

A MICROHISTORY OF RURALITY, NAZISM, AND YOUTH SEXUALITY. ROMANIAN REPORTS OF A MEDICAL EXAMINATION CONDUCTED ON THE GERMAN YOUTH OF ORȚIȘOARA (1942)

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Abstract:

As part of a pronatalist propaganda campaign taken by the German Ethnic Group of Romania in 1942, two members of the organization, a doctor and a woman, went to the predominantly German village known as Orțișoara in Romanian and Orzydorf in German under the guise of conducting a medical examination for the German girls aged 16 and boys aged 18. Upon arrival, they had the participants undress and stand naked during the examination. After the examination ended, the woman delivered a speech in which she urged the girls to have children, regardless of who the father was, and that there was no shame for girls so young to be pregnant. After her oration, a majority of the teenagers allegedly went to the backyard of the community center where they engaged in sexual intercourse. The only sources that mention this event are the reports of the local gendarmes and the testimonies given by four Romanian villagers. Using discourse analysis as an approach, this paper argues that the German Ethnic Group of Romania instrumentalized sexuality as a means by which to distance the youth from the Roman-Catholic Church and make them more committed National Socialists.

Keywords: Gendarmerie; Banat; National Socialism; Discourse analysis; Minorities

Introduction. Responding to an order to acquire information on supposed Nazi pronatalist propaganda in the countryside,¹ the commander of the gendarmerie post in Orțișoara reported to his superior in Vinga on 29 March 1942 that earlier that month, a male doctor and a woman from the National Socialist organization of the German Ethnic Group (GEG) of Romania traveled from Timișoara to Orțișoara, a predominantly German village,² to organize a medical examination for the village's German youth.

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¹ Serviciul Județean al Arhivelor Naționale – Timiș (SJAN-TM) [Romanian National Archives, County Branch Timiș], fonds Legiunea de Jandarmi Timiș-Torontal (LJTT) [Gendarmerie Legion of Timiș-Torontal], inventory number 619, folder 373/1940, f. 87.

² According to the numbers of the National Institute for Statistics, there were 1 942 Germans living in the village of Orțișoara in 1940, see Stefan Olaf Schüller, *Für Glaube, Führer, Volk, Vater- oder Mutterland? Die Kämpfe um die deutsche Jugend im*

Boys aged 18 and girls aged 16 and older were called for this examination at “Hocim,” presumably the name of the community center of the village. Once there, they were brought into a room and told to undress. Both sexes were told to stand in a row facing each other while the examination took place. After the doctor finished looking at them, the woman who accompanied him stood in front of the boys and girls while they were still naked. She told them that there was no shame for a 16-year-old girl to have a child, as the Swabian people needed to compensate for war losses and increase their numbers to achieve their objectives. She added that it didn’t matter who the child’s father was, since the elderly could care for the babies. After she finished her speech, some of the girls ran back home, where they were allegedly scolded by their parents and told to go back. However, the majority of the teenagers went in the building’s backyard, where they engaged in sexual intercourse on haystacks.³

Further investigations by local gendarmes gathered four testimonies from Romanian locals who had German friends or acquaintances, from whom they learned about the event. The testimonies were given by Mihai Selhan, the village cowherd,⁴ Elena and her mother, Gherghina Neagoie, as well as Maria Ardelean, who was a close friend of one of the girls involved in the event.⁵ Neither the initial report, nor subsequent testimonies were able to explicitly name the male doctor or the woman who accompanied him. The General Inspectorate of the Gendarmerie in Bucharest suspected that the woman might have come from Germany.⁶ None of the sources specify exactly how many boys and girls were gathered for the “medical examination.” It is unclear whether the written accounts were taken before or after the commander of the Orțișoara gendarmerie post reported the event to his superiors, as none of the testimonies in question are dated. None of the local newspapers

rumänischen Banat (1918-1944) [For Faith, Leader, Kin, Fatherland or Motherland? The Struggles for the German Youth in the Romanian Banat (1918-1944)] (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2009), 532; According to the 1930 Census, there were 2 173 dwellers in Orțișoara, of whom 196 were Romanian, 115 were Hungairan, and 1 854 were Germans. See Sabin Manuilă, *Recensământul general al populației din 1930 – Vol. II Neam, limbă maternă, religie* [General Census of the populace from 1930 – Volume II Kin, Mother Tongue, Religion] (Bucharest: Institutul Central de Statistică, 1938), 474.

³ SJAN-TM, fonds LJTT, inventory number 619, folder 373/1940, folio (f.) 95.

⁴ SJAN-TM, fonds Școala generală Orțișoara [Primary School of Orțișoara], folder 2/1942, f. 4v.

⁵ SJAN-TM, fonds LJTT, inventory number 619, folder 373/1940, f. 153-156.

⁶ Serviciul Arhivelor Naționale Istorice Centrale [Central Branch of the Romanian National Archives] (SANIC), Inspectoratul General al Jandarmeriei [General Inspectorate of the Gendarmerie] (IGJ), folder 35/1942, f. 111.

reported on this event. The issue never appears again in the archival documents of the gendarmes outside of the archival files of the Vinga/Theresientstadt section of the gendarmes and the General Inspectorate of the Gendarmerie, where it was confirmed by the legion commander for county Timiș-Torontal on 30 May 1940 that further investigations had led to no results.⁷ The General Inspectorate of the Gendarmerie requested for investigations to continue and suggested that the location where the meeting took place was the village school, rather than the community center.⁸ However, this claim is not substantiated and most likely came from a rival informative network. The scarcity in sources can most likely be traced back to the destruction or loss of archived document as a result of the village briefly falling under the occupation of the Hungarian army⁹ after Romania became a combatant state of the Axis following the ousting of Ion Antonescu on 23 August 1944.

Given the context of the Second World War and the Nazification of the German minority of Romania,¹⁰ particularly in the Banat, where this weakened the influence of the Roman-Catholic Church over the youth,¹¹

⁷ SANIC, IGJ, folder 35/1942, f. 110.

⁸ SANIC, IGJ, folder 35/1942, f. 111.

⁹ The only archival documents remaining of the gendarmerie post of Orțișoara contain documents from 1945 onward, mostly investigative notes regarding German collaborators, see SJAN-TM, fonds LJTT, inventory number 619, folder 244/1945.

¹⁰ See Wolfgang Miede, *Das Dritte Reich und die Deutsche Volksgruppe in Rumänien 1933-38. Ein Beitrag zur nationalsozialistischen Volkstumspolitik* [The Third Reich and the German Ethnic Group in Romania 1933-38. A contribution to National Socialist Ethnic Politics] (Frankfurt am Main & Bern: Peter Lang & Herbert Lang, 1972), 76-269; Hildrun Glass, *Zerbrochene Nachbarschaft: Das Deutsch-jüdische Verhältnis in Rumänien (1918-1938)* [Broken Neighborhood: The German-Jewish Relations in Romania (1918-1938)] 323-458, 477-526; Florian Kühner Wielach, "Drumul spre „alinierarea” la național-socialism. Pentru o istorie politică a germanilor din România între 1933 și 1940" [The Path Towards the "Synchronization" to National Socialism. For a Political History of the Germans of Romania between 1933 and 1940], in *Un veac frământat. Germanii din România după 1918* [A troubled Century. The Germans of Romania After 1918], ed. Ottmar Trașcă, Remus Gabriel Anghel (Cluj-Napoca: Institutul pentru Studiarea Problemelor Minorităților Naționale, 2018), 77-112; Johann Böhm, *Nationalsozialistische Indoktrination der Deutschen in Rumänien 1932-1944* [National Socialist Indoctrination of the Germans of Romania] (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang Verlag, 2008) 37-210; Paul Milata, *Zwischen Hitler, Stalin und Antonescu: Rumäniendeutsche in der Waffen-SS* [Between Hitler, Stalin, and Antonescu: The Romanian Germans in the Waffen-SS] (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2007), 29-48.

¹¹ Mariana Hausleitner, *Die Donauschwaben 1868-1948. Ihre Rolle im rumänischen und serbischen Banat* [The Danube Swabians 1868-1948. Their Role in the Romanian and Serbian Banat] (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2014), 184, 195-216; Schüller, *Für Glaube*, 299-449; Mihai Panu, *Capcanele ideologiei: Opțiuni politice ale etnicilor*

these reports and testimonies offer a glimpse into how Nazism was interpreted in the countryside. They also show how the GEG instrumentalized sexuality by condoning pre-marital sex as a solution to the declining birthrate of the Banat Swabians. It is unclear if the doctor and the woman of the GEG created the premises for sexual relations between the boys and girls to take place by putting them naked in the same room together. Likewise, it cannot be ascertained if there were already existing sexual tensions among the youth, with the medical examination merely having acted as a catalyst. Similarly, it remains unclear if the doctor or the woman knew anything of the subsequent sexual intercourses that occurred after they had left or if indeed that had been their precise intention.

This raises the question: how did Nazi pronatalist propaganda impact the German youth of Orțișoara? Sexual norms have always been different and contingent on the geographic location and the historical time period. In the case of the Nazi regime, attempts were made to approach the topic of sex by both distancing itself from Victorian prudishness whilst also rejecting the perceived degeneracies of the Weimar Republic in favor of a “clean” sexual life.¹² The Banat Swabian countryside, more conservative and more religious, fell more in the category of Victorian prudishness, where premarital intercourse was generally looked down upon. Neither the report of the gendarmerie post of Orțișoara, nor the four testimonies given ever go into details regarding the alleged sexual intercourse, which is only ever referred to as the “sexual act,” or as the “immoral act” by the commander of the gendarmerie legion.¹³

This paper aims to look at the effects of Nazi ideology on the sexuality of the German youth of Orțișoara. It achieves this by contextualizing the historical context of the region of the Romanian Banat through the relevant research literature and the local German-language

germani în România interbelică [The Traps of Ideology: Political Options of the Ethnic Germans in Interwar Romania] (Cluj-Napoca: Mega, 2015), 35-47; Ottmar Trașcă, “Grupul Etnic German din România în “Era” Andreas Schmidt,” [The German Ethnic Group of Romania in the “Era” of Andreas Schmidt] in *Un veac frământat. Germanii din România după 1918* [A troubled Century. The Germans of Romania After 1918], ed. Ottmar Trașcă, Remus Gabriel Anghel (Cluj-Napoca: Institutul pentru Studierea Problemelor Minorităților Naționale, 2018) 125-130.

¹² Elizabeth D. Heineman, “Sexuality and Nazism: The Doubly Unspeakable?” *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, Vol. II, No. 1/2, Special Issue: Sexuality and German Fascism (Jan. – Apr., 2002), 31-32.

¹³ SANIC, IGJ, folder 35/1942, f. 110.

press before utilizing the approach of discourse analysis¹⁴ to analyze the *pure description of discursive events*¹⁵ behind sexuality and Nazism as they were interpreted by second-hand non-German perspectives. This study argues that the Banat section of the GEG sought to normalize premarital sex among rural teenagers as a strategy to deepen their devotion to its Nazi ideology. They did so by invoking the need to replenish the losses at the front, despite the fact that by March of 1942 only 2 Swabians from Orțișoara had died on the front.¹⁶

It must be emphasized that the majority – minority relation at a national level was reversed in Orțișoara, where the German-speaking Banat Swabians, who referred to their village as *Orzydorf*, made up the vast majority of its inhabitants, whilst the Romanians were a minority. One of the many objectives of the ideology of National Socialism propagated by the GEG was to dislodge the attachment that the Banat Swabians had to their homeland, to their customs, and get them to self-identify first and foremost as members of the German *Volk* [people]. This message resonated with the segments of Orțișoara that wished to share in the commonalities they shared with the Third Reich and feel closer to it than to their own homeland, which helps to explain to almost normative value attributed to the demands of the female assistant of the GEG. Lastly, this study aims to bring a contribution to the growing scholarly literature on minorities in Southeastern Europe, as well as rural social structures in a borderland region of Greater Romania, by highlighting this microhistory on the blend between Nazism and youth sexuality as it unfolded on the local, rural level in the village of Orțișoara.

Historical Context. Orțișoara was first documented under the name of Kokaach in 1318, Kakot in 1333, and Kokoth 1335, which most probably derives from the old Slavonic word *kokoši* for rooster.¹⁷ As part

¹⁴ Rainer Diaz-Bone, Andrea D. Bührmann, Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez, Werner Schneider, Gavin Kendall, Francisco Tirado, “The Field of Foucaultian Discourse Analysis: Structures, Developments and Perspectives,” in

Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung, Vol. 33, No. 1 (123), (2008), 7-28 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20762257>; Stefan Jordan, *Theorien und Methoden der Geschichtswissenschaft. 3. Aktualisierte Auflage* [Theories and Methods of Historical Science. 3rd Updated Edition] (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2016), 191-193.

¹⁵ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972) 27.

¹⁶ See Dietmar Giehl, *Ortssippenbuch Orzydorf im Banat 1785-2018 – Bd. 2 (M-Z)* [Local Family Book of Orzydorf in Banat 1785-2018] – Vol. 1 (A-L)] (Fürth: Heimatortsgemeinschaft (HOG) Orzydorf, 2018), 1801-1803.

¹⁷ ***, *Geschichte der Gemeinde Orzidorf mit Rückblick auf die Vorgeschichte des Banates und der Gemeinde* [History of the Community of Orzidorf with a Look Back at

of the wider colonization plans of the Habsburg Empire, supported largely by private enterprise, its Southeast European domains along the Danube in the Kingdom of Hungary were settled by colonizers from German speaking regions in Central Europe.¹⁸ The village that came to be known as Orțișoara received its name from Ladislaus Baron Orczy (1750-1807), who was the president of the cameral administration of the region during the time the village was colonized by two hundred German-speaking settler families in the late 18th Century.¹⁹ Because their ancestors came from the region of Swabia, specifically on *Ulmer Schachtel* ships from the city of Ulm downstream the Danube, by the turn of the 20th century, the demonym *Donauschwaben* [Danube Swabians], came into use as an identifier for the rural German-speaking populations of the former Hungarian part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In this regard, the term *Banater Schwaben* [Banat Swabians] was a subset of the former to designate those that inhabited the region of the Banat.

Orțișoara became a part of Romania after the end of the First World War and the subsequent Paris Peace Conference, which partitioned the Banat, ceding two thirds to the Kingdom of Romania, one third to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, and a sliver comprising 1% of the territory in the Northwest around Szeged to the Kingdom of Hungary.²⁰ The political leadership of the Germans of the Banat militated for the full unification of the Banat with the Kingdom of Romania in the hopes that the future kingdom would commit to the stipulations of the Resolution of Alba Iulia/Karlsburg from 1918. This resolution guaranteed the minorities of the future Greater Romania the right to administer, instruct, and educate

the Prehistory of the Banat and the Community] (Timișoara: "Viktoria" Druckerei, 1935), 22; Gertrude Adam, Anton Peter Petri, *Heimatbuch der deutschen Gemeinde Orzydorf im Banat* [Homeland Book of the German Community Orzydorf in the Banat] (Marquartstein: Th. Breit Verlag, 1983), 17.

¹⁸ See Gerhard Seewan, Michael Portmann; *Donauschwaben. Deutsche Siedler in Südosteuropa* [Danube Swabians. German Settlers in Southeastern Europe] (Ulm: Donauschwäbisches Zentralmuseum, 2020), 35-94.

¹⁹ Dietmar Giehl, *Ortssippenbuch Orzydorf im Banat 1785-2018 – Bd. 1 (A-L)* [Local Family Book of Orzydorf in Banat 1785-2018 – Vol. 1 (A-L)] (Fürth : Heimatortsgemeinschaft (HOG) Orzydorf, 2018), V; See Adam, Petri, *Orzydorf*, 20-30, 40-47, 66-76.

²⁰ Hausleitner, *Donauschwaben*, 77; Vasile Dudaș, "Weltkriegsende 1918/1919: das Banat im Widerstreit der Erwartungen," [End of the World War 1918/1919: The Banat in the Conflict of Expectations] in *Temeswarer Banat. Eine europäische Regionalgeschichte*, ed. Victor Neumann, trans. Armin Heinen (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2023), 405.

themselves with people of their own groups.²¹ However, successive Romanian governments, particularly those of the National Liberal Party, were more preoccupied with achieving the unification of Romania on a cultural level, the aim being that of ethnic homogenization in its newly acquired territories. This was planned to take place through measures meant to prioritize ethnic Romanians for key administrative and educational positions, as well as by enforcing Romanian language proficiency in these areas.²² These efforts at ethnic homogenization had, as a result, led to a growing sense of alienation among the Germans of the Banat vis-à-vis the Romanian state.²³

It is important to note that throughout most of their history, the Banat Swabians, like most of the ethnic Germans living in the countryside of the former Hungarian part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, did not strongly identify themselves as Germans or as forming a single collective beyond the local village level.²⁴ This collective ascription only began to appear at the start of the 20th century and gained steam after the end of World War I. Before the war, the main opposing factions were those of the Magyarophiles, predominantly landowning clerics and bourgeois Swabian elites, belittled as *Madjaronen*, and the more ethnically oriented emerging elites of the Germanophiles.²⁵ After the war, these differences broadly dissipated as the Roman-Catholic Church in the region under the leadership of the first Banat Swabian bishop, Augustin Pacha (1870-1954), took on a leading role in reinvigorating German language and culture in the province.²⁶ The St. Lioba sister of the Benedictine order, Hildegardis

²¹ Vasile Ciobanu, "Germanii din România în anii 1918-1933" [The Germans of Romania in the Years 1918-1933] in *Un veac frământat. Germanii din România după 1918* [A troubled Century. The Germans of Romania After 1918], ed. Ottmar Trașcă, Remus Gabriel Anghel (Cluj-Napoca: Institutul pentru Studiarea Problemelor Minorităților Naționale, 2018), 41; Glass, *Zerbrochene*, 85.

²² Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania* (Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 1995), 7-11, 16-18; Hausleitner, *Donauschwaben*, 79; Lucian Boia, *Cum s-a românizat România* [How Romania was Romanianized] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2015), 56-57.

²³ Mihai Panu, *Filii și mecanisme de propagandă nazistă în Banat 1933-1945* (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Mega, 2014), 86.

²⁴ Schüller, *Für Glaube*, 27; Seewann, Portmann, *Donauschwaben*, 57.

²⁵ Christopher Wendt: "Formulating Germanness in the Banat: 'Minority making' among the Swabians from Dualist Hungary to interwar Romania," *National Identities Issue 4: Contested Minorities in the 'New Europe': National Identities in Interwar Eastern and Southeastern Europe*, Volume 23, 2021, DOI: 10.1080/14608944.2020.1810651, 330.

²⁶ Călin Claudiu Sergiu, "Dr. h.c. Augustin Pacha (1870-1954). Succinct excurs biografic al primului episcop romano-catolic de Timișoara," [Dr. h.c. Augustin Pacha (1870-1954).

Wulff (1896-1961), who came from Freiburg to the Banat in 1928, was another influential personality that led these efforts at “re-Germanizing” the Banat Swabians, becoming a leading cultural figure because of her work among Swabian Catholic women.²⁷

This German Catholic revival movement appeared even in the village of Orțișoara, where Wulff together with the priest of the village, Georg Bittenbinder, founded local Catholic boys’, girls’, and women’s associations, numbering a total of 165 (60 boys, 46 girls, 59 women) members in 1930.²⁸

Beginning in the 1930s, the ideology of National Socialism began to spread and take root among the German minority of Romania. Its causes were multifaceted: growing disdain for the political leadership of the Banat Germans, frustration at the discrimination they faced from the Romanian government, the effects of the Great Depression, and their social connections to Nazi circles in Germany and Austria, to name a few. All of these led to political disunity, which allowed for a nascent National Socialist movement to *wedge* itself into the political life of the German minority of Romania.²⁹ One of its main vectors of transmission were the university students who went to study in Germany, where they became proponents of Nazi ideology, which they brought back home with them to popularize in their social circles.³⁰ Additionally, National Socialism was viewed favorably by the leading political figures of the Banat Swabians, by people like the chairman of the largest Swabian political organization,

Brief Biographical Study on the First Roman-Catholic Bishop of Timișoara] *Banatica* 19 (2009) 231-233, 246; Panu, *Capcanele*, 22.

²⁷ See Nikolaus Engelmann, “Hildegardis Wulff und die Banater Schwaben” [Hildegardis Wulff and the Banat Swabians] in *Die Liobaschwester Dr. Hildegardis Wulff. Weg, Werk und Vermächtnis* [The St. Lioba Sister Dr. Hildegardis Wulff. Path, Work, Legacy] eds. Nikolaus Engelmann, Franziska Graf, Peter Krier, Eduard Schneider (Wangen: Selbstverlag der Landsmannschaft der Banater Schwaben Landesverband Bayern, 1996), 15-20; Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes [German Political Archive of the Foreign Affairs Office] (PA AA), RAV 43-1 Gesandtschaft Bukarest [Bucharest Legation], 150 Deutsch-Schwäbische Volksgemeinschaft [German-Swabian People’s Community], X.E.1 Minderheiten-Allgemeines [Minorities-Miscellaneous], Bd. 1, 1932-39, T.No.20/31 German Consulate to the Bucharest Legation, 15 January 1931.

²⁸ *Banater Deutsche Zeitung*, 13. February 1932, 5.

²⁹ Schüller, *Für Glaube*, 82-83; Johann Böhm, *Nationalsozialistische*, 54; Hausleitner, *Donauschwaben*, 111; Paul Milata, “Motive Rumäniendeutscher Freiwilliger zum Eintritt in die Waffen-SS” [Motives of Romanian-German Volunteers for Joining the Waffen-SS] in *Die Waffen-SS. Neue Forschungen* [The Waffen-SS. New Research], eds. Jan Erik Schulte, Peter Lieb, Bernd Weger (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2014), 222-223; Panu, *Filiere*.

³⁰ Hausleitner, *Donauschwaben*, 104; Schüller, *Für Glaube*, 165; Panu, *Filiere*, 82.

the *Deutsch-schwäbische Volksgemeinschaft* [German-Swabian People's Community], Kaspar Muth (1876-1966),³¹ and the Roman-Catholic canon, Franz Blaskovics (1864-1937).³² These people collaborated closely with the German consul of Timișoara/Temeswar, who acted as an important conduit for transferring financial support to German cultural institutions and organizations in order to help keep them afloat.³³

An issue that found common ground, both on the side of the more Catholic circles, as well as the National Socialist movement, was the growing fear regarding the status of the Banat Swabians as a dying people due to their declining birthrates.

This issue first appeared in a 1935 study written by Eugen Jaeger, a student of medicine at the Ludwig-Maximilian University of Munich. The study compiled data from 50 undisclosed majority German villages in the Banat. The average of births and deaths in these villages significantly dropped from 6697/5064 in 1880 to 2311/2049 in 1933. Jaeger argued that if this trend continued, the number of deaths would outpace the number of births.³⁴ He went on to name the causes for this state of affairs: 1. Liberalism, an ideology that rooted the individual out of their community and led them to spiritual homelessness; 2. Materialism, whose emphasis on earthly goods incentivized small families; 3. Emigration, which led to the gradual disappearance of artisans and workers; 4. Magyarization, which had led to the assimilation of the Swabian intelligentsia into Hungarian culture. The only social category left standing, according to Jaeger, was the German peasant: "Today, the peasantry is also affected by

³¹ Glass, *Zerbrochene*, 452, 507; Schüller, *Für Glaube*, 121.

³² Glass, *Zerbrochene*, 431.

³³ As an example, for 1939, the German government approved financial support for German cultural establishments in Romania of up to 177,300 Reichsmark, of which 40,000 were destined to the Banat for maintaining the *Banatia* school complex (25,000), the Roman-Catholic elementary schools (9,000), the agricultural school in Voiteg/Wojtek (4,000), and to support the "diocesan school inspector (2,000). See PA AA, RAV 261 Konsulat Temesvar [Consulate Timișoara/Temeswar], 676, Kult S 4331/39, Berlin, 3 June 1939, 1-5.

³⁴ Eugen Jaeger, "Die Bevölkerungsbewegung der Deutschen im Banat" [The Population Movement of the Germans in the Banat] (Dissertation zur Erlangung der Doktorwürde in der gesamten Heilkunde vorgelegt der Hohen Medizinischen Fakultät der Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität zu München [Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Medicine, Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, in fulfillment of the requirements for the doctoral degree in the entire field of medicine], 1935) 5.

this biological population crisis, and this will certainly lead to the death of the people unless healing counterforces are developed.”³⁵

Even the Roman-Catholic bishop of the Banat, Augustin Pacha, expressed his disapproval at couples not having children in a pastoral letter from 1939³⁶ titled *Zum Volkstod* [Towards the death of the people]. In it, he took on a very combative tone in which he accused Banat Swabian parents of not loving their children, claiming that the villages and towns were becoming increasingly deserted, and that children no longer knew the joy of having siblings. He accused women of breaking the fifth commandment of not committing murder by simply not having children, thereby denying life to countless unborn. He also argued that the materialism of men is one of the main driving forces behind the low birthrate.³⁷

This same fear is echoed by the ethnic German Nazi political scientist, Hans Herrschaft, in his book on the history of the Banat. In it, he described the *Volkstod* as the greatest danger that the Germans of the Banat faced, a danger that existed merely due to egoistic materialism, which could only be overcome by moving beyond one-child families to families with four or even five children, all whilst maintaining racial purity in accordance with National Socialist doctrine.³⁸

By 1940, the Romanian rural gendarmes were tasked with monitoring the civilian population for any activities considered dangerous to national security. These included, among many others, political activities undertaken by irredentist-revisionist (Hungarian, Ukrainian, Russian, Bulgarian) and extremist movements, namely communism, socialism, and Hitlerism, as the Romanian authorities referred to Nazism. In the course of their intelligence-gathering process, they gathered information from both public and private spheres, collecting documentary evidence and incorporating it into their reports for submission to their

³⁵ Jaeger, 9: „Heute ist auch der Bauernstand von dieser biologischen Bevölkerungskrise erfaßt, und das führt zum sicheren Volkstod wenn nicht heilende Gegenkräfte sich entwickeln.”

³⁶ *Banater Deutsche Zeitung*, 15 May 1939, 6; *Temesvarer Zeitung*, 13 May 1939, 6.

³⁷ Nikolaus Engelmann, *Hirte seines Volkes: Aus dem Leben und Wirken des Temesvarer Bischofs Dr. theol. H. c. Augustin Pacha* [Shepherd of His People: From the Life and Work of Bishop Dr. theol. h. c. Augustin Pacha of Temesvar] (Munich: Verlag “Christ Unterwegs,” 1955), 74-76.

³⁸ Hans Herrschaft, *Das Banat: Ein deutsches Siedlungsgebiet in Südosteuropa* [The Banat: A German Settlement in Southeastern Europe] (Berlin: Verlag Grenze und Ausland GmbH, 1942), 264-271; See Hausleitner, *Donauschwaben*, 198.

superiors.³⁹ Put succinctly, the hierarchical order within the institution of the gendarmes went top-down in the following manner: The General Inspectorate of the Gendarmerie – The Regional Gendarmerie Inspectorate – The Regiments of Gendarmes/The County Legion of the gendarmes – the gendarmerie section – the gendarmerie post.⁴⁰

If at the start of the 1930s, Nazism was making slow but steady headways into the political discourse of the Banat Swabians, by 1940 it had come to dominate the political life of the entire German minority of Romania after multiple struggles throughout the second half of the 1930s.⁴¹ This hegemony over the German minority in Romania became codified after the GEG acquired juridical recognition by the Romanian government through the law decree nr. 3884 of 20 November 1940.⁴² This trend is noticeable in the reports of the gendarmes as well. The commander of the gendarmerie section of Vinga, Pavel Daş, reported on 26 October 1940, that of the circa 8,000 Germans of their precinct, 1804 of them lived in Orţişoara, a village which served as the main transmission hub from Timişoara to the villages of the precinct. Daş claimed that the Swabians had abandoned the former associations they were part of and have created a single bloc called *Conducerea Național-Socialistă Germană din România* [The German National Socialist Leadership of Romania]. His report went on to allege that the Swabians were acquiring Nazi uniforms and engaging in military drills and marches whilst hoisting the *Hakenkreuz* flag during public events.⁴³ Later reports claimed the following: On 10 November 1940, the leader of the National Socialist movement in Orţişoara, Johann Frank, had ordered the Romanian school and Orthodox chapel in the village to be vacated to make way for a new headquarters for the “Swabian organization.” On 23 January 1941, a group of 20 young Swabian men led by the veterinarian Johann Lauer broke into the gendarmerie post, stealing twenty firearms. On 25 January, the commander of the gendarmerie post was accosted by Nikolaus Kleman while handing out draft orders, who told him to stop handing out such papers because they only took orders from the “German organization.”⁴⁴

³⁹ SJAN-TM, fonds LJTT, inventory number 573, folder 11/1940, f. 32-34.

⁴⁰ Miron Ovidiu Marius, *Jandarmeria în epoca interbelică între mit și realitate* [The Gendarmerie in the Interwar Period between Myth and Reality] (Lugoj: Editura Dacia Europa Nova, 2003), 52-54.

⁴¹ See n. 10.

⁴² Traşcă, “Grupul etnic,” 120.

⁴³ SJAN-TM, fonds LJTT, inventory number 619, folder 373/1940, f. 1-2.

⁴⁴ SJAN-TM, fonds LJTT, inventory number 619, folder 373/1940, f. 4.

Against this backdrop of illegalities undertaken by local Swabian Nazi leaders, a propaganda campaign was launched by the GEG in early 1942 to further promote the idea of women having as many children as possible under the slogan *Jede deutsche Frau schenkt in diesem Jahr dem Führer ein Kind* [This year every German woman sends the Führer a child as a gift].⁴⁵ An article titled *Frauenehre und Ehe sind uns heilig!* [Women's honor and marriage are sacred to us!] in the local German-language newspaper, *Südostdeutsche Tageszeitung – Ausgabe Banat* [Southeast German Daily Newspaper – Banat Edition] sought to dispel the fears that some had over the propaganda campaign by reaffirming the sacredness of marriage to the GEG. However, the article did underline the precept of Nazism whereby marriage was first and foremost a service to the *Volk* [people]. Under these precepts, the article argued, marriage shouldn't be based on materialistic considerations of improving one's finances, but instead focus on healthy offspring. As such, marriages between sterile couples or partners with an unhealthy hereditary background were to be avoided. With these considerations in mind, the article concluded that as long as both parents were healthy, even a child born out of wedlock presented no problems.⁴⁶

The investigation of the gendarmes regarding the “pronatalist propaganda” of the GEG began with the investigative order nr. 3699 of 13 March 1942 given by the Timiș-Torontal legion commander Ioan Peșchir. The order was for the gendarmerie section and post commanders to investigate the recent pronatalist propaganda, supposedly launched by one of the leaders of the organization who allegedly told women and girls to “get to it” and start making babies in order to replenish the losses at the front.⁴⁷ The gendarmerie post of Satchinez reported on 20 March, that last Winter, Swabian teachers had told the women and girls of their village to give in to “debauchery” so long as it increased their numbers, regardless of who the father was. One of the teachers, Anna Schmidt, claimed that although she never had children, she now wished to have ten.⁴⁸ According to a report sent by the Gendarmerie Inspectorate of Timișoara to the General Inspectorate of the Gendarmerie, a woman by the name of Iolan Hiller in the county of Arad went to the villages of Șagu, Aradu Nou, and Cruceni, to give public speeches to the Swabian women of the villages.

⁴⁵ Panu, *Filiere*, 123.

⁴⁶ *Südostdeutsche Tageszeitung – Ausgabe Banat* [Southeast German Daily Newspaper – Banat Edition], 17 March, 1942, 3-4.

⁴⁷ SJAN-TM, fonds LJTT, inventory number 619, folder 373/1940, f. 87.

⁴⁸ SJAN-TM, fonds LJTT, inventory number 619, folder 373/1940, f. 94.

Hiller urged them to have as many children as they could, regardless of whether they were married or not. The report underlined that the youth received these demands with enthusiasm in contrast to the elderly who disapproved of them, with one of them noting: "All the poor (leaders) have made boots out of the money collected from the German population, and now they are engaging in propaganda aimed at dishonoring their daughters."⁴⁹ On 21 March, the commander of gendarmerie post of Orțișoara, initially reported that they were unable to identify any such cases of German pronatalist propaganda on their territory,⁵⁰ before sending a new informative note on 29 March describing the medical visit, based on the testimonies they received.⁵¹

Discourse Analysis of the testimonies. No dates are given for any of the four testimonies; therefore, it can be presumed that they were added as annexes to the report from 29 March. Likewise, all four testimonies have the same font and each of them are on a single folio. It can be presumed that these texts were written at the headquarters of the gendarmerie post, typed on a type-writer, then given to the four witnesses to sign, one of whom, Gherghina Neagoie, being illiterate, signed her testimony using her thumb. Whether these testimonies were given one after another during the course of a single day or throughout the eight days between 21 and 29 March, or even beyond this time frame cannot be ascertained. What is certain, however, is that all four people were residents of the village of Orțișoara, as this is stated in the first sentence of each testimony. Fundamentally, the four testimonies offer three second-hand perspectives on the incident: that of Mihai Selhan, that of Elena and Gherghina Neagoie, and that of Maria Ardelean.

Mihai Selhan claimed that he heard about the incident from multiple sources: From overhearing Swabian boys talking amongst themselves during one of the breaks he gave them during premilitary drills; From Elisabeth Toth, when she described what had happened in the Neagoie household; From Margareta Franț, who found handkerchiefs from the teenagers on the haystacks in her backyard after they had engaged in sexual intercourse the previous night; From Iaub (Taub?) Ecaterina, who worked as the cleaning lady of the community center and caught a boy and a girl in the sexual act, but did not identify who they were; From passing by the house of the Schmelzer family, where Johann Schmelzer (1896-

⁴⁹ SANIC, IGJ, folder 109/1941, f. 185: „Toți săracii (conducătorii) și-au făcut cizme din banii adunați dela populația germane și acum fac propaganda pentru a le necinsti fetele”.

⁵⁰ SJAN-TM, fonds LJTT, inventory number 619, folder 373/1940, f. 89.

⁵¹ See n. 1.

1974) was scolding his daughter, Katharina Margareta Schmelzer (born on 10 September 1926) for having not gone with the other teenagers to the community center, implicitly in order to engage in sexual intercourse. Selhan claimed that she was crying and said she didn't want to go because of the experience of the medical examination and didn't want to go through with what the woman had told her and the girls to do. To this, her father replied that he'll stop feeding her and that he won't let her out of the house anymore.

Already multiple things can be deduced from his sources. Firstly, Mihai Selhan was the premilitary instructor of the village. Premilitary training consisted of military-style drills for men aged 18-21 that would prepare them later on for military service.⁵² This, coupled with being the cowherd, meant that he was a well-connected person in the social network of the village, someone that the entire village knew and communicated with. Secondly, Selhan could understand either German or the Banat Swabian dialect of the village, since he was able to listen in on what the Swabian villagers were talking about amongst each other. Furthermore, according to Dietmar Giehl's compendium on the families of Orțișoara, the only Elisabeth Toth alive and close to the age bracket of the participants was born on 18 March 1928, making her either thirteen or fourteen years old when the medical examination took place. Even Katharina Schmelzer would have been fifteen years old at the time.⁵³ This suggests that the ages indicated in the reports and testimonies are incorrect, as some of the girls gathered and put to stand naked in the same room with naked eighteen-year-old boys could have actually have been as young as thirteen.

From what Selhan overheard from the Swabian boys at the premilitary drills, they were comparing the physiques of the girls whose bodies they saw on the evening of the medical examination. They were bragging about how they slapped the buttocks of the girls whenever they would return to their spot after each individual examination was over, all without the doctor or woman saying anything. Allegedly, after the examination was over, the woman gave her speech, claiming that there was no shame for a sixteen-year-old girl to have a child, regardless of who the father was, since there were enough elderly to take care of the child, especially since they had nothing better to do. She went on to argue that

⁵² Schüller, *Für Glaube*, 162-163.

⁵³ Giehl, *Ortssippenbuch Bd. 2*, 1312-1313; 1497.

the *Swabian nation* (*nația șvăbească*)⁵⁴ must grow so as to replenish its losses in the war, that it would be nice for the girls to have a child as a memory of the boys who went to the army and that only this way would they accomplish their mission. He heard similar claims made by Elisabeth Toth when she was in the house of Petru Neagoie with multiple girls and women, describing the event as it unfolded in much the same way, including both girls and boys being naked in the same room together, the girls having their buttocks slapped by the boys in front of the doctor, and the speech held by the woman at the end of the evening.⁵⁵

In her testimony, Elena Neagoie claimed that she was a close friend of the Swabian girl Elisabeth Toth, which was why Toth came over to her house one day with more female friends to tell her about what had happened on the evening of the “medical visit.” According to what Elisabeth Toth told her, the information maps on with what Mihai Selhan provided, aside from the girls being slapped on the buttocks by the boys or the boys and girls going into the building’s courtyard afterwards to engage in sexual intercourse. She does state, however, that the doctor and the woman told the teenagers to stop going to church, because Jesus was a Jew and the Virgin Mary was a prostitute. Elena Neagoie alleged to be a friend of Katharina Schmelzer and that one day in March of 1944, when she went to visit her, she could hear Katharina’s father scolding her while she cried. She waited for her father to leave the house before heading inside to ask her what was wrong, to which Katharina told her that it was because she didn’t go to the community center when the medical visit took place because she was ashamed of taking off her clothes in front of all of the boys. Elena’s mother, Gherghina Neagoie, claimed to have heard of the incident from overhearing what Elisabeth Toth said while in her home: all girls sixteen-years-old and older and all boys eighteen and older of the village were to go to a “medical visit” organized by a doctor and a woman from Timișoara. The pair then went on to undress all of the teenagers before carrying out a medical examination. When they were finished, the woman spoke, arguing in favor of the girls having children in order to supplement the losses in the war and that she stressed that there was no shame in not knowing who the father was and that the child could serve as a beautiful memory of the boy who went off war. The majority of the boys and girls then supposedly went to the community center’s backyard, where

⁵⁴ It is unclear, given the second-hand nature of the primary sources at hand, what was meant by the term “Swabian nation,” and was either a mistranslation of *schwäbisches Volk* [Swabian People] or the term “German nation” might have been meant instead.

⁵⁵ SJAN-TM, fonds LJTT, inventory number 619, folder 373/1940, f. 153.

many of them stayed on the haystacks. Lastly, Gerghina Neagoie admitted that she hadn't paid much attention and did not remember the entire sequence of events as they were described by Elisabeth Toth.⁵⁶

In her testimony, Maria Ardelean claimed to have been a very good friend of Katharina Schmelzer, from whom she claimed to have heard about the event while they were at the house of Elena Neagoie together. According to her, Katharina told everyone how one day in March a doctor and a woman from Timișoara/Temeswar came to the village and brought all the boys and girls into one place, where they undressed them and kept them in the same room while carrying out a "medical visit" on the girls in front of the boys. At Maria's insistence, Katharina replied that, although she was her best friend, she couldn't tell her what transpired because she was ordered by the woman not to divulge to anyone what had happened. Ardelean stated, that even when she worked with her on the train lines and started talking about the medical visit again, Katharina refused to go into any details. All that she could muster up to admit to was that she no longer wished to go to the community center where the Swabian youth gathered because of "certain impositions and obligations," which the woman put on them during the medical visit.⁵⁷ Maria Ardelean's testimony stands out from the other three testimonies, as it focused only on the singular experience of Katharina Schmelzer, specifically the way she expressed her shame regarding the event, reflected in her hesitancy to go into detail and shroud the entire incident in a veil of mystery.

Put together, these written testimonies offer a glimpse of the outsider's view gazing in to the interethnic and political landscape of the Swabians of the village. The outsiders themselves can be a disinterested onlooker (Gherghina Neagoie), a friend of one of the participants (Maria Ardelean), a gossipy person (Elena Neagoie), or a well-connected figure in the village (Mihai Selhan). It can be deduced that part of their motivation for giving these testimonies have to do with the investigation carried out by the gendarmes, under what conditions they gave these statements are lost to history. The combined perspectives paint a picture of a community shocked by the sexual promiscuity of a significant portion of their youth—promiscuity that was explicitly encouraged by authoritative figures whom the community had to respect, or risk being cast out and losing their Germanness. The shock was experienced differently from person to person, with the boys who attended the medical examination boasting about their experience, Elisabeth Toth omitting herself out of the story, and

⁵⁶ SJAN-TM, fonds LJTT, inventory number 619, folder 373/1940, f. 154-155.

⁵⁷ SJAN-TM, fonds LJTT, inventory number 619, folder 373/1940, f. 156.

Katharina Schmelzer distraught by the experience and unwilling to relive it by speaking of what happened to her. The manner in which the medical examination was carried out, coupled with the instances of sexual intercourse that followed suit, offer the image of a *mélange* between intra-ethnic youth sexuality confined within the hierarchical societal power hierarchies of National Socialism superimposed over the social structure of Banat Swabian rurality gazed into through the prism of alterity by their Romanian neighbors, who were alien to the *thick descriptions*⁵⁸ that underlined the societal expectations that were placed on the Swabian youth of Orțișoara.

Conclusions. The discursive framework of the Banat Germans, as reflected in their press and publications, revealed anxieties about their declining birthrate, which some feared might lead to the extinction of the Banat Swabian people. Officially, Nazism vigorously promoted increasing the fertility rate as a requirement of biological racism. This approach not only aimed to boost the birthrate but also sought to undermine the authoritative influence of the Roman Catholic Church, which condemned such behavior. The four testimonies do not clarify the roles of Elisabeth Toth or Katharina Schmelzer during or after the medical visit. Their personal perspectives and actions are missing, only implicitly suggesting that they participated in the “medical visit” but were likely among the minority of teenagers who returned home afterward.

The testimonies provided implicitly offer evidence of the multilingualism practiced in the Banat at the time, one in which individuals like Mihai Selhan spoke the language of the majority in the village, whereas Elisabeth Toth and Katharina Schmelzer spoke to their Romanian friends in the language of the state, as neither Maria Ardelean nor Elena Neagoie spoke German. In this regard, the Orțișoara of 1942 stands as an example of the multiculturalism of the Banat constituted through multilingualism and a kind of peaceful, even friendly cohabitation between the different ethnicities of the region.⁵⁹ Yet, given the different allegiances to power hierarchies in the village, with the gendarmes acquiring testimonies *only* from Romanians, and the issue of increasing the birthrate affected *only* Germans, it should be stressed that the amicability of Romanian-Swabian relations came on a gradient of allegiances to their

⁵⁸ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1973), 6-14.

⁵⁹ Anton Sterbling, „Mythos Banat?“ [Myth of the Banat?], *Spiegelungen: Zeitschrift für deutsche Kultur und Geschichte Südosteuropas* [Reflections: Journal for German Culture and History of Southeast Europe] Heft [Issue] 2, 9 (2014): 131.

respective authorities. For the Swabians, it was the GEG. For the Romanians, it was the gendarmes.

The normative power of the GEG is strongly present in these reports, which show how two people from the organization could, under the aegis of serving their people, erase the corporal privacy of the youth of the village. The acceptance of this authority is best observed in the reaction of Katharina's father, who scolded his daughter for, what can only be deduced to have been her refusal to engage in sexual intercourse with another boy after she went through the medical examination. Instead of his anger being directed at the GEG, it was directed at Katharina for not obeying the orders that she received.

One of the issues that the sources don't provide any concise information about is the precise number of participants at the medical examination and the latter group intercourse. Were one to approximate how many 14–18-year-old teenagers there were in a village of circa 2,000 inhabitants at the time, estimates could range anywhere from 40 to 60 participants. However, this is presuming that indeed all German aged 16–18 teenagers went. This study has already shown that the age range provided by the testimonies were incorrect, and given the fact that the GEG managed at the height of its power and influence to incorporate only 90% of the ethnic German youth into its organization⁶⁰ still leaves out a considerable minority of 10% of Banat Germans. Just with that data point alone, the estimate of participants can drop to anywhere between 36 and 54. Viewed in its local and regional context, the medical examination conducted on the German youth of Orțișoara stands as an example of how the GEG imposed itself into the lives of the German minority of the Romanian Banat. This normative imposition instrumentalized premarital sex for political aims because of the long-existing fears and anxieties of the Banat Swabians of becoming an extinct people, something that ultimately did come to happen, but not from a declining birthrate, but from the voluntary and coerced migrations of the Banat Swabians that ensued over half a century afterwards.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Schüller, *Für Glaube*, 443.

⁶¹ See Mathias Beer, "Emigrația minorităților germane din România după 1945. Premise, proces, consecințe" [The Emigration of the German minorities of Romania after 1945. Premises, Process, Consequences] in *Germanii din România. Migrație și Patrimoniu Cultural după 1945* [The Germans of Romania. Migration and Cultural Heritage After 1945] eds. Mathias Beer, Sorin Radu, Florian Kührer-Wielach (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 2019), 29–45.