reich. After the important racial and political processing, they were designated to resettle large areas of conquered Poland. "VoMi evacuated a total of 93,548 Germans from Bessarabia and another 43,568 from northern Bukovina. Of these, some 80,000 Bessarabians were eventually classified as racially and politically worthy of settlement in the east, but only some 23,000 Bukovina Germans were acceptable."¹³³

While the Bessarabian and North Bukovinan resettlements were under way, the Reich government entered into discussions with the Romanian government to resettle the ethnic Germans of Southern Bukovina and the Dobrudja. The

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

Reich was not expecting that these regions would be handed over to the Soviet Union, so the motivation for removal of these populations was very different than for the previous resettlement. Instead, Lumans reports, the relative poverty and low status of these Germans, especially when compared to the Saxons and Swabians, made them somewhat of an embarrassment for the German government. The evacuation was not as smooth as before, as the local authorities of Southern Bukovina interpreted this action as a prelude to Soviet invasion. The evacuation took place in the final quarter of 1940 and ultimately 52,107 settlers were rejected as racially unfit and returned to Romania.¹³⁴ Nevertheless, in a few short months of 1940, the population of Romania's German community was reduced by more than 150,000.

Russian satisfaction with the Bessarabian question gave Hungary and Bulgaria added incentive to press their demands upon the Romanian government. Romanians in general cared little about the Bulgarian claim to Dobrudja and the government ceded it with little argument. Transylvania,

¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 174.

however, was an entirely different matter. The dispute was submitted to arbitration by the Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop and Italian Foreign Minister Count Ciano. The Vienna Award of 30 August 1940 gave Hungary a vast expanse of what had been Romanian territory.¹³⁵ The loss of half of Transylvania was a devastating blow. Even though Transylvania had not been a part of Romania until twenty years before, the union of the region to the old kingdom was seen as the one of the crowning moments in the history of the Romanian people. To put it mildly, very few Romanians were happy to see Transylvania and more than a million ethnic Romanians go.

¹³⁵ "Terms of the Vienna Award, 30 August 1940," *DGFP*, Series D, X, pp. 581-587.

CHAPTER 5

THE TWILIGHT OF ROMANIA'S VOLKSDEUTSCH
COMMUNITY, 1940-1945

THE ANTONESCU REGIME

Nationalism and anti-Hungarian feelings had always been widespread in Romania between the two wars, but they reached a fever-pitch in the latter half of 1940. After "giving" a large portion of the east to Russia and a vast portion of the west to Hungary, both without a fight, King Carol was seen by many people as having betrayed his country. Nicholas Nagy-Talavera reports that it was not uncommon to see people weeping in the streets of Bucharest on 30 August 1940: "The mood was a revolutionary one."¹³⁶ After all, the culmination of Romanian history, the dream of Great Romania, had been destroyed. On 3 September 1940, pro-fascist legionnaires led an uprising in Bucharest, Brasov and Constanta. To quell the attempted putsch, Carol appealed to General Ion Antonescu. A sometime opponent of the king, the veteran Romanian general

¹³⁶ Nicholas M. Nagy-Talavera, *The Green Shirts and the Others: A History of Fascism in Hungary and Rumania* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1970), p. 307.

was also one of the few people who could control the army and put down the uprising. Antonescu was appointed to the premiership and he promptly demanded Carol's abdication in favour of his son, Mihai.¹³⁷ At the age of eighteen, King Mihai was seen as someone who would maintain the dynasty without interfering in the actual affairs of state. This was correct; Antonescu was able to run the country with no further meddling from the throne.

On 14 September 1940, the new National Legionary State was established with Ion Antonescu as premier and with Horia Sima, the commander of the legionary/guardist movement, as the vice-premier. In addition to the premiership, Antonescu also declared himself to be "Chief of State, Minister of War, Minister of the Navy, Minister of Armaments, and Minister of the Interior."¹³⁸ Key cabinet positions were given to members of the Iron Guard, accentuating the fact that Romania was now clearly led by authoritarian,

¹³⁷ Hans Rogger, "Romania," in Hans Rogger and Eugen Weber, eds., *The European Right: A Historical Profile* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965), p. 559. Fox, *German Relations with Romania*, pp. 135-136. Nagy-Talavera, *Green Shirts and Others*, pp. 307-308.

¹³⁸ Fox, *German Relations with Romania*, p. 144.

militaristic fascists. As would be expected, one of the first acts of the new regime was to normalise its relations with Germany. Hitler reacted favourably to the events in Romania and congratulated Antonescu on his decision to move Romania closer to the Axis powers.¹³⁹

Antonescu went much further than his predecessors had when it came to relations with Germany. Fearing Russian action on the eastern frontier, he asked for a German military training mission and a promise to defend Romania's borders. There was little question that what he was asking for amounted to a German occupation of Romania: one division of German troops to ostensibly protect the Romanian oil fields at Ploesti and to help provide order during the first months of Antonescu's regime.¹⁴⁰ The entrance of the German troops in late September and early October 1940 marked the final stage in the German-Romanian relationship. From simple trading partners in the early 'thirties, Romania was an occupied German satellite state in late 1940.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

For the *Volksdeutschen* of Romania, the Vienna Award of 30 August 1940 added a large part of Transylvania to the Bessarabia, Bukovina and Dobrudja evacuations. In one fell swoop, the German ethnic group lost more than 200,000 members as Northern Transylvania and the Sathmar region were amputated. The more than half a million ethnic Germans that remained were easier to keep unified and regulated by both the Romanian authorities and the Reich Germans.¹⁴¹ Antonescu's subsequent actions ensured that this would be the case.

Antonescu's pro-German leanings translated into special status for the German minority in order to ingratiate himself with his German friends. By the end of 1939, the leadership of the German community was in the hands of a Dr. Wolfram Bruckner. Fabritius's replacement had even stronger ties to the Reich and "had in reality not been elected but practically appointed from Berlin."¹⁴² Within a year, even Bruckner had to go. The leader of the *Volksdeutsche*

¹⁴¹ Lumans, *Himmler's Auxiliaries*, p. 227.

¹⁴² Scheider, *The Fate of the Germans in Rumania*, p. 38.

Mittelstelle, SS Obergeruppenführer Werner Lorenz came to Brasov in September 1940 to personally install Andreas Schmidt as the new leader of Romania's German community.¹⁴³

Schmidt, not yet 30 years of age, was not very well known among the Germans of Romania. He was, however, very well connected in the right circles in the Reich. As a student in Berlin, he had made close contact with a number of influential Nazis, and had become the son-in-law of the Chief of the SS head office, Berger. In Schmidt, the German Reich had what they had hoped for; the ethnic group had become visibly subordinated to the VoMi and to Himmler's SS.¹⁴⁴ The *Deutsche Volkspartei* was renamed to explicitly reflect the orientation of the movement: the *NSDAP der Deutschen Volksgruppe in Rumänien*.

On 20 November 1940, Antonescu's regime took a large step forward in its relationship with both the German ethnic group and the German government. Building on an accord signed by both Antonescu and Ribbentrop that stipulated that

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

the Bucharest government would "place the members of the German ethnic group in Romania on an equal footing in every respect with the members of the Romanian nation," Antonescu issued a decree that was a milestone for the Volksdeutschen of Romania.¹⁴⁵ According to his decree, the German ethnic group in Romania was to be recognised as a "Romanian body corporate in law." Furthermore, all Romanian citizens professing to be of German nationality were to be listed on a national register in order to be included in this corporate body. The most important article of the decree, however, was the third, which read:

3. The national spokesman of the will of the German Ethnic Group in Romania shall be the "National Socialist German Labour Party (NSDAP) of the German Ethnic Group in Romania." It shall work within the framework of the National Legionary Romanian State.¹⁴⁶

The dual allegiance that the protocol and the decree proclaimed was exemplified by the article that allowed the Germans of Romania to "hoist the flag of the German People

¹⁴⁵ "The Ethnic Group Agreement: German-Romanian protocol of 30 August 1940," Scheider, *The Fate of the Germans in Rumania*, Annex 3.

¹⁴⁶ "The Ethnic Group Law: Decree-Law no. 830/1940 concerning the constitution of the German Ethnic Groups in Romania," Scheider, *The Fate of the Germans in Rumania*, Annex 4.

alongside the flag of the Romanian State."¹⁴⁷ Control over the ethnic Germans was accomplished by the section that allowed the *volksdeutsch* authorities to "issue provisions for the maintenance and consolidation of its national life and shall have binding force for its members."¹⁴⁸ In effect, the decree meant that the medium-term objective for all German minorities had been achieved in Romania: the German community became an autonomous state within a state.¹⁴⁹

Beyond the change of name, Schmidt completely reorganised the structure of governance for the ethnic German community. The NSDAP of the German ethnic group included homologues to the structures of the Reich German party: the *Einsatzstaffel* (SS), *Deutsche Mannschaft* (SA), *Deutsche Jugend* (Hitler Youth), *Deutsche Arbeiterschaft* (German Labour Front), and the *Landesbauernschaft* (Peasants' organisation). The German language press was "co-ordinated" and the two largest dailies were amalgamated to form the "*Süddeutsche Tageszeitung*."

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ Lumans, *Himmler's Auxiliaries*, p. 228.

In contrast to his predecessors, Schmidt was strongly indebted to the SS and the VoMi for his position and he served these two organisations above all others. Even before his appointment, Schmidt had played an important role in the recruitment of Romanian *Volksdeutschen* into the *Waffen-SS* and this role only grew as he took over control of the *Volksgruppe*. The SS had been keen to scoop up those ethnic Germans who had served in the Romanian army but had deserted in response to the unusually harsh treatment reserved for non-Romanian soldiers. Conditions in the Romanian armed forces were uniformly bleak throughout thanks to "widespread corruption, lack of discipline and organisation." Ethnic Germans, however, were also discriminated against as their Romanian counterparts were obviously preferred for advancement. In contrast, the German army was seen to be well-run, professional and victorious.¹⁵⁰ Clearly, the *Volksdeutschen* could look forward to better treatment in the German forces.

¹⁵⁰ Scheider, *The Fate of the Germans in Rumania*, p. 55.

Of course, the Romanian authorities were outraged at Schmidt's recruitment of deserters and the VoMi ordered the minority leadership to put an end to the defections. Despite the diplomatic fallout from the operation, Schmidt was ordered by his father-in-law to recruit 1,000 more men. They were smuggled out of the country without the knowledge of the Foreign Ministry and the VoMi. Faced with a *fait accompli*, Ribbentrop personally intervened with the Romanian government and asked for permission to "repatriate" 1,000 men to work in the *Reich* as agricultural workers. While this permission was supposed to be retroactive to cover the men who had already left Romania, the SS saw it as authorisation to remove 1,000 more. By mid-June 1940, they were sailing up the Danube to join the other "agricultural workers."¹⁵¹

The outrage of Ribbentrop and Antonescu was not enough to stem the tide of ethnic Germans who were deserting from the Romanian armed forces. "The stream turned into a flood in early 1943 after the Romanians shared in the devastating defeat at Stalingrad. Romanians retreated in disarray and in

¹⁵¹ Lumans, *Himmler's Auxiliaries*, pp. 228-229.

a mutinous mood. In the confusion, *Volksdeutsche* serving with the Romanian forces simply walked over to German units."¹⁵² Hitler personally ordered that the Germans serving in the Romanian army who found themselves cut off from their units were not to be returned to the Romanian command.¹⁵³

SS Chief Berger decided, in early 1943, that the time was ripe for a more general recruitment from among Romania's ethnic Germans. Himmler agreed and the Foreign Office was asked to negotiate a large-scale recruitment with the Romanian government. The result was an agreement signed on 12 May 1943 that allowed Romanian *Volksdeutschen* to volunteer for enrolment in the German armed forces or the SS without losing their Romanian citizenship. Those who were already serving in the Romanian armed forces were ruled to be ineligible for recruitment. The agreement was a one-time-only arrangement as it stipulated that those who opted for service with German fighting forces "must have left the country by 31 July 1943."¹⁵⁴ By the end of 1943, 54,000

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 230.

¹⁵³ Scheider, *The Fate of the Germans in Rumania*, p. 58.

¹⁵⁴ "The SS Agreement," *Ibid.*, Annex 8.

members of Romania's German community were serving in the *Waffen-SS*.¹⁵⁵ This was more than ten percent of all members of the German community in Romania.

The recruitment from among Romania's German population was not unopposed. Obviously, the Romanian authorities objected to the earlier recruitment as well as the widespread defection of Romanian troops to the German ranks. The German ambassador in Bucharest raised questions about these practices as he feared that those best suited to serve in the SS were also the biological foundation for the future of the ethnic group. Bruckner, while he was the leader of the *Volksgemeinschaft* had had similar fears. Himmler, on the other hand, had a tight grip on both the SS and the VoMi. To him, the VoMi was a tool that could be used to increase his power and to be used as a source of recruits for the SS. Himmler's desires were irresistible. There was little that could be done, particularly by a minor official or a foreign office bureaucrat, to stop or prevent the situation. Romania and Germany were both at war as members of the Axis. Men of

¹⁵⁵ Lumans, *Himmler's Auxiliaries*, p. 230.

fighting age had very little choice as to whether or not they were going to participate in the conflict. The choice that they were given, however, was which uniform they would wear. Regardless of where one's allegiance lay, Romania or Germany, choosing the SS uniform was simply logical for those interested either in military glory or simple self-preservation.

During this period, the situation among Romania's Germans was not ideal. A feeling that this German community was making more sacrifices than Germans elsewhere was spreading and Schmidt had become the focus of much dissatisfaction. His control over the Volksgruppe was based largely upon his connections with the SS and the VoMi and though he was originally from Romania, many felt that he was an outsider. His loyalty lay with the Reich institutions that had given him his position and not with the local community, many felt. Demands for his removal became more vocal particularly after it was alleged that he and the leadership of the party had been involved in the misappropriation of funds that had been meant for the

families of serving SS members.¹⁵⁶ The general level of satisfaction with the leadership of the community plummeted during the first years of the war and it was not to recover. It was plain that the communities' concerns were secondary to the needs of the Reich.

During the war, Romanian troops fought side-by-side with their German counterparts. Unfortunately for the German forces, Romanians generally saw their participation in the war against the Soviet Union as part of the long series of border struggles that had plagued the relations between the two countries for centuries. Once fighting beyond the borders of Bessarabia, the Romanian army reportedly lost its passion for battle. The slaughter that accompanied the Battle of Stalingrad, in which "two Romanian armies were chewed up by the Russians," had important repercussions on morale back in Romania and a defeatist attitude became prevalent. Antonescu even ordered his Security Chief, Christescu, to arrest anyone who displayed defeatism.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ Fox, *German Relations with Romania*, p. 241.

Antonescu's fear of conspiracy was evident in his response to rumours that Legionnaires had been infiltrated into Romania wearing SS uniforms to carry out a *coup d'état*. On 12 December 1942, the dictator ordered that all Romanian citizens, *Volksdeutschen* included, who were serving outside of the country were required to report their conditions within forty days under penalty of death. "Thus Antonescu hoped to have some knowledge of the Romanian *Volksdeutsche* in the *Waffen-SS* and what they were doing."¹⁵⁸ Antonescu's fear of conspiracy was a reasonable one, as rumours of plots and betrayals were gaining currency in Bucharest. In 1941, however, Antonescu's hold on power was assisted by the fundamental weakness of anyone who would have opposed him. His support was spread throughout the country-side where his urban-based competitors could not compete. Overall, his government received the passive support of the majority.

For the community of *Volksdeutschen*, the war was extremely destructive. The special status conferred on the ethnic Germans was offset by the degree to which they were

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 241-242.

used as pawns and as cannon fodder for the Nazi war machine. Antonescu was not particularly pleased with the situation as each Romanian citizen who joined the German SS was one less young man for his army. Furthermore, he questioned their allegiance. In this atmosphere, Himmler aggravated the situation by asking for another 20-30,000 recruits from among the *Volksdeutschen*. It took words of assurance from Hitler to calm Antonescu's objections. Germany was preparing for total war and every man of military capability must be made available, he stated, and any obstacles to this mobilisation could only hurt the war effort.¹⁵⁹ The 10,000 that were serving in the German forces in March of 1943 were thus greatly added to, bringing the total up to 50,000 by the year's end. These young men, for the most part, served on the brutal eastern front and almost 15 percent of their number either died in battle or as prisoners of war.¹⁶⁰

The approaching Russian forces and the close proximity of Allied forces in the Mediterranean made the possibility

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 258-259.

¹⁶⁰ Castellán, "The Germans of Rumania," p. 5.

of conflict on Romanian soil appear more and more likely as the reversals of 1943 led into a foreboding 1944.

Preliminary, unauthorised contacts had been made with the Allies by Mihai Antonescu (no relation to Marshal Ion Antonescu), who was serving as the Foreign Minister, but the Nazis did not think that anything would come of these discussions. Marshal Antonescu was experiencing his own divided loyalties. He had promised Hitler that he would never betray their friendship or their alliance.

Nevertheless, he had no desire to see Romania capitulate in humiliation to an Allied-dictated peace. As his predecessors had done in the latter half of World War I, Antonescu chose to betray his ally in order to maintain an advantage for Romania.

Throughout 1943, Romania began a gradual disengagement from both the war and from Germany. Mihai Antonescu continued his *sub rosa* contacts with representatives of the Allies, but he was unable to secure any favourable conditions of surrender. The official policy of "unconditional surrender" applied to all Axis powers,

Romania included. Sympathy for the German cause declined greatly among the general population, particularly as it was reported that German troops, retreating from the Russian lines, had participated in the looting of Romanian villages. Food shortages increased as Allied air raids kept produce in the warehouses and even the *Volksdeutschen* hoarded one third of their 1943 crop and were slaughtering their pigs.¹⁶¹

The general situation continued to deteriorate as Allied pressure on Romania increased and the German war machine was showing signs of weakness. The Russian forces had pushed the German lines in the South-East back to the Dniester River by July 1944 and the Soviet forces controlled the southern end of the river. Speaking with Antonescu, Hitler said that the troops might have to be regrouped along a line from Galati, Focani and the ridge of the Carpathians.¹⁶² Talk of moving the front line right into the heart of Romania was not what Antonescu was hoping to hear. But before the Axis powers could pull their troops back,

¹⁶¹ Fox, *German Relations with Romania*, p. 307.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 309.

Russian forces hit back at the German-Romanian line on 7 August 1944 with a massive tank, artillery and air attack. The line was broken and the Romanian city of Iasi fell to the Russians on 17 August.

KING MIHAI'S ROYAL COUP

News of the Soviet breakthrough reached King Mihai in Sinaia and he promptly decided to implement a royal coup d'état. He had planned to take power for some time, but the events on the front forced him to move up his schedule. The exact version of events is the subject of debate; however, it was carried out bloodlessly thanks to support from the military commanders. The result was the so-called royal coup of 23 August 1944: the dismissal of Antonescu and the prompt termination of hostilities on the Romanian front.

Surprisingly, the German army did not turn their arms against their former allies. Orders had come from Berlin to use military force to crush the coup, but the situation was not in Germany's favour. On the night that Antonescu was deposed, the highest German officials were locked up in the German embassy. Romania was not actually occupied by large

numbers of German forces, as was the case in Hungary. The military presence was mostly limited to air defence forces for the oil fields and the other German troops who were in garrisons scattered throughout the countryside were unable to seize control of the country. Military action against the coup was limited to a Berlin-ordered bombing attack on Bucharest that only served to give the King a pretext for declaring war on the *Reich* on 24 August 1944.¹⁶³

The news of the coup and the radical re-orientation of the Romanian government came as a complete surprise for the *volksdeutsch* community. Schmidt, the leader of the German community, was in Berlin at the time and the *Volksdeutschen* were left without any decisive leadership. Despite the fact that the tide had turned against the Axis forces more than a year earlier, no plan had been developed to deal with such a situation and there was no consensus on what to do. The leadership vacuum exacerbated this confusion. Scheider reports that hundreds of young students in Brasov took up

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 315-316. Scheider, *The Fate of the Germans in Rumania*, p. 64.

arms, under orders from the Volksgruppe leadership. Most communities, however, were urged to stay calm and to stay where they were. Nevertheless, many of the leaders of the ethnic community fled the country either with the retreating German troops or in their wake.¹⁶⁴

In the space of a few short days, the German community quickly lost its position of privilege. As the "nationals" of a now-enemy power, ethnic Germans were ordered to register, along with ethnic Hungarians, with the police. Special identification papers were issued to them and "all weapons, wireless sets, motor vehicles and bicycles had to be surrendered"¹⁶⁵ Those identified as leaders of the ethnic community who remained in the country were rounded up and interned. Strangely, the order for their arrest demanded that the "three leading personalities had to be arrested" in each locality. In some areas, this meant that elementary teachers who had not been involved in politics were arrested simply because they were among the leading personalities.

¹⁶⁴ Scheider, *The Fate of the Germans in Rumania*, pp. 65-66.

¹⁶⁵ Castellan, "The Germans of Rumania," p. 66.

The arrests continued following the conclusion of the armistice with the U.S.S.R. and virtually every respected potential leader of the German community was interned. Scheider estimates that up to two or three thousand arrests probably took place in the first months after the Romanian surrender. On the face of it, the Romanian authorities seemed to take strong measures against the German community. The reality, however, was that the treatment received by the *Volksdeutschen* was quite favourable compared to that of their counterparts in Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia.¹⁶⁶

With the surrender, the front line quickly moved West from Romania's eastern frontier. The German troops which had been garrisoned in Romania retreated into Hungary and set up a front on Romania's western frontier. Just as before, this region was home to a significant number of ethnic Germans and life was anything but easy in the zone of operations. SS General Phelps of the newly organised Transylvanian command ordered the evacuation of the German villages along the frontier. These evacuees were soon joined by others as the

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

SS led streams of fleeing ethnic Germans from the Banat, Sathmar and even from Yugoslavia. Approximately 100,000 people took the trek from their homes toward Austria.

The evacuations westward left the German community in Romania a shadow of its former self. The evacuation of Bessarabia, Dubrudja, and Bukovina subtracted more than 220,000 from their ranks. The 50,000 who had served in the *Waffen-SS* added to the estimated 100,000 who retreated in the days following Romania's surrender left the *Volksgruppe* with a population of approximately 300,000 in late 1944.

By the end of 1944, the Russians were firmly in control in Romania and large scale deportations to the Soviet Union began: all men between the ages of 17 and 45 and all women from 18 to 30 were ordered onto trains to an extremely harsh situation in the U.S.S.R. Horrendous conditions resulted in high mortality and fully 15 percent of the 75,000 deported never returned from forced labour in the Soviet mines. The Romanian *Volksdeutschen* were not alone in this situation; the Russians also deported Germans from the other territories that they occupied. It was only in 1950 that the

"repatriation" of these Germans to either East Germany, West Germany or Austria was completed.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., pp. 67-68.

CONCLUSION

When one drives through Transylvania today, the influence of the German community is unmistakable. The architecture and the town planning are obvious examples, reminiscent of small, medieval German towns. Many local museums showcase the rich cultural heritage of the area and the landscape has been shaped by centuries of farming. The massive Black Church dominates the centre of the city of Brasov (formerly Hermannstadt), a symbol of the Lutheran faith shared by thousands of Germans that can be seen for miles around. Surrounding the church, in the lanes and on the squares, shop signs are often found written with bold Germanic script. The language, however, is not German. Fifty years after the end of the war, the only German one hears in the cafés and restaurants comes mostly from tourists who come for the skiing.

After hundreds of years working the soil and building communities in Hungary and then Romania, the history of the Danube Swabians and the Transylvanian Saxons came to a

climax between the two world wars. Beginning as an autonomous society, these ethnic Germans started as servants of the princes who endowed them with the land. Later, they came under the dominion of the Hungarian kings and the dual monarchy. Meanwhile, their linguistic and cultural differences kept them distinct from their neighbours and the clannish notions of the region discouraged their assimilation into a larger Hungarian or Romanian society. Links between the German community and the German Reich were difficult to maintain, though the strength of the Lutheran church was testimony to the cultural and religious intercourse that did take place.

Toward the turn of this century, nationalists in the German Reich, prompted by the ideas of social Darwinism and racial ideology, began to seek out their supposed brethren. Tangible assistance in the form of funding for schools and individual exchanges reaffirmed and strengthened the link between the Reich and these outposts of German culture. If living as a linguistic and cultural minority had not left the *Volksdeutschen* with enough of a sense of "other-ness"

compared with their neighbours, the Pan-Germanists went to great lengths to accentuate this difference and to instil in them the chauvinistic nationalism that was on the rise in Germany.

By the first days of peace in 1919, the number of private societies that concerned themselves with *Auslandsdeutschtum* was at a record high. The loss of the war meant that the hopes of a German-dominated *Mitteleuropa* had been dashed and, ironically, the German nationalists believed that Germanism was threatened to an unprecedented degree. The acuity of the perceived threat lead to a spiralling increase in interest in the *Volksdeutschen* of South-Eastern Europe. At the same time, the revisionist governments of Weimar followed a policy that was based on the supposition that maintaining the Germanness of those cut off from the *Reich* would form the basis for Germany's claims for treaty revision. The preservation of the culture of the disparate Germans of Central Europe was now motivated by a combination of positive nationalism and political pragmatism.

When the Nazi Party came to power in 1933, it was nationalism that held the upper hand. The same ideas that had shaped the doctrine of the original Pan-Germanists were also to be found in the ideology of the National Socialists. If ever there was a case in which the blood link between Germans in the *Vaterland* and those abroad was to be upheld both as a means and an end, one would have expected it to have been during the era of the NSDAP. The *Auslandsdeutschen*, after all, were to be the tool of one of the prime objectives of the Thousand Year *Reich*: the German acquisition of *Lebensraum* and empire in Eastern Europe. While tentative steps were taken toward this objective in conquered Poland, this remained but a dream for the Nazis. In the meantime, Hitler and his deputies had other plans for the *Volksdeutschen* of Romania.

The circumstances that led to the dramatic radicalisation of politics in Germany during the twenties were also apparent on the political scene in Romania. The period between the wars was characterised by instability, economic dislocation and the polarisation of political

discourse. The activists of the left openly battled the thugs of the right on the streets and at rallies and by the time Hitler was consolidating his hold on Germany, Romania had taken a massive shift toward authoritarianism, nationalism, xenophobia and plain racism. The same historical forces that brought Hitler to power and gave the radical right such power throughout the continent were also operative in Romania.

In this atmosphere, the *Auslandsdeutschen* of Romania were experiencing a reawakening of their Germanness and a political unity that they had not experienced before. The Romanian government, with no prompting from Berlin, repaid the community for its support for the Karlsburg Resolutions of 1919 with a remarkable tolerance and in some cases actual encouragement of German nationalism. While thousands of their Romanian neighbours were marching in support of the Iron Guard and the other radical right parties, thousands of Germans were offering support to the Nazi inspired revivalist movement. It was but a small step, therefore, for Romanians to take to support Nazi-inspired Antonescu; just

as it was for ethnic Germans to support the Nazi-inspired *Volksgemeinschaft*.

The Romanian state did very little, if anything, to discourage the inculcation of German nationalism. In fact, the Liberal government and its right-wing successors actually encouraged the growth of Nazism and nationalism in the German community. The ultimate acts of supposed disloyalty, the flying of the swastika within Romania and the enrolment of Romanian citizens in the German SS, were done with the knowledge of the government of the day.

As Germany pulled Romania closer and closer until it was a virtual satellite state, Romania, at first, tried to steer a neutral course. But in the end, Romania hitched its hopes to Nazi Germany. To suggest that Romania's Germans were disloyal for doing the same is not to consider the powerful forces that were pulling their allegiance in many directions. The image of the pledge of allegiance to the Führer and the Romanian Legionary state speaks volumes. This split loyalty was not the contradiction that one might have supposed.

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