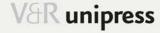# zeitgeschichte

Authoritarian Regimes in the Long Twentieth Century

Preconditions, Structures, Continuities –
Contributions to European Historical Dictatorship
and Transformation Research

edited by
Florian Kührer-Wielach and Oliver Rathkolb

V&R unipress

ZEITGESCHICHTE

Ehrenpräsidentin:
em. Univ.-Prof. Dr. Erika Weinzierl († 2014)

Herausgeber:
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Alle Hefte dieser Zeitschrift sind peer-reviewed.

zeitgeschichte
49. Jg., Sonderheft (2022)

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Vienna University Press

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Florian Kührer-Wielach / Oliver Rathkolb

Introduction

This special issue of the journal *zeitgeschichte* presents the results of the doctoral theses written within the context of the Doctoral College (DC) "European Historical Dictatorship and Transformation Research" (2009–2013) in the form of selected scholarly essays. Within the framework of this project, jointly conducted by the Institutes of Contemporary History, Political Science, East European History, and Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies of the University of Vienna, and funded by the Faculty of Historical and Cultural Studies of the University of Vienna, doctoral students from various disciplines devoted themselves to the study of authoritarian regimes of the 20th century in Austria, Belarus, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, and the Soviet Union. Taking a comparative approach to socio-historical transformation research, the theses examined different aspects of dictatorships, particularly "small" ones: the conditions of their emergence; structures; continuities; and preceding and subsequent processes of political and social transformation. The various regional, methodological, and professional approaches of the respective projects are represented in the diversity of the contributions assembled in this volume. They reflect the results of the research training group from a certain temporal distance, and the current state of research has been included wherever possible. Common to all the essays is the historical perspective, which has been combined with approaches rooted in social and political science.

Florian Kührer-Wielach analyzes Romania's transformation and integration process in the years 1918–33 from a regional perspective and the associated path to an authoritarian regime. Katharina Ebner uses a transfer-historical approach to examine the spread of Mussolini's fascist ideology via the "transmission belts" of Vienna and Budapest. Florian Wenninger subjects historiographical interpretations of the end of the first Austrian republic to critical analysis and proposes an updated reading on the basis of new findings. Linda Erker's study of the University of Vienna in the years 1933–38 considers a wealth of sources in her examination of what remains an underresearched period in the history of this institution. Nathalie Soursos compares visual representations of Metaxas' dic-

tatorship in Greece with that of Mussolini in Italy, using press photographs. Kathrin Raminger also takes a comparative approach by examining art exhibitions of the dictatorships of Salazar in Portugal and Franco in Spain with regard to their political instrumentalization. Petitions, complaints, and statements are the focus of Inga Paslavičiūtė's contribution, in which she examines this form of communication between the regime and society in terms of its functions as an outlet and instrument of control and traces the volatile boundaries of permissive discourse. Eleni Kouki uses the example of the Greek military dictatorship of April 21 (1967–74) to address the question as to what the analysis of monuments and ceremonies can contribute to an understanding of the mechanisms of authoritarian regimes. Florian Musil examines the transformation of Spanish society from Franco's military regime to a modern liberal democracy beginning in 1976, focusing on civil society in the Barcelona metropolitan region. The long shadow of the interwar period is addressed in Lucile Dreidemy's essay, which reflects on the Dollfuss myth and its persistence in Austrian postwar discourse, and Filip Zieliński's, which deals with the topos of a Polish "Golden Age" between the world wars after the fall of the Iron Curtain. Finally, Johannes Thaler proposes how central theories of fascism can be made productively combined despite their partly opposing approaches.

The fellows were supervised in their work by scholars at the participating institutes. The framework of the research training group also enabled regular and intensive exchange both between its researchers and with renowned experts from various disciplines in the humanities and social sciences in addition to joint publications and international conferences on European dictatorship and transformation research. The chronicle in the appendix lists the persons involved and documents the research training group's manifold activities.

Florian Kührer-Wielach

Habsburg Revenants on Victory Road. Greater Romania's Integration Process 1918–33

The time had finally come to make Romania a "fertile and flourishing garden", as the Romanian Foreign Minister Alexandru Vaida-Voevod wrote in London's renowned *Slavonic and East European Review* in January 1929.[1] His National Peasant's Party had just taken over the government with an overwhelming election victory, turning the political situation in Romania upside down. It had won with a program that drew heavily on the already legendary unification of the eastern Hungarian territories of Transylvania, the Banat, and the Partium with the Kingdom of Romania. Hence we go back ten years to that 1 December 1918 and travel from London to Alba Iulia in Transylvania – German Karlsburg or Hungarian Gyulafehérvár.

1. A Vision for a New Country

While the Romanian army had already taken the southeastern part of the region, war still raged in the Banat and just a few weeks after the last Habsburg emperor, Karl (from the Hungarian perspective King Karl IV) had officially renounced all participation in the affairs of government, tens of thousands of delegates had gathered there to proclaim the annexation to and a democratic vision for the new, coming Romania. On the one hand, they had the national emancipation of the Romanians living in Hungary in mind, but on the other hand, they were aware of

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1 Vaida-Voevod, "Ten Years of Greater Roumania," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 7 (1929) 20, 261–267. This scientific essay is based on the results of my dissertation: Florian Kührer-Wielach, *Siebenbürgen ohne Siebenbürger? Zentralstaatliche Integration und politischer Regionalismus nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg* (München: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2014). (Südosteuropäische Arbeiten 153) as well as on my chapters Florian Kührer-Wielach, "A fertile and flourishing garden. Alexandru Vaida-Voevod's Political Account Ten Years after Versailles," in "Romania and the Paris Peace Conference (1919). Actors, Scenarios, Circulation of Knowledge", *Journal of Romanian Studies*, Special Issue edited by Svetlana Suveica, 1 (2019) 2 (Stuttgart: ibidem, 2019): 135–52.

the politically and economically comparatively backward conditions in the "Old Kingdom" of Romania. The authors of the resolution organized themselves in a "Great National Assembly" (*Marea Adunare Națională*). With the voice of the Greek Catholic Bishop Iuliu Hossu and under the eyes of his Orthodox colleague Miron Cristea, they demanded "provisional autonomy" for the territories annexed by Hungary as well as

1. Full national liberty for all peoples living together. Each people shall be educated, administered, and judged in its own language by individuals from its own midst, and each people shall have the right of representation in the legislative bodies and in the country's government in proportion to the number of individuals constituting it.
2. Equal rights and full confessional autonomy for all confessions in the state.
3. The perfect establishment of a pure democratic regime in all spheres of public life. Universal, direct, equal, secret, proportional, suffrage in the communities for both sexes aged 21 and over, for representation in communes, counties, and parliament.
4. Complete freedom of the press, association and assembly, free expression of all human thought.
5. A radical agrarian reform. [...]
6. Industrial workers are guaranteed the same rights and benefits that are provided in the most advanced industrial states of the West.[2]

However, if we revisit Vaida-Voevod's portrayal to an international audience in early January 1929, developments in the first decade after the end of the Danube Monarchy seem to have followed a different, less utopian path: the emergence of so-called Greater Romania "born from military glory and the wisdom of the Romanians from the old kingdom and the new provinces", as Vaida-Voevod put it, was quickly followed by "ten years of fear, disillusion and experience".[3]

Vaida-Voevod, the spin doctor of the predominantly Transylvanian-led National Peasant's Party (*Partidul Național-Țărănist*, PNȚ), was – in the spirit of political storytelling – very interested in portraying the period before the opposition's victory as a dark decade. All the greater was the impression of a

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2 "The Resolution of the National Assembly in Alba-Iulia on the 18th of November/the 1st of December", <http://www.cimec.ro/Istorie/Unire/rezo_eng.htm> (13 December 2018). (Translation edited by the author.)
3 Alexandru Vaida-Voevod, "Ten Years of Greater Roumania," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 7 (1929) 20, 261.

"redemption" which, given the election results of 1928, was shared by a large part of the electorate.[4]

2.   Hope: 1928

The advent of the so-called National-Peasant government about a decade after the disintegration of the Danube Monarchy and the emergence of "Greater Romania" thus represented an extraordinary moment of hope for the Romanian people. A 'redeemer figure' was found in the earnest personality of Iuliu Maniu (1873–1953), a lawyer who had studied in Vienna and Budapest and had previously acted as an attorney for the Greek Catholic Church.[5] Maniu stood for the desire for change, supported by the broader masses: the "change" eagerly awaited since 1918 now finally seemed possible, the "fruitful and flourishing garden" within reach.

However, the period of national-peasant governments was to end less gloriously in 1933: the shooting of striking railway workers by the executive and the murder of the recently installed liberal Prime Minister Ion G. Duca by fanatical fascists marked – synchronously with European developments – the beginning of an era of radicalization and authoritarianism. In this essay, I will try to answer the question as to why the potentially "fertile and flourishing garden" ended up becoming something of a graveyard.

We will approach this question in several steps: First, we will consider the months after 1918, since examination of the situation in this liminal moment shows how little people were prepared for the actual collapse of the Danube Monarchy and what a daunting task the inhabitants of the enlarged Romania faced. Secondly, I will outline the most important aspects of the Romanian integration process and thus show how a power struggle for dominance in the state unfolded, encompassing all areas of public life down to the private, personal sphere. Thirdly, I show how the 'neo-Romanian' opposition reacted to the transformation of Greater Romania, actually managed to gain power, and ultimately failed due to its own pretensions. Fourthly, I show the development in the 1930s before finally providing an outlook on the further developments.

Our companion on this journey will be Alexandru Vaida-Voevod, a Vienna-educated doctor and scion of an ennobled Greek Catholic landowning family since his biography and political actions demonstrate the significance of the

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4   Sextil Puşcariu, "Regionalismul constructiv," *Societatea de Mâine* 2 (1925) 6, 83–86, 85: "Ardealul era arbitrul situaţiei politice în România"; Kührer-Wielach, "Siebenbürgen ohne Siebenbürger," 252.

5   Kührer-Wielach, "Siebenbürgen ohne Siebenbürger," 375.

after-effects of the Danube Monarchy in an almost ideal-typical way. This structural and cultural echo of the Habsburg Empire is an essential component of my perspective on the Romanian transformation after 1918: the consciousness of the national unity of the Romanians from all the merged regions could not conceal the different historical imprints. These disparities were instrumentalized and intensified in an increasingly violent political contest. Hopes for improvement in the overall social situation were dashed several times, leading to further destabilization and disavowal of a democracy that was fragile from the outset and practiced partly just for show. However, I do not set out from a bipolar analytical scheme that only distinguishes between factors of continuity and ruptures or success and failure. Rather, I would like to understand the actions of the actors after World War I as a form of *adaptation.*[6] Collective visions and the struggle to realize them have just as much of a place in this interpretive scheme as contingency management, spontaneous reactions to change, and interest-driven speech and action. In order to create synchronous as well as diachronic contexts, I will allow myself to deviate from the classical chronological account at times. So, back once more to 1918.

3.   1918 – a Decisive Moment without a Decision

The national master narrative presented the emergence and existence of Greater Romania up to the present day as an unstoppable process without any alternative and the unification of almost all territories inhabited by Romanians as the only logical, just, and sensible outcome – in other words, as a typical *Risorgimento* narrative in which one's own nation takes center stage. Consequently, the interwar period is presented as a golden age of Romanian national becoming,[7] which is not entirely illogical in view of everything that came afterwards (dictatorship, world war, communism). However, this idealizing view does not do justice to the erratic developments in the two decades after World War I, which were sometimes driven by political arbitrariness and violence as well as the international economic crisis.

"1918" came rather unexpectedly because, in fact, only a few months earlier hardly anyone could have imagined the extent of the geopolitical upheaval – that is, the complete dissolution of Austria-Hungary, the shrinking of Germany, and

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6 Florian Kührer-Wielach and Sarah Lemmen, "Transformation in East Central Europe. 1918 and 1989 – a Comparative Approach," *European Review of History* 23 (2016) 4, 573–579, 577.
7 Lucian Boia, *Geschichte und Mythos. Über die Gegenwart des Vergangenen in der rumänischen Gesellschaft* (Wien – Köln – Weimar: Böhlau, 2003), 10.

the end of the Tsarist Empire – regardless of whether one was loyal to the dynasty, a nationalist, or both.

4.   A Look Back at the Late Danube Monarchy

The thin but energetic layer of Romanian intellectuals under the Habsburg crowns had actively contributed to the vision of overcoming the Austro-Hungarian dualism established in 1867. We owe one of the best-known plans for a federal Danube monarchy to Banat-born Aurel Popovici with his work *Die Vereinigten Staaten von Groß-Österreich* (The United States of Greater Austria).[8] Alexandru Vaida-Voievod (then Vajda von Felső-Orbó[9]) reported in his memoirs how the Romanian students in Vienna, of which he was one, hung on the lips of Professor Popovici, then in Café Wien.[10] A few years later, Vaida-Voevod found himself in the wider circle of advisors to the heir apparent, Franz Ferdinand, in which such ideas about abolishing the hated Austro-Hungarian dualism were developed and discussed.

In 1916, when the small kingdom of Romania entered the war on the side of the Entente, Vaida-Voevod published an article in the *Österreichische Rundschau* calling for the unconditional loyalty of the Hungarian Romanians to the Habsburgs.[11] He was not alone in this attitude guided by pragmatism, realism, and the lack of alternatives – as demonstrated by a declaration of loyalty to the Hungarian Crown written a few months later and signed by some 200 Romanian politicians, church leaders, and intellectuals from Hungary.

Loyalty to the dynasty and national emancipation were thus not contradictory, especially since a vehement Magyarization policy was pursued by the governments while the nominally apolitical Emperor or King Franz Joseph was seen as "above things". Thus the Romanian National Party in Hungary founded in the 19th century – with Maniu and Vaida-Voevod among its leaders – had fought for its seats in the Budapest parliament at the turn of the century. Aligned as an "ethno-party", it strove for a monopoly position in the representation of Hungarian Romanians. This experience and attitude were to continue to have an effect after 1918 under the new auspices.

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8 Aurel Popovici, *Die Vereinigten Staaten von Groß-Österreich. Politische Studien zur Lösung der nationalen Fragen und staatrechtlichen Krisen in Österreich-Ungarn* (Leipzig: B. Elischer Nachfolger 1906).

9 "Vaida-Voevod (Vajda von Felső-Orbó), Alexandru (1872–1950), Politiker," <https://www.biog raphien.ac.at/oebl/oebl_V/Vaida-Voevod_Alexandru_1872_1950.xml> (7 May 2022).

10 Alexandru Vaida Voevod and Alexandru Şerban, *Memorii*, Vol 1, edited by (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Dacia, 1994), 68.

11 A. von Vajda, *Österreichische Rundschau*, 15.9.1916.

In the last months of the war, the representatives of the Hungarian Romanians then saw that their chance had come to take over the leadership in the areas of eastern Hungary inhabited by a Romanian majority – with or without the Habsburgs at the helm. Thus it was Vaida-Voevod who, on behalf of the Executive Committee of the Romanian National Party, announced the the Hungarian Romanians' secession in the Budapest Reichstag in October 1918. This short but rapid development led to the union of eastern and southeastern Hungary with the Kingdom of Romania.

5.   A Look Back at the "Old Kingdom" of Romania

The small Romanian kingdom on the lower Danube, known as the "Old Kingdom" (*Vechiul Regat*) in historiography, had come into being in several steps: to create facts, within a few weeks in 1859 the estates of the two Romanian Danubian principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia elected Alexandru Ioan Cuza as their respective head. This process, which initially met with resistance from the High Porte and the Habsburg Empire, is remembered as the "small unification" (*mica unire*). In 1862, however, an institutional unification between the two entities took place, in 1866 they gave themselves a constitution, and in 1878 Romania formally gained independence in the wake of the Congress of Berlin. In 1881, Romania became a kingdom. As in Greece and Bulgaria, a member of a foreign dynasty was placed on the throne: thus, from 1866 to 1947, members of the House of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen were to wear the Romanian crown. In 1885, the Orthodox Church achieved autocephaly, that is, administrative and canonical autonomy vis-à-vis the patriarch of Constantinople, and consolidated its position as the Romanian "national church", which it was de facto, for demographic reasons alone. The political landscape was very monotonous in that the census electoral law, which was only gradually relaxed, favored a constant, very thin layer of boyars and excluded most of the population from political and economic participation. Two clans organized in parties dominated: the Conservatives, whose success depended on a high electoral census, which plunged them into relative insignificance after its final abolition after 1918, and the Liberals, grouped around their first leader, Ion C. Brătianu, whose family would also dominate the political sphere in the interwar period.

6.   The "Great Unification" in Figures

In 1918, the "Unification King" Ferdinand and his wife Queen Maria not only saw Hungarian, that is, Transleithanian territories growing into their small kingdom. Around the same time, the parliament of the Austrian, i. e. Cisleithanian *Kronland* Bukovina also decided to secede to Romania, albeit without a spectacular march. This was an "unconditional annexation" declared in the provincial capital of Czernowitz by only a rump parliament in which by no means all representatives of the various groups or estates were present. The situation was similar in Bessarabia, whose provincial council had already renounced its ties to revolutionary Russia in March 1918 and announced its medium-term integration into the Romanian state. At that time, the state still formulated its own demands, which included extensive regional – including fiscal – autonomy for Bessarabia. The tangible annexation of Bessarabia under great military pressure in November 1918 then took place unconditionally and with only weak legitimacy.

This was the challenging situation in late 1918 – Romania had doubled its land and population in one fell swoop: the territory had grown from 138,000 km² to 295,049 km², the population from 7.9 million (1915) to 14.7 million (1919) and was to increase to 18 million by 1930. However, the different historical influences that characterized the merged regions weighed even more heavily: the main regions of the "Old Kingdom", Walachia and Moldavia, could look back on a common statehood with relative independence since 1859, as described above, but at the same time the country had a traditional social order. The Romanians of the Crown of St. Stephen, on the other hand, could point to a tradition of political participation, which was strengthened by the growing pressure to assimilate to the Magyar hegemonic culture. In Bukovina, the Romanians benefited from Vienna's relatively liberal regime. Thus, one can speak of a relatively well-functioning system of ethnic coexistence for the historical *Kronland*, even if the new electoral order of 1910, designed to balance out the groups, could not be applied due to the war. Even the Romanians in Bessarabia, which had been part of the Russian Empire since 1812, could call on their traditional regional and local representative and administrative bodies. And in any case, the case of Dobruja, which was populated by various linguistic, religious, and ethnic groups and had fallen to the Kingdom of Romania in several stages since the Congress of Berlin in 1878, must be differentiated from the 'core areas' of the "Old Kingdom" for its diverse social structure; it had served as an experimental field for the integration and Romanianization of multi-ethnic and multi-confessional areas before World War I.

In addition to the different historical traditions, the high degree of confessional and ethnic diversity is thus an essential and common feature of the territories annexed by or united in the "Old Kingdom". For in this small pre-war

Romania, minorities played only a subordinate role. Especially in Moldova's few urban settlements, there was a large proportion of 'ethnic non-Romanians' (predominantly Jewish, Aromanian, Greek, or Italian families), but they did not challenge the dominance of "the Romanian" and were merely tolerated by the (nationalizing) state. The Jews living in the country, who represented a large and culturally active group, had been systematically denied citizenship, even after they were officially granted the right of naturalization, following interventions at the Berlin Congress in 1878, and even though they had a number of obligations towards the state.

In 1918, however, this state suddenly had to incorporate about one third of 'ethnic non-Romanians', including many Orthodox, and one third of 'confessional non-Orthodox', including many Romanians.

The 1930 census provides a good basis for quantitatively tracing the demographic structure after 1918: Romanians (as an ethnic-national group) accounted for 71.9% of the total population at the time, the rest being distributed between a variety of ethnic groups, including 7.9% Hungarians, 4.1% Germans, and 4% Jews. 72.6% of the total population professed the Orthodox faith, 7.9% were Greek Catholic (united with Rome), 6.8% Roman Catholic, 6.1% Protestants of various denominations, and 4.2% considered themselves Jews.

If one analyses the figures for the areas that largely belonged to other empires before 1918, the extent to which the demographic conditions in the state of Romania changed becomes even clearer: in Transylvania, for example, there were 57.6% Romanians, in the Banat 54.4%, in the Partium 60.7%, while the large rest of the population belonged to "minorities", the most significant being Hungarian and German groups. The new regions were also uneven from a confessional point of view: in Transylvania, about half of the Romanians belonged to the Greek Catholic Church, and even in the Partium only 36.8% were Orthodox. In Bukovina, 44.5% were of Romanian ethnicity, 27.7% were Ruthenians (Ukrainians), and 10.8% Jews. In Dobruja, there were 44.2% Romanians, 22.7% Bulgarians and 8.5% Turks. In the parts of the Old Kingdom, on the other hand, there were about 90% Romanians, more or less identical with the number auf Orthodox people. The data clearly show that especially in the 'neo-Romanian' areas there was an ethnic and confessional mix.[12]

As the Habsburg historian Pieter Judson, to whom we owe an important recent book on the Danube Monarchy, its end and its aftermath, has noted, the Habsburg lifeworld continued to exist *mutatis mutandis* in the successor states: from this point of view, in the interwar period we are dealing with post-imperial small empires[13] that did not quite know how to deal with themselves: established and

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12 Kührer-Wielach, "Siebenbürgen ohne Siebenbürger," 66.
13 Cf. Pieter Judson, *The Habsburg Empire. A New History* (Cambridge: Harvard University

proven structures were shattered, especially since the borders drawn after the war cut through and shifted regional historical-cultural contexts. Greater Romania, having emerged so suddenly, had yet to achieve its effective *translatio imperii* in the shape of comprehensive economic, social, political, cultural, institutional, and mental integration. In the years following the "Great Unification", the form this new society should take was negotiated at different levels and by different means.

So, in the first weeks after nominal and military-supported unification, a struggle between the "old" and the "new" Romania for supremacy in the country already began to emerge. In addition to regional demarcation lines, the relationship between the "majority" and the "minority" – a concept that was only nascent on the international level – was a defining factor of the transformation period after 1918.

7.   Minorities in Greater Romania

Ultimately, for the various non-Romanian and non-Orthodox inhabitants of the annexed territories, there was, similarly to the national und confessional mainstream, no alternative to the new situation, for there was no realistic return to the pre-war order. Thus, as in the case of the Magyars in the west and the Russians in the northeast, the "majority people" became part of a minority. They became citizens of a state whose centralist basic structure was to gradually assert itself in the new territories too – Romanians and, from the confessional point of view, Orthodoxy were given *de facto* and increasingly also *de jure* priority.

The various minority groups reacted accordingly: they either maintained their tendency to reject the Romanian state decisively and permanently, like a larger part of the Magyar actors who took refuge in political passivity, or still withheld recognition of the annexation, as the Transylvanian Saxons did in January 1919. Or they just waited for international recognition, like the Hungarian Jews who, in contrast to the Jews in the Old Kingdom, were skeptical about the creation of Greater Romania and only officially recognized the existence of the enlarged Kingdom of Romania after the Treaty of Trianon on 4 June 1920. The Bessarabian Germans, on the other hand, tended to view the annexation positively, as they expected protection from the Bolsheviks within the framework of the Romanian state.

To understand the minority situation, it is important to note that we can by no means assume *homogeneous* ethnonational groups in this post-imperial setting. *The* German minority, *the* Jewish minority, *the* Hungarian minority existed only

Press, 2018).

on paper and in the rhetoric of politicians. For understandable reasons, they had to have a vested interest in generating solidary groups that were large, powerful, and homogeneous enough to defend specific interests and rights, and which they intended to represent and lead. Yet, like the Romanians in the different parts of the country, the so-called "nationalities" were composed of highly disparate elements and minority groups. In this regard, let us consider just three paradigmatic examples:[14]

– The two bigger German neighboring groups in western Romania – Protestant Transylvanian Saxons in Transylvania and Catholic Swabians in the Banat – differed in terms of confession, historical and regional cultural self-image, and dialect, and, since the Danube Swabians bowed more readily to Magyarization before 1918 than the Transylvanian Saxons, in part even in terms of language.

– When the Lutheran communities (*Confessio Augustana*) united on the soil of the state that had just come into being, one of the debates concerned this church's new center: should it be in Transylvanian Sibiu, where the "Saxon" bishop sat? Or should it be in the capital, Bucharest? Dogmatic differences were even noted and discussed by the Saxons and the – also Lutheran – Bessarabian Germans. Moreover, an ethnic stratification took place in 1921, when the Hungarian-speaking Lutherans founded their own ecclesial structure. There have been two Lutheran churches in Romania ever since.

– Most of the Jews living in the former Hungarian regions spoke Hungarian and were what could be called loyal to the crown or the dynasty. A similar attitude prevailed among the liberal and in many cases secular-minded Jews of Bukovina, who were inclined towards German culture. These in turn differed markedly from the very traditional Hasids, who were also a large group in Bukovina. Therefore, the emancipated Jews in Bukovina and its new western part as well as the Yiddish- and Russian-speaking, but hardly Tsarist-dynastic Bessarabian Jews naturally regarded themselves as a *national* minority in Greater Romania. Spokespersons of the Jews in the "Old Kingdom", who lived under the worst conditions until 1918, on the other hand, interpreted their community – probably also due to a lack of alternatives – as part of the Romanian culture and merely as a *religious* minority. In addition, there was the Zionist movement, the increasing acceptance of which ran across linguistic and regional-cultural differences among the Jews.

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14 Cf. Florian Kührer-Wielach, "(Was) Minderheiten schaffen. 'Eigen-sinnige' Lebenswelten und ethnonationale Blockbildung am Beispiel 'Großrumäniens'," in *Zerfall, Trauma, Triumph. Das Epochenjahr 1918 und sein Nachleben in Zentral-, Ostmittel- und Südosteuropa*, edited by Steffen Höhne (Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2020), 327–362.

Accordingly, the establishment of ethnic umbrella organizations proved difficult. It was only when the new state situation proved to be permanent that nationwide political representations of the minorities established themselves, delimited according to ethnonational criteria.

8.   A Transylvanian Episode, 1919/1920

The Paris Peace Treaties were intended to solve all these 'ground problems' from a bird's eye view, as it were, and to provide international recognition of the post-war order that had emerged so spontaneously. Geopolitics was at the center of this: the vague idea of the peoples' right to self-determination provided the basis for establishing the broadest possible and most stable buffer zone of new or enlarged states in East Central Europe; the idea was to keep at bay the greatest factor of insecurity after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire: the revolutionary and thus completely unpredictable Russian Soviet Republic, which was to expand into the Soviet Union in 1922.

The two treaties relevant to Romania – St. Germain for the former Austrian territories in 1919 and Trianon for the former Hungarian territories in 1920 – were preceded by a bilateral Minority Treaty, which the League of Nations (*Völkerbund*) made a condition for concluding the Paris Peace Treaties. It was part of a whole system of treaties for the protection of minorities, which was established as a balancing act between the claims of the nation-state and its reality.

The treaty obliged the Romanian government to guarantee full protection of life and liberty to all inhabitants, regardless of birth, nationality, language, ethnicity, and religion (Art. 2). It was also to recognize as equal citizens those persons residing on Romanian territory at the time the treaty came into force (Art. 3). Moreover, the treaty stipulated that all persons with Austrian or Hungarian citizenship who were "born on the territories annexed to Romania" were to be recognized as Romanian citizens and that the use of the mother tongue be guaranteed in the official sector. The government was to grant permission to establish self-financed schools and – as a special feature – "local autonomy" for Saxons and Szeklers in school and church matters. Only some of these conditions were later implemented.[15]

An additional obligation was to fulfill the requirement that had already existed since the Berlin Congress of 1878, namely to finally grant citizenship to the approximately 250,000 Jews living in the country. Ion I. C. Brătianu, experienced in the politics of the Kingdom of Romania and now once again prime minister

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15 Kührer-Wielach, "Was Minderheiten schaffen," 14.

and leader of the National Liberal Party, thought this step would be so unpopular that he preferred to protest against the decision, leave the negotiating table in Paris, and resign from his post as prime minister. Further negotiations were conducted by Alexandru Vaida-Voevod, who had been in power since 5 December 1919 as the first Romanian prime minister to be legitimized by nation-wide elections after 1918.

Vaida-Voevod's cabinet, which tended to be minority-friendly, only existed until March 1920, however. Then, the (partially) autonomous administration of the territories that had separated from Hungary, led by his colleagues in the Romanian National Party (*Partidul Naţional Român*) anchored politically, mentally, and culturally in the former Hungarian territories, was also finally dissolved. This was a decisive moment: with the failure of the Vaida-Voevod administration, legitimized by the electorate, a phase dominated by the politics of the Old Kingdom began, led by Brătianu's National Liberal Party and enjoying the support of the king. In other words, one could say that here the pre-war networks continued to function. For the other parties – first and foremost the old Transylvanian 'ethnic party' of Maniu and Vaida-Voevod – it was a matter of first learning the craft of political opposition under pluralistic conditions. The course was now set, however; the path that had been taken was to lead to a central state.

9.   Institutional Transformation

The institutional transformation into a functioning state, which was to be followed by the mental one, was characterized by three fundamental processes: *centralization*, *Romanianization*, and *socialization.*

Centralization

The question as to how Romania's administration was to be organized in the future concerned all Romanian citizens: should it be a decentralized state, as a significant number of 'New Romania's' elites demanded? Or should they continue to adhere to the French model of the central state? In the end, all further steps in shaping society depended on this (ostensibly) merely technical question, especially on those levels on which important political decisions were made. As early as 1920, with the abolition of autonomy in western Romania, the administration was centralized step by step. The final decision was made after tough political wrangling in 1923 with the adoption of the new constitution: it was largely based on the old constitution of 1866, which had been explicitly modeled

on that of Belgium and was considered particularly modern at the time of its introduction. Romania was thus to remain a central state.

Even after this landmark decision, the opposition – often in cooperation with the minorities in the new territories – fought against the constitution, which was perceived as having been imposed by a small elite. One point of criticism was that the ideals formulated in the declaration of 1.12.1918 had not been taken into account: the constitution did not address the rights of the workers, the national minorities, women, and the confessions to the same extent as had been formulated in Alba Iulia. In fact, the constitution granted comprehensive rights to individual citizens, but did not stipulate any group rights for the "nationalities".

Romanianization

The governments of Greater Romania, and ultimately most of the parties in opposition too, demanded and forced the rise of the "Romanian element" in the new state. In this context, the 'national argument' can be seen above all as a vehicle for exploiting the economic and social opportunities offered by the new state and the transforming social environment. For although the Romanians were in the quantitative majority in almost all parts of Greater Romania, they still felt in a position of inferiority due to their historically determined, rather weak social and economic status.

This situation was to be changed with targeted Romanianization measures in all areas of public life – school, the economy, culture, administration, etc. This began with the denial of group rights to minorities, led to language examinations for non-native speakers in the civil service at relatively short notice, and ended with the Romanianization of public spaces in the form of renaming streets and erecting new monuments. This became particularly clear when the Romanian fraternity between Rome and Romania was emphasized by the city of Rome sending several Capitoline She-Wolves at once: while such a statue had already been on display in Bucharest since 1906, further copies were gradually erected in Cluj-Napoca (1921), Târgu Mureş (1924), and Timişoara (1926), and many more copies were made as a visible sign of the progressing enforcement of the "Romanian element".

What the Romanian government was ultimately engaged in was what in today's contexts is often referred to as *affirmative action* – "positive discrimination" to establish equality of opportunity and resources. In practice, this meant putting in place policies aiming at rapid and undifferentiated social leveling while favoring the Romanians.

Socialization

One tendency that affected minorities such as Romanians was the state's extensive absorption power: on the one hand, censorship and the state of emergency were imposed far beyond what was necessary in internationally and nationally turbulent but actually peaceful times. Additionally, the system of confessional schools, which was common especially in the territories of the former Danube Monarchy, was starved out and at the same time many state schools were established. This was certainly important in the fight against illiteracy – but of course it also led to the loss of an important institution for the promotion of collective identity beyond the national level, be it the Orthodox and Uniate Romanian-language schools or the schools of the 'non-Romanian' churches: within such communities, the confessional schools were seen as a particularly important instrument for the sustainable preservation of identity.

Thus the state's interventions were a combination of economic and ideological factors: for example, the comprehensive, albeit inconsistent, agricultural reform, which favored Romanians, brought about a certain redistribution that was supposed to lead to the self-empowerment of the socially weaker sections of the population. At the same time, however, the nationalization and redistribution of their forest property deprived the Transylvanian Saxon Protestant community of the financial basis for their schools. Yet the reforms generated discontent even beyond minority issues when the Romanians living in the regions annexed by the Old Kingdom dominated the administration, which usually appointed its supporters even in the new territories.

Thus, the hopeful, if surprising, union soon turned into a struggle for distribution of resources and political dominance. The development did not go unchallenged and the 'Habsburg Romanians' took the lead in the opposition.

10. Habsburg Revenants on Victory Road

After the abrupt end to the ephemeral coalition of 'New Romanians' and smaller opposition parties from the "Old Kingdom" in the spring of 1920 and the initiation of the change towards a central state, the opposition took quite a while to gather itself.

Essentially, the Transylvanian National Party built on its anti-centralism and on – at least pretended – empathy for the minorities. The fact that the campaigns conducted both in the newspapers and on the streets (as well as in the churches!) were increasingly popular was partly thanks to Alexandru Vaida-Voevod: in contrast to the rather thoughtful party leader Iuliu Maniu, he provided catchy slogans and provoked the anger of his opponents with his statements. Vaida-

Voevod's most famous battle cry was "Transylvania for the Transylvanians". This alluded to a statement made by Prime Minister Brătianu in the course of the Union in 1918/1919, when he was said to have expressed the wish that Romania wanted Transylvania, but preferably without the Transylvanians. "Transylvania for the Transylvanians" was soon adopted in the other united territories and, obviously, also found favor among the minorities, some of whom, probably thinking back to allegedly better times, expected decentralization to ease the pressure of Romanianization.

Vaida-Voevod, who obviously enjoyed repeatedly becoming the center of debate in this way, had copied his style of policy making from one of the first 'masters of populism': in his memoirs, written secretly under communist house arrest, Vaida-Voevod told of his admiration for the Christian Social politician Karl Lueger, who held the office of mayor of Vienna from 1897 to 1910. He had been able to climb to the top of the capital's government by implementing his long-standing demand for universal suffrage and distinguished himself as a decisive modernizer of Vienna. He was also successful with his social policy. At the same time, however, he positioned himself as anti-Semitic and anti-Magyar, which even earned him honorary citizenship of Bucharest. Thus Lueger's and Vaida-Voevod's attitudes display great parallels: modernist, reformist, anti-liberal. Hence it may come as little surprise that Vaida-Voevod, the former parliamentarian in Budapest, and his comrades-in-arms were ostentatiously reproached for their "dynastic, patriotic, and traditional sentiments" in political discussions.

Delicately, it was a Transylvanian compatriot, the politically increasingly radicalizing writer Octavian Goga, who had already turned away from Transylvanian regionalism early on and took the conflict to extremes: he saw politicians like Maniu and Vaida-Voevod as specters of the past, as "revenants of Habsburg loyalty". Like the "ghosts" from Henrik Ibsen's stage drama, they wandered around Bucharest to take revenge on the Romanians in service of the old Hungary. Goga and his fellow campaigners considered the Austro-Hungarian influence to be alien and harmful, in contrast to the Romanians' "Latin roots", and preferred to point to an affinity with French culture. He argued that the Transylvanian politicians had to finally take the "right" intellectual path, so that the "hybrid mixture" that had served as their "intellectual nourishment" would finally come to an end. For Goga, Vaida-Voevod was a "man from Budapest" and wanted to separate Transylvania from the rest of the country by bringing the idea of a Greater Austria out of the "Viennese rag store" (*Lumpenkammer*). Politicians of his ilk were now walking around uprooted on Bucharest's Victory Road (*Calea Victoriei*, one of the central boulevards in the Romanian capital), refusing food and rejecting local humor, harboring general mistrust, arguing with hotel porters and political parties alike, telling Hungarian anecdotes and invoking the

Budapest parliament's rules of procedure, getting annoyed, protesting and voting with "everyone and no one" – they were simply regionalists.

This harsh criticism, which probably also says a lot about the critics themselves, could not prevent the gradual rise of the opposition. In 1926, the Transylvanian National Party united with the Peasants' Party anchored in the "Old Kingdom" to form the National Peasants' Party (*Partidul Național-Țărănesc*). This fusion is tantamount to a double expansion of the political combat zone: on the one hand, it opened up new territories, and on the other hand it also expanded its ideological profile by taking over the agendas of the Peasants' Party, which were very much focused on social issues concerning the peasantry.

The complete loss of confidence in the governments of the Liberals and their satellite parties, which secured their power by manipulating the elections and instrumentalizing the authorities, was a favorable factor for the new constellation that was staging itself as a movement. Iuliu Maniu, the central figure of the opposition, was stylized as Romania's savior and redeemer, not least by the party 'spin doctor' Vaida-Voevod. The concept of "Transylvania" had long since ceased to stand only for the territorial keystone of a Romanian *Risorgimento*, but rather became a political program itself: "Transylvania" stood for a counter-vision that had been clearly formulated in Alba Iulia on 1.12.1918 – Transylvanian values would cure Romania.

11.   Another Moment of Hope: 1928

hus, in late 1928, the National Peasants' Party was able to achieve a brilliant electoral victory, almost 78% of the electorate voting for them. Maniu became prime minister, while Vaida-Voevod held the post of minister of the interior. The party leaders had understood in the meantime how to deal with the form of mass democracy that was new to Romania, and in fact hardly needed any means of pressure. It was quite sufficient to take advantage of the real, crisis-ridden political climate and to develop a vision to which the masses of voters responded. It was therefore obvious that the issues of the electoral law and the land reform were at the center of the political discourse. In this logic, the new line of conflict ran between political cultures, regions, and generations. The thematic focal points can be reduced to pairs of opposites:
– the *ancien régime* versus democratic minds,
– arbitrariness versus rule of law,
– oligarchy versus parliamentary representation.

These developments must be seen against the background of the emergence of mass democracy, multiple transformation crises including economic and ad-

ministrative dysfunctions, and the ideological aggravations related to all these factors throughout Europe. The arrival of the Maniu government itself was presented as a radical turning point, as the end of a "nightmare", as a return to the common values and goals formulated in 1918: the "fruitful and flourishing garden" seemed within reach.

12.   Escalation of Violence and the End of Hope

The Maniu administration immediately began to reform the state apparatus. The executive was reorganized, its training improved and its powers of access restricted, with the aim of reducing acts of arbitrary officialdom. A comprehensive administrative reform was to restructure the country along decentralized lines. On the level of economic policy, the protectionist system was abolished, and foreign investment was to be made possible and encouraged. The inalienability of the right to land allocated by the land reform was abrogated. This allowed the pooling of smaller agricultural areas and thus their more efficient cultivation. The government also tried to create a better legal framework for the labor force.

Only a short time after Maniu's inauguration, however, the Great Depression also began to manifest itself, so that many of the government's measures became stuck in the implementation phase and their anticipated positive effects never materialized. The prices for Romania's most important export product, grain, fell appreciably, and the advancing debt not only affected the farmers and the enterprises, but also brought the state budget to the brink of insolvency. Contrary to the announcements made during the opposition period, taxes had to be increased, which further fueled the already poor morale within the populace caused by the economic crisis. During a workers' strike in Lupeni, located in the Transylvanian mining region of Valea Jiului, 29 people were killed in 1929 by the intervention of the gendarmerie. The government immediately suspended the local decision-makers responsible for the brutal action against their own population. Ultimately, however, these violent events marked the first break with the promises made by the National Peasants' Party leaders in their election campaign. Thus Maniu's government now also resorted to restrictive measures. Censorship of the press also continued to exist, albeit via different methods. (Print runs were already confiscated instead of being censored before going to press). Trust in the government rapidly declined.

There followed an unsteady period of several National Peasant cabinets, interrupted by the equally unsuccessful experiment of an ostensibly technocratic cabinet, which, however, was primarily there to implement the authoritarian tendencies of King Carol II. This first attempt by the king to rule over the heads of party politicians, however, failed, for the time being, due to the "authoritarian