THE VIEWPOINTS AND STANCES OF THE BANAT GERMANS ON THE GREAT UNION

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Abstract

The author has researched the older and new literature pertaining to the history of the Banat Germans in the 19th and 20th centuries. He attempts to illustrate the politicization process of the Banat Swabians, which took place especially in the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century.

The author regards this process as one of political maturation. At the end of the First World War, it allowed the Banat Germans to take decisions that determined their destiny for the next half of the century, rather than setting their course for the entire 20th century.

The Banat Swabians were confronted with the following issues and events at the end of the war: the preservation of the territorial or economic unity of the historical Banat, the declaration of the Great Romanian National Assembly of Alba Iulia, and the danger represented by the Hungarian Socialist Republic for the peasants and citizens of Banat. The possibilities of the Swabians under these circumstances and the different opinions of the various political groups of the Banat Germans (radicals and moderates for or against the union with Romania) have led to the decision of the Banat Swabians for the inclusion of the undivided Banat in Romania. Their resolutions were sent to the Paris Peace Conference, the Romanian Ruling Council of Transylvania, and to the King of Romania.

Keywords: Banat Swabians, Edmund Steinacker, Rudolf Brandsch, First World War, Austria-Hungary, Trianon Treaty, Transylvanian Saxons.

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1 Danube Swabians (Donauschwaben): The name was coined in the early 1920s by Robert Sieger, a geographer from Graz. In 1922, historian Hermann Rüdiger began to spread it. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Weimar Republic confirmed the name in 1930, thus acknowledging the ethnicity of the Banat Germans.

2 This article is an abridged version of my study entitled “Die Banater Deutschen und die Vereinigung von 1918,” published in German in the volume Loyalitätswechsel und institutioneller Neuanfang. Die regionalen deutschen Minderheiten in Rumänien 1918–1928, eds. Rudolf Gräf and Daniela Stanciu (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2018), 373–92.
I. The Banat Germans in the Habsburg Monarchy

The year 1918 marked the 200th anniversary of the first settlements of German colonists in Banat, in the context of a large-scale mercantilist action undertaken by the absolutist Austrian state, an endeavor that lasted for three-quarters of a century. This was a rural population, consisting of peasants who came from different regions of the Holy Roman Empire, France, and the northern regions of Italy, but it also included industrial workers originating from the mountain/mining regions of the Habsburg Empire, who settled in the Banat Highlands. By 1918, this population had worked hard and prospered, eventually building a good life for themselves or even thriving, particularly in comparison to the economic situation in their native lands and to that of the Wallachian or Balkan peasantry in the surrounding regions.

The German settlers had contributed to the advancement of the Banat region through actions of land drainage and grubbing, through their advanced agricultural techniques, as well as by establishing and developing cities, crafts, trade, and industry. By 1918, their industrious efforts had led to a radical change of the province: Banat had turned from a border province of the Ottoman Empire into a border province of the Habsburg Empire, integrated not only in the Austrian, but also in the European economic circuit.

At the time of their arrival, they came as inhabitants of the Habsburg Empire. Banat became an imperial province (Kronland), managed by the Banat Province Administration (Banater Landesadministration), which was subordinated to the Imperial Chamber and the Imperial War Council in Vienna. Nearly half a century later, Maria Theresa had to give in to the pressure exerted by the Hungarian nobility, to which she felt indebted for the support she had received during the war of succession to the throne of Austria (1740–1748), so Banat was incorporated in the Kingdom of Hungary. Between 1849 and 1860, Banat received once again a special status as “Serbian Vojvodina and the Temes Banat.” After 1860, it was reintegrated in the Kingdom of Hungary, a situation that became permanent in 1867, after the end of the negotiations for the Austro-Hungarian Compromise. However, at that time, the Banat Germans were not a national community. The building process thereof started as late as the First World War and continued after it. This was due to the manner in which the Austrian colonization had been conducted and to the fact that it had not pursued the national objectives of these

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3 Hans Heinrich Rieser, *Das rumänische Banat—eine multikulturelle Region im Umbruch* (Stuttgart: Jan Thorbecke, 2001), 71–84.
Germans. They were regarded primarily as a tax-paying work force. Since Banat had become a domain of the Crown that had its own legislation and organization, and that privileged none of the nations residing in it, peaceful cohabitation forms have developed in time, making it possible to avoid the national tensions and conflicts that appeared in other provinces of the Empire.

As a part of Hungary, Banat was organized in three counties, and the military border was disbanded in 1873–1874. The country achieved remarkable economic growth also thanks to the smart economic policy developed and practiced by the outstanding Hungarian political and intellectual elite (Ferenc Deák, József Eötvös, and Lajos Mocsáry). However, neither this nor the Austrian elite could solve a key issue of the monarchy and the Kingdom of Hungary, i.e. the national issue. As the great landowners asserted themselves in political life with increasing power, the possibility of establishing a unitary national state became more and more appealing.

The first political manifestations of the Banat Swabians occurred in the middle of the nineteenth century. During the Revolution of 1848–1849, 31 village judges and jurors from 13 communes submitted to the Emperor the so-called Swabian Petition of Bogarosch (Bogaroscher Schwabenpetition), requesting the Emperor to provide them with their own administration, education, and justice systems, and to appoint a German comes of the Swabians, just like the Transylvanian Saxon comes.

The politicization of the Swabians was directly related to the process of social stratification they underwent, the development of intellectual elite as late as the middle of the nineteenth century, and to the rising living standards after the emergence of the independent category of rural workers and day laborers. From this moment on, however, the rise of the elites also meant adopting the lifestyle of the Hungarian noblemen. “Belonging to high society and being Hungarian meant the same thing,” so these Magyarized elites no longer related to the rural

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population from which they had sprung.\textsuperscript{11} Thus, the assimilation of the Swabian bourgeoisie and elites in Banat ultimately benefited the Hungarians, and the lower classes were left defenseless in the face of the Magyarization process.\textsuperscript{12}

Still, there were some reactions, even though they partially came from outside of Banat. The man who managed to unite the Swabians’ actions for promoting their national interests was Edmund Steinacker (1839–1929).\textsuperscript{13} Through the articles he published in the written press of Germany, Austria, and Hungary, but also by means of his political activity devoted to solving the minorities’ issues, Steinacker tried to stop the process of dissolution and Magyarization afflicting the German bourgeoisie in Hungary. He acted as a deputy of the Saxons to the Parliament of Budapest, where he advocated not only the cause of the Saxons in Transylvania, but also that of all the Germans in Hungary. In addition, he was a press correspondent.\textsuperscript{14} Steinacker significantly contributed to the “discovery” of the Swabians,\textsuperscript{15} supporting the German peasants in Hungary to assert their national identity and urging them to find ways of cooperation with the other nationalities of Hungary.

The politicization of the Swabians was a fairly long process that started with the creation of the first “societies” (Vereine). In his memoirs, Edmund Steinacker showed that the establishment of cultural associations, answering the call of the German School Association (Deutscher Schulverein), had an undesired effect, namely the intensification of Magyarization at the social level.\textsuperscript{17} Compared to the religious or rifle associations (before 1848) and the associations of the elites (the casinos or swimming societies of the 1860s–1870s), the trend of music and singing societies gained momentum only in the 1880s, when the Swabian population had reached a financial situation that enabled it to pursue also other interests than those related to the satisfaction of their material needs. These associations adopted, however, a pro-Magyar stance, too. The societies that best preserved their German character were the ones in the cities at the former German military border.

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{14} He represented the Saxons in Transylvania in the electoral circles of Bistrița (1875–1878) and Cisnădie (1881–1888); in 1875, he failed to create a German party in Hungary. The hopes invested in the Budapester Tagblatt, a newspaper he founded in 1880, did not materialize either. See Adam Wandruszka and Peter Urbanitsch, eds., Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848–1918, vol. III/1. Die Völker des Reiches (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1980), 392.
\textsuperscript{15} Wandruszka and Urbanitsch, Die Habsburgermonarchie, III/1, 391.
\textsuperscript{16} Senz, “Soziale Differenzierung,” 93.
\textsuperscript{17} Steinacker, “Lebenserinnerungen,” 111.
The German national movement entered a new stage with the establishment of the newspaper *Deutsches Tagblatt für Ungarn* (following the initiative of Johann Anheuer and with the collaboration of Edmund Steinacker, who was contacted for this purpose by the Swabian writer Adam Müller-Guttenbrunn). The first issue was published in Timișoara on 16 December 1900. It was the first periodical from outside Transylvania with a pronounced national German attitude. Steinacker believed that this moment represented the birth of an organized political movement of the Germans in Hungary, a period that lasted until 1907. In the first decade of the twentieth century, the political movement of the Banat Germans continued to consolidate with the support of interested parties from Germany and Austria, but also from Transylvania. Southern Banat and Vârșeț became the political headquarters of the Germans in Southern Hungary. Taking advantage of the more relaxed national policy pursued by the government led by Baron Géza Fejérváry, the German community established a party in Vârșeț at the end of 1906 (on 30 December), i.e. the *German People’s Party in Hungary* (*Ungarländische Deutsche Volkspartei—Magyarországi Német Néppárt*). Ludwig Kremling was elected leader of this party. He was seconded by Johann Röser and by a secretariat: The party’s purpose was to secure the survival and prosperity of the German minority in Hungary. However, the program, drawn up by Edmund Steinacker, was addressed not only to the Germans in Southern Hungary, but to all the Germans in Hungary. In addition to its national goals, the party (GPPH) also included in its agenda a series of general economic, social, and democratic objectives.

Another strong political personality representing the Germans in Hungary and that emerged before the end of the First World War was Rudolf Brandsch (1880–1953), a Transylvanian Saxon who tried to concentrate in one place the efforts of all the Germans in Transleithania. He attempted to distance himself from petty Saxon politics by forging a political orientation that could include all the Germans in Hungary. He collaborated with the German People’s Party in Hungary and with the *Pan-German Union (Alldeutscher Verband)* in the German Empire. He was a member of the so-called Belvedere Circle of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, so he was familiar with his plans concerning Greater Austria. He played an important role in 1918 when, upon the collapse of the Habsburg Monarchy, he suggested that the Germans in Hungary should strive for self-determination, unlike Jakob Blayer, for whom it was more important to maintain the territorial integrity of the countries belonging to the Crown of Saint Stephen. When the Hungarian

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19 Steinacker, “Lebenserinnerungen,” 139.
Kingdom was dismantled, he decisively influenced both the Saxons and the Swabians to opt for the incorporation of the Germans in the Romanian state. For the position of the Germans in the Romanian Kingdom, it was important for the Saxons and the Swabians to express their disavowal of Hungarian policies even before the conclusion of the peace treaties. They did so.

Somewhat different was the fate of the German population in the Banat Highlands. Having first settled there in the eighteenth century, this population differed from the Swabians to some extent, in terms of their place of origin—they came mainly from the Alpine regions of Austria, from Bohemia, Moravia, and Zips in Slovakia. Initially, most of them were Germans, but until mid-nineteenth century, Slovaks, Czechs, Italians, etc. had also settled here. An interesting phenomenon was the Germanization of this population due to the fact that German was the language spoken in factories, mines, on the estates of the Erarium, and finally, at the State Railway Society (Staats Eisenbahn Gesellschaft, StEG) of Reșița, Bocșa, Anina-Steierdorf, Oravița, Moldova Nouă, Sasca, and so on. This happened in spite of the Magyarization policy adopted by the government in Budapest. The working class was more interested in political and social issues than in national ones. Therefore, a strong social-democratic movement developed in Southern Banat. Still, they did not lose their German identity in spite of the adverse Hungarian legislation and the fact that they were outnumbered by the majority Romanian population of the Banat Highlands.

During the dualist era, the history of the Banat Germans and, in particular, of the Swabians was marked by the awakening of German national consciousness and the difficulty of choosing between granting primacy to the Hungarian state or to the German nation. At that time, the assertion of German national identity in Hungary was hindered by the competing and very strong affirmation of Hungarian

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23 Regarding the demographic relations, see Ioan Bolovan and Sorina Bolovan, Germanii din România: Perspective istorice și demografice (Cluj-Napoca: Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2000).

24 Costin Feneșan, Mineritul și metalurgia din Banat în secolul al XVIII-lea (PhD thesis), Babeș-Bolyai University (Cluj-Napoca: 1977); Rudolf Gräf, Domeniul bănățean al StEG 1855–1920 (Reșița: Banatica, 1997).


27 Schödl, “Rudolf Brandsch,” 123.
state nationalism. This tendency of the Germans was simultaneous with the
national movement of the other peoples in the Hungarian Kingdom. The collapse
of the Empire and the Kingdom and the division of the historical Banat have led to
the situation in which the Banat Germans had to live in three different states, i.e.
Hungary, Yugoslavia, and Romania. Therefore, it was impossible to gather all the
Germans in Southern Hungary in a single state, as was, in fact, desired by their
leaders. However, German political leaders found new possibilities for action in the
interest of the numerous German population living in Greater Romania, the state
that was proclaimed as such on 1 December 1918 and was recognized by the
international treaties that had put an end to the world war.

Towards the end of the war, when there were no more doubts concerning the
way the global conflagration would end and that the monarchy would be torn apart
by centrifugal political, economic, and national forces, Banat politicians searched
for solutions that could prove advantageous to their peoples in the future. It came
in useful that the *Manifesto of 16 October 1918* issued by Emperor Charles I/King
Charles IV, announced, albeit much too late, the intention to reform the Empire by
transforming it into a federal state, excepting Hungary, which was troubled by
serious national problems. This was followed by the establishment of numerous
National Councils, including the Romanian one. Under these circumstances, the
politicians representing the Banat Swabians and the Transylvanian Saxons looked
for further solutions.

National forces were persistently highlighted as engines of change in those
times: the Hungarian population, naturally loyal to the Hungarian state; the German
population, culturally very well integrated in Hungary, its majority expressing the
intention to maintain Banat undivided as a part of the Hungarian state, but also
evincing the first signs of a rapprochement to Romania, as the major goal was to
avoid the division of Banat in order to not affect its economic interests. The Serbs
wanted, of course, to be integrated into the Slavic state of the Serbs, Croats, and
Slovenes, and the majority Romanian population desired, naturally, the union with
Romania. All the populations of Banat aspired, however, to keep the province
undivided.

In this period, the officials in Budapest still nurtured the belief that the
Hungarian state would maintain its existing boundaries, with all its peoples of non-
 Hungarian origin, as stated in the Proclamation of the National Magyar Council of
27 October 1918.28 This hope was nourished even after the conclusion of the
armistice between Hungary and the Entente in Belgrade, on 13 November, and
even after the Hungarian National Council proclaimed the People’s Republic on 30
October (Mihály Karoly).

28 Georg Wildmann, *Donauösterreichische Geschichte*, vol. III. *Die Tragödie der
Selbstbehauptung im Wirkfeld des Nationalismus der Nachfolgestaaten*, with the collaboration of
Oskar Feldtänzer, Hans Müller, Kaspar Hügel, and Friedrich Spiegel-Schmidt (München:
Donauösterreichische Kulturstiftung, 2010), 220.
The Saxons, with their highly advanced political sense, formed and
developed across centuries, reacted quickly, realizing the possibilities that had
opened for them, and declared their adhesion to the Union on 8 January 1919
(we should not forget that they had enjoyed religious, administrative, judicial,
and economic autonomy for centuries, being one of the privileged nations, that
is, part of the ruling system of Transylvania, that they lost this autonomy
under the German Catholic Emperor Joseph II, then during the Revolution of
1848–1849, and under Dualism when, in 1876, the Hungarian state abolished
the Saxon University that became a foundation). The Swabians were more
difficult to persuade and had more hesitations. Banat represented the touchstone
for the union with Romania, regarded from the perspective of German national
interest. The attempts of the German politicians to organize a joint action of the
Germans in Hungary eventually failed. Therefore, the Banat Germans had to
decide which political path they should take.

On 24 November, the German People’s Council for Hungary convened a
popular assembly attended by only 600–700 people. Its spokesman was Rudolf
Brandsch. The reached decision was to consider the German People’s Council for
Hungary as the only representative body of the Germans living in Hungary. Only
on 1 January 1919 was the Central Committee of the Germans in Hungary
established, to which all the political parties and the regions inhabited by Germans
were represented by deputies. The joint action of the Germans in Hungary largely
failed due to the lack of political will and, perhaps to an even greater degree, to the
missing ability for political organization.

II. The events in Banat (the fall of 1918–1919)

On 22 October 1918, *Temeswarer Zeitung* published a resolution adopted
two days before by a meeting of the Swabians, in which they still declared
themselves in favor of the political and economic unity of the Hungarian state. At
that time, the representatives of the Romanians, Croats, Slovaks, and Serbs had
already stated their decision to make use of their right to self-determination, in
order to become independent from the Hungarian state. The resolution stated that
the Swabians from Southern Hungary, living in the counties of Timiș, Torontal,
and Caraș, did not represent the majority of the population even if the County of
Batschka was taken into account. In the same issue of this newspaper, Josef Striegl
pushed further for keeping Hungary within its medieval borders, demanding,
however, full cultural freedom, in accordance with the statement previously drafted
by Dr. Kaspar Muth.29

29 See Bolovan and Bolovan, *Germanii din România.*
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a. The Banat Republic

In this complicated national and international context, a “Banat Republic” was proclaimed in the Banat region, which means that beside the national forces, the social-political and supranational ones also tried to play a role in addressing the situation in Banat in 1918–1920.30

The proclamation of the Banat Republic was preceded by demonstrations in the most important industrial cities, i.e. Timișoara and Reșița (24, 27, 28, and 31 October 1918). The working class demanded peace, consistent food supplies, the abolition of censorship, and an electoral reform, and was against the Wekerle government and the political circles around Andrásy.31

Both the Kingdom of Serbia and that of Romania planned the annexation of the whole Banat, because the two agrarian countries were aware of the industrial potential of the province and regarded it as a sufficient reason for claiming it for themselves. Hungary, too, hoped to keep the province for which it had made so many efforts since 1778.32

b. The Serbian occupation

The weak and hungry soldiers who had returned to Banat from the front manifested their discontent caused by the chicaneries to which their families had been exposed.33 Revolutionary ideas were beginning to take root. To these internal threats were added external ones. After Hungary had signed a military convention with the Entente countries on 13 November 1918,34 the Serbian troops entered Banat and occupied it on behalf of the Entente. They intended to create a fait accompli for ensuring their domination over the province. Officially, however, the province was still under the authority of the Hungarian government.

In the meantime, the Central Romanian National Council (CRNC), which had been established in Budapest on 31 October, was quickly moved to Arad. It

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33 Nicolae Ilieșiu, Monografia istorică a Banatului, introductive study, edition, and notes by Dumitru Țeicu, toponimic index by Minodora Damian (București: Mica Valahie, 2011), especially 233.
34 Manfried Rauchensteiner, Der Erste Weltkrieg und das Ende der Habsburgermonarchie (Wien: Böhla, 2013), 1051, 1156 (note 2520).
provided the Romanian soldiers and officers in the Austro-Hungarian Army with weapons, promoted the incorporation of Transylvania, Banat, Crișana, and Maramureș in Romania, and organized the Great National Assembly in Alba Iulia, which decided the union of these provinces with Romania. Similar gatherings, but of much lower proportions, were organized by the Serbs in Novisad and by the Hungarians in Cluj.

Meanwhile, as shown above, the Serbian Army advanced in Banat, trying to achieve a fait accompli by occupying the entire province. This prompted France to send a part of its army in the Balkans to Banat. These troops were to occupy positions in between the Serbian Army and the Romanian Army that was coming from Transylvania, in order to avoid a clash between the two armies.

In a last effort to save the integrity of the Hungarian state, negotiations took place between the Hungarian delegation led by the Minister of Minorities Oszkár Jászi and the CRNC delegation (13–14 November 1918), attended by the representatives of the Swabian National Council (Josef Gabriel, Josef Striegl, and Franz Neff), of the Transylvanian Saxons (Emil Neugeboren), and of the Hungarians in Hungary (István Apathi). The CRNC decision was to go for a total separation from Hungary and to proclaim the Union of the Romanians in Transylvania, Banat, Crișana, and Maramureș in a great assembly scheduled, as is known, on 1 December 1918 in Alba Iulia.35

Dr. Otto Roth, a social democrat who had also been in Arad, but had not participated in the negotiations, attacked the CRNC policy in an interview published on 15 November in Temeswarer Zeitung. However, in the same issue of the aforementioned newspaper one could sense that the attitude of the Banat Swabians was beginning to change, as Professor Josef Striegl showed that he understood the views expressed by the Romanians.36

c. The Banat Germans’ change of attitude

A key moment that influenced the position of the Germans from Transylvania and Banat regarding the unification of these provinces with Romania was the publication of the Proclamation of Alba Iulia, which, among other things, provided the following:37

35 For the further development of events I follow Wildmann, Donauschwäbische Geschichte, III, 236 ff.; Ioan-Aurel Pop and Ioan Bolovan, Istoria Transilvaniei, 2nd rev. and exp. ed. (Cluj-Napoca: Școala Ardeleană, 2016), 375.
36 Wildmann, Donauschwäbische Geschichte, III, 239.
III. In connection with this, the National Assembly proclaims the following fundamental principles underlying the constitution of the new Romanian State:

1. Full national freedom for all the inhabiting peoples. For every people, the language of education, administration, and justice shall be their native tongue, and every people shall receive the right of representation to the legislative bodies and the country’s government in proportion to the number of individuals composing it.

2. Equal entitlement and full autonomous confessional freedom for all the denominations in the State.

3. The complete accomplishment of an absolutely democratic regime in all areas of public life. Universal, direct, equal, secret vote, by communes, proportionally, for both sexes, beginning with the age of 21, for representation to communes, counties, and Parliament.


The elements regarded by the representatives of the Germans living in the two provinces as guarantees for the preservation of the national identity of their ethnic groups played a major part in their future decision to support the union with Romania. Of course, the Declaration of Alba Iulia was not a legal act, but was interpreted by the representatives of the Germans as a firm promise they could count on in the future.

In this context, those who quickly drew the right conclusions were the Transylvanian Saxons. In Mediaș, on 8 January 1919, their representatives reached their decision regarding the Proclamation of Alba Iulia, namely to embrace the Union with Romania.

In Banat, however, the situation was more complicated. A conflict broke out between the Serbian occupation authorities and the Banat People’s Council due to the fact that the former ones were trying to take control over the entire province. They imposed Martin Filipon as leader of the county and appointed Reinhold Heegen, a German engineer from Vârșeț, as main county head (Obergespan) of Timișoara. In order to attract the German population, they promised to establish a German university and considerably hindered the Romanians who were heading to Alba Iulia. On 20 February, the Serbs took over the entire civil administration of Banat, ordered the dissolution of the national councils, and triggered the resistance of the Banat population. Josef Geml, the mayor of Timișoara, refused to sign a series of official documents. In February, there was a general three-day strike. It was followed by a general strike of the railway workers on 22–30 June 1919 and the refusal of the Workers’ Council led by the Social Democratic Party, whose
members included German and Romanian workers, to recognize the *Narodna Uprava* in Novisad. The workers advocated the unity of Banat and pushed for a referendum. Otto Roth resigned on 20 February 1919, putting a definitive end to the Banat Republic.38

All these actions prevented the takeover of full control over Banat by the Serbian authorities and were ultimately conducive to the completion of the unification process with Romania, providing the necessary respite for the Romanian troops to arrive in Banat and for the Romanian diplomats to negotiate the fate of the province. The Serbian troops withdrew on 26–27 July. On 29 July 1919, the Ruling Council appointed Dr. Aurel Cosma, a lawyer, as prefect of the Timiș-Torontal County. The first Romanian soldiers entered Timișoara on 2 August.39

The Banat Swabians were not united. The same political groupings as in Hungary existed there as well. They oscillated between pro-Hungarian, pro-Romanian, even pro-Serbian and autonomist attitudes. However, all groups shared the desire to preserve Banat undivided.

III. Political orientations of the Banat Germans in 1918–1919

a. Moderate Swabians40

Throughout this period, the Banat Swabians were divided around two political groups: The radicals, recruited from the ranks of the German People’s Party in Hungary, who recognized and emphasized their German identity (Johann Röser, Karl von Möller, Hans Tengler, Franz Wettel, Michael Kausch), and the moderates, led by Dr. Kaspar Muth, Prelate Franz Blaskovics, Dr. Franz Kräuter, and Josef Strieggl, who asserted their German identity only after the war and were ironically called “new Germans” (*Neudeutsche*). Muth had already founded, in November 1918, the Swabian National Council, and had published his *Swabian Manifesto*, in which he had requested the establishment of an *Eastern Switzerland*, by uniting Banat with Batschka inside the Hungarian state. He opposed the decisions reached in Alba Iulia and Novisad. The annexation of undivided Banat to Serbia was supported merely by a small group led by Reinhold Heegen.

This group of moderates founded the *Swabian Autonomist Party (Schwäbische Autonomiepartei)* on 10 January 1919, championing the idea of the undivided Banat as a part of the Hungarian state.41

41 Ibid.
b. Radical Swabians

By contrast, the group of the radicals continued the tradition of the German People’s Party in Hungary and set up the German-Swabian People’s Party (Deutsch-Schwäbische Volkspartei) on 19 March 1919, striving for the union of undivided Banat with Romania.\(^{42}\)

Both groups aimed to maintain the Banat Swabian population in an undivided Banat. Efforts to bring it closer to the interests of the Romanians were made especially by the radicals, but also by some of the moderates like Josef Striegl. On 16 December, Striegl wrote that the Wilsonian principles allowed for the foundation of Greater Romania, and that he was bringing geographical, ethnographic, and especially demographic arguments in support of his thesis.\(^{43}\) Then, Temeswarer Zeitung published the Proclamation of Alba Iulia and reported about the Assembly in Alba Iulia. In Arad, in December 1918, a delegation of Swabian farmers submitted a petition to General Berthelot, in which they requested that dominion over Banat should be awarded to the Romanian nation, akin to the French nation “that we fully trust in regard to the recognition of our rights.”

For spreading their ideas, the radicals founded the first German associations in Timisoara (Viktor Orendi-Hommenau), then the Swabian Cultural Association (Schwäbischer Kulturverbund) on 9 May 1919, through which Saxon politicians like Rudolf Brandsch and Lutz Korodi campaigned for the acceptance of the unification of undivided Banat with Romania. Moreover, the appointment of Korodi as undersecretary of state in the Ruling Council of Sibiu created a permanent link with this governing and legislative body of the Transylvanian Romanians.

However, Otto Roth and Kaspar Muth still hoped to establish an Autonomous Banat Republic within Hungary,\(^{44}\) while Andreas Dammang from the Deutsche Wacht and Johann Tengler, Director of the Association of Swabian Rural Cooperatives, were already overtly in favor of a rapprochement with Romania.

An event with international consequences that had a major influence on the Germans of Banat was Bela Kun’s Republic of Councils followed by the Romanian military intervention, about which Hermann Plattner wrote in the Siebenbürgisch-Deutsches Tageblatt: “Our position on the side of the Romanian people has never been as clear as it is now.”\(^{45}\) This was the second element that determined the Swabians to opt for Romania. A nation of rural landowners could not be won over by communist ideas; moreover, they deeply rejected them.

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\(^{42}\) Ibid., 245

\(^{43}\) Ibid., 249.

\(^{44}\) Ibid., 251.

\(^{45}\) Ibid., 252.
The defeat of the Hungarian Republic of Councils and the entry of the Romanian troops in Budapest (4 August) was followed, on 10 August, by a large popular assembly of the Romanians in Timișoara, in Piața Unirii (Exerzierplatz). At the same time, more than 1,000 representatives of the Swabians gathered in the German House in Timișoara. Historian Franz Wettel and retired Colonel Karl von Möller were the keynote speakers, demanding, in the last moment, a resolution that finally favored Romania.\(^\text{46}\) The Resolution, drafted by Michael Kausch, was read by Karl von Möller and ruled for an undivided Banat, united with Romania.\(^\text{47}\) It stipulated that this decision should be communicated to the Peace Conference and was signed by Franz Wettel and Karl von Möller as presidents, as well as by Stefan Frecot, Julius Tengler, and Julius Neuhaus.

This Resolution was unanimously approved and, on 12 August, it was sent to the Paris Peace Conference through a delegation consisting of the following members: Dr. Stefan Frecot, Dr. Andreas Buschmann, Thomas Fernbacher, and Franz Timo. On 19 August, they were received by the Council of Ten (the heads of governments and foreign ministers of the U.S.A., France, Great Britain, Italy, and Japan), to whom they submitted a Mémoire présenté à la Conférence de la Paix and the Resolution of the Swabian National Assembly, issued in Timișoara on 10 August. Frecot spoke about the unfortunate prospects of dividing Banat; however, the dice had already been cast, and Banat was divided into three regions. A minor correction was made in 1923.\(^\text{48}\)

The Resolution of Timișoara was also sent to the Ruling Council on 15 August. The Swabian delegation was received by Aurel Vlad, Vice President and Minister of Finance, and by other six ministers of the Ruling Council. The Swabian delegation included four farmers, three officers (one of them was Karl von Möller), a physician, a journalist and editor (H. Anwender), two lawyers (Dr. Josef Gabriel and Dr. Michael Kausch), an evangelical priest (M. Reiser), and a bank director, J. Tengler.

The speech delivered by Anton Anton, a farmer from Warjasch, and the reply of Aurel Vlad revealed the expectations of the two groups and their mutual confidence, as well as the desire to meet the demands of the Swabians.

However, the resolution of Timișoara was not accepted by all Swabian political groups. The moderates around Kaspar Muth and Franz Blaskovics did not recognize the right of the assembly held in Timișoara on 10 August to speak


\(^{47}\) Wildmann, Donauschwäbische Geschichte, III, 253.

on behalf of the entire Swabian population. Shortly before the elections held on 2 November, they sent from Budapest a comprehensive memorandum to the Paris Peace Conference, contesting the right of the assembly in Timișoara to speak on behalf of all Swabians. They regarded themselves as the only representatives of the Swabian people, calling the authors of the declaration of 10 August “not sons of the Swabian people, but homeless Transylvanian Saxons or other pan-Germanic adventurers who have been in the service of Romanian imperialist policy for many years.” They also showed that the imprisonment of the moderate Swabian leaders Muth and Blaskovics was meant to silence an inconvenient group for Romanian politics. The anonymous authors of the memorandum claimed to speak on behalf of the entire population of Southern Hungary, hence, also in the name of the Romanians and the Serbs, demanding to remain inside the Hungarian state. If that was not possible, they wanted Banat to be organized under neutral leadership following a referendum, or the establishment of a republic called Banatia, in accordance with the Swiss canton system. However, this memorandum had no echo. The only consequence was that the Romanian authorities did not forget the gesture of this group of Swabians, who eventually submitted the declaration of loyalty to the Romanian state after the Treaty of Trianon had been signed.49

Nevertheless, Rudolf Brandsch immediately proceeded to organize the Germans in new Romania in a single political party. The approximately 800,000 Germans of Greater Romania were the second minority in terms of size, so acting jointly during elections and in parliament could prove beneficial to them. At the meeting of the representatives of the Germans from Greater Romania, held on 6–7 September 1919, a meeting organized from the perspective of the elections that were soon to take place, a program of 16 points was adopted. The last point provided for the joint action of the representatives of the Germans to Chamber and to Senate, and for their union in a single parliament group. Collaboration with the other political parties was to be conducted based on the resolutions of Alba Iulia. The program was signed by 30 representatives of the Germans from Transylvania, Banat, and Bukovina, respectively, as well as by 20 from Bessarabia and 20 from the Old Kingdom. As a result of the elections of 2 February, the Germans from Romania sent 23 deputies and senators to the Romanian Parliament. The Swabians had four deputies and two senators, the Saxons eight deputies and four senators, the Germans from Bukovina three deputies, and those from Bessarabia one deputy. The numbers of German deputies and senators from Romania were never going to be this high again.50

49 Wildmann, Donauschwäbische Geschichte, III, 256.
50 Ibid., 252–61.
IV. The Peace Conference

The Peace Conference of Paris took place from 18 January 1919 until 21 January 1920. Its purpose was to establish the conditions of peace after the end of the First World War. The participants in the war had already concluded a ceasefire with Austria-Hungary on 3 November and with Germany on 11 November 1918, respectively. Thus, Europe was redesigned. The Habsburg Monarchy disintegrated. It was replaced by a number of national states that were more or less ethnically homogenous and were soon going to face the pressure of two totalitarian powers.

The Treaty of Trianon divided Banat between Romania (two thirds), the Southern Slavic State (one third), and Hungary (a small part around Szeged). Therefore, the dream of a unified Banat was shattered for the Germans from Banat. From now on, a new future with new challenges had to be mastered by the Germans of Banat within the borders of three different national states.

V. Conclusions

The Banat Germans, i.e. the Swabians, were reluctant to proclaim their adhesion to the Union for the following various reasons:

a. Their attachment to the Hungarian state, as a result of the policy of denationalization
b. Uncertainty in the face of a completely new situation, as they were to be included in the Romanian Kingdom
c. The lack of contacts with the Old Kingdom. Unlike the Saxons, who had cultivated commercial, economic, political relations, etc. for centuries, they knew very little about this.
d. A widespread opinion disseminated by the Hungarian and the German newspapers, according to which they would become the subjects of a less developed state from cultural and economic points of view, with an arbitrary and corrupt political life.
e. The greatest fear of the Swabians was an economic one, as their main objective was the preservation of the administrative unity of historical Banat, so

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51 Vasile Vesa, “Transilvania la Conferința de Pace din anii 1919–1920,” in Istoria Transilvaniei, vol. III, eds. Ioan-Aurel Pop, Thomas Nägler, and András Magyari (Cluj-Napoca: Academia Română, Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2008), 627–47. See Margaret Macmillan, Făuritorii Păcii. Șase luni care au schimbat lumea, translated from English by Smaranda Câmpeanu (București: Trei, 2018), 175–79. Regarding that matter, Macmillan barely mentions the minorities and asserts that “practically in Banat, there was no important industry” (p. 176), while it was especially the steel industry and the mining (coal and iron) in the Banat Mountains that made the region so attractive for predominantly agricultural countries like Serbia/The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, as well as Romania.
that their economic interests would not be affected. They feared that the division of Banat would destroy and cut off the trade routes to the West, and this is exactly what happened.

f. Their attitude changed after the Proclamation of Alba Iulia and after the Republic of Councils opened up the prospect of their economic interests to be destroyed by a new ideology, the communist one.

g. The Banat Germans (the Banat Swabians and the Germans from the Banat Highlands), much like the Transylvanian Saxons and all the other regional German minorities, had to face new challenges during the events of 1918–1920. The state to which they had belonged collapsed, and they were integrated in a state that was unknown to them and that defined itself as a national state. They were going to live in their old territories as a national minority, under the new circumstances created by the national state.

h. For the Romanians this was also the beginning of a new stage in their existence as a nation and as a state, in which they entered successfully as a result of the competition for territories, resources, and population. Romanians are entitled to consider this moment of Unity as an astral hour of their history. The question that was to be asked now was whether the citizens of new Romania would walk a common path towards prosperity, safety, and peace.